May 24, 2020

Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair   Assemblymember Phil Ting, Chair
Senate Budget Committee   Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol Room 5019   State Capitol Room 6026

Re: 2020 May Revise Budget Proposal - Transportation

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assemblymember Ting,

The undersigned organizations express our deep appreciation for your efforts to develop a budget in the midst of the uncertainty caused by a global pandemic. We understand that hard decisions must be made in order to address an unprecedented budget deficit.

As we've seen across the nation, COVID-19 has decimated public transit. Ridership and fare revenue have dropped by more than 90 percent at many agencies. According to a survey by the California Transit Association, BART has seen more than a 94 percent reduction in ridership and $8.9 million in losses; LA Metro's ridership is down by 75 percent while the system loses $5.75 million weekly in fare revenue. While the federal stimulus has helped transit agencies address some of the immediate needs; based on previous recessions, we know the losses for transit are likely to continue to grow exponentially. Without additional assistance, the long-term impact would be reduced quality and service of transit operations which would most harm low-income transit-dependent people.

COVID-19 has also created a "cycling explosion." Bikeshare data[1] shows that cycling has become an open-air and physically distant alternative to public transportation for many essential workers. Many cities, such as Oakland, have adopted "slow streets" to support safe physical activity and create more space for physical distancining. These slow streets have created new networks for people to safely access essential goods and services. Additionally, more Californians are walking more frequently, utilizing sidewalks and walking paths, demonstrating the importance of such infrastructure in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Right now, we believe it is critical to use existing transportation dollars where they are most needed in this present moment. With a $54 billion dollar state budget deficit, the transportation sector should not be taking funds away from essential needs in the general fund budget such as unemployment insurance, rent support, or education; especially when there is over $5 billion a year allocated and earmarked for state transportation funds. Please see our recommendations below for providing support for transit and active transportation during COVID-19—without endangering other parts of the state budget.

1. **Reprogram existing state transportation funds to prioritize transit operations, and walking and bicycle projects related to COVID-19.**
   - RECOMMENDATION #1: Temporarily increase flexibility in the Transit and Intercity Rail and Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) to fund transit operating expenses related to COVID-19.
   - RECOMMENDATION #2: Where legally possible, allow transportation agencies to use funds from the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP), and Solutions for Congested Corridors (SCCP) to fund transit operations related to COVID-19 and prioritize quick build bicycle and pedestrian projects related to COVID-19.

2. **Providing a safe transit environment for transit workers and riders.**
   - RECOMMENDATION #3: Federal stimulus dollars or state transportation dollars should fund PPE (personal protective equipment) for every transit worker; a mask for every rider that is missing one; hand sanitizer on all transit vehicles and at all transit hubs; hazard pay for transit workers and paid sick leave for workers who have been exposed to the virus and need to quarantine, who are infected with COVID-19,or need to care for someone who is sick with COVID-19; daily routine sanitation to properly disinfect all transit vehicles following the latestg guidelines and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and

---

[1] Bryant, Miranda. 2020. The Guardian. "Cycling 'explosion': coronavirsus fuels surge in US bike ridership." Retrieved here: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/13/coronavirus-cycling-bikes-american-boom

Prevention (CDC); on-site testing when possible and daily temperature checks of transit workers, and for line relief operators. Additional protections should be included to meet the specific needs of paratransit drivers, including: assistant dressed in a protective suit, face shield, gloves, mask, goggles, and one passenger per vehicle, per trip.

- RECOMMENDATION #4: The state should also ensure that all transit agencies have clear guidelines for PPE, including how transit operators should protect themselves; how vehicles surfaces should be cleaned; rear-door boarding on all buses; and ensure that transit agencies have created a COVID-19 health and safety plan per Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In regions with numerous transit agencies, the state should ensure these PPE guidelines are made consistent regionally by an MPO or major transit agency to ensure practices do not differ substantially and better protect riders who use multiple systems.

We understand that these recommendations are unprecedented, but California is in an unprecedented time. The most urgent need at the moment is funding to keep transit running for essential workers, restore transit service to provide equitable access to transportation, and create walking and bicycling networks so people can safely access essential jobs, goods, and services.

These funding recommendations also allow California to retain the ability to address the climate crisis. Ultimately, the need to run service needs to take a higher priority in the current crisis over valuable projects for capital expansion. If accepted, we believe these recommendations could provide around $1 billion per year for transit operations and active transportation, which will help transit agencies and cities as they plan for the future.

Thank you for your hard work to address the current crisis we're facing. We look forward to partnering with you to address COVID-19 impacts upon the transportation system.

Please reach out to Chanell Fletcher at chanell@climateplanca.org if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

Chanell Fletcher, Executive Director
ClimatePlan

Matthew Baker, Policy Director
Planning and Conservation League

Julia Randolph, Policy and Outreach Associate
Coalition for Clean Air

Jared Sanchez, Senior Policy Advocate
California Bicycle Coalition

Linda Rudolph, Director
Center for Climate Change and Health

Jonathan Matz, California Senior Policy Manager
Safe Routes National Partnership

Ian Griffiths, Policy Director
Seamless Bay Area

Adina Levin, Executive Director
Friends of Caltrain

Hana Creger, Environmental Equity Program Manager
The Greenlining Institute

Bryn Lindblad, Deputy Director
Climate Resolve

Gloria Ohland, Director of Policy and Communication
MoveLA

Tina Yuen, Senior Planner
ChangeLab Solutions

Carolina Martinez, Policy Director
Environmental Health Coalition

Wesley Reutimann, Special Programs Director
Active San Gabriel Valley

Victoria Rome, California Government Affairs Director
Natural Resources Defense Council

Julia Jordan, Policy Coordinator
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Laura Cohen, Western Region Director
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Melissa Romero, Legislative Affairs Manager
California League of Conservation Voters

Kevin Hamilton, Co-Founder and Co-Director
Central California Asthma Collaborative

Esther Rivera, Interim Executive Director
California Walks

Joshua Stark, State Policy Director
TransForm

Cc

Senator Jim Beall	Assemblymember Richard Bloom
Senator Nancy Skinner	Assemblymember Cristina Garcia
Senator Benjamin Allen	Assemblymember Eloise Reyes
Senator Lena Gonzalez	Assemblymember Marc Berman
Senator Scott Wiener	Assemblymember Laura Friedman

Eric Thronson, Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Transportation
Randy Chinn, Chief Consultant, Senate Committee on Transportation
James Hacker, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Farra Bracht, Consultant, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3