

July 9, 2020

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale Street, Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: Plan Bay Area 2050 Final Blueprint: Key Decisions for the Transportation Element –Agenda Item #5a, July 10, 2020

Dear Joint MTC Planning Committee with the ABAG Administrative Committee Members:

SPUR appreciates the many months of work to analyze and prioritize capital projects for Plan Bay Area 2050. This letter makes several general comments and lists the projects and policies that SPUR supports.

General Comments

- 1) SPUR strongly supports staff's funding priority for system maintenance and state of good repair. Our backlog for maintenance and state of good repair compounds year after year and we cannot afford to ignore it.
- 2) SPUR is deeply concerned that at the proposed package of projects for Plan Bay Area 2050 achieves less than two-thirds of the minimum GHG emissions reductions required by law. We hope that our region can be a leader in California by achieving GHG emissions reductions beyond the bare minimum legal requirement. We have a long way to go.
- 3) This package of projects highlights the need for a regional transit coordinator to set service goals and standards for network performance that drive capital investment decisions. This current recommended package of projects highlights the reality that our project list is built from the bottom up, leading to disjointed collection of improvements. In a region with dispersed growth like ours, new transit projects can reduce efficiency and increase competition for riders and revenue. We need to make sure that new investments add up to better service. The regional transportation plan should be a vehicle for planning an integrated transit network, not an inventory of commitments and financial costs for budgeting. The real benefits are seen when the region prioritizes a connected network.
- 4) It is vital that PBA 2050 consider how our investment priorities influence project costs and timelines. SPUR will be publishing a paper this summer on how to improve transportation project delivery. One of the clearest findings is the great extent to which project delay drives project cost escalation. The more that a project costs, the longer it takes to fund. The longer it takes to fund, the more expensive the project gets—with each year adding approximately 4% to the project costs.

Support for specific projects and programs

SPUR supports staff's recommendation to prioritize lower cost, high performing transit projects that increase local transit frequency, capacity, and reliability for Phase 1. Specifically, SPUR supports the following:

- AC Transit Rapid Network
- Muni Forward
- San Pablo BRT
- Geary BRT Phase 2
- El Camino BRT
- Geneva-Harney BRT
- SFMTA Core Capacity

SPUR also supports fare integration, Active Transportation and Vision Zero investments, and Complete Streets Network investments.

Support for staff phasing recommendations

SPUR supports staff's recommendation to include following projects in Phase 1 of PBA2050

- BART Core Capacity
- BART to San Jose Phase 2 in the first phase
- REX Lines
- Initial AC Transit Transbay Frequency Boost
- Better Market St

Recommendations to change to staff phase recommendations

SPUR supports moving the following projects from Phase 2 to Phase I:

- Caltrain service upgrades
- Caltrain downtown extension
- Treasure Island & SF Congestion Pricing

Recommendations for stronger commitments

There are several projects SPUR supports with certain qualifications as discussed below.

- SPUR supports inclusion of BART phase 2, but recommends an independent review of train storage options. It would be inappropriate and inequitable for East San Jose wait another a decade or more for BART because isn't enough funding to get all the way to Santa Clara.
- SPUR supports per-mile tolling on congested freeways with transit alternatives but recommends that MTC to develop an action plan that can be approved by the time of PBA adoption to ensure that this proposal is concrete and implementable.

- SPUR supports completion of the express lanes network, with full mitigation requirement, and calls for MTC to develop a policy by the time PBA2050 is adopted that ensures projects will implement mitigations listed in the plan.

We also request that staff develop a process to ensure that all interchange and freeway investments incorporate express bus infrastructure such as stations and direct access ramps, or design proposed upgrades in manner that considers and easily accommodates future installation of such facilities.

Issues requiring further information

Several important proposals require more explanation. SPUR requests that greater detail could be provided on the following:

- “Seamless Mobility with Unified Trip Planning and Fare Payment” costs.
- “Carpool/Vanpool Program,”
- “Climate Initiatives Program,”
- “Other MTC Regional Programs,”
- “Advance regional Vision Zero Policy through Street Design and Reduced Speeds,” and
- “Build a Complete Streets Network.”

Thank you for consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to ongoing engagement on the Blueprint this summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Laura Tolko', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Laura Tolko
SPUR Regional Planning Policy Director