

March 17, 2022

Senator Josh Becker
1021 O Street, Suite 7250
Sacramento, CA 94293

Re: SB 917 (Becker) – Seamless Transit Transformation Act – Support and Seek amendments

Dear Senator Becker,

SPUR appreciates your commitment to advancing the bold actions approved by the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force and by MTC, as documented in the Bay Area Transit Transformation Action Plan. State leadership is important for maintaining consistent progress toward regional transit integration and rider-focused improvements that Bay Area leaders have promised.

SPUR supports SB 917 and seeks several amendments. The purpose of our suggested amendments are primarily to: 1) advance transit priority planning because transit priority is central to delivering reliable and coordinated transit, and 2) balance the need for rapid and dramatic progress with the need to support and build upon recent consensus and collaboration between transit operators and other regional actors.

Transit operators remain overwhelmed by near term challenges associated with pandemic impacts, recovery, and the likelihood of long-term ridership and travel pattern changes. And yet, the integration efforts in SB 917 are fundamental to transit's survival amidst rapidly changing travel patterns and are essential to attracting the level of public support that is a prerequisite for sustainable transit funding.

SPUR would like to see the bill amended to address the following issues. We would be happy to work with your office on options implementing the changes below:

- 1) Support transit priority -- Funding and planning will not succeed in delivering coordinated and reliable bus service if not paired with stronger transit priority implementation. The connected network plan should explicitly require development of a regional transit priority network that identifies corridors where transit priority improvements will be streamlined. This action would begin implementing the following Transit Transformation Action Plan items:

11. Define a Cooperative Agreement process that expedites travel time improvements on arterials and bus rights-of-way. (by late 2022)

12. Fund, develop and adopt a Transit Priority Policy and Corridor Assessment for improving bus speed and reliability on high-transit corridors and arterials, including identification of current bus speeds to establish a baseline. (by late 2023)

- 2) Adjust deadlines -- Proposed deadlines should be adapted to be consistent with those agreed to in the Transit Transformation Action Plan.
- 3) Fare Integration -- The common regional fare structure and multi-agency pass were not assigned deadlines in the Transit Transformation Action Plan or in the Fare Coordination and Integration Study due largely to uncertainties regarding their anticipated cost. Yet these were two of the highest performing interventions at generating new riders, whose cost has dropped significantly as a result of pandemic-related ridership declines. In this one instance, we support the bill going beyond the Transit Transformative Action Plan and setting deadlines for a common regional fare structure and multi-agency pass. However, we would recommend that the bill is clear that the specifics of the regional fare structure and multi-agency pass should be developed collaboratively between operators, MTC and key stakeholders; that the deadlines to implement these measures should be generous; and that MTC should be able to delay the deadline should operators not have sufficient funding available to implement either the regional fare structure and/or the multi-agency pass.
- 4) STA Funding -- Conditioning of STA funding is useful to ensure that transit operators know they will be accountable for commitments made during regional coordination efforts, which, under MTC's leadership, has been highly consensus-driven. The STA funding conditioning language should be amended to explicitly allow for exemptions when MTC determines, based on the transit operator's submittal, that the agency cannot comply without negatively impacting transit service quality.

Through ongoing engagement with MTC, operators, and advocates, SB 917 can be shaped to help drive a more integrated and rider-centric transit network in the Bay Area. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,



Jonathon Kass
Transportation Policy Manager, SPUR