



## MTC'S Transportation Revenue Measure Scenarios

Dear MTC Commissioners,

I am Collin Thoma the Systems Change Advocate with Disability Services and Legal Center (DSLC). We are an independent living center (ILC) that serves people with disabilities and seniors in Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake counties. While we do not serve Marin County my comments still pertain to Marin given its close proximity to our service area. Furthermore, we work with the Independent Living Center Marin Center for Independent Living that serves Marin County. Both DSLC and Marin CIL serve thousands of consumers (clients) every year. Furthermore, Sonoma, Napa and Marin counties are some of the quickest aging populations in the state which will put more of a demand on public transportation. My comments today are regarding MTC'S Transportation Revenue Measure Scenarios. While I am glad to see a plan to increase funding for transportation services in the San Francisco Bay Area, I have concerns regarding that the North Bay Counties won't be included in the final revenue measure. Not including the North Bay can have a serious negative impact on people with disabilities and seniors who often rely on public transportation to get around.

The level of transportation services in Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties are quite different from the level of service in San Francisco, the East and South Bay. The frequency of fixed routes and paratransit service is more limited and doesn't meet the demand. The areas of service are also more limited in the outskirts of the cities/towns and in rural areas.

There is also a significant disconnect of multi county service since Golden Gate Transit and SMART train are the only providers that serve multiple counties. Both providers only serve Marin and Sonoma counties, mostly around the Highway 101 corridor leaving out a large portion of both counties. This also completely leaves out Napa and Solano counties, making getting to and from these counties very difficult. Like all other transit providers, SMART and Golden Gate Transit are also quickly approaching a fiscal cliff. SMART current tax measure will expire in the

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next few years unless it is re-approved which is not guaranteed. Golden Gate Transit has seen a reduction in ridership post pandemic resulting in less revenue for their service. This is why having a funding option that includes the whole Bay Area is so important to help avoid the fiscal cliff.

All North Bay counties have a mix of rural and urban areas and while the level of transportation in the urban area is decent at best, the same can't be said for rural areas. The rural areas have more limited bus routes and service times. This makes it harder for those to use the bus since more planning is required, which can be challenging for some. Furthermore, it severely limits paratransit services which are commonly used by people with disabilities and seniors. In my three and a half years at DSLC I have helped dozens of consumers (clients) who live in these rural areas. I have had some success in getting paratransit services for these consumers. However, I often need to supplement it with Community Based Organizations (CBO'S) transportation services. In some cases, transportation provided by CBO'S are the only option available since the consumer lives outside of the paratransit service area. These options are also pretty limited since there are not a lot of CBO'S that provide transportation. Additionally, some CBO'S only serve a small portion of the county they operate in. I have also had some instances where I needed to help consumers who live in urban areas with getting alternative transportation. This can be due to the gaps of transportation in urban areas.

Another major challenge for people with disabilities and seniors is getting transportation service to San Francisco, the East or South Bay. Many need to go to these parts of the Bay Area for medical appointments or for social activities. While those who have Medi-Cal can get transportation through their coverage plan for these trips, it is nearly impossible for those who do not have Medi-Cal. In my three and a half years at DSLC I have tried to help several consumers who don't have Medi-Cal to get their medical appointments with very little success. This is because there is no easy one-seat ride or seamless and easy transfers between transit providers. People with disabilities and seniors need easy transfers as it can be challenging to plan their trip

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to make numerous transfers. Furthermore, some may become easily fatigued if they have to make multiple transfers. There are a few companies that provide transportation for medical appointments but cost hundreds of dollars. People with disabilities and seniors often can't afford those trips due to their very limited income from the Social Security benefits and the extremely high cost of living.

Given the challenges in the North Bay, I strongly recommend the commission adopts a hybrid model that automatically includes all 9 counties. If Scenario One is adopted, I worry that it would have a significant negative impact on the level of transportation and transportation providers in the North Bay. If this option is adopted, I would like to see the MTC work closely with the North Bay governments to opt-in to the plan. I would prefer to see the hybrid model adopted so all Bay Area counties are included. This is because of the aforementioned transportation challenges in the North Bay. Furthermore, there is no universal bus service like AC Transit that serves multiple cities and counties. This means that the local transportation providers have a smaller ridership base that will provide revenue to fund their services. Also, the hybrid model will also act as a safety net if the SMART tax is not renewed or changed to provide less money. Furthermore, if the SMART tax is renewed or increased the hybrid model will enhance SMART funding. The city of Petaluma is also proving that strong funding can be used to provide successful transportation enhancements. They have made bus trips free for everyone, making it much more appealing to ride the bus. Furthermore, they have started a pilot program called LumaGo which is an on-demand shuttle for the downtown area. In the few short months, the shuttle has been running they have already provided thousands of rides and is proving to be a great transportation option.

Thank you for taking your time to review my comments regarding MTC'S Transportation Revenue Measure Scenarios and for your efforts to improve transportation. I hope to see a final decision that will work for the entire Bay Area. This will be great to see since the plans that the commission has to improve transportation are greatly needed. These plans will make it much

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easier to use public transportation especially for people with disabilities, seniors and other marginalized groups who often heavily rely on it.

Sincerely,

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