

May 13, 2020

Re: Agenda Item 4B: BART FY2020/2021 Budget Overview

Dear BART President Lateefah Simon and Board Members:

It is hard to speculate how the future will play out when the world today looks so different from the one we inhabited just two months ago. Yet one thing is certain: we will still need transit. It is critical to for attracting and retaining jobs, for supporting economic mobility and for meeting environmental goals.

- 1. We are supportive of the staff proposal *in concept* and strongly encourage staff to work with transit agencies and MTC to develop a coordinated regional network restoration plan. We understand that BART’s Board must be fiscally prudent. However, BART’s service decisions should be coordinated with other transit agencies as part of a regional restoration effort.**

This is the time to collectively ask and answer: How might our goals and outcomes need to change, and how should our service plans adjust to meet them?

Now, more than ever, the region’s many operators need to come together to design service cuts and restoration plans. Our transit decisions are deeply interrelated. For instance, as the core of the region’s transit network, major cuts in BART service will have knock-on effects for every other transit system and their passengers. Drastic cuts in BART service across the Transbay may mean that other systems need to completely redesign their routes and service.

This is also a chance to learn more about customers and their needs. A rapid, regional survey can help inform service adjustments to meet the needs of people who will be reliant on transit during this time.

- 2. We encourage BART to be flexible and to be prepared to respond rapidly as part of a coordinated regional strategy and as demand changes.**

The staff proposal allows BART to retain enough staff to be adequately able to ramp up and down. As many cities are starting to reopen their economies, they are starting to see a large uptick in driving to limit exposure and are warning of a “carpocalypse”. We should take heed. The Bay Bridge corridor is likely going to be the lynchpin for the Bay Area’s carpocalypse and this is also where the majority of trips are taken by transit.

Overly curtailing service now could accelerate a carpcocalypse, which will be deeply damaging to the environment, the economy, and to vulnerable populations who already shoulder a disproportionate burden of the region's pollution and have higher rates of many underlying conditions that make COVID-19 especially dangerous.

3. **We encourage BART to pursue other cost savings to address short- and long-term financial stability.** In the past few weeks, transportation agencies have shown remarkable flexibility. We have seen transportation agencies do things rapidly, whether it is moving to electronic tolling overnight or scaling up industrial cleaning. As BART prepares for a period where it needs to ramp up and down service quickly to meet changes in demand, we encourage BART to:

- Significantly streamline hiring processes and civil service provisions to be able to ramp up and down more quickly.
- Continue working with unions on modifying work rules, including increasing flexibility for the agency around shift bids, to realize greater cost savings from service reductions.
- Continue to pursue efforts to accelerate capital projects and build them more quickly while service and ridership are down -- including temporarily shutting down service on parts of the system and providing bus bridges -- which could potentially save many millions of dollars in the long-run.

This is a critical moment to shape the future of transit. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on BART's budget outlook and service plans.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Laura Tolhoff', written in a cursive style.

Laura Tolhoff
Regional Planning Policy Director