»»»» Next Gen Freeways

PLAN BAY AREA 2050

STRATEGY T5
FREEWAY TOLLING

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In partnership with Caltrans

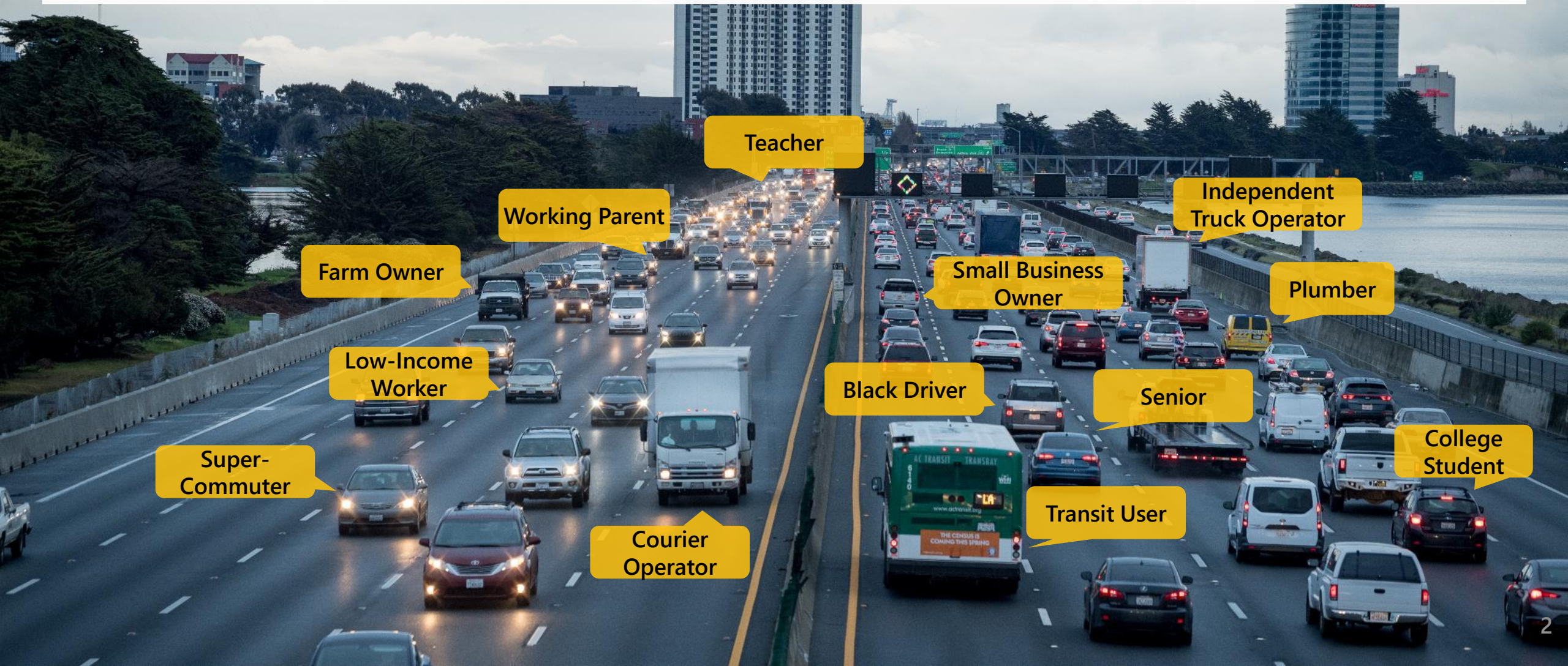
Next Generation Bay Area Freeways Study

Exploring Pricing Strategies to Advance Equity, Climate, and Mobility Goals

SPUR Digital Discourse
January 2023

Image Source: Karl Nielsen

Pricing strategies may offer potential to transform our freeways, but the more critical question is whether there is an equitable and politically acceptable pathway toward doing so.



Pricing strategies cannot be studied in isolation

This study is exploring "pathways" that combine pricing and complementary strategies.

What is a Pathway?

- Pricing type
- Location/Extent
- Pricing levels, by time of day
- Interaction with other pricing schemes

Complementary Strategies

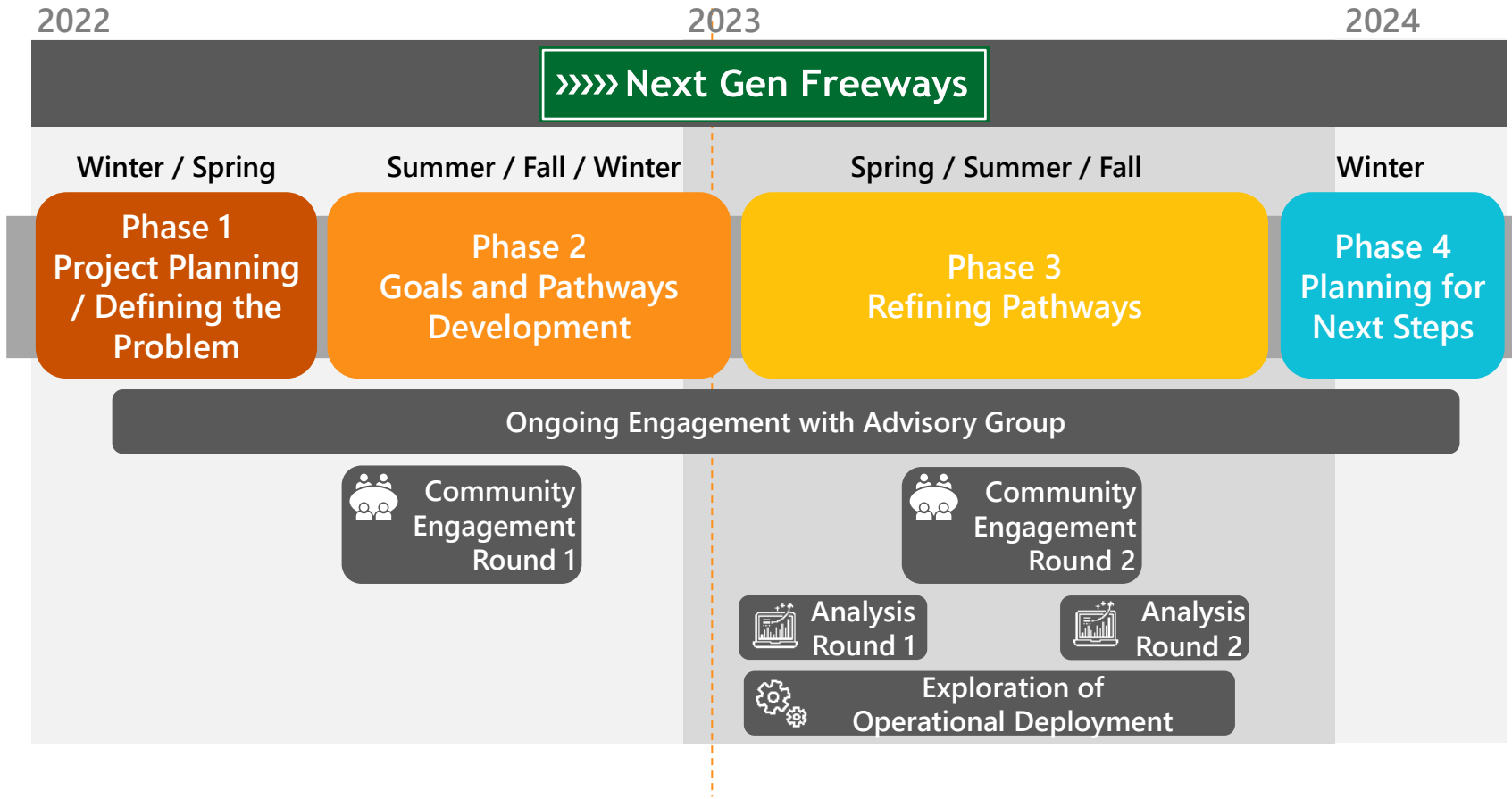
Funded by tolling revenues and alignment of existing or planned resources

This study is an early implementation action of the freeway pricing strategy in Plan Bay Area 2050

PLAN BAY AREA 2050

STRATEGY T5
FREEWAY TOLLING

- Adoption of strategy by MTC/ABAG
- Critical strategy in meeting state-mandated emissions targets



- Corridor-scale alternatives assessment
- Other planning studies to-be-determined
- Pricing systems design
- Pilot framework studies
- Potential pilot implementation

We are here
JANUARY 2023

There are several questions that the study must tackle…

- What does this mean for HOV/express lanes?
- What will toll revenues be used for?
- What is the burden on essential workers who must drive to work?
- What is the impact on local streets parallel to freeways?
- What technologies should we consider, and how would they integrate with FasTrak/Clipper?
- Will drivers into Downtown SF pay three separate fees with SF congestion pricing?
- How could transit improvements be in place prior to start of tolling?
- Will exemptions and discounts reduce effectiveness of pricing?
- Will freeway pricing use same systems as the Caltrans road user charge?
- What is the cost of implementation, including back-office elements?

and so many more questions!

Community Engagement: Highlights so far

- Clear frustration with both unaffordability and traffic (and lack of viable alternatives)
- Recurring themes when asked for a vision of "Next Generation Freeways"
  - Less traffic, less congestion
  - Freeways that hold more capacity
  - Safer drivers, better merges and better maintained roads
  - Good alternative options
  - Better management of freight truck traffic
  - Less time in traffic = more time for family, friends and community, and better health, improved mental wellness, more economic opportunities

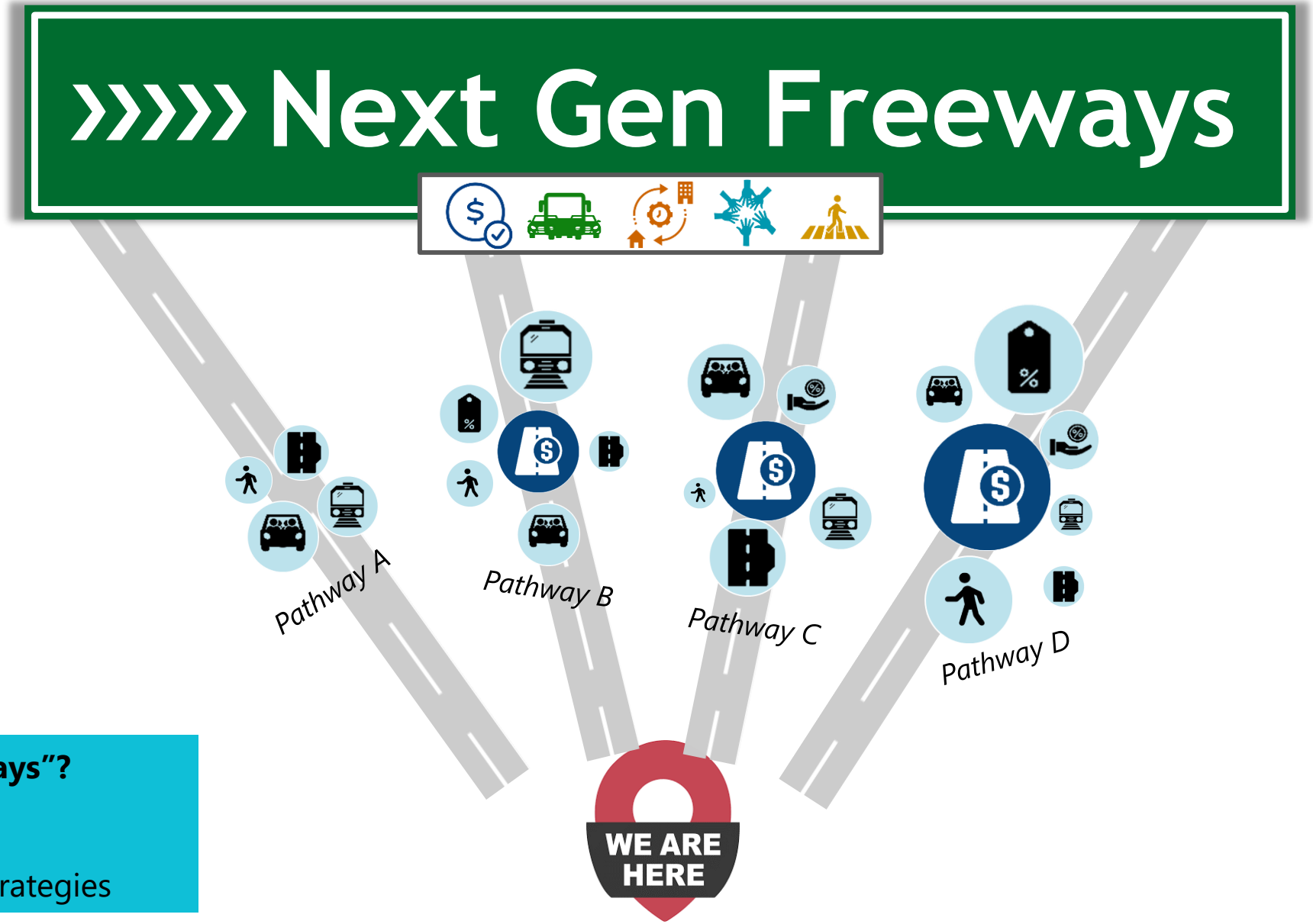
First reactions to "pricing":

- "We already pay for this" — perception of pricing as "double taxation"
- Deep belief that it will not reduce congestion — sounds like another "money grab"
- Deep distrust in policymakers
- Want to see "proof" that it can work and understand key details of the proposal

“Next Generation” Freeways: Goals and Desired Outcomes that serve as our starting point

Goals for Next Generation Freeways	Desired Outcomes
 **Affordable** Ensure cost-effective travel options.	Affordable travel options for those with limited means.
	Travel time savings that are worth incremental travel costs.
 **Efficient** Maximize capacity of existing infrastructure.	Transit alternatives that are time-competitive with driving.
	Greater use of multimodal alternatives to driving.
 **Reliable** Reduce traffic congestion and improve reliability.	Reduced travel times on freeways without adverse impacts on parallel local roads.
	Improved reliability of travel time throughout the day.
 **Reparative** Support communities adversely impacted by 20th-century transportation policy decisions.	Investments that reverse health, safety, connectivity and aesthetic issues caused by freeways in adjacent communities.
	Incremental costs that are not regressive to those with limited means.
 **Safe** Promote safer road conditions and improved environmental health.	Fewer fatalities on and off freeways.
	Reduced climate emissions.

Focus of last four months: Co-creating an initial set of regional-scale pathways that we want to analyze and refine during Phase 3 of our study



What are "Pathways"?

Pricing Strategy +
Complementary Strategies

Pricing Strategies: Three pricing strategies, and no pricing, form the basis of the pathways

1. All-Lane Highway Tolling in Transit-Rich Corridors

Toll all lanes of highways in corridors with existing or planned regional rail or frequent express bus service.

2. All-Lane Highway and Arterial Tolling in Transit-Rich Corridors

In addition to all lanes of highways, toll major parallel arterials to limit diversion.

3. Cordon Pricing around Urban Centers

Toll vehicles entering the downtowns of the region's three largest cities: Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose.

4. No "New" Pricing Initiatives

Express lanes remain on freeways.

Complementary Strategies: Many options; constrained resources

NOT EXHAUSTIVE

Transit / HOV

- Transit frequency boosts
- New regional express bus service
- Transit safety programs
- Extended service hours
- Transit Priority and Timed Transfers
- Paratransit Modernization

Roadway / Bike / Ped

- Bike/sidewalk investments
- Local street safety improvements
- Freeway Safety Improvements
- Pavement maintenance
- Expanded shared mobility coverage

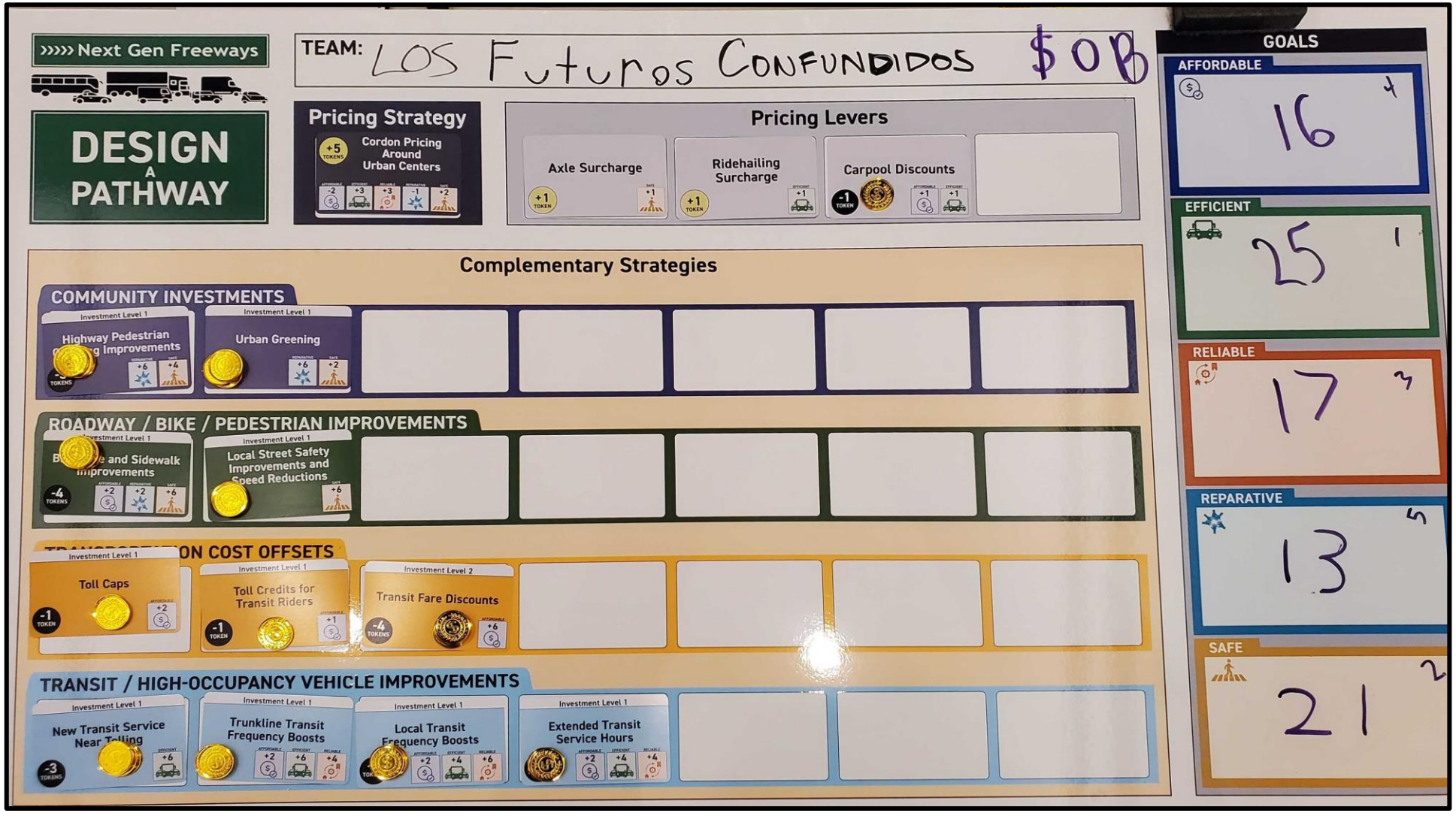
Transportation Cost Offsets

- Toll exemptions/discounts
- Toll credits for transit riders
- Toll caps
- Transit fare discounts
- Shared Mobility Discounts

Community Investments

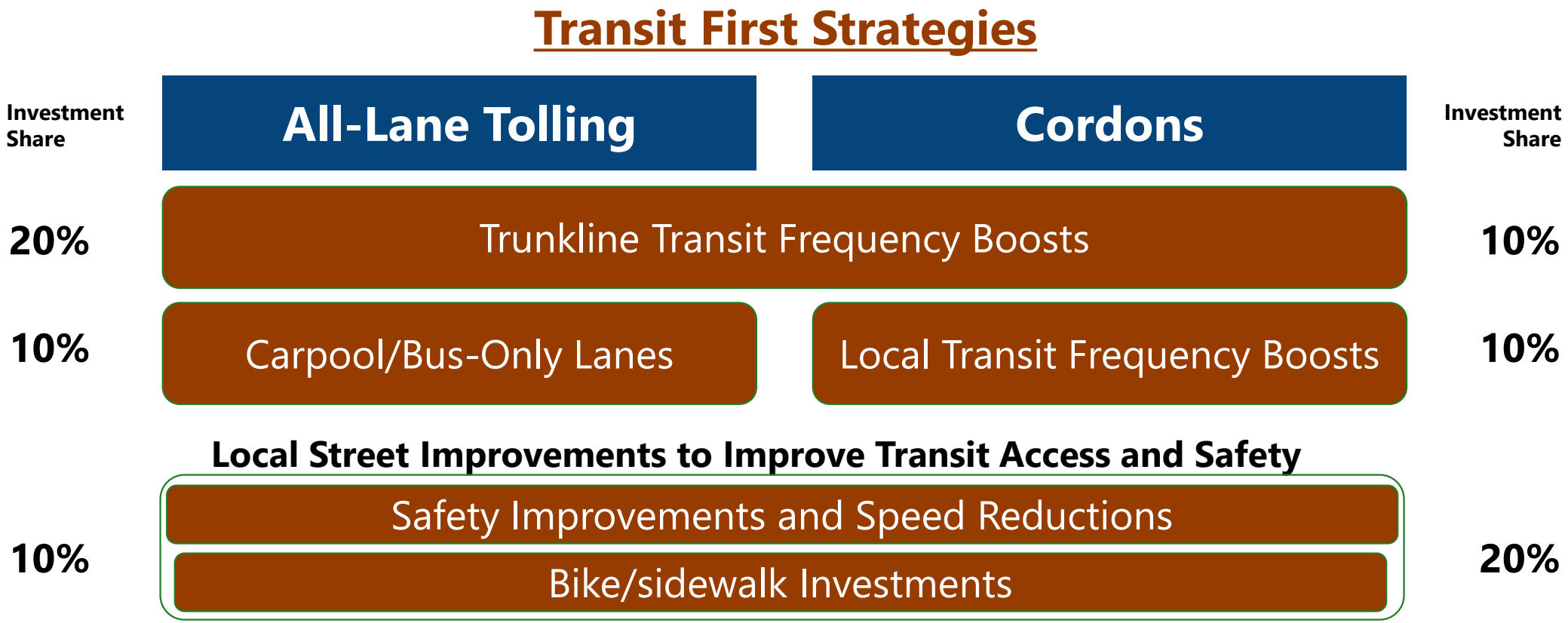
- Highway pedestrian crossing improvements
- Urban greening
- ZEV bus transition
- Noise Mitigation
- Stormwater / Sea Level Rise Resilience

“Design-a-Pathway” Game: Co-creating pathways while debating tradeoffs, given a fiscal constraint

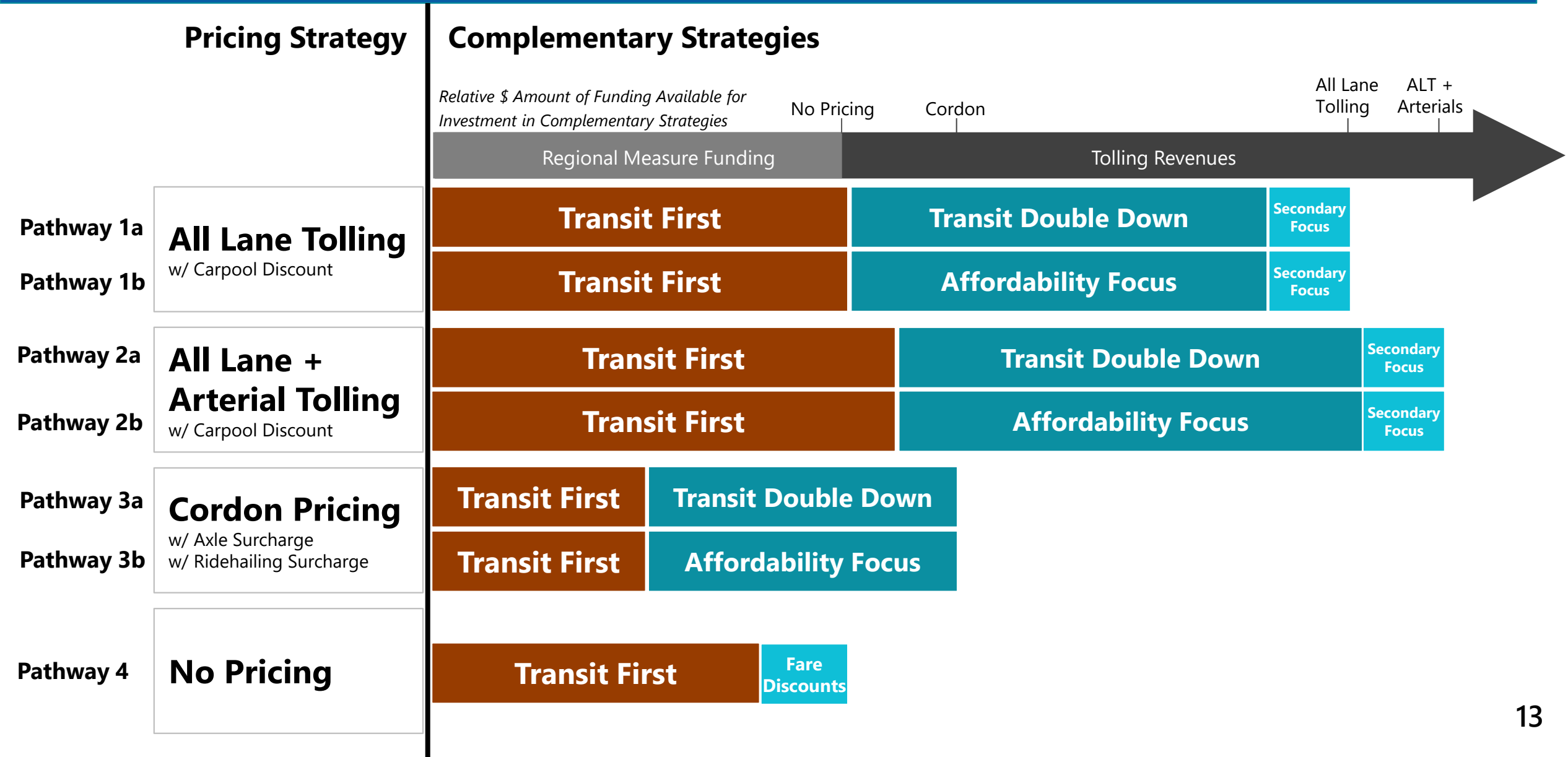


All teams invested their "tokens" in a core set of strategies, demonstrating a "Transit First" priority

Proposed: All pricing-based pathways invest at least 40% of revenues in making transit more reliable and accessible



Early draft of proposed portfolio of pathways for analysis: Understanding impacts of divergent approaches



Next Steps

February/March:

- Share initial portfolio of pathways for analysis externally with other stakeholder groups
- Analyze pathways with MTC's transportation model

April-June:

- Share findings:
  - Regional performance indicators re: Goals/Outcomes
  - Corridor-level outcomes
- Refine pathways based on findings and prioritize corridors for second round of engagement/analysis

Summer:

- Share externally and refine pathways with other stakeholder groups
- Community Engagement Round 2: Visualize whether a priced system in 2035 could help achieve Next Generation Freeway goals

»»»» Next Gen Freeways

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Thank you!

Questions?

Anup Tapase

Next Generation Freeways Study
Project Manager

atapase@bayareametro.gov