METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

Date: April 23, 2025
To: Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
From: Carina Lieu, Policy Advisory Council Chair
Regarding: April 2025 Council Report to Commission

Summary:

This memo provides a summary of the activity of the Policy Advisory Council (Council) over the previous month.

March 25, 2025 Meeting:

The Policy Advisory Council covered two items on March 25, 20225. Prior to the meeting, the Equity & Access Subcommittee held leadership elections. As Chair, I filled two vacancies on the Subcommittee, appointing Diana Benitez (Alameda and Marin Counties) as well as Dwayne Hankerson (Solano County).

E&A Leadership Elections

- **Chair Re-elected**: Chris Fitzgerald (Santa Clara County) was re-elected Chair of the Subcommittee by a one-vote margin over Johnny Parker, Jr.
- **Vice Chair Re-elected**: Johnny Parker, Jr. (Solano County) subsequently ran for re-election as Vice Chair, and was unanimously re-elected by his peers over Dwayne Hankerson, who was unable to attend the meeting due to a family commitment.

Status Update on legislation authorizing Regional Transportation Measure

Last month, MTC adopted principles to guide advocacy on SB 63. Staff and leadership met with bill authors (Senator Wiener and Senator Arreguín). Principles and polling results were shared with the Bay Area legislative delegation. Substantive amendments to the bill are anticipated by March 26.

Key advocacy dates:

- March 18-19: MTC Sacramento legislative visits
- May 9: Deadline for Senate Transportation Committee to hear the bill

- June 6: Deadline for bill to pass the Senate floor
- July 18: Deadline for any Assembly policy committee to hear the bill
- September 2-12: Floor session only
- September 5: Last day to amend bill on the Floor
- September 12: Last day for each house to pass bills
- October 12: Deadline for Governor to sign or veto bills

Staff will provide a verbal status update at the March 26, 2025 Commission meeting. Recommendation for action on the legislation will be presented at the March 26, 2025 Commission meeting.

Council Feedback

Councilmembers engaged in a candid and wide-ranging discussion on the challenges and opportunities surrounding the draft regional transportation funding measure. There was a general recognition that the political environment is not favorable to a nine-county approach, due to voter fatigue, competing local measures, and the broader economic landscape.

Several members emphasized the importance of messaging. To secure public support for a new sales tax—particularly during difficult financial times—members agreed that the measure must clearly convey tangible, transformative benefits for all residents, not just regular transit users.

- Councilmember Wong stressed the need to highlight how the measure could reduce mobility costs and increase access regionwide, especially beyond high-ridership counties.

- Councilmember Levin supported maintaining the transit transformation plan as a living document, updated regularly with feedback from advisory bodies.

- Councilmembers Castro and Rhodes called for greater fairness and transparency in funding allocations and the opt-in process. Rhodes specifically asked who defines fairness—county boards, transit agencies, or regional bodies?

- Councilmembers Deutsch Gross and Rhodes underscored the need for public trust, calling for clear accountability measures and performance benchmarks.

- Councilmember Baldini asked that messaging go beyond service cuts and highlight transit agencies' own cost-saving efforts to build credibility with working-class communities.

- Councilmember Kinman raised concerns about how federal grant criteria—such as farebox recovery—might impact funding allocations.

- Councilmember Eldred raised the potential for competition with housing-related citizen initiatives, asking whether staff had considered the impact of multiple major measures on the ballot. Others echoed concerns about overlapping sales tax proposals at the local level and their impact on public appetite for a regional measure.

Proposed Bay Area Infrastructure Financing Authority (BAIFA) Toll Facility Ordinance Amendment

MTC staff member Diana Dorison presented proposed amendments to the BAIFA Toll Facility Ordinance in preparation for tolling on the I-80 Express Lanes in Solano County. The changes include incorporating new express lane segments, revising toll policies, and potentially ending the Clean Air Vehicle (CAV) discount in fall 2025. Tolling is expected to begin in fall 2025 and will include carpool discounts, FasTrak requirements, and automated enforcement.

Council Feedback

Purpose, Timing, and Enforcement
Councilmembers asked for clearer articulation of the goals of weekend tolling. Without a well-communicated purpose, they expressed concern that the public may not support or understand the program—particularly if tolling expands unnecessarily. A request was made to ensure express lane rules are posted prominently on 511 and BayArea FasTrak to improve public understanding

Equity and Access
Multiple members raised concerns about barriers to participation, particularly for drivers without FasTrak or those unfamiliar with setting up accounts. They emphasized the need for equitable access, streamlined systems, and coordination across programs. Members expressed strong support for expanding Express Lane START discounts and requested confirmation that those would be available from Day 1. They also asked whether eligibility could align with programs like Clipper START. Members expressed interest in ensuring that toll revenue is reinvested directly in the corridor and that equity outcomes are clearly monitored and communicated.

Public Engagement and Messaging
Councilmembers stressed the need for clear, consistent messaging—especially around the difference between HOV and Express Lanes and when tolling is active. Councilmembers expressed concern about the clarity and accessibility of communication materials. There were calls for improved signage, better real-time information, and more user-friendly digital resources to help motorists understand tolling rules and benefits. A specific request was made to include Vietnamese in outreach efforts. While staff shared that social media is cost-effective and has broad reach, several members urged a **hybrid outreach approach**, recommending in-person sessions to reach communities with limited digital access or language barriers. One member asked whether social media comments count as formal public comment, prompting interest in how public input is recorded and reflected in the decision-making process.

Evaluation and Coordination
Members expressed interest in how tolling outcomes—such as travel time savings, lane usage, and weekend-specific impacts—will be measured. They requested that findings from the pilot be shared transparently and used to shape future expansion decisions.

Councilmembers appreciated staff's commitment to ongoing data analysis and coordination with the BAIFA Network and Operations Committee.