



March 28, 2022

Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814
By email

Dear Governor Newsom,

In reviewing your transportation relief package developed in response to higher gas prices released on March 22, we are encouraged by the intention to relieve the burden of rising costs on Californians and invest in strategies that will help combat the climate crisis. However, the undersigned advocates from across the state representing thousands of Californians believe that the proposal could be improved to ensure that relief equitably reaches all Californians that need it, while funding transit and active transportation measures that especially benefit low income Californians.

We support an expansion of this relief proposal guided by the following principles:

Rebates and direct relief: While we strongly support direct relief to struggling Californians, those payments should reach all low-income Californians, regardless of whether they own a car. The cascading impact of rising gas prices is felt at the pump and in the cost of other necessities. We support progressive direct relief that targets those who need it most, including approaches that ensure those who are undocumented and very low income are included.

Expand transit funding: We applaud the Governor's proposal to fund public transportation, and free transit is one of many strategies we can employ to support transit-dependent Californians, build ridership, and reduce vehicle miles traveled. The proposed \$750 million investment in free transit is an effective short term strategy that can be built upon with more durable solutions that support transit in the longer term.

However, the \$750 million in fare relief is not enough. As [community organizations and stakeholders have said before](#), we strongly encourage you to dedicate at least \$2.5 billion specifically for transit operations. Many transit agencies are facing [fiscal cliffs](#) due to lost ridership and reduced revenue during the pandemic, and further relief is needed to ensure the resilience of public transportation amid the ongoing pandemic and build sustainable ridership moving forward. This aligns with the needs outlined by our transit agency partners ([in the Bay Area](#) and in [Southern California](#)) that will maintain public confidence in the system while long term solutions are explored.

A robust investment that actually matches the scale of the climate crisis will do so much more than provide temporary fare relief. It will ensure transit operators are paid what they need and deserve and what's needed to address the operator shortage, it will ensure service is maintained and increased to meet the needs of riders, it will ensure fare fair structures that make transit affordable, and it will ensure that the 24% of Californians with disabilities have access to all the services they need to get where they need to go, including paratransit, fixed route, and other accessible services.

Expand funding for active transportation and zero-emission vehicles: We are excited to see that the Governor's proposal signals support for key equitable climate change policies by providing money for the Active Transportation Program (ATP) and the Governor's Zero Emission

Vehicle (ZEV) package. However, both amounts proposed are far below what's needed. We support a \$2 billion one-time augmentation to the ATP from the FY 22-23 General Fund as well as the full funding of the Governor's ZEV package.

These investments are needed now, in the face of the impacts of the pandemic. However, sustained, long-term funding for transit and zero-emission transportation is also needed as part of a long term strategy to protect Californians from inevitable future oil price shocks and rising greenhouse gas emissions. Environmental justice communities suffer disproportionately from transportation-sector pollution and they, as well as all Californians, deserve clean air. We must build communities that can easily and efficiently live without reliance on fossil fuels in order to see the emissions declines we need.

Maintain transportation investments: Though relief is needed in the face of record-high gas prices, reducing the gas tax is not an effective approach as it could reduce funding to much-needed programs like the State Transit Assistance Fund. Maintaining the gas tax plan adopted in SB 1 will ensure transportation programs are well-resourced to provide clean, safe and affordable mobility for all, while supporting good jobs in transportation infrastructure and operations. Given the historic budget surplus in the state this year, direct payments to low-income Californians and robust investments in a bold climate agenda are the most impactful steps the state can take.

We look forward to working with you to refine your proposal and ensure the equitable, climate-friendly outcomes we collectively support.

Thank you,

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