



# Memorandum

## AGENDA ITEM 13

**DATE:** February 19, 2020  
**TO:** Transportation Authority Board  
**FROM:** Maria Lombardo - Chief Deputy Director  
**SUBJECT:** 3/10/2020 Board Meeting: Adopt a Support Position for the Seamless Transit Principles

<p><b>RECOMMENDATION</b>    <input type="checkbox"/> Information    <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action</p> <p>Adopt a support position for the Seamless Transit Principles.</p> <p><b>SUMMARY</b></p> <p>Seamless Bay Area is a non-profit organization whose mission is to transform the Bay Area’s public transit system into a world-class, unified, equitable, and widely-used system by building a diverse movement for change and promoting policy reforms. Seamless Bay Area is seeking resolutions of support for their seven Seamless Transit Principles (Attachment 1). At a high level, these principles are consistent with San Francisco’s transportation policies, particularly around transit-first and climate change goals, though we have some concerns with the details of implementation across the region’s 27 transit operators, which have very different operating and financial profiles. Seamless Bay Area is also sponsoring Assembly Bill (AB) 2057 (Chiu), which is currently a spot bill that specifies the author’s intent to put in place seamless transit reforms. We support the high level Seamless Bay Area principles with the caveat that both the task force that we understand will be proposed by AB 2057 and any subsequent Transit Network Manager have a composition that reflect where the region’s transit ridership is currently the strongest, e.g. Muni, BART and AC Transit carry 80% of all the region’s transit trips. These principles can help inform our state legislative advocacy this session (e.g. inform input on a potential regional transportation measure), as well as ongoing planning work related to Plan Bay Area 2050 and the city’s long-range transportation planning work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fund Allocation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fund Programming</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/Legislation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plan/Study</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Capital Project Oversight/Delivery</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Budget/Finance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contract/Agreement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul>
--	--



## **BACKGROUND**

In October-November 2019, the FASTER Bay Area and Voices for Public Transportation coalitions made presentations to the Transportation Authority Board and Citizens Advisory Committee about their proposals for potential new revenue measures for public transit in the Bay Area. The FASTER proposal, which was further along in its development, is estimated to bring as much as \$100 billion in new funding primarily for transit. Both groups are working toward a potential November 2020 ballot measure and recognize that they will need to come together to support one measure that can reach the required 2/3 voter approval threshold. Any such regional transportation revenue measure requires authorization by the State Legislature and the Governor. SB 278 (Beall) is currently the placeholder for a regional transportation revenue measure, and as of mid- February, the FASTER proponents have begun discussions with housing advocates about potentially splitting a 1-cent sales tax measure between housing and transportation projects. This conversation is ongoing, and we will continue to track SB 278's development and advocate for the measure to support San Francisco's priorities such as a regional means-based fare program, BART and Muni core capacity programs, transit operations, and other key projects such as the Downtown Caltrain Extension and US 101/I-280 Express Lanes with Bus Service.

As these revenue conversations continue, Seamless Bay Area is making a related but independent proposal to establish a state-sanctioned task force to study the Bay Area's 27 transit systems, establish policy direction and set goals to help create a more seamless network from the user's perspective, and create a Transit Network Manager role to establish leadership to coordinate between the existing transit agencies toward meeting the seamless network goals. Seamless Bay Area is sponsoring AB 2057 (Chiu), which as noted above is currently a spot bill that specifies the author's intent to put in place reforms that will make the region's transit system easier to use with a more seamless experience for transit riders.

To date, several advocacy and governmental organizations have taken actions to support the Seamless Transit Principles including SPUR, San Francisco Transit Riders, TransForm, the City of Berkeley and the Cities Association of Santa Clara County. Seamless Bay Area has made requests of numerous other city, county and transit agency boards including the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board.

## **DISCUSSION**

As noted above, the Seamless Transit Principles, at a high-level, are consistent with San Francisco's Transit-First policy, climate goals, and other transportation policies and priorities. We are recommending that the Board adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 2), expressing a support position these principles with an important caveat pertaining to composition of the anticipated task force and future Transit Network Manager. We have discussed the resolution with Seam Bay Area representatives, and our Technical Working Group, which includes the SFMTA, BART, and other San Francisco and regional agencies.

Implementing a truly seamless regional transit network with so many different transit operators, is no easy task. To provide some real leadership and momentum to effect the desired changes, Seamless Bay Area has been developing a proposal for state legislation that



would form a state task force and designate a Transit Network Manager to work with the transit operators and other stakeholders to identify the needed changes, an implementation strategy, etc. We are conceptually supportive of the state task force and Transit Network Manager concepts, but will want to work with the legislature and relevant stakeholders on the details. For example, we have concerns about the governance structure for both groups. In Bay Area regional conversations, the voices of the urban core communities and large transit operators are often drowned out by suburban and ex-urban communities and small suburban transit operators. SFMTA, for example, has approximately 45% of the region's transit ridership, but may have the same vote as an agency with 4% or less of the region's ridership. Similarly, the big three cities (San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose) house approximately 30% of the Bay Area's residents, but are often outnumbered by many smaller cities and suburban communities on boards and commissions such as ABAG, where each jurisdiction is given equal footing.

Another area that should receive further discussion is the funding required to implement Seamless Bay Area's Transit Network Manager proposal. The Transit Network Manager role would require staffing and resources. More significantly, implementing uniform fare discounts and affordable fare programs such as an accumulator pass that caps the daily or monthly fare a rider pays, will necessarily impact transit operators' farebox revenues, and without assurances to help those agencies' bottom line, this proposal would face strong resistance from transit operators.

MTC is currently leading a Transit Fare Coordination and Integration study, to look at ways to make the region's transit network better coordinated, to identify practical steps toward integrating operations of the various transit agencies into a customer-focused network with a more affordable and intuitive fare structure. This process is important to help the region understand how transit fare policies are set. For example, Caltrain has 70% farebox recovery, Muni has a 29% farebox recovery ratio while AC Transit has 20% and VTA 12% (according to MTC's Vital Signs website). Furthermore, per-boarding costs vary across agencies, with AC Transit at \$5.15 and Muni at \$2.41. Setting a base fare without considering the agencies' disparate costs could have major impacts on the transit operators' ability to provide service to their customers. Changes to fares has an outsized influence on agencies that rely more heavily on farebox receipts. At the same time, these agencies are under increasing pressure to develop lifeline fares and/or pass products to help with affordability.

Finally, we understand that AB 2057 (Chiu) will include a proposal to create a base local bus fare. This idea should be approached cautiously and be guided by the findings of MTC's Transit Fare study, and by a conversation about regional values and principles. This conversation is needed to help reconcile the wide range of fare and subsidy policies in the region, for example, the importance of transit affordability. This will also help set parameters that should anchor the effort to find a solution (e.g. do no harm to existing transit operations levels by keeping budgets whole). This may mean that solutions should assume new money only, and should require matching funds be provided by a jurisdiction if existing pots of money are used. Otherwise, a base fare system could reward suburban jurisdictions for their historic lack of investment, and reduce funds to major operators whose jurisdictions' residents have been investing in transit service for years.



**Next Steps.**

We will continue to engage with our Board, transit operators, and partners as this proposal moves forward, and convey our positions to Assemblymember Chiu's office and the state legislature as AB 2057, SB 278, and other legislation that relates to these principles. Similarly, we will keep the principles in mind as we continue to provide input to Plan Bay Area 2050 and advance the Connect SF long-range transportation planning program.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

None. The recommended action would have no impact on the Transportation Authority's budget.

**CAC POSITION**

The CAC will consider this item at its February 26, 2020 meeting.

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

- Attachment 1 - Seamless Transit Principles
- Attachment 2 - Draft resolution of support

## ATTACHMENT 1

**The Seamless Transit Principles** Viewable at: [www.seamlessbayarea.org/seamless-transit-principles](http://www.seamlessbayarea.org/seamless-transit-principles)



### 1) Run all Bay Area transit as one easy-to-use system

Public transit should work as one seamless, connected, and convenient network across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Getting around on transit should be as fast and easy as driving a car. Coordinated bus, rail, and ferry routes and schedules should encourage effortless transfers. Consistent and clear customer information, branding, and maps should make using transit simple and dignified.



### 2) Put riders first

Riders should feel comfortable when using transit and be treated like valued customers. Public transit agencies must do more to listen to riders and continuously improve service. They must prioritize riders' needs above all else, and overcome all operational, political and bureaucratic barriers to provide an excellent and seamless customer experience.



### 3) Make public transit equitable and accessible to all

People of all income levels, ages, abilities, genders, and backgrounds should have access to world-class public transit. People who are the most reliant on transit are best served by a universal, inclusive, regionally integrated, connected system that is used by all. People with limited means to pay for transit should be provided with discounts.



### 4) Align transit prices and passes to be simple, fair, and affordable

Transit should provide good value for money. Fares across the region's 27 public transit agencies must be aligned into a consistent, fair, and affordable system that encourages using transit for all types of trips and doesn't punish riders for transferring. Cost-effective monthly passes should work across the Bay Area and should be widely available to individuals, employers, and schools.



### 5) Connect effortlessly with other sustainable transportation

A person's journey does not end when they get off a bus or exit a station. Excellent pedestrian, bicycle, and other pollution-free transportation options should seamlessly connect public transit to communities and destinations, supporting door-to-door trips that don't require a car.



### 6) Plan communities and transportation together

High quality public transit should be at the heart of communities across the Bay Area. Transportation should be closely aligned with our region's land use, promoting a connected network of transit-oriented, walkable communities that expands access to affordable housing and job opportunities, and reduces car travel and greenhouse gas emissions.



### 7) Prioritize reforms to create a seamless network

A regionally integrated, world-class transit system won't happen on its own -- it will take leadership, unprecedented levels of cooperation, and changes to existing local, regional, and state policies. The cities, counties, public transit agencies, regional authorities, business leaders, advocacy groups and elected representatives of the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California megaregion must prioritize the broad public interest and urgently work together collaboratively to advance critical reforms. Our future depends on it!



RESOLUTION ADOPTING A SUPPORT POSITION FOR THE SEAMLESS TRANSIT PRINCIPLES

WHEREAS, The Transportation Authority 's mission is to make travel safer, healthier, and easier for all; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Bay Area is facing a series of interrelated crises, including increasing congestion, rising pollution, decreasing affordability, and widening inequality, which are exacerbated by an inadequate public transportation system; and

WHEREAS, There are currently 27 transit agencies operating in the Bay Area, and residents have consistently identified the lack of coordinated information and difficult transfers between operators as a barrier to increasing their use of transit; and

WHEREASE, Using public transit in the Bay Area can require using multiple transit systems operated independently, paying multiple separate fares, and navigating different wayfinding systems; and

WHEREAS, Climate change is a significant challenge facing the Bay Area, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector will require a significant increase in the number of residents and workers taking transit rather than a single occupancy vehicle for more of their trips; and

WHEREAS, Low-income transit riders are more reliant on public transit, with 60% percent of low-income households in the region not having access to a private vehicle, and low-income transit riders make more intra-agency transit transfers than high-income riders; and

WHEREAS, A more seamless-to-the-customer public transit system with integrated transit fares has the potential to both benefit low-income transit riders and attract new riders; and

WHEREAS, The Seamless Transit Principles proposed by Seamless Bay Area, are as follows:

1. Run all Bay Area transit as one easy-to-use system
2. Put riders first
3. Make public transit equitable and accessible to all



4. Align transit prices and passes to be simple, fair, and affordable
5. Connect effortlessly with other sustainable transportation
6. Plan communities and transportation together
7. Prioritize reforms to create a seamless network; and

WHEREAS, Seamless Bay Area is simultaneously sponsoring Assembly Bill (AB) 2057 (Chiu), currently a spot bill, with the intent of establishing a task force to develop recommendations that would improve coordination and oversight of the Bay Area's regional transit system; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that the region's largest jurisdictions and transit operators' interests are appropriately represented on this task force given that the region's three largest transit operators - Muni, BART and AC Transit, carry 80% of the region's transit riders; and

WHEREAS, There is risk that reconciling the region's disparate transit fare and subsidy policies could inadvertently harm these core systems; and

WHEREAS, Should the task force recommend the creation or designation of a Transit Network Manager, the governance of that body should also reflect the strong transit ridership in the region's core; and

WHEREAS, At its February 26, 2020 meeting, the Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed and discussed the Seamless Transit Principles proposed by Seamless Bay Area and adopted a motion of support for the adoption of the subject resolution of support for those principles; and

WHEREAS, At its February 11, 2020 meeting, the Board reviewed and discussed the Seamless Transit Principles; now, therefore let it be

RESOLVED, That the Transportation Authority hereby adopts a support position for the Seamless Transit Principles listed herein, and agrees to be publicly listed as a supporter; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Transportation Authority recommends that any Task Force or Transit Network Manager formed through legislation be structured in a way that reflects where transit ridership is strong and be guided by a principle to enhance and optimize, and avoid harming ~~ing, to~~ the region's core transit systems (Muni, BART, AC Transit); and be it further



RESOLVED, That the Transportation Authority affirms its commitment to working collaboratively with State agencies, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Bay Area transit operators, and other local and regional agencies and stakeholders to develop a highly integrated regional transit system that provides convenient, seamless, and affordable transit for customers.