

DRAFT FINAL

MTC BAY AREA TRANSIT PRIORITY POLICY FOR ROADWAYS

** Underlined, blue text denotes substantive changes from version shared for 9/22/2025 RNM Council meeting. Minor or clarifying wording changes are not highlighted. **

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The purpose of the MTC Bay Area Transit Priority Policy for Roadways (Policy) is to:

- Promote active interagency engagement to minimize unintended impacts to transit; and
- Enhance the transit rider experience by supporting transit priority infrastructure and policies that improve transit travel times and reliability

The goals of the Policy include:

- Establish a common definition of transit priority;
- Strengthen interjurisdictional coordination and guide agencies to consider transit in roadway projects; and
- Inform prioritization of funding for transit priority projects.

The Policy aligns with Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint Transportation Element Strategy T11, which aims to improve the vitality and viability of existing transit services throughout the Bay Area by providing increased frequency, improved reliability, and greater capacity to reduce wait time, decrease travel time, and encourage ridership growth. Further, the Policy fulfills Action 12 identified in the Bay Area Transit Transformation Action Plan (2021), which calls for the development and adoption of a Transit Priority Policy for improving bus speed and reliability on high-transit corridors and arterials.

TRANSIT PRIORITY DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy, “Transit Priority” refers to transit-supportive infrastructure, design, and policies that decrease transit vehicle travel times and enable them to move more reliably by avoiding traffic congestion and minimizing delays. Transit-supportive infrastructure and design treatments include but are not limited to: transit lanes, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, bus-on-shoulder lanes, transit signal priority, queue-jump lanes, and transit stop design elements such as bus bulbs or boarding islands. Transit-supportive policies include but are not limited to:

strategic traffic/parking regulations, optimized transit stop placement and spacing, boarding/fare payment practices such as off-board fare payment and all-door boarding, and application of the physical infrastructure and design treatments mentioned previously.

WHERE POLICY APPLIES

The Policy applies to public roadways in the nine-county Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma), including both surface streets and access-controlled highways, that have existing scheduled, fixed-route, publicly-accessible transit service (i.e., published transit routes) that operates in shared or semi-dedicated right-of-way (i.e., bus, light rail, and streetcar services). [It also applies to public roadways with existing non-revenue scheduled routes¹, existing recurring detour routes², and planned budgeted routes³. Non-recurring special event services, demand-responsive services, and paratransit services are excluded from the Policy.](#)

FUTURE TRANSIT PRIORITY NETWORK

MTC is conducting a Transit Priority Roadway Assessment, referenced in Action 12 of the Transit Transformation Action Plan, to define a regional Transit Priority Network (TPN) of key transit corridors. The TPN will be used to:

- Determine locations and corridors where transit supportive design would have the greatest impact on improving travel time and reliability for transit service and maximize person throughput; and
- Inform the distribution of regional discretionary funding by identifying roadways which should be prioritized for transit priority investments.

¹ “Non-revenue scheduled” routes include deadhead movements and pull-in routes where buses operate when they are not carrying passengers.

² “Recurring detour” routes include locations with regular special events and conditions that require transit service to detour to an alternate street.

³ “Planned budgeted” routes include transit service that is included budgeted service changes or an approved Comprehensive Operations Analysis (short-term service plan). It does not include long-range plans, unless they are budgeted.

IMPLEMENTATION VIA COMPLETE STREETS POLICY CHECKLIST

MTC will incorporate the transit agency review requirements of the Transit Priority Policy for Roadways into the existing MTC Complete Streets Policy Checklist (CS Checklist). MTC Resolution No. 4493, Complete Streets Policy (CS Policy) (2022), aims to ensure that people biking, walking, rolling, and taking transit have safe, connected, and convenient trips within the Bay Area transportation network. While transit is included within MTC's CS Policy, transit is not a focus of the CS Policy. The CS Policy and the Transit Priority Policy for Roadways are complementary to each other, and both apply to transportation project planning, design, funding, construction, reconstruction, and maintenance activities.

All projects seeking MTC endorsement or regional discretionary funding⁴ over the threshold identified in MTC Resolution No. 4493 (or its future update), regardless of project type or sponsor, must complete a CS Checklist and comply with the most recent CS Policy.

Consolidating implementation of both the CS Policy and Transit Priority Policy for Roadways into the CS Checklist simplifies project adherence to these policies, ensures requirements of both policies are sufficiently incorporated into projects, and ensures that appropriate transit agency coordination has occurred.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The following Policy requirements will be added to the CS Checklist:

- A project on a roadway with qualifying transit services, as defined previously, must be reviewed by all affected transit agencies to ensure the project considers the needs of transit and/or mitigates project elements that may adversely impact transit operations. Transit agencies must finish this high-level review and provide comments to project sponsors within 20 business days of receipt of project information. For complex projects or extenuating circumstances, transit agencies may request an additional 10 days to complete the review.

⁴ As explained in the CS Policy, MTC regional discretionary funds include federal, state, and regional fund sources administered by MTC, including but not limited to: Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) funding, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funding, Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), Transportation Alternatives (TA) set-aside/Active Transportation Program (ATP) funding, regional bridge tolls, and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) funding.

- In addition to the previous requirement, projects along the regional TPN should incorporate reasonable transit-supportive design elements from best practice national, state, and local design guidance to improve transit travel time and reliability. *This requirement will not go into effect until after the regional TPN is adopted, which is anticipated no sooner than late 2026.*
- For projects requiring transit review, Project Sponsors should document design feedback / discussions with the transit agency, and:
 - update the project scope and/or design information on CS Checklist portal, based on project review by Transit Agencies, or
 - explain why project was not modified to incorporate transit agency feedback, and if applicable claim an exception to incorporating suggested transit mitigations (or the suggested transit-supportive design elements, if project is on the TPN) on the CS Checklist Portal (see Exceptions sections below).

Projects along roadways without applicable transit service, as defined previously, are not subject to these new requirements.

EXCEPTIONS

The Policy shall apply to all phases of project development. However, project sponsors may seek an exception to incorporating suggested transit-impact mitigations and/or transit-supportive design elements. Eligible exceptions include:

1. **Lack of Response.** Transit agency did not provide feedback within 20 business days and did not ask for a 10-business day extension, or asked for extension and did not review project within extension;
2. **Infeasibility.** The transit-impact mitigations that the transit agency suggested are infeasible along the roadway due to conflicts with fire code, designation as evacuation route or similar public safety code requirements, [requiring additional right of way, conflicts with existing infrastructure](#), and/or environmental concerns defined as abutting conservation land or severe topological constraints, and alternative transit-supportive design elements cannot be identified;

3. **Disproportionate Cost (for projects on TPN).** The cost to add transit-supportive design elements that transit agency suggested to the non-transit project is excessively disproportionate to the base project cost. Generally, “disproportionate” is defined as greater than 20 percent⁵. If the cost of preferred accommodation is considered excessively disproportionate, project sponsors shall consider alternatives that represent a feasible share of the total project cost but still provide transit supportive design to improve transit travel time and reliability; or
4. **Separate Transit Project (for projects on TPN).** Transit-supportive design elements to be addressed through a separate process or project.

To claim an exception, project sponsors must provide documentation in the CS Checklist detailing how the project meets one or more of the exception conditions above. Exceptions must be documented and signed by senior-level staff or an authorized delegate of the project sponsor.

COORDINATION & COLLABORATION ON PROJECT SCOPE

Agencies are encouraged to work collaboratively to develop a project that considers the needs of transit while meeting the project goals. If consensus cannot be reached by the project sponsor and transit agency regarding transit-impact mitigations or transit-supportive design elements, MTC may convene a stakeholder meeting with the affected agencies to aid in discussions, but MTC would not take a lead role or be a mediator. If a resolution cannot be reached, the project sponsor should document all efforts made to resolve the dispute in the CS Checklist submission.

OPTIONAL LOCAL TRANSIT PRIORITY RESOLUTION OR POLICY

A right-of-way owners, roadway operators or a county transit agency should consider adopting a local resolution or policy to reinforce local support to improve transit travel times and reliability, which enhances the overall transit rider experience. Such a commitment may be shown by

- Adopting a resolution in support of the Bay Area Transit Priority Policy for Roadways;
- Adopting a standalone local transit priority policy; or
- Modifying an existing local plan or policy to include language on transit priority.

⁵ Per FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations: “A cost may be considered excessively disproportionate when the cost of providing the accommodation would be more than 20% of the cost of the larger transportation project.”

Templates are available as resources when taking one of the above actions. In the future, MTC may provide funding incentives to projects located in jurisdictions that have adopted a resolution or policy. Any funding incentives would be implemented through MTC funding programs, not through the Policy.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

The Policy will be implemented in phases to give affected agencies the opportunity to gradually adapt to new Policy criteria when applying for discretionary funding or MTC endorsement:

- (1) Upon adoption of Policy (anticipated early 2026): project sponsors with projects along roadways with transit service will be required to review the project with affected transit agencies and consider potential mitigations, via the CS Checklist process.
- (2) After adoption of the regional TPN (anticipated late 2026 or early 2027): project sponsors with projects along the TPN will need to consider incorporating reasonable transit-supportive design elements into projects, via the CS Checklist process. The TPN will be developed through the Transit Priority Roadway Assessment in 2026.

EQUITY

Projects should improve the travel time and reliability of transit routes serving disadvantaged populations, including Equity Priority Communities (EPCs) or other similar designations. Some MTC discretionary funding programs prioritize projects with larger anticipated equity benefits; the exact prioritization methodology is subject to a particular funding program's equity priorities and approaches.

EVALUATION

Project sponsors that receive MTC discretionary funding, regardless of project type, should consider the transit rider experience and transit operations throughout project planning and design, proactively incorporating transit-supportive design treatments or mitigating project elements that may adversely impact transit operations. Some MTC funding programs require project sponsors to conduct a pre-/post-implementation evaluation of project impacts on transit travel time and reliability, to be conducted by the project sponsor or delivery agency. Periodic monitoring of transit priority investments is also encouraged to maintain project effectiveness.

For network-level evaluation, MTC will develop an existing conditions baseline of transit operations in the region through the Transit Priority Roadway Assessment, and utilize Regional Network Management Performance Measures (MTC Resolution No. 4648, adopted May 2024) to routinely track progress toward improving transit travel time and reliability along the TPN. MTC staff will produce reports regularly, in coordination with CS Policy reports, to summarize funded projects, report changes in transit performance, and update the Policy and TPN, if needed.

EARLY COORDINATION

Regardless of project type, project sponsors should proactively coordinate with transit agencies potentially affected by the project well in advance of the project seeking regional discretionary funding from MTC, to evaluate the potential of incorporating transit-supportive design elements into the project and/or mitigate any potential adverse impacts to transit operations. In addition to sponsoring or delivering projects, agencies or local jurisdictions introducing policies or other work that may potentially impact transit operations should similarly coordinate with transit agencies.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

As resources allow, MTC will support project sponsors, transit agencies, and local jurisdictions to promote transit priority and implement the Policy through technical assistance programs. MTC will continue to advocate for and advance transit priority through leadership at the regional level.