



Assembly Member Gonzalez-Fletcher
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Rm 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814
August 22, 2017
RE: AB 595 – Oppose Unless Amended

Honorable Committee on Appropriations Chair Gonzalez-Fletcher,

We, the undersigned transportation and labor advocates urge you to oppose the current expenditure plan for SB 595 (Beall), unless amended to better provide effective solutions for our most burdened residents.

We want to support a funding package that improves Bay Area mobility in a way that advances social equity, protects our environment, strengthens our economy, and improves the quality of life for all Bay Area residents.

We support and appreciate some of the proposed investments in transit network improvements, including investments for the Caltrain Downtown Extension, new Transbay Tube, Diridon Station, and a better Dumbarton connection. **However, overall the current expenditure plan fails to offer comprehensive, sustainable, equitable, and effective solutions to our current traffic crises.** We are also disappointed with the lack of transparency and limited opportunities for public engagement in the crafting of the expenditure plan.

These concerns are particularly acute because of the measure's potential impact on low-income residents. As proposed, the measure would charge a single bridge toll to all drivers regardless of income. This approach would place a disproportionate burden on the region's low-income residents, many of whom must travel long distances because of the Bay Area's housing affordability challenges, and do not have access to quality multi-modal mobility options.

We therefore urge you to support several key revisions to the expenditure plan:

1. Restore and increase funding for Clipper 2.0 to \$150M (with \$50M dedicated to a regional means-based multi-agency fare program)
2. Grant AC Transit's request to assign the core capacity project sponsor to AC Transit, increase their Rapid Bus Improvement allocation to \$100M, and assign Regional Express Bus funds based on ridership.
3. Increase funding to cover the full cost of new BART cars
4. Double current funding to the Bay Trail / Safe Routes to Transit category to \$300M

Each of these priorities is described in more detail below.

I. Restore and increase funding for Clipper 2.0, including means-based fares

Clipper 2.0 is a key opportunity to address Transbay transportation, interagency operability, social equity, and affordability, all at once. We were deeply disappointed that the \$100M Clipper expenditure was removed from the expenditure plan that made it out of the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee.

Clipper 2.0 and the fare streamlining it could allow for would significantly improve Bay Area transit ridership, reducing vehicle trips and vehicle miles travelled. **It may also be one of the best mechanisms to promote equitable access to mobility in RM3.** In light of the growing displacement of low-income residents to the farthest edges of the Bay Area, with longer commutes and high driving rates, our region needs a means-based transit fare discount that addresses cross-regional commutes as well as local bus service.

Funds for Clipper 2.0 in RM3 should:

- Allow for the careful study of regional pass options, including a means-based, low-income regional pass;
- Test whether regional fare options can help increase regional transit ridership and help low-income riders better afford transit;
- Assess revenue-sharing methods and the potential cost of a policy to cover revenue loss by individual agencies.

Considering all of the above, we strongly recommend that the expenditure plan include \$150M for Clipper 2.0, with \$50M of those funds dedicated to the creation of a regional means-based fare program.

2. Expand Transbay Bus Service

AC Transit provides nearly 14,000 weekday transbay trips over the San Francisco-Oakland, San Mateo-Hayward, and Dumbarton Bridges. AC Transit is the only provider of 24-hour transbay service. RM3 should safeguard and expanding these essential mobility options for Bay Area residents.

We strongly support AC Transit's requests for the following changes to the expenditure plan:

- The project description for "Core Capacity Transit Improvements Serving the Bay Bridge" should state that these funds are for AC Transit Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects, which includes new buses, a new bus yard facility, and other priority improvements required to expand transbay service.
- The project description for "Regional Express Service" should specify that these funds should be allocated in proportion to the Transbay bus ridership of each eligible transit agency recipient.
- Increase the funding commitment for AC Transit - Rapid Bus Improvements to \$100 million to make transformative improvements for ridership levels, congestion relief, and air quality.

3. Cover remaining cost of new BART cars and related upgrades

A fleet of new BART cars would benefit every corner of the Bay Area. It would likely have the greatest congestion reduction benefit of any RM3 project, and would provide the single greatest expansion of transit capacity in RM3. As BART will soon run on 100% renewable energy, investment in BART cars to increase BART capacity could also provide the greatest climate and air pollution benefit.

BART serves over 425,000 riders each weekday from throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. During peak weekday commute hours across the Bay Bridge corridors into San Francisco,

- BART carries almost 2.5 times the number of passengers across the Bay as travel in cars
- BART carries 10 times the number of passengers as buses
- BART carries 20 times the number of passengers as ferries

BART's fleet expansion plan would move 40% more riders through the Transbay Tube at peak hours — the equivalent of all passengers driving across the Bay Bridge at a peak hour. It would also increase the number of "seats in the fleet" by 49%. BART would require no new operating subsidy to run these new cars, and the increased ridership would bolster BART's financial outlook. Moreover, these additional BART cars are necessary to carry new riders brought by the expansion of service to Santa Clara, San Jose, and eastern Contra Costa County. Even with the current proposed allocation of \$500M to expand BART's fleet, the agency is still \$300M short of the cost of its fleet expansion needs. If the full \$1B need cannot be identified, a smaller amount does not simply mean a proportionately smaller car order. The pricing of a rail car order is closely linked to the size of the order, so a smaller amount means disproportionately fewer cars. BART has committed \$200M from its own operating revenues, a generous amount given its ongoing fiscal challenges. There is currently no alternative plan to make up the difference, so we urge you to allocate \$800M for BART's new fleet.

In addition to an investment in new train cars, \$250M should be prioritized for BART's new train control system and traction power upgrades. Measure RR and other BART sources will fund a significant portion of these investments, but RM3 was expected to contribute as well, as these particular needs are heavily driven by the need for greater transbay capacity and reliability.

4. Double current funding for Bay Trail / Safe Routes to Transit Projects, from \$150M to \$300M

In an effort to construct bicycle and pedestrian safety and access improvements on and in close proximity to toll bridges and transit facilities serving regional trips, the current \$150M for Bay Trail / Safe Routes to Transit amount should be restored to the earlier proposed \$300M. This ask is consistent with the recommendations of Bike East Bay, the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, and the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, detailed in their letter of July 14, 2017 to your office, and is supported by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Bay area Trails Collaborative.

We look forward to speaking more with you and any other legislators concerned with this matter whenever it would be most convenient for you.

As always, we thank you for your commitment to improving transportation, sustainability, equity and the sustainability of our communities.

Sincerely,

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