From: Sophia D
Sent: Monday, September 23, 2024 3:59:57 PM
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: Comment for the Select Committee on a Regional Transportation Measure

External Email

Dear Commissioners:

My name is Sophia D. I am with EBHO part of Voices for Public Transportation. We are the leading affordable housing advocacy coalition in Alameda and Contra Costa counties and we are part of the winning coalition for a regional measure that funds abundant transit, with progressive sources, and is climate positive. **The latest scenarios are moving further away from a proposal the majority of people will be excited to support.** A successful measure needs to raise at least $1.5 billion a year and have a sustainable source of transit funding over the life of the measure in order to **save union jobs**, increase transit service levels, and implement regional initiatives like free transfers, transit priority, and make improvements to **access for seniors and people with disabilities**.

On an individual level, as someone who relies on transit to get to work, take care of daily errands and be an active and involved part of my community, transit service cuts would upend my life and remove much of the freedom of movement I enjoy. It would also cause a traffic nightmare and prevent us from reaching our climate goals or building the housing we need. The Bay Area can– and MUST– do better.

Rev. Sophia D.
Chief Program Officer
EAST BAY HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS (EBHO)

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District
Mike Hursh, General Manager

October 18, 2024

Jim Spering, Chair
Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Item 4b, Transportation Revenue Measure Scenario Updates

Dear Chair Spering,

I am writing on behalf of the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) to express my deep concerns regarding the current Transportation Revenue Measure proposals. I appreciate MTC's commitment to building consensus during this urgent and immediate need for transit operating funds to keep transit running. As the CEO of AC Transit, I want to emphasize the critical importance of equitable funding and support for our transit services in the East Bay.

As I have previously mentioned, I am extremely concerned that AC Transit will not receive a fair share from the current proposed scenarios. It will be difficult for AC Transit to support a scenario that fills only 50% of our projects annual operating deficit need.

This inequity would have serious implications for our operations and the communities we serve. Our most vulnerable and underrepresented communities stand to be hit hardest by service cuts if AC Transit's projected deficit is not adequately addressed. We currently serve over 150,000 riders on an average weekday, and in just the first quarter of this fiscal year, we have already surpassed 10 million rides. The number of individuals who rely on our service is significant and cannot be overlooked.

From the outset of this process, we have stressed the necessity for equity to be integrated into the revenue distribution equation. Unfortunately, this has not been adequately reflected in the proposed allocations. AC Transit is facing a projected deficit of $146 million over the next four years, starting next fiscal year. With emergency federal assistance ending this fiscal year and state financial support concluding next year, the challenges we face are exacerbated by rising operational costs.

It's important to note that our current deficit projections are based on maintaining only 85% of service levels. We have no intention of remaining at this reduced level; we aim to restore our service to 100% as soon as possible. Given our resource constraints, we are committed to maximizing our existing resources and directing service where it is needed most.

The MTC's reliance on fare box recovery as the primary metric for determining transit agency needs is neither fair nor equitable. We have requested an equity analysis and advocated for the inclusion of ridership data in future funding allocations. Without these changes, diminished AC Transit service will only worsen the existing inequities faced by our riders.

I urge the committee to reconsider the proposed revenue distribution and to ensure that the East Bay receives its fair share. Our communities deserve reliable and equitable transit service, and we stand ready to collaborate in any way that ensures our collective goals are met.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 510-891-4753 or mhursh@actransit.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Hursh
CEO/General Manager
Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit)

CITY OF OAKLAND

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Office of the Mayor
Honorable Sheng Thao

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October 18, 2024

Jim Spering, Chair
Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Bay Area Transportation Revenue Measure

Dear Chair Spering,

As the Mayor of Oakland, the largest city in Alameda County and served by AC Transit, with almost half of AC Transit riders getting on and off the bus in Oakland, I am writing to urge the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to include additional funding for AC Transit as you develop the Bay Area Transportation Revenue Measure. I am deeply concerned that Oakland's public transit system will not receive its fair share from this revenue measure. Scenario 1A leaves 50% of AC Transit's projected annual deficit unfunded.

I worry that communities like Oakland will be significantly impacted by service cuts if AC Transit's funding needs are not met. 75 percent of AC Transit riders are people of color, 65 percent are low-income, and nearly half depend on public transit to travel to school, work, medical appointments, or grocery stores.

According to the MTC's Plan Bay Area 2050, Oakland is defined as an equity priority community. The MTC employs an Equity Priority Communities framework in decision-making for many of its grant programs. This framework should also be applied when reviewing transportation revenue measure proposals. Ensuring financial stability for AC Transit and the East Bay will garner support from Alameda County for passing a funding measure for transit operators. Put simply, I fear that Oaklanders will not give this measure the support at the ballot box it needs if we feel we are being left behind for the benefit of our neighbors.

I appreciate the time and care that the entire Select Committee has put into this process and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sheng Thao
Mayor, City of Oakland

CC: Members, MTC Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee
Commissioners, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

October 18, 2024

The Honorable Jim Spering, Chair
Bay Area Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale St.
San Francisco, CA, 94105

Re: Comments for October Select Committee Hearing

Dear Chair Spering:

On behalf of the California Alliance for Jobs and the 2,000 employers and 100,000 union construction workers that we represent from the Central Valley to the Oregon border, I am submitting this formal letter to provide comments to be considered by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Bay Area Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee. We understand the transit and overall transportation challenges the Bay Area is currently facing and we also know there will be no easy solution to resolve these funding issues. However, what we do know is that an efficient and safe transportation system improves the quality of life for all residents and provides significant economic benefits to the Bay Area.

Per the Select Committee agenda packet released on October 15th, upon review, we are disappointed that all the proposed scenarios fail to take into account many of our priorities that have been conveyed at previous hearings, and furthermore, based on polling carried out throughout this year, fail to offer a viable pathway to attain voter approval. Moreover, we are unsatisfied with the outreach / vetting process over the past five months as specific advocates continuously appear to have a number of priorities funded in all scenarios when we know for a fact that over 80% of Bay Area residents are motorists, not frequent transit riders. In fact, only 4% of Bay Area commuters rely on public transit according to MTC's most recent Vital Signs report.

Below are several priorities that we have communicated on countless occasions that have not been comprehensively considered:

- Balanced Expenditure Plan: A more tailored and focused measure that possesses a more direct link between its constituents and services provided may have a better opportunity for success. This includes equal amounts of both transit and infrastructure / capital funding.

- Everyone Pays and Everyone Benefits: Establishing a return-to-source formula that is reasonable and fair to ensure each county has sufficient financial resources to fund their transportation priorities.

- Proper Tax Levy: Throughout the Select Committee process a variety of tax levy options have been introduced and explored. As a sales tax has traditionally been the revenue mechanism used to successfully fund transportation measures over time, we will not support the inclusion of other tax levies (i.e. parcel & payroll tax) in a new measure. A sales tax resonates with the voters and has the greatest probability of success.

- Full Flexibility: Any expenditure plan that is developed and includes "county flex" or "opt-in" provisions should specify that allocated funds are completely flexible to fund projects that meet county transportation priorities.

We recognize that the development of a regional measure while addressing a variety of priorities is a challenging endeavor. We also know that the scenarios put forth will not have the consensus of the Select Committee. The abovementioned priorities are both reflective of what voters have conveyed through extensive polling and also the priorities of the construction industry. We know the inclusion of these priorities will get MTC closer to achieving the needed consensus on any successful regional measure that will be put in front of Bay Area voters.

Sincerely,

Michael Quigley
Executive Director

BAYAREA COUNCIL

October 19, 2024

Chair Jim Spering
Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: Comments on October Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee

Dear Chair Spering,

Thank you for your steadfast leadership in advancing this important work to build consensus on how the Bay Area funds public transportation going forward. I also want to thank MTC staff for their tireless shuttle diplomacy to find scenarios that are acceptable to the many diverse viewpoints on this topic.

Unfortunately, as we arrive at the final meeting of this Select Committee, I am disappointed that the conversation has not progressed substantially from where we were with SB 1031, which was a lopsided expenditure plan that caused widespread division within our region. We cannot continue to frame this as a measure to bail out an existing public transit system that is not meeting the needs or expectations of Bay Area residents. We must require public transit agencies to provide a better, safer, cleaner, and more coordinated rider experience, and they must take the difficult steps of identifying opportunities to cut costs.

This is not the first time we have come together to reform Bay Area public transit. I served on the Transit Sustainability Task Force in 2012 to improve efficiency and address the persistent transit funding shortfalls, the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force in 2021 to create a more rider-focused system, and I'm currently serving on the State Transit Transformation Task Force which is a process created in response to the fiscal cliff crisis. Yet none of these efforts have had a material impact on the way we provide public transit, or the cost of doing so.

We must now reimagine how we deliver public transit. Our polling repeatedly confirms that the voters are not interested in funding the status quo, and neither is the business community. We will not support any revenue funding absent real and substantive change.

There are several changes we think are very reasonable that we insist upon in order to support additional funding for public transit:

- **We must get costs under control.** Transit shortfalls have existed long before the pandemic, and we need to better understand what is driving costs so we can right size budgets and adjust to post-pandemic travel demands. We cannot continue to do business as usual. We should assess whether we need to continue to operate certain low

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BAYAREA COUNCIL

ridership lines, or consider how we could integrate technology to improve mobility at a cheaper cost while providing better options for transit users.

- **We must create strong independent oversight of agency operations.** Our polling repeatedly shows that the public does not trust public transit agencies to use taxpayer funds well, so we need to convince voters that agencies will use any new funds far more efficiently. We must also ensure that public transit operators are delivering on their promise to create a more seamless, integrated, and commonsense transit network that riders have long demanded. In some cases, this may require a restructuring of governance structures to ensure that public transit agencies are delivering a service that is responsive to riders and crafting a budget that is responsive to taxpayers.
- **We must deliver a safer, cleaner, and more comfortable transit rider experience *before* going to the ballot.** Our extensive polling and public outreach clearly shows that this is a top concern for riders of the BART system, specifically. Continuing to make progress on increasing the security presence, enhancing the cleaning of trains and stations, and preventing non-paying customers from entering the stations will not only regrow ridership but it will also rebuild voter confidence as we work towards a future funding measure. We appreciate that BART has made progress in these areas over the past year, and we urge the agency to continue to prioritize these top rider concerns and deliver a safe and clean system at all hours of the day.
- **We must offer a multimodal expenditure plan to win voter support.** We know from extensive polling that any new revenue measure must have a balanced expenditure plan that responds to the multimodal needs of all Bay Area residents and employers. Less than 10 percent of our population regularly rides public transit, so we need an expenditure plan that delivers direct benefits to all transportation users. We recognize that public transit agencies are facing a dire financial crisis, and I believe a measure that includes some funding for other transportation needs stands the best chance of being supported by voters.
- **We must pursue a revenue mechanism that can pass at the ballot.** A sales tax is a traditional source of transportation funding and polling indicates that among the various options, it resonates best with voters and thereby offers the greatest opportunity for success.

I'm sorry there is no measure being offered that we can support at this time. However, I look forward to continuing to work together to create a viable option that responds to the diverse transportation needs of Bay Area residents and offers a clear path to success at the ballot.

Sincerely,

Jim Wunderman
President & CEO

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From: Carol T.
Sent: Sunday, October 20, 2024 1:11:04 PM
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee for 10/21/24 Meeting

To respected members of the MTC Transportation Revenue Measure Select Committee:

Because Monday, October 21, 2024 is the last meeting of this committee I feel pressured to bring up concerns which may be outside the current agenda.

I am a pubic transit rider - mine is an outsider's view. Throughout these proceedings it seems to me this committee has been generally seeing Golden Gate Transit as "that cute little bus company up north somewhere."

Big numbers are not the only measure of importance.

I believe that if BART were to stop running tomorrow people in the East and South Bay will have alternative means of traveling. But if Golden Gate Transit stops running tomorrow nobody in Sonoma or Marin will have a way of getting to San Francisco or the East Bay by public transit. There isn't any other. We'll have nothing.

Not only that but GGT is our only reliable service running evenings and holidays in both Sonoma and Marin. People in both counties who work at restaurants, stores or go to night classes will have no ride home. Same for holidays because Sonoma County Transit does not run a single bus on any holiday.

It's easy to get sentimental and talk about Sonoma veterans with no way to get to San Francisco's Fort Miley for medical services. Or the black teens stuck in the ghetto of Marin City with no way to go anywhere including the Saturday night movies in San Rafael.

GGT is an intrinsic part of life in Sonoma and Marin and the spine of all public transportation for both counties. For fifty plus years I personally have witnessed their providing reliable services with no noticeable deferred maintenance, no major accidents or work stoppages. Service has only been suspended for floods and fires as far as I know. All this from a company maintaining the Golden Gate Bridge while running boats and buses.

The most important thing for me now is that while BART has the numbers, Golden Gate Transit has our backs.
Please do not forget us.

Thank you,
Carol T.
Bus Rider
Genesis, a member of Voices for Public Transportation

October 21, 2024

Dear MTC Commissioners and Select Committee Members,

We understand the urgency of the financial challenges for transit agencies like BART, Muni, Caltrain, and AC Transit. Getting these agencies on a sustainable footing is important for the region, but Sonoma and Marin counties should not be left out of the conversation about transit funding. Marin and Sonoma need additional transit funding to prevent fiscal cliffs, add new regional connections, and increase local service in order to increase access and reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

We have two multi-county agencies that will face large fiscal challenges without additional revenue in the next 4 years. Golden Gate Transit hasn't recovered from the loss of bridge tolls, and MTC's numbers project a $35 million deficit. The ¼ cent sales tax in Marin and Sonoma for SMART that raises approximately $51 million annually expires in 2029. Both services are critical to getting people up and down the 101 corridor and to San Francisco.

However, North Bay residents have additional important transit needs. The North Bay is lacking in regional transit connections outside of the 101 corridor that are critical to serving current travel needs and reducing congestion. There is only limited Golden Gate service across the Richmond Bridge. Frequent connections to the East Bay will serve both North Bay residents and East Bay residents who work in Marin. We also need transit infrastructure and service across Hwy 37 connecting Marin to Vallejo.

In both Marin and Sonoma counties, we need funding for additional local transit service. Current service is too infrequent to attract riders and inadequate to meet current riders' needs, especially in the evenings and weekends. Currently, Sonoma County Transit doesn't provide service on holidays. SMART's limited weekend schedules make trips inconvenient for Marin and Sonoma residents that want to try using the train for some trips.

The transit improvements in the Transit Transformation Action Plan to make service more user-friendly and affordable are also critical for Marin and Sonoma residents. All students at Santa Rosa Junior College were eligible for the BayPass pilot and in the first year they took over 140,000 trips, with at least 20% of trips outside Sonoma and Marin counties. The wayfinding pilot will help people navigate the Santa Rosa transit center. People with disabilities and seniors are in need of the improvements to accessibility and paratransit.

Please don't leave the North Bay out of the regional transit funding conversation. We have critical transit funding needs for our existing service, and we need to improve our connections to the rest of the Bay Area.

Sincerely,

Jack Swearengen, Chair Friends of SMART

Wendi Kallins, Sustainable Marin

Nathan Spindel, Safe Streets Petaluma

Omar Carrera, Canal Alliance

Carol Taylor, Genesis

Collin Thoma, Disability Services and Legal Center

Dave Sorrell, TDM-CP, Seamless Bay Area & Association for Commuter Transportation, Northern California Chapter

Stephen Birdlebough, Chair Sonoma County Transportation & Land-Use Coalition

From: Kenne B.
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: Idea for permanently adequately funding Bay Area transit agencies - Bay Area wide toll increases to ensure ongoing viability of transit

External Email

To whom it may concern,

Many ideas have been floated to preserve funding for Bay Area transit agencies to keep them permanently funded. This is a critical issue over the next few years and beyond.

These ideas include parcel taxes, sales tax increases, and income tax increases. These are all unpopular. Of these, parcel taxes are the most regressive and likely the most unpopular. Sales taxes and income taxes are at least progressive and less likely to be resisted by the voters.

However...

I propose something much more direct, and likely far more palatable, since there is an obvious direct cause-and-effect relationship between how the increase is collected, and what it is spent on - making it easier and less stressful to get around.

Toll increases throughout the Bay area - SIGNIFICANT increases - earmarked for preservation and improvement of Bay Area transit.

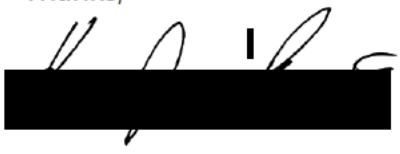
Such increases may be large - like at least tripling current tolls system-wide. ALL of the increases go to ongoing transit agency funding.

This makes driving more expensive. It also permanently preserves and improves service levels of BART, MUNI, AC Transit and all of the other Bay Area transit agencies.

Driving becomes more expensive to provide a truly viable transit alternative to driving. Car traffic congestion is relieved. By providing a truly viable, and far less stressful, transit alternative to driving.

This could be a real winner for all involved.

Thanks,



Kenne J B.

PS - A cost-saving idea too: Amalgamation of all Bay Area transit agencies, as is the case in New York. This would significantly reduce costs and increase efficiency.

MTC'S Transportation Revenue Measure Scenarios (Item 4b)

Dear MTC Commissioners and Select Committee Members,

I am Collin Thoma the Systems Change Advocate with Disability Services and Legal Center (DSLC). We serve people with disabilities and seniors in Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake counites. While we do not serve Marin County my comments still pertain to Marin given its close proximity to our service area. My comments today are regarding MTC'S Transportation Revenue Measure Scenarios. While I am glad to see a plan to increase funding for transportations services in the San Fransico Bay Area I have concerns regarding the funding for the North Bay Counties.

The level of transportation services in Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties are quite different from the level of service in San Fransico, the East and South Bay. The frequency of fixed routes and paratransit service does not meet the demand. The areas of service are also more limited and are disconnected from other North Bay counties. This makes it quite difficult to travel between counites. The only transit providers that serves multiple counties is Golden Gate Transit and the Sonom Martin Area Rail Transit (SMART). Both providers only serve Marin and Sonoma counties, mostly around the Highway 101 corridor leaving out a large portion of both counties. Both of these providers are also quickly approaching a fiscal cliff in just a few short years. SMART tax will expire unless it is re-approved which is not guaranteed. Golden Gate Transit has seen a reduction in trips 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 Noth Bay counties have a mix of rural and urban areas and while level of transportation in the urban area is decent at best, the same can't be said for rural areas. The rural areas greatly needs transit improvements. These areas often 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 area. 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, the CBO rides are the only option available since the consumer live outside of the paratransit service area and, can't use the fixed route bus. These options are also pretty limited since there are not a lot CBOS's that provide transportation. Additionally, some CBO'S only serve a small portion of the county they operate in. 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.

A major challenge for people with disabilities and seniors is getting transportation service to San Fransico, 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 plan for these trips, it is nearly impossible for those who do not have Medi-Cal. This is because there is no easy one-seat ride or seamless and easy transfers between transit providers. 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. 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.

Given the challenges in the North Bay, I strongly recommend the commission and the select committee adopts a hybrid model that automatically includes all 9 counties, so no county has to opt-in. 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.

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

Sincerely,

Collin Thoma
Systems Change Advocate
Disability Services & Legal Center (DSLC)
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Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707)636-3076