



DRAFT MINUTES

Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee

Thursday, November 18, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Present at Roll Call: Members: Rosa Chen, Anni Chung, Zack Deutsch-Gross, Jessie Fernandez, Mel Flores, Amandeep Jawa, Jessica Lum, Jodie Medeiros, Susan Murphy, Calvin Quick, Pi Ra, Maurice Rivers, Eric Rozell, Earl Shaddix, Sujata Srivastava, Tracey Sylvester (for Maryo Morgannam), Wesley Tam, Joan Van Rijn, Christopher White (19)

Absent at Roll Call: Jay Bain, Majeid Crawford, Rodney Fong, Sharky Laguana, Aaron P. Leifer (joined after roll call), Maryo Mogannam (alternate Tracely Sylvester present), Maelig Morvan, Yensing Sihapanya, Kim Tavaglione (arrived during Item 4) (9)

2. EPAC Chair's Remarks

Chair Jawa noted that President Biden signed the \$1.2 trillion federal Infrastructure Investment Act, of \$497 billion is for transportation, and of this amount, draft estimates for California include \$30 billion for roads and bridge repair throughout the state and \$9.5 billion for public transit improvements including for Muni, BART and Caltrain, in addition to many competitive programs for a wide variety of transportation projects.

Chair Jawa also noted that the Transportation Authority was shifting the sales tax expenditure plan reauthorization efforts to focus on the November 2022 election rather than June 2022 due to a statewide initiative for a constitutional amendment that just received state approval to gather signatures. He said the initiative would, among many other things, void the sales tax measure if approved by voters at the June 2022 election since the initiative would require any proposed tax seeking voter approval be consolidated with a regularly scheduled general election for members of the governing body of the local government, with few exceptions. He said the initiative would apply retroactively to any tax adopted after October 1, 2021, meaning the sales tax measure would need to be on a November even-numbered year ballot. He said that staff had been advised that the measure may qualify for and meet the simple majority threshold for passage at the November 2022 ballot and therefore rather than risk voiding a measure approved in June 2022 and needing to go back to the voters a second time, staff would refocus efforts on November 2022. He said that the updated timeline anticipates an EPAC recommendation in February 2022 so staff would be polling EPAC members regarding additional meetings in January and February.

Finally, he introduced the meeting's agenda as the first to discuss the tradeoffs involved in deciding the expenditure plan funding levels.

3. Meeting #5 Recap, Minutes and Follow-Ups - INFORMATION

Michelle Beaulieu, SFCTA, presented the item.

There were no questions from the committee.



4. Funding Trade-Offs: Paratransit and Other Programs - INFORMATION*

Michelle Beaulieu, SFCTA, and Annette Williams, Accessible Services Program Manager, SFMTA, presented the item.

A member asked what the average on-time performance of the paratransit program had been prior to the pandemic.

Ms. Williams answered that it had varied from the high 80% range to the low 90% range. She clarified that a trip was considered on-time if departure was no more than 5 minutes early and arrival was no more than 15 minutes late.

The member asked about the program's average passenger trip time.

Ms. Williams answered that the program's goal was for trip times to be less than that of the equivalent fixed route.

The member commented that the proportion of the Asian population using paratransit seemed low compared to the proportion of city residents.

Ms. Williams said SFMTA had not collected race or ethnicity data on paratransit program services except for its new Essential Trip Card program, for which passenger demographics were close to the ratios for the city as a whole.

A member asked about the proportion of registered paratransit users vs. active users.

Ms. Williams answered that the program had approximately 11,000 registered users, of which 5,000-6,000 were active users of paratransit taxis and about 2,500 were active users of the accessible van service.

Michelle Beaulieu said SFMTA had provided more detailed information, which staff would share with EPAC.

A member asked how the cost of paratransit services compared to the cost of services offered by Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft.

Ms. Williams answered that TNCs didn't have many accessible vehicles and their accessible services tended to be less reliable. She said TNCs were not open with their data and the cost of services could not be readily compared, but she said that SFMTA had not ruled out paratransit contracts with TNCs. She said the paratransit program was able to meet its current needs using taxis and these contracts helped support the taxi industry, which had suffered from the rise of TNCs. Ms. Williams pointed out that the labor environment for TNCs was quite volatile, and time would tell if they remained a viable option for accessible services.

A member asked if the proposed levels of sales tax programming would be sufficient to support the program.

Ms. Williams answered that the proposed sales tax funding could provide about 40% of the cost of the program, whereas she hoped that sales tax could provide about 50% of total funding.

A member asked why the Free Muni program didn't apply to qualified paratransit riders.

Ms. Williams said paratransit was an expensive program and free fares would likely increase demand and make fully funding the program even more difficult. She estimated that the cost of adding another rider is in the range of \$50 per trip for a taxi ride. She pointed out that paratransit fares in San Francisco were less than half the



cost allowed under federal law.

A member asked if the program conducted user satisfaction surveys and if so, if they were conducted in multiple languages.

Ms. Williams answered that user satisfaction surveys were conducted annually (with a year off during the COVID pandemic), by phone and in multiple languages. She said phone surveys had greater accuracy and said the results of the most recent survey had been shared with Transportation Authority staff. [The San Francisco Paratransit Brokerage 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey is posted in the November 18 EPAC meeting materials under [Item 4 - Attachment 1 Paratransit Questions and Answers.](#)]

Michelle Beaulieu then presented three options included in the agenda materials for paratransit funding levels in response to a desire for increased funding for the program expressed by EPAC members.

- Option A: Maintain paratransit funding at 8.6% of Priority 1 funding
- Option B: \$12 million/year for 20 years from Priority 1 funds with about 3 additional years from Priority 2 funds
- Option C: \$12 million/year for 18 years from Priority 1 funds with about 7 additional years from Priority 2 funds

A member asked how the future needs of the program would change, for instance whether the Essential Trip Card (ETC) program would continue after the pandemic and how demand was expected to change.

Ms. Williams responded that demand had been stable for several years but said the population of people 85+ years of age was projected to grow by 30% between 2020 and 2030. She said the ETC program would continue through Fiscal Year 2022. She said ETC was helpful for transitioning to full fixed route service because it provided a ride home even if off-peak service had not yet been restored. She said there were no plans for eliminating programs such as the Shop-a-Round or Van-Go shuttles.

Ms. Beaulieu pointed out that the cost of the paratransit program had grown over time as a faster rate than sales tax funds.

A member commented that program costs had been fairly stable until 2015 and asked why they began to rise at that time.

Ms. Williams answered that driver salaries were the main factor, as they had been increased to keep up with the Bay Area cost of living. She noted that the chart of program costs included in the meeting materials showed approved budgets, whereas actual program costs had come in substantially below budget most years since 2015.

A member commented that local sales tax funding for paratransit had never met the need and as a result the program was losing drivers to Muni, which paid better, and the paratransit program was unable to expand group van service sufficiently to meet needs. They asked what had been the paratransit share of the Prop B sales tax expenditure plan approved in 1989.

Ms. Williams replied that 8% of the Prop B revenues had been programmed for paratransit.

A member asked which fund categories had been reduced to provide the increased paratransit funding levels proposed in Options 2 and 3 and asked why those categories were proposed for reductions.



Ms. Beaulieu answered that the proposed increases drew from other large transit categories. She said the transit maintenance and core capacity programs were scalable and had opportunities to leverage outside funding, but that it was still a tradeoff.

Maria Lombardo added that EPAC could propose reductions to different or additional categories as well and the options were just illustrative to support discussion.

The member asked for clarification about the likelihood that the Priority 1 revenue projections would come to fruition.

Ms. Beaulieu answered that full funding of Priority 1 programs was not guaranteed, noting that Prop K revenues had fallen short of Priority 1 targets and no Priority 2 funds had been allocated. However, she said the revenue forecasts for the new expenditure plan were more conservative.

A member commented that Priority 2 and Priority 3 funding likely was wishful thinking.

A member said they would prioritize preservation of existing transit systems over system expansion.

Another member asked how the proposed reductions had been distributed between the Muni - Vehicles, Facilities and Guideways rehabilitation and replacement categories.

Ms. Beaulieu answered that the exact ratio would have to be worked out with SFMTA if this option were chosen. She asked if EPAC members had suggestions for other categories to reduce to shift funds to paratransit.

The member commented that transit rehabilitation and replacement was costly but necessary.

A member commented that new paratransit funds were not included in the recent federal infrastructure funding bill, whereas said the bill did increase funding for transit capital projects, potentially increasing leverage opportunities for transit rehabilitation. They expressed support for Option B.

Ms. Beaulieu said it was possible that the federal infrastructure bill would make new paratransit operating funds available. She emphasized that the Priority 1 forecast was the most conservative.

Two members expressed agreement that EPAC should take potential federal funding into account in prioritizing local sales tax funds and said the EPAC should get that information before going forward with its recommendations.

Ms. Beaulieu said staff would provide information on other fund sources at EPAC's next meeting.

Chief Deputy Maria Lombardo, SFCTA, pointed out that the federal infrastructure bill had been signed just that week, but said it appeared that the bulk of the transportation funds would be distributed via existing formula fund programs, which are primarily for maintenance and rehabilitation types of projects. She emphasized that those programs required matching funds from local sources such as sales tax.

A member suggested that EPAC consider reductions in sales tax funding for big infrastructure projects such as DTX where sales tax reductions might be sustained without killing the projects.

Staff conducted a Zoom poll of EPAC members, meeting participants, and members of



the public in the Zoom meeting to ascertain preferences regarding the options staff had presented for increasing paratransit funding. Options B and C each drew support from approximately 40% of participants in the poll, including committee members and other meeting participants. There were 25 responses to the poll and not all persons present participated in the poll.

A member said they voted for a write-in option for increasing Priority 1 funds for paratransit over the Option B level.

A member said they voted for a write-in option because they needed information on leverage opportunities in other categories before deciding how paratransit funding should be increased.

A member said they voted for a write-in option in support of funding for free fares for Muni.

Ms. Lombardo commented that in staff's view, Priority 2 funds were not really wishful thinking but a plausible outcome because both the Priority 1 and Priority 2 level forecasts were more conservative revenue forecasts than the Prop K expenditure plan had been.

A member asked when Priority 2 funds would be available if revenues came in above Priority 1 levels.

Ms. Lombardo answered that they would not be available in Year 1 and said revenues and programming for the 30-year Expenditure Plan period would be re-evaluated at least every five years. She speculated that it probably wouldn't be sooner than mid-way through the plan and would depend on when revenue forecasts showed revenues exceeding the Priority 1 projections.

A member pointed out that neither Prop B nor Prop K had achieved their Priority 1 forecasts, and that paratransit funding had run out well before end of the expenditure plan period.

Ms. Beaulieu noted that paratransit was not the only program for which funds ran out early.

Ms. Lombardo added that Prop K funding for all of the major capital projects (except DTX) had ended because they were complete. She said a longer expenditure plan period increases bonding capacity and provides the flexibility to advance funds to meet pressing needs.

Staff conducted a second Zoom poll of EPAC members to gauge interest in increasing funding for additional programs: curb ramps, street trees, safer streets including traffic signals maintenance, transportation demand management, community-based planning, BART, Ferry, or other.

A member said the EPAC needed more contextual information to make decisions about reprioritizing funds among the expenditure plan categories.

Another member agreed about the need for context and asked if the EPAC could consider raising the sales tax.

Ms. Beaulieu said the EPAC's role was to advise on a new expenditure plan for the existing half-cent sales tax, and that another effort would have to be undertaken if there was a desire to increase the sales tax, which would need to be approved by the voters along with an expenditure plan for the use of those revenues.



A member said a framework for prioritizing category funding levels should allow comparison among categories on issues such as leveraging, equity, and whether funding was for rehabilitation or expansion. They said meaningful choices were difficult when considering programs individually.

Chair Jawa summarized some of the EPAC's comments and asked staff to come back with more context and a more comprehensive or holistic approach to making Expenditure Plan tradeoffs.

5. What We've Heard: Community Engagement Update - INFORMATION*

Kaley Lyons, SFCTA, presented the item.

A member commented that it can be difficult to reach equity priority populations and said they hoped outreach was reaching these populations. They also said online poll participants were not reflective of the demographics of San Francisco.

Ms. Lyons said the Transportation Authority was trying to balance online input with interviews of community-based organizations and focus groups in Equity Priority Areas, in order to reach these communities.

Michelle Beaulieu said the reauthorization team would continue to visit additional neighborhoods and events to gather diverse input.

Chair Jawa reiterated that the EPAC schedule was being revised since the ballot measure was now targeting June instead of November 2022 and announced that there wouldn't be an additional December 2nd meeting of the EPAC as had been proposed previously.

6. Public Comment

Cathy DeLuca, with the Community Living Campaign, expressed support for the paratransit program, and said they worked on a daily basis with users of the Essential Trip Card program. They said many people who qualified for the program weren't being served and said it should be expanded. They also supported the expansion of the Free Muni program to include paratransit.

Edward Mason expressed disappointment about absenteeism at EPAC meetings. He said the paratransit funding discussion should consider the potential elimination of fixed-route lines as part of the proposed 5-minute network, which could increase demand for paratransit services for people who can't walk the extra distance to the 5-minute network. They suggested eliminating sales tax funding for street trees to allow increased paratransit funding.

An EPAC member said the expenditure plan should ensure that programs such as curb ramps should be based on equity maps showing historically under-served neighborhoods.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.