

April 22nd, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins, President Pro Tempore
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 209
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for transit, active transportation, and climate during COVID-19

Dear Governor Newsom, President pro Tem Atkins, and Speaker Rendon,

We, the undersigned organizations, want to express our deep gratitude for your collective efforts to ensure that transit remains solvent during this crisis. Because of your quick and decisive action to require physical distancing and mandate a shelter-in-place across the state, California has not experienced the level of devastation we've seen in other places. And while transit is experiencing a necessary, yet significant drop in ridership and revenues due to COVID-19, we understand that the federal stimulus is providing essential support to ensure that transit remains solvent.

As we mentioned in our previous comments, we know the federal stimulus will not be enough. The California Transit Association (CTA) has stated that their members anticipate that additional funding will be necessary in the near future to:

- Backfill revenue lost from the expected devastating decline in sales tax revenue;
- Prevent much-needed emergency service cuts made in response to state and local directives from becoming permanent cuts to their systems;
- Stave off future cuts that could further set transit service back.

In addition to the points raised by the CTA, we know that transit operators and essential workers who rely solely on transit to get to and from work need a dependable transit system. Essential workers cannot afford cuts to their routes that will cause them to miss work because they don't have transportation -- neither should they be forced to use unsafe systems because agencies lack the funds or guidance to institute adequate safety measures for the public and for drivers.

Below we offer the following recommendations to address the issues raised above:

1. We recommend the Administration and Legislature temporarily allow the Low Carbon Transit Operation Program (LCTOP) to support operating expenses associated with COVID-19. We also elevate our previous recommendation for the Administration and the Legislature to create flexibility in the Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and other legally allowable funds to be used to fund operating expenses associated with COVID-19. We understand Article 19 protects transportation funds, and encourage the Administration and Legislature to identify any discretionary transportation funding pots that can also be used to support transit operations during COVID-19.
2. We strongly encourage the Administration and Legislature to use existing funds as well as discretionary funding pots to provide additional funding to active transportation projects, including road closures to increase more space for pedestrians and reallocating lane space for bicycling. Walking and bicycling has become a main source of transportation for many people who cannot ride transit and do not have access to a car. As noted in CityLab¹, "to protect people doing essential trips — including medical staff, who need to get to work — networks of emergency cycleways could be built quickly and cheaply, using easy-to-install temporary bollards and wands, as the city of [Seville once did](#)." Streetsblog USA² also provides an example of [how to create open streets](#) for pedestrians and cyclists to maximize physical distancing.

We also want to express our deep concerns around "administrative and/or regulatory relief measures" for transit. We understand that transit agencies are grappling with immediate challenges around declining ridership and fares due to COVID-19. It is important to provide these agencies with the necessary support and flexibility to address COVID-19. However,

¹ Laker, Laura. 2020. "In a Global Health Emergency, the bicycle shines." [CityLab](https://www.citylab.com/perspective/2020/03/coronavirus-bike-lane-emergency-transportation-covid-19/608725/). Retrieved here: <https://www.citylab.com/perspective/2020/03/coronavirus-bike-lane-emergency-transportation-covid-19/608725/>

² Wilson, Kea. 2020. "How to open streets right during social distancing." Streetsblog USA. Retrieved here: <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2020/04/08/how-to-open-streets-right-during-social-distancing/>

California--and the nation--is dealing with another crisis: climate change. We want to make sure administrative or regulatory relief measures will not slow down California's ability to tackle climate change. We ask the Administration, the Legislature, and the California Air Resources Board to carefully balance administrative and regulatory relief efforts for transit with the urgent need to address climate change and air pollution.

We understand the need for flexibility for transit agencies in this crisis, but we also know that the public deserves to know how public transportation dollars are being spent. Even in a pandemic, we cannot allow California taxpayer dollars to be spent without transparency. Transit operators, who are at the front lines of this crisis, also desperately need vital safety measures to protect themselves and riders.

Specifically, we recommend that the Administration and Legislature:

- Maintain audit and other transparency measures, and drug and vehicle testing and inspection services. With billions of additional federal dollars being invested in transit agencies, now is not the time to relax these measures and risk fallout from real or imagined scandals in spending.
- Transit agencies should receive funding to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and hazard pay for transit workers. The state should also ensure that transit agencies have clear guidelines for PPE, including how transit operators should protect themselves; how vehicles surfaces should be cleaned; and ensure that transit agencies have created a COVID-19 health and safety plan per Center for Disease Control and Prevention³.

Thank you for your hard work to address the current crisis we're facing, as well as your efforts to create a multimodal transportation system that provides real solutions to climate change while improving access and ensuring equitable outcomes for all Californians. As we said in our previous comments, we are excited to partner with the Administration and Legislature to address COVID-19 as well as pursue innovative solutions such as a universal transit pass and fare-free transit to help California achieve its collective goals around climate, equity, and health.

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

Best,

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Julia Randolph, Policy and Outreach Associate
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³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. What Transit Maintenance Workers Need to Know about COVID-19. Retrieved here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/transit-maintenance-worker.html>

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