2023 Report to the California State Legislature

February 2023
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We Can't Afford to Lose Transit: State Funding for Transit Operations Needed

A strong public transit system underpins California’s ability to deliver an equitable and climate friendly future. The Bay Area is fortunate to have a solid foundation upon which to build. However, without a multi-year commitment of state funds, some Bay Area operators are at risk of having to make severe cuts that would deny access to work, school, health care and other daily needs to hundreds of thousands of residents each day. The Bay Area is partnering with the California Transit Association and transit partners around California to urge the state to take action as part of the fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 State Budget to avoid this dystopian scenario and help all transit agencies retool for the future.

Federal Funds — A Temporary Lifeline

Congress stepped in within months of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide billions of dollars in assistance. Thanks to these resources, transit agencies sustained service for essential workers and avoided draconian layoffs. We are making strides in attracting riders back to transit and adapting to serve riders’ needs in a post-COVID world, but federal funds are running out and state gap funding is needed while transit agencies retool and develop new strategies for long-term financial sustainability.
Transit is Key to State’s Climate Strategy

Zero-emission vehicles are not enough to solve the climate crisis; a significant reduction in driving is required. To achieve this, Californians need a reliable and attractive transit system that offers clear benefits over driving. The Air Resources Board recommends investing in “making public transit a viable alternative to driving by increasing affordability, reliability, coverage, service frequency, and consumer experience.”

State Budget Proposal: Secure and Revive Public Transit

California should begin a multi-year Transit Recovery Program in FY 2023–24 to shore up the financial solvency of transit systems most at risk, while also providing funding to address high priority, customer-focused benefits with a strong potential to attract new riders and thereby delivering equity, climate and mobility benefits. State resources could help leverage additional investments in regions like the Bay Area, as we explore self-help.

Secure (Track 1) Transit Service Preservation

The state should provide a lifeline for transit operators facing near-term fiscal cliffs, which, if not avoided, would trigger significant and unacceptable service cuts or layoffs. Funding would be made available on the basis of need.

Revive (Track 2) Retooling for the Future

Transit ridership was declining even before the pandemic and the reasons riders give today for not wanting to ride transit are familiar ones. They want systems that are convenient, reliable, safe and clean. Funds to invest in strategies to retain and attract riders will advance the state’s climate and equity goals and help avoid budgetary challenges down the road.
Reject Shortsighted Budget Cuts: State Dollars Drive Benefits for Bay Area Travelers

From zero-emission buses to railway modernization, state investment approved in last year’s budget will help make the Bay Area transportation network cleaner, greener and faster. The state’s $10.9 billion 2022 transportation package — which included $4 billion from the state’s FY 2023-24 and 2024-25 budgets — will help leverage billions more in federal infrastructure dollars. MTC is helping the Bay Area make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

**MTC Adopts New MAP for Funding Next Generation of Major Projects**

MTC in October 2022 unanimously adopted a new policy for prioritizing, building and delivering the next generation of major Bay Area transportation projects, focused on transit. Known as the Major Project Advancement Policy (MAP), the investment framework is designed to accelerate the completion of large scale transit modernization projects while preserving resources for other regional priorities, such as accelerating the transition to zero-emission buses.

Consistent with the MAP, MTC’s endorsements for the recently announced Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) awards focused on major transit capital projects that are leveraging federal funds and are either ongoing or nearing construction.

This focused approach helped the Bay Area secure 85 percent of funds available for projects outside Southern California, as follows:

- **$367 million – Caltrain Electrification**
- **$250 million – BART Transbay Core Capacity**
- **$375 million – BART Silicon Valley, Phase 2**
- **$34 million to extend SMART north to Windsor**
The MAP assumes at least $800 million in future TIRCP funds will help complete BART to Silicon Valley, Phase 2 and BART Core Capacity, as well as fund The Portal (formerly known as Downtown Rail Extension), Valley Link, and zero-emission bus transition.

MTC will amend the MAP this spring with policy elements to help reduce project cost overruns — which have plagued the region's mega projects — and ensure broad policy alignment with Plan Bay Area 2050.

State Support Helps Bay Area Compete for One-Time Federal Grants

The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) authorized more than $100 billion in U.S. DOT competitive grants. MTC spearheaded the Bay Area Infrastructure Grant Strategy aimed at maximizing the Bay Area’s share of these funds, which will be available only through federal FY 2026. The Commission-endorsed suite of BIL regional priority projects is mapped above. Fully funding the 2022 state transportation commitments will help the Bay Area win more of these competitive grants.
The Bay Area is gearing up to place its first regional housing bond measure on the 2024 ballot to raise billions of dollars to deliver housing affordability at scale. AB 1487 (Chiu, 2019) created BAHFA — the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority — which offers a set of new financing and policy tools to promote affordable housing development and combat displacement, including placing a regional housing measure on the ballot. MTC and ABAG are sponsoring AB 1319, authored by Assembly Housing and Community Development Chair Buffy Wicks to maximize the benefits BAHFA can deliver for Bay Area residents.

Making A Good Law Even Better
The Legislature in 2019 took a bold step in creating BAHFA, the state’s first regional housing financing body. BAHFA is governed by the same board as MTC and any expenditure plan must also be approved by ABAG.

Since embarking on a business plan to determine how BAHFA can best meet the region’s affordable housing funding needs, MTC and ABAG have identified several limitations in the enabling legislation. AB 1319 will address these and ensure BAHFA can effectively finance housing, preserve homes and protect tenants.

Specifically, the bill will:
▲ Clarify BAHFA’s full range of lending powers;
▲ Clarify that tenant stabilizations may include homelessness protections, such as emergency financial assistance;
▲ Allow BAHFA to acquire land (a local government partner request);
▲ Conform the agency’s allowable uses of bond funds with any future changes to the State Constitution; and
▲ Make other technical changes.

Regional Solutions to Expand Bay Area Housing Affordability

ABAG and MTC's expanded regional housing portfolio is rooted in the "3Ps" framework that comprehensively addresses the housing crisis through a combination of housing production, preservation and tenant protection. (Photos, clockwise from left: Karl Nielsen, Amie Holbrook, iStock, Karl Nielsen)
Bay Area Housing Pilot Programs

Pilot Projects Demonstrate BAHFA’s Potential

Thanks to $20 million from the FY 2021-22 State Budget, BAHFA is implementing five pilots to test innovative regional approaches to tackling our affordability challenges (see box above). These pilots are already demonstrating the value BAHFA brings to the Bay Area's housing landscape.

Heavy Lift Draws Many Hands

BAHFA, ABAG and our government, labor, business and nonprofit partners have begun the hard work to place a $10 billion to $20 billion regional housing bond measure on the 2024 ballot. If approved by voters, this measure would:

▲ Leverage an additional $15 billion to $30 billion in state, federal and private resources;
▲ Help produce and preserve up to 80,000 affordable homes; and
▲ Fund programs to cushion the impacts of unexpected events — such as job loss or medical emergencies — that can lead to homelessness.

We also support ACA 1 (Aguiar-Curry) and complementary efforts to place on the 2024 statewide ballot a measure to reduce the vote threshold for passing local and regional housing bonds.

In August 2022, BAHFA closed its first deal to preserve the 24-apartment Eden Housing De Anza Terrace complex in Alameda County. (Photo courtesy of Eden Housing)
Plan Bay Area 2050: Implementing a Bold New Vision

MTC is putting Plan Bay Area 2050 into action. Defined by 35 strategies for housing, transportation, the environment and economic vitality, Plan Bay Area 2050 details a groundbreaking combination of policies and investments to make the nine-county Bay Area more affordable, connected, diverse, healthy and vibrant for all residents.

From Planning to Implementation

Plan Bay Area 2050 goes further than previous planning efforts by outlining a concrete path to move from plan to reality. The Implementation Plan details near-term actions MTC and ABAG and our local, state and federal partners can take to realize the Bay Area’s sweeping vision.

We are grateful that in the FY 2021-22 State Budget the Legislature provided $600 million to help with SCS implementation (including $103 million for the Bay Area) through the Regional Early Action Grant Program (REAP) 2.0. In the Bay Area, we’ve invested the funds to implement Equity Priority Community investments, affordable housing, and implementation of the Transit Transformation Action Plan.
California Legislature Can Further Support Plan Bay Area 2050 Progress

MTC, ABAG and our partners have already made progress toward advancing Plan Bay Area 2050 goals for housing, equity, fighting climate change and enhancing resilience, and supporting transit recovery (see box below). But significant implementation challenges remain and require state engagement. These include:

▲ Authority: From transportation network pricing to speed limit enforcement, key strategies fall outside MTC and ABAG’s current authority; and

▲ Funding: The ‘fiscal cliff’ facing transit operators poses risks to the entire Bay Area transportation system; ridership recovery investments are needed if the Bay Area is to realize the transit of the future; and inadequate funding for affordable housing could jeopardize plans for hundreds of thousands of new homes in transit-oriented communities.

MTC and ABAG are seeking state resources to address these near-term transit needs (see page 2-3) and AB 1319 (Wicks) will help the Bay Area maximize benefits from future a regional housing measure (see page 6-7).

The Implementation Plan is a commitment to do hard things, not just think about them.

Therese McMillan
MTC-ABAG Executive Director 2019-23

Transit-Oriented Communities Policy

In 2022, MTC adopted a revised Transit-Oriented Communities policy to support a greater mix of housing and commercial densities in areas within ½-mile of existing or planned fixed guideway transit stops, stations or terminals.

Next Generation Freeways

MTC’s Next Generation Freeways Study about all-lane road pricing asks Bay Area residents to think about the tradeoffs we face to meet state climate targets.

Bay Area Climate Adaptation and Resilience

ABAG and MTC are working with regional, state and federal partners toward a more resilient Bay Area, including developing a Sea Level Rise Adaptation Funding and Investment Framework and securing funding for resilience investments.

...And Much More!

- Major Project Advancement Policy (page 4)
- Clipper BayPass (page 11)
- Express Lanes START (page 13)
- Housing Capacity Building (page 15)
Transforming Bay Area Transit by Putting Customers First

Although the Bay Area's impending public-transit funding crisis is looming large and creating uncertainty, it also has fueled MTC and the region’s transit operators to make progress on the priorities identified in the Transit Transformation Action Plan adopted in 2021. The Plan’s goal is a more connected, efficient and customer-focused network that lets residents and visitors alike navigate the nine-county region with speed, safety, convenience and confidence.

Transit of the Future
Recognizing that a customer-centric, regionally-coordinated system will retain and attract riders, MTC and Bay Area transit agencies are implementing a 27-point Transit Transformation Action Plan. To sequence priorities, we are accelerating work in three categories:

▲ Fare Coordination: MTC and its transit agency partners are developing new fare tools to encourage more ridership, including piloting an all-agency transit pass known as Clipper BayPass (see box at right). Next up: elimination of transfers from bus to bus, plus reduced-cost transfers from bus to regional operator, like BART, Caltrain or ferries;

▲ Mapping & Wayfinding: MTC in July 2022 approved a contract with Applied Wayfinding Inc. to develop a single mapping and wayfinding system for use by all Bay Area transit agencies to make the experience of riding multiple systems easier to navigate; and

▲ Transit Network/Transit Priority: MTC is embarking on the first comprehensive connected network plan for Bay Area transit (see page 11). MTC has also invested over $100 million in transit performance initiative projects to support projects that speed up and make transit more reliable, including speeding up bus travel to and from the Bay Bridge.
Integrated Transit Network Management Under Study

With 27 different agencies operating Bay Area transit systems, it’s difficult to be efficient, nimble and coordinated at the same time. The Commission has just completed a Network Management Business Case which explored how decision-making about key items could be better integrated through a Transit Network Management Committee comprised of both operators and MTC. By later this year, this new voluntary body should be in place to formalize transit coordination decisions.

Bay Area bus riders continued to count on transit through the pandemic. (Photo: Noah Berger)

Clipper Bay Pass Delivers Unlimited Transit Access

*MTC and Bay Area transit agencies in 2022 launched Clipper® BayPass, a two-year pilot program to study the impact of a single pass that provides some 50,000 Bay Area students and residents living in affordable housing communities access to the myriad bus, rail and ferry services in the nine-county region.*

*The launch of the Bay Area’s first all-agency transit pass is a major milestone on the path to fare integration. The pilot will enable the region to better understand how making transit more accessible affects travel behavior and other life outcomes.*

Clipper BayPass pilot gives residents of 12 affordable housing communities and students at four public colleges and universities free access to all Bay Area transit. (Photo: Noah Berger)

Everyone wants the same things:

An overwhelming majority of Bay Area residents think these features are important:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Feature Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Real-time information on wait times and vehicle locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>More direct service, fewer transfers, and shorter wait times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>A regional network that can set fares, align routes and schedules, and standardize information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Easy to use and uniform maps and signage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>A single mobile app for planning, schedules, and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89%</td>
<td>A single set of fares, passes, discounts, and transfer policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Dedicated travel lanes along key transit routes for buses and carpools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force Public Opinion Poll, April 2021
Equity in Motion: More Mobility for More People

MTC is committed to making sure the Bay Area’s ever-evolving transportation network does not leave lower-income residents behind. From the comprehensive Tolling Equity Action Plan — reinforced by last year’s passage of state Assembly Bill 2594 (Ting) — to the ClipperSTART® transit-fare discount program and new pilot programs to evaluate regionwide transit passes and Express Lane toll discounts, the Commission understands that transportation must remain affordable for all Bay Area residents to have access to opportunity.

Reducing Toll Violation Penalties

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted an abrupt transition to all-electronic tolling at the Bay Area’s state-owned toll bridges, and with that came a surge in toll violations from customers without FasTrak® accounts. Recognizing the burden unpaid toll violations were having, the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), an MTC affiliate agency, unveiled an ambitious Tolling Equity Action Plan to dramatically reduce the financial burden of toll penalties, switching to invoices with no penalty for the first notice and cutting initial penalties to $5 from $25. Following enactment of AB 2594 (Ting, 2022), BATA will also offer low-income customers a waiver on penalties from unpaid toll bridge crossings accrued during the pandemic and offer payment plans for subsequent outstanding tolls and penalties accrued by low-income drivers effective July 1, 2023.

BATA moved to all-electronic tolling in March 2020. (Photo: Karl Nielsen)
Transit Fare Discount Pilot Off to Successful START

The Clipper® START℠ pilot program launched in 2020 by MTC and Bay Area transit agencies allows lower-income adults to ride on any of 21 transit systems at 20-50 percent off regular fares. Clipper START is available to adults whose household incomes are no more than twice the federal poverty rate, the same eligibility criteria set for toll penalty waivers and payment plans.

Riders receive a personalized Clipper card and discounts are applied automatically whenever the card is used on participating transit systems. By summer 2022, 13,000 riders had used Clipper START for more than 1 million trips. Given this high demand, MTC extended the program through July 2023.

Thousands of lower-income riders each day tap MTC’s Clipper START card to save 20-50 percent off regular adult transit fares. (Photo, top: Ron Purdy)

Pilot Program Tests Equity Discounts for Express Lanes

MTC in 2023 will debut a first-in-the-nation pilot to lower the Express Lane affordability barrier for lower-income drivers. Operating in both the northbound and southbound Express Lanes along Interstate 880 in Alameda County, the Express Lanes START pilot will allow qualifying drivers to save 50 percent or more off posted toll rates throughout the corridor.

Express Lanes START pilot will test the impact of toll discounts for lower-income drivers along the East Bay’s jobs-rich I-880 corridor.

MTC’s new Express Lanes START pilot will test the impact of toll discounts for lower-income drivers along the East Bay’s jobs-rich I-880 corridor.
Bay Area Cities, Counties REAP State Grant Benefits

MTC and ABAG are putting state Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) funds to work to help the Bay Area address some of its most pressing housing, transportation and environmental challenges. We are grateful to the Legislature for this investment focused on reducing vehicle miles traveled, encouraging infill and affordable housing, and advancing social equity and we support additional resources to assist in the implementation of our vision for a more affordable, connected, diverse, healthy and vibrant Bay Area.

MTC is advancing a $630 million Plan Bay Area 2050 implementation initiative, which is funded with regional discretionary dollars. MTC’s $103 million share of REAP 2.0 is a key piece of the funding plan, and will be used to advance housing, transit and equity projects, as shown below. REAP 2.0 was a one-time investment from the 2021-22 State Budget to support regions in implementing state-mandated sustainable communities strategies (SCS).

If implemented, Plan Bay Area 2050 — the Bay Area’s SCS — will achieve a 19 percent per capita reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 compared to 2005 levels and support 400,000 new affordable housing units. The Plan Bay Area 2050 Implementation Plan outlines concrete actions needed to move from plan to reality and new resources like REAP 2.0 funds are essential for this vision to come to fruition. (See pages 8-9 for more on Plan Bay Area 2050 implementation.)

Bay Area's REAP 2.0 Investment Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Affordability ($58 million)</th>
<th>Rider-Focused Transit Improvements ($32 million)</th>
<th>Equity Priority Community-Driven Projects ($8 million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Repurposing public land and aging malls/office parks for housing</td>
<td>• Piloting no- and low-cost transfers</td>
<td>Develop and fund community-driven projects in Equity Priority Communities, from Complete Streets to transit ambassadors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preserving affordable housing near high-quality transit</td>
<td>• Mapping updates to make it easier to navigate Bay Area transit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making MTC’s transit-oriented communities policy a reality</td>
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REAP 1 Puts Focus on Housing

Thanks to a $24 million state grant from the original REAP program established in the 2019-20 State Budget, ABAG provided a broad suite of technical assistance to help Bay Area cities and counties meet their new Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) requirements, comply with other state housing laws, and advance the ‘3 Ps’ of housing production, preservation and tenant protection. By the end of 2022, practically every Bay Area local jurisdiction had participated in at least one of the many offerings provided. This work includes:

- **Hosting interactive webinars for local government staff and launching an online Housing Technical Assistance portal**
- **Developing mapping and public engagement tools** to help residents and local governments identify and visualize sites for new housing in their communities
- **Advancing research and resources** to help jurisdictions understand how to meet state and federal requirements to affirmatively further fair housing (AFFH)
- **Identifying best practices for engagement on housing issues with multi-lingual audiences**

MTC and ABAG staff hosted 19 live and interactive webinars, including “How to Talk About Housing,” to help local governments update their general plans’ housing elements. (Photo: Noah Berger)
Bay Area Partnership

MTC works in partnership with the top staff of various transportation agencies, environmental protection agencies, and local and regional stakeholders, listed here.

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- **Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit)**
  - Michael Hursh 510.891.4753

- **Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)**
  - Robert Powers 510.464.6060

- **Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA)**
  - Seamus Murphy 415.291.3377

- **Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (County Connection)**
  - Bill Churchill 925.676.1976

- **Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority (Tri Delta)**
  - Rashidi Barnes 925.754.6622

- **Fairfield and Suisun Transit (FAST)**
  - Dianne Feinstein 707.434.3808

- **Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District**
  - Denis J. Mulligan 415.923.2203

- **Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (WHEELS)**
  - Christy Wegener 925.455.7555

- **Marin County Transit District (Marin Transit)**
  - Nancy Whelan 415.226.0855

- **Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain)**
  - Michelle Bouchard 650.508.6200

- **San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)**
  - Jeffery Tumlin 415.701.4720

- **San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans)**
  - April Chan 650.508.6200

- **Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)**
  - Carolyn Gonot 408.321.5555

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