



Friday, March 10, 2023

The Honorable Steve Bennett
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3
California State Assembly

Re: Request to Protect Public Transit in FY 2023-24 State Budget

Dear Chair Bennett,

In advance of your upcoming budget hearings this month, we are writing to share our concerns about the funding shortfalls facing transit operators across the state due primarily to the ridership declines caused by the COVID 19 Pandemic. We ask that your committees hear this issue to provide a forum for exploring solutions since it is not addressed in the Governor’s proposed FY 2023-24 State Budget, which instead proposes \$2 billion in cuts to public transit capital funding that the Legislature approved just last year.

The undersigned organizations request your support to help the state’s public transit systems avoid looming cuts to critical transit service that millions of Californians rely upon and that is foundational to our state’s climate strategy. Transit operating shortfalls reflect the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has devastated transit agency budgets as a result of

diminished fare revenue from lower ridership as well as higher costs arising from inflation. We look forward to engaging with your budget subcommittees to ensure that this year's final budget bill provides additional transit operating assistance to sustain critical transit service riders depend upon *and* fund proven strategies to attract new riders and help lessen financial challenges in the future.

A Strong Public Transit System is Vital to Creating an Equitable, Economically Vibrant and Climate Friendly Future

Based on 2021 U.S. Census data, almost 60 percent of California residents who commute via public transit have a household income below \$35,000. Over half a million California households own no vehicle and count on public transit for their daily needs, including access to K-12 education and college. Public transit is an economic lifeline for these residents, especially seniors and persons with disabilities. Yet residents of all income levels also depend on transit to access their jobs and maintaining the viability of the transit systems is essential for the future of the state's economy and quality of life. Public transit also supports good-paying jobs, employing over 31,000 California workers statewide in FY 2021.

When it comes to climate change, California prides itself on being a global leader. The state has taken a two-pronged strategy to reduce transportation-related emissions – the largest of any sector – by decarbonizing the vehicle fleet, while also encouraging less driving through a combination of investments in transit and other modes plus a suite of policies to encourage more infill, transit-oriented development. Policies aimed at reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) depend on a reliable and convenient public transit system; they have little chance of success if transit agencies across the state have to make severe cuts to service.

Today, about 65 million trips/month are taken on transit in California, reducing VMT by hundreds of millions each year. To meet the state's carbon neutrality goals by 2045, however, significantly more people will need to choose transit instead of driving. To encourage this shift, California Air Resources Board has urged the state to support efforts to *double local transit coverage and service frequencies* by 2030, recognizing that both vehicle decarbonization *and* less driving are needed to achieve our state's bold greenhouse reduction targets. However, without a multi-year commitment of state funds to help sustain transit and put it on a path to attracting millions of new riders, the state's climate strategy is in serious jeopardy.

Bay Area Operators Face Significant Looming Budget Shortfalls

We are at an unprecedented moment, with the survival of transit as we know it at risk. The rise of remote work, growing costs due to inflation, and apprehension to ride transit due to health concerns has led to a growing fiscal cliff on the horizon. Additionally, the transit sector is severely understaffed (with some agencies reporting as high as 30 percent of jobs unfilled for some positions), limiting service agencies can put on the street and placing upward pressure on salaries and benefits as agencies work to retain and attract workers.

Based on current ridership, service levels, and cost trends, Bay Area operators forecast annual budget shortfalls in the tens of millions of dollars in FY 2023-24, growing to hundreds of millions of dollars beginning in FY 2024-25 and thereafter. Funding gaps of this magnitude cannot be addressed through fare increases or service cuts; doing so would lead to service of such poor quality that it would erode transit's climate benefits and cut off even basic access to critical destinations for those who rely on it most. For instance, to achieve budgetary savings in

the range of 20-40 percent, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) would need to cut service by 65-85 percent, eliminating access to jobs, schools, grocery stores, and other essential services for many current riders. This, in turn, would further reduce passengers, leading to further cuts. We cannot let this doomsday scenario happen.

Fortunately, in the medium and long term, there is reason for optimism. While statewide ridership is around 62 percent of its 2019 levels and Bay Area ridership is around 53 percent, ridership is steadily growing. In December 2022, statewide ridership was up 9 percent compared to a year before and in the Bay Area up by 23 percent. Bay Area transit operators are working more closely than ever, together with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), to create a better, more seamless transit experience across the region. Plans are beginning for a future regional transportation measure. A unified mapping and wayfinding system is being designed to make transit easier to navigate. The first all-agency transit pass using the Clipper[®] card is being piloted at key colleges and affordable housing sites. Operators across the state are likewise deploying technology to shift to mobile fare payment and updating their routes and frequencies to better serve existing riders while also attracting more of them.

Honor Transit Commitments from FY 2022-23 Budget

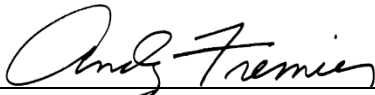
Under your leadership, California has made historic investments in our transit capital infrastructure, supporting critical rail and bus expansion and the zero-emission transit transition. The historic transit investment made in last year's Transportation Package includes \$4 billion over the next two years for further transit and intercity rail capital investments, yet Governor Newsom proposes to cut this in half, reducing the amount to \$1 billion next year and \$500 million for the following two years. Doing so would put at risk the funding plans for high priority projects in the Bay Area, several of which are already under construction or poised to receive billions of dollars in highly competitive federal funds.

Request: Provide New Multi-Year Funding for Transit Operating Assistance

To address the operating challenges, we are seeking a new multi-year operations funding commitment on a limited term basis to assist California's transit systems as they recover from the pandemic and develop long-term funding plans, as necessary. The funding picture for each transit system is unique and there is no one-size-fits-all path to financial sustainability. While some agencies need assistance to stave off service cuts next year, other agencies face deficits in the hundreds of millions of dollars starting in FY 2024-25 or FY 2025-26. Others may not face near-term service cuts but have priorities that, *if funded*, could attract significantly more riders (advancing the state's climate goals) and help avoid budgetary challenges down the road. We are working in coordination with partners statewide, including the California Transit Association, to refine our assessment of the funding need and put forward a specific budget request later this month. In addition, we are seeking an extension of the statutory relief previously provided to transit agencies through FY 2024-25.

Californians demand meaningful action on climate change and want their state representatives to ensure transit is not just a viable option, but an attractive one to get to work, school, health care, shopping, dining, entertainment and more. We know that you share these goals and we look forward to working with you to ensure that public transit both survives and thrives in California.

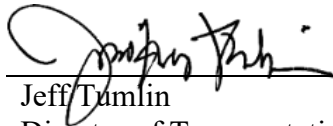
Sincerely,



Andrew B. Fremier
Executive Director, MTC



Robert Powers
General Manager, BART



Jeff Tumlin
Director of Transportation, San Francisco
Municipal Transportation Agency



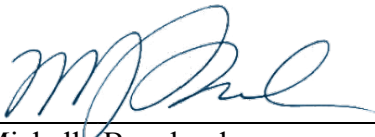
Mike Hursh
General Manager, AC Transit



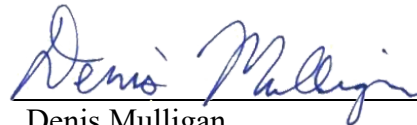
Carolyn Gonot
General Manager/CEO, Santa Clara Valley
Transportation Authority



April Chan
General Manager/CEO/Executive Director,
SamTrans/San Mateo County Transportation
Authority



Michelle Bouchard
Executive Director, Caltrain



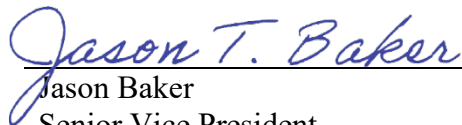
Denis Mulligan
General Manager, Golden Gate Bridge,
Highway and Transportation District



Steve Adams
Transit Manager, Union City Transit



Bryan Albee
Transit Systems Manager,
Sonoma County Transit



Jason Baker
Senior Vice President,
Silicon Valley Leadership Group



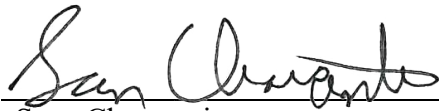
Daniel Barad
Associate Director, Sierra Club



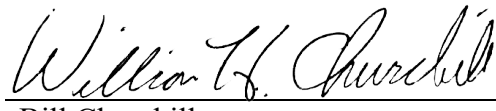
Rashidi Barnes
Chief Executive Officer, Tri Delta Transit



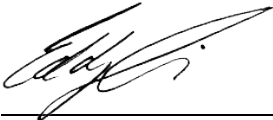
Tilly Chang
Executive Director, San Francisco County
Transportation Authority



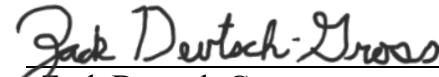
Sean Charpentier
Executive Director, City/County Association
of Governments of San Mateo County



Bill Churchill
General Manager, County Connection



Eddy Cumins
General Manager,
Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit



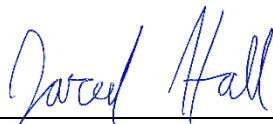
Zack Deutsch-Gross
Policy Director, Transform



Ian Griffiths
Policy Director, Seamless Bay Area



Tim Haile
Executive Director, CCTA



Jared Hall
Transit Manager, Petaluma Transit



Daryl Halls
Executive Director, Solano Transportation
Authority (Solano Express)



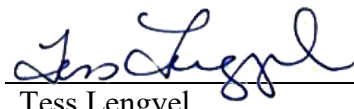
Johannes J. Hoevertz
Director, Sonoma County
Department of Public Infrastructure



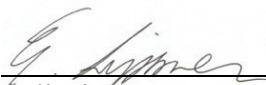
Caro Jauregui
Co-Executive Director, Cal Walks



Beth Kranda
Executive Director, Solano County Transit



Tess Lengyel
Executive Director, Alameda County
Transportation Commission



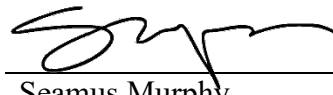
Eli Lipman
Executive Director, Move LA



Carolina Martinez
Climate Justice Director,
Environmental Health Coalition



Kate Miller
Executive Director,
Napa Valley Transportation Authority



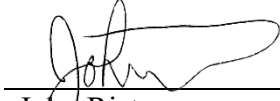
Seamus Murphy
Executive Director, Water Emergency
Transportation Authority / SF Bay Ferry



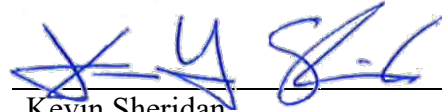
Sofia Rafikova
Policy Advocate,
California Coalition for Clean Air



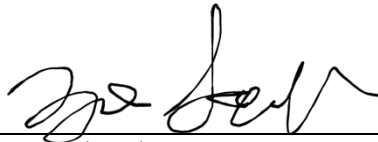
Anne Richman
Executive Director,
Transportation Authority of Marin



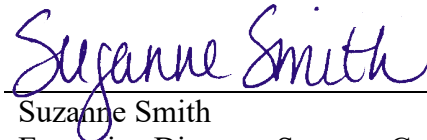
John Ristow
San José Department of Transportation




Kevin Sheridan
Executive Director, Tri-Valley – San Joaquin
Valley Regional Rail Authority



Zoe Siegel
Director of Climate Resilience,
Greenbelt Alliance



Suzanne Smith
Executive Director, Sonoma County
Transportation Authority/Regional Climate
Protection Authority



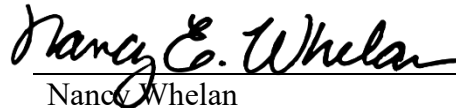
Jennifer Thompson, Executive Director
Sustainable Silicon Valley



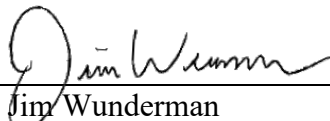
Rob Thompson
General Manager,
Western Contra Costa Transit Authority



Adam Van De Water
Executive Director,
Transbay Joint Powers Authority



Nancy Whelan
General Manager, Marin Transit



Jim Wunderman
President & CEO, Bay Area Council

Zak Accuardi
Transportation Advocate,
Natural Resources Defense Council

Emily Abraham
Director of Legislative and Community Affairs
San Francisco Chamber of Commerce

Arturo E. Aguilar
Chairman, California Conference Board
Amalgamated Transit Union

Eli Akira Kaufman
BikeLA

Stephen Baiter
Executive Director,
East Bay Economic Development Alliance

Shiloh Ballard
Executive Director,
Silicon Valley Bike Coalition

Steve Birdlebough
Chair, Sonoma County Transportation and
Land Use Coalition

Adam Buchbinder
Policy Lead, Silicon Valley Democratic
Socialists of America (SV DSA)

Rita Clement
Transportation Co-Leader,
San Diego 350

Corinna Contreras
Policy Advocate, Climate Action Campaign

Zack Defazio Farrell
RideSD

Christine Fitzgerald
Community Advocate, Silicon Valley
Independent Living Center

Rosanne Foust
President and CEO, San Mateo County
Economic Development Association
(SAMCEDA)

Solange Gould
Co-Director,
Human Impact Partners

Sara Greenwald
Transportation Committee Member,
350 Bay Area Transportation Committee

Josh Hawn
President,
Common Ground California

Michelle Hudson
Co-Leader,
San Mateo Climate Action Team

Lavie Kakol
Democratic Socialists of America,
San Francisco

Eugene Bradley
Founder,
Silicon Valley Transit Users

Patrick Chaffey
Chair Housing Working Group,
Silicon Valley Democratic Socialists of
America (SV DSA)

Ellie Cohen
CEO, The Climate Center

Janet Cox
CEO, Climate Action California

David Diaz, MPH
Executive Director,
Active San Gabriel Valley

Alexa Forrester
Co-Lead,
Bikeable Santa Rosa

Glen Garfunkel
Co-chair, Climate Reality Project,
Silicon Valley

Vinita Goyal
Executive Director,
San Francisco Transit Riders

Chris Guenther
Co-Lead,
Bikeable Santa Rosa

Brandi Howard
President & CEO,
East Bay Community Foundation

Rafael Jaime
President,
UAW Local 2865

Tarrell Kullaway
Executive Director,
Marin County Bicycle Coalition

Gary Latshaw
Co-chair, Silicon Valley Chapter of the
Climate Reality Project

Bryn Lindblad
Deputy Director, Climate Resolve

Kevin Ma
UUCPA Green Sanctuary Committee

Jerry Maldonado
Vice President of Programs,
PolicyLink

Ashley McClure, MD
Climate Health Now

Cynthia Murray
CEO & President,
North Bay Leadership Council

Alicia Nichols Gonzalez
Organizing Manager, California,
Mothers Out Front CA

Zayda Ortiz
Center for Independent Living Berkeley
(CIL)

Kristina Pappas
President, SF League of Conservation Voters

Amee Raval
Policy and Research Director,
Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Tiffany Rodriguez
TDM Manager, San Jose State University,
Associated Students

Jared Sanchez
Senior Policy Advocate, CalBike

Arnold Sowell, Jr.
Executive Director, NextGen California

Adina Levin
Executive Director, Friends of Caltrain

Liza Lutzker
Coordinating Committee Member,
Walk Bike Berkeley

Richard Marcantonio
Managing Attorney, Public Advocates

Emma Martin
Community Engagement Program Manager,
Center for Independent Living

Amanda Millstein, MD
Climate Health Now

Debbie Mytels
Chair, Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action
(PICA)

Nassim Nouri
Coordinating Committee Member,
Green Party of Santa Clara County

Jesse O'Sullivan
Policy Counsel, Circulate SD

Maia Piccagli
Mothers Out Front SF

Leah Redwood
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area

Carol Rothman
Member Coordinating Committee, 1000
Grandmothers for Future Generations

David Sorrell
Northern California Chapter of the
Association for Commuter Transportation

Brian Stewart
Founder, Electrify Now

Annie Stuart
Steering Committee Member,
350 Petaluma

Jack Swearengen
Chair, Friends of SMART

Jean Tepperman
Sunflower Alliance

Laura Tolkoff
Transportation Policy Director, SPUR

Igor Tregub
Alameda County Democratic Party

Hoai-An Truong
Mothers Out Front Silicon Valley

Marc Vukcevic
Co-Director of State Policy,
Streets For All

David Watson
Mountain View YIMBY

Cheryl Weiden
Steering Committee Member
350 Silicon Valley

Christy Wegener
Executive Director, Livermore Amador
Valley Transit Authority, Tri-Valley Wheels

Lauren Weston
Executive Director, Acterra

Kristel Wickham
President, Democratic Club of Sunnyvale

Sam Wilkins
California State Conference Chairperson
Transport Workers Union of America,
AFL-CIO

BK Williams
Steering Committee Co-Chair, Richmond
Progressive Alliance

Chris Wright
Senior Vice President, Advance SF

Janelle Wong
Executive Director,
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

Ellen Wu
Executive Director, Urban Habitat

Sonoma County Climate Activist Network
(SoCoCAN!)

Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
The Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President Pro Tempore
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Assembly Speaker
The Honorable, Nancy Skinner, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee Chair
The Honorable Phil Ting, Assembly Budget & Fiscal Review Chair
The Honorable María Elena Durazo, Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 5
The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, Senate Transportation Committee Chair
The Honorable Laura Friedman, Assembly Transportation Committee Chair
The Honorable Toks Omishakin, Secretary, California State Transportation Agency
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 5
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3