

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Programming and Allocations Committee**

May 13, 2026

Agenda Item 4a-26-0346

**Endorsements for the 2026 Cycle of the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program
(TIRCP)**

Subject:

Recommended Commission endorsements for Bay Area applications to the 2026 state TIRCP program (Cycle 8).

Background:

The TIRCP program funds projects that will modernize California's rail, bus, and ferry transit systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, and congestion. The regular 2-year program, referenced as the "Base TIRCP" program in this memo and attachments, receives funds from both Cap and Trade Auctions and Senate Bill 1. Additional TIRCP Augmentation funding was distributed from the state general fund in 2023. Six Base TIRCP award cycles and two Augmentation funding rounds have been completed, during which MTC has endorsed and advocated for projects consistent with the Cap and Trade Framework.

TIRCP Cycle 8 Call for Projects

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) released a call for projects for a new five-year program of projects, with an estimated \$950 million available in new programming capacity for Cycle 8. Applications are due May 18th, 2026.

Staff initiated a call for project application information through outreach to MTC's partners, and received notice of ten planned applications from the Bay Area, as detailed in Attachment A. Staff reviewed applications and provided letters of consistency based on Plan Bay Area 2050+ (PBA50+), as required by the TIRCP program guidelines.

In addition to confirming consistency with PBA50+, MTC has an opportunity to endorse certain applications from sponsors in the region. MTC's TIRCP Framework, part of an overall Cap and Trade Framework in MTC Resolution No. 4130, Revised, sets regional targets and priorities to guide MTC endorsements for each round. The Framework was developed to implement and prioritize near term projects, with a focus on the region's core capacity transit needs and projects and programs with strong performance. As part of development of MTC's Major Project

Advancement policy (MAP), the framework was revised in 2022 to reflect progress on the prior framework, new priorities from Plan Bay Area 2050, and changes to funding availability. To date, endorsements as part of the Framework have helped the region successfully focus and sequence large state investments in major rail projects, while also securing funding for smaller transit expansion, efficiency, transit oriented development, and state of good repair projects throughout the region. The current Framework is summarized in Attachment B.

The Portal

The Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) plans to apply for a total of \$750 million for The Portal during this TIRCP cycle. Their needs during the next 5-year cycle are likely much lower than that, but projects are not generally able to receive multiple awards across cycles from TIRCP, so TJPA is seeking a multi-year funding agreement to secure matching funds for its planned FTA New Starts funding and support delivery of the final project.

MTC's adopted TIRCP framework endorsed The Portal for \$500 million in TIRCP funds. The federal administration's change in funding priorities, along with inflationary pressure, has increased the need for early state investment in The Portal, and with other sponsors named in the framework not pursuing TIRCP this round, it is a strategic opportunity to prioritize funding for the project. In light of these factors, staff recommend superseding the adopted endorsement limit for The Portal for this round to endorse the full \$750 million request. Capacity for this higher endorsement would come from the unassigned category for multiple operators, which includes a regional contingency.

TJPA's application includes a request for CalSTA to commit \$100 million in FYs 2027-28 and 2028-29 not contingent on an executed FTA Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) to complete preconstruction activities needed to secure an FFGA and advance to construction. TJPA will request another \$167 million within the Cycle 8 5-year program, and a multi-year funding agreement for the remainder of the TIRCP request. Staff recommend MTC support this requested distribution plan in the endorsement.

Besides the exception to TJPA's framework amount, staff recommends maintaining the projects and endorsement limits in the TIRCP framework.

TIRCP Cycle 8 Endorsements

The remaining planned applications this round are not named in the TIRCP framework, and are subject to the endorsement limit of \$25 million per application. Following this limit, staff recommends endorsing nine applications for a total of \$176 million in addition to TJPA's \$750 million request. This recommendation includes partial endorsement for projects over the \$25 million limit, projects partially outside of the nine-county Bay Area, and to exclude scope not consistent with PBA50+. Proposed endorsements are shown in Attachment A.

Regional endorsements are not listed as a formal component of CalSTA evaluation criteria, but may be considered along with the application package. Further, given the prior adoption of a regional framework which has not been fully funded and the pressing need to secure funding for The Portal, staff proposes the Commission endorse, and thus encourage CalSTA to focus TIRCP investment on, key investments to expand and maintain transit service throughout the region.

To address the recent Cap and Invest program extension and as part of PBA50+ implementation, staff further commits to revisiting the Framework and proposing framework updates prior to the next TIRCP cycle.

Issues:

Projects partially in the Bay Area Region: Two TIRCP applications this year will include scope that is partially in the 9-county Bay Area – the San Joaquin Regional Rail Authority is applying for two ACE rail trackwork projects, one in Alameda County and one in San Joaquin County, and Caltrain's project will be a component of a larger Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority application. For both of these projects, staff recognize the importance of the full request scope for interregional rail service that serves the Bay Area, but consistent with PBA50+ and the TIRCP Framework, but recommend MTC endorse only the portion of funds that would be invested physically in the Bay Area.

Plan Bay Area 2050+ Consistency: SMART's planned application includes funding for design and construction of the Geyserville infill station between Healdsburg and Cloverdale. The SMART to Cloverdale extension project included in the adopted Plan Bay Area 2050+ Transportation Project List does not include the Geyserville Station. Staff are coordinating with

SMART on a potential future amendment to include the Geyserville station, but at the time of endorsement this component of their application is not consistent with the Plan. Staff recommend endorsing the components of the project that align with Plan Bay Area, which include new buses for Sonoma County Transit and pedestrian bridges to enhance the SMART Pathway/Great Redwood Trail.

Recommendations:

Refer the TIRCP Endorsement List (Attachment A) to the Commission for approval.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: TIRCP Endorsement List
- Attachment B: TIRCP Framework and Previous Awards
- Presentation

Andrew B. Fremier