

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Programming and Allocations Committee
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

May 12, 2021

Re: Agenda Item 4a - 21-0580 and 4b - 21-0563

Dear Commissioners,

We support the proposed principles of **stabilizing and sustaining transit, restoring, and reimagining service, and improving customer experience** for the distribution of American Rescue Plan Funds.

1. **Stabilize and Sustain Transit** - We agree with MTC's approach to stabilize and sustain transit because transit is the lifeblood of our cities, our economy, and key to reducing the region's congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

We strongly support MTC's approach to release funding in tranches. This is a sensible way to restore transit service, while saving funds for future revenue shortfalls and to fund the efforts needed to execute principles (2) and (3).

2. **Restore and Reimagine Service** - We strongly support conditioning funds on restoring service hours and deploying service hours in a way that 1) advances equity and 2) increases local and regional transit demand. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a clear call to action: we cannot return to normal. This is an opportunity to shift service levels so that more people, especially people of color and low-income populations, have better access to frequent, high-quality service (which SFMTA has done well over the past year). In some cases, it may be more equitable and more cost effective to increase the frequency of transit service on routes where there is higher demand, rather than restore service to pre-pandemic levels on all routes. This can help avoid pass-ups.

We also recommend that funding from the American Rescue Plan be used to develop a regional transit priority network and implement transit priority measures so that taking the bus is reliable and quick. This will ensure transit remains competitive with (if not faster than) driving alone.

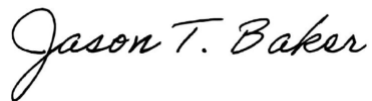
3. **Improve Customer Experience** - The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to change people's travel patterns and preferences for some time. The 2021 Bay Area Council poll found that while 29% of people took transit everyday to get to work before Covid-19, only 20% of people anticipate taking transit to work post-pandemic. Additionally, the poll found the average person went into the office 4.8 days a week pre-pandemic. After the pandemic, the average person believes they will go into work 3.45 days per week. Thirty-four percent of those employed say they will go into the office less often after the pandemic is over. We strongly support allocating funds to improve rider experience-- less stressful than driving, easy to use for new riders- to lure riders back. This should include accelerating the deployment of mapping, wayfinding, branding, real-time at the regional scale, the launch of a promotional transit pass to encourage riders to return, as well as supporting fare integration and service coordination.

We support allocating Quick-Strike funds to support 1) regional and corridor projects; 2) planning and programming to support the projects.

The projects funded by the Quick-Strike program (e.g. mapping, branding, and wayfinding) are critical to getting riders back on transit and improving rider experience. Additionally, MTC's "Principles to Guide Distribution of American Rescue Plan Funds" complements the Quick-Strike funding by focusing on strategies to generate ridership, retain ridership, and attract new riders.

Thank you for supporting the priorities of the Blue-Ribbon Task Force and prioritizing customer service in transit recovery.

Sincerely,



Jason Baker
Senior Vice President, Transportation, Health & Housing
Silicon Valley Leadership Group



Laura Tolhoff
Transportation Policy Director
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Gwen Litvak
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