

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT SAFE, AFFORDABLE TRANSIT OPTIONS, OPERATIONS AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

TO: Members of Governor Newsom's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery

FROM: 90+ Organizations that Signed on to [Just Recovery Recommendations](#) for Governor Newsom's Task Force

THE CHALLENGE

Public transit and active transportation are essential components for a healthy, sustainable, and equitable community. Both are critical in California's fight against COVID-19 and to long-term recovery. While the federal stimulus has staved off the worst impacts for transit for now, the California Transit Association noted in a recent op-ed that a second wave of funding deficit will hit local transit agencies, especially with state and local sales taxes plunging due to a slow economy. Decades of chronic underfunding for public transit has contributed to this problem.

Essential workers are holding up our economy, and making sure our neighborhoods are well-resourced, connected, and safe. Many of these essential workers are low-income, transit-dependent, and don't have the luxury of working from home. This also has huge racial equity implications: Asian-American and African-American workers commute by public transit at four times the rate of White workers, while Latino workers rely on public transit at three times the White rate.

We need public transit to remain fully functional in order to help essential workers to protect us and keep our economy afloat in these turbulent times. Dwindling economic activity and consumer spending mean that many public transit agencies will face long-term financial strain and will be forced to make tough decisions, placing additional burden on Californians as we begin economic recovery. Federal and state governments must step up and fund public transit service at levels that keep it resilient in the face of disaster.

THE SOLUTION

California needs to use existing transportation dollars where they are most needed now – both to survive the current crisis and to prepare a robust system for the economic recovery to come. Transit agencies cannot compete with money in the state's general fund that should be used for rental assistance or unemployment insurance. Every sector should be spending its available resources to best address the needs of the moment.

Reprogram existing state transportation funds to prioritize transit operations, and walking and bicycle projects related to COVID-19.

- 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. 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.

Providing a safe transit environment for transit workers and riders.

- 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 latest guidelines and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and 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.

- 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.
- **Support permanent free transit passes for vulnerable riders:** Using the funding sources listed above, formally establish fare-free transit passes for youth, college students, and seniors. This approach is a critical part of the recovery package that will help vulnerable populations get back to school, jobs, and to health care.
- **Establish a universal transit pass:** California should put into place a statewide transit pass system where the fares of transit riders would be collected into one single revenue pot. This universal system would more easily allow vulnerable populations to receive discounted or free fares. It could work like the Bay Area's Clipper Card, which is a reloadable fare card that is attached to a persons' identity, and is capable of providing flexible payment options and fare-caps.
- **Better align state transportation funding to ensure that people can easily take transit, walk, and bicycle:** As people work from home and accommodate shelter-in-place ordinances, bicycling and walking have become a symbol of freedom. State transportation dollars should fund excellent pedestrian, bicycle, and other pollution-free transportation options that seamlessly connect public transit to communities and destinations, and support door-to-door trips that don't require a car.
- **Implement active transportation policies and planning that reinforce public safety and equity:** *Curbed* just reported that slow streets are the path to a better city. However, slow streets without clear policy guidance will reinforce historic biases for communities of color. Ahmaud Arbery was killed while jogging in South Georgia. Nia Wilson was stabbed to death at Macarthur BART station in Oakland. Walking, jogging, hiking, and riding transit while being a person of color is not safe, and will not be safe until California incorporates racial justice into its transportation planning.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [2.8 million essential workers nationwide rely on transit to get to their jobs](#)
- [Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty](#)
- [To Move Is To Thrive: Public Transit and Economic Opportunity for People of Color](#)
- [Staying at Home During Coronavirus Is a Luxury](#)
- [Slow streets are the path to a better city](#)

The recommendations above are an expansion of concepts included in the [Just Recovery Recommendations for Governor Newsom's Task Force](#), which was supported by the 90+ organizations below. While the organizations below support the overall concepts, they have not yet had a chance to review the detailed recommendations we shared in this letter.

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