



# DRAFT MINUTES

## **San Francisco County Transportation Authority**

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

### **1. Roll Call**

Chair Mandelman called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

**Present at Roll Call:** Commissioners Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Preston, Peskin, Safai, Stefani, and Walton (9)

**Absent at Roll Call:** Commissioners Melgar (entered during Item 2) and Ronen (entered during item 2) (2)

### **2. Chair's Report – INFORMATION**

Chair Mandelman discussed two pieces of good news about regional transportation funding. The first was that Caltrain was awarded a \$367 million grant from the Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP). This funding completed the Caltrain Electrification Project's funding plan. Chair Mandelman thanked Secretary Toks Omishakin and the California State Transportation Agency for their support. The Chair also shared that the California Supreme Court upheld Regional Measure 3 [bridge toll measure], which will fund about \$4.5 billion in Bay Area Transportation improvements on the Bay Area state-owned toll bridges and their approaches. Both the TIRCP and RM3 funds will allow the Transportation Authority to leverage sales tax dollars to fund and delivery major transit projects. Chair Mandelman noted that while there has been success with recent capital grants, there are pressing issues on the operating side for local and regional transit agencies. He thanked Director Tumlin and staff from the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), BART and Caltrain for attending to participate in the transit information items later on the agenda.

The Transportation Authority Board took a brief recess to address some technical issues.

There was no public comment.

### **3. Executive Director's Report – INFORMATION**

Tilly Chang, Executive Director, presented the Executive Director's Report.

Commissioner Preston recognized the hard work to secure the \$17 million Safe Streets and Roads for All grant to implement the Western Addition Community-Based Transportation Plan (CBTP), including the advocacy of Director Jeffrey Tumlin and the SFMTA. Commissioner Preston stated that the grant would fund the completion of the plan that was developed by the community in 2017. He also thank members of the community and organizations that were also instrumental in securing the funds including Majid Crawford and the Community Leadership Foundation, the Boys and Girls Club, San Francisco Housing Development Corporation, Mo'Magic, the San Francisco Rebels, the Village Project, his legislative aide Preston Kilgore, as well as thanking the federal Department of Transportation.

There was no public comment.



**4. Approve the Minutes of the February 14, 2023 Meeting – ACTION\***

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Preston moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Walton.

The minutes were approved without objection by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Preston, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, and Walton (11)

## **Consent Agenda**

- 5. [Final Approval] Appoint Mariko Davidson to the Community Advisory Committee — ACTION\***
- 6. [Final Approval] Allocate \$4,188,294 and Appropriate \$50,000 in Prop K Funds, with Conditions, Allocate \$1,179,000 in Prop AA Funds, and Allocate \$2,000,000 in TNC Tax Funds for Seven Requests — ACTION\***
- 7. [Final Approval] Adopt the Fiscal Year 2022/23 Transportation Fund for Clean Air Local Expenditure Criteria — ACTION\***
- 8. [Final Approval] Approve the 2023 State and Federal Legislation Program — ACTION\***
- 9. [Final Approval] State and Federal Legislation Update — ACTION\***

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Melgar moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Peskin.

The Consent Agenda was approved without objection by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Preston, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, and Walton (11)

## **End of Consent Agenda**

- 10. Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Transit Regional Network Management Update — INFORMATION\***

Tilly Chang, Executive Director, Liz Brisson, SFMTA and Shurti Hari, MTC, presented the item per the staff memorandum.

Before opening the item to discussion, Chair Mandelman thanked Commissioner Ronen for her work on the MTC Commission with regard to the two transit topics before the Board.

Vice Chair Melgar also thanked Commissioner Ronen for her service on the MTC Commission, and the presenters for their thoroughness. Commissioner Melgar asked for Ms. Hari to clarify how MTC would strengthen governmental authorities as one of the steps to operationalize the Regional Network Management (RNM).

Ms. Hari responded that the operating model she described would establish key performance indicators and recurring reviews that would measure the success of the framework. She said that through this process, staff would be able to identify where the gaps may be in the structure's ability to deliver the benefits that are targeted and then would be able to fill those



gaps as needed.

Chair Mandelman thanked staff for the work and acknowledged that there was a great opportunity for collaboration across the region. The Chair related that he was concerned about potential unintended consequences of this structure and gave the example of the implementation of a free transit for youth program. He referenced that there were different levels of subsidy in fares across the region, and noted that it would be important not to disadvantage jurisdictions that have already chosen to invest in transit capital and operations funding. He asked how staff were thinking about addressing disparities across the region in how agencies were funded, and how they think about subsidies differently, and how their policies differed as a starting point.

Ms. Hari replied that it was important to remember that the focus of this effort is Regional Transit Network Management, and that local services would continue to be fully managed by the local agencies. She acknowledged that one of the key areas was indeed fare coordination and pointed to the example of Clipper Start. She also clarified that the goal of this work was to help transit, not harm it, and said that MTC would not want investments made in regional transit to come at the expense of service cuts that riders depend on. She noted that with respect to funding, this framework was intended to coordinate the experience of customer facing elements while allowing each agency to retain their own authorities.

Ms. Brisson added that the RNM Council includes the general managers of the largest agencies. She added that ultimately fare policy was a decision for each operator about their operating budget, which would still be controlled at each agency.

Ms. Hari followed up by clarifying that the Network Management Business Case work identified that while coordinating transfer policies may be a good thing to tackle at the regional level, setting individual agency fares may not be. She said there will be further analysis of this type that would go into potential future decisions as well.

During public comment, Francisco Da Costa said that this topic is a very complicated subject, and that two minutes is insufficient for public comment. He stated that there should be a needs assessment on BART, which is suffering from low ridership. He also stated in San Francisco there were Muni routes, such as the 3 bus, which were not running and impacting seniors, while at the same time, the Executive Director of the Transportation Authority was talking about electric buses in the Presidio. He a needs assessment should precede discussion of regional network management.

Aleta Dupree, said that this topic was very important and that she had attended a number of these meetings. She said that it was important to have consistency across the board, particularly around wayfinding and signage. She raised the New York City subway as an example of consistent signage that preserves historical markers, recognizing the system's history and culture. She also said that there were a lot of different agencies in the Bay Area with a lot of different fare structures, and that this created a barrier. Lastly, she noted the importance of leveling the playing field with fares, particularly with respect to attracting riders from equity priority communities.

**11. Transit Fiscal Cliff Update: BART, Muni, Caltrain — INFORMATION\***

Jeffrey Tumlin, Director of SFMTA; Michelle Beaulieu, Principal Transportation Planner; Casey Fromsom, Caltrain Chief Communications Officer; Pamela Herhold, BART Assistant General Manager; and Bree Mawhorter, SFMTA Chief Financial and Administration Officer presented the



item per the staff memorandum.

Following the Muni portion of the presentation, Commissioner Preston stated that he had many questions and suggested that the Board consider holding further presentations and discussions on this topic in the future. He noted that the limiting factor to increased transit service was meeting hiring needs for operators, and that meeting those hiring needs had not been adversely affected by financial constraints or debt projections. He asked staff to clarify if the 'budget offramp' mentioned in the Muni presentation meant that hiring was being limited, or if it meant that there was a potential for slowing hiring in future years.

Ms. Mawhorter clarified that the current budget depended in part on revenues recovering, and that because revenues have not recovered to the degree expected, the SFMTA would not be hiring for some new positions that the budget introduced to enhance customer service, for example with respect to parking tickets. Ms. Mawhorter contrasted this to the status of transit operator hiring, and stated that Muni is hiring transit operators as fast as possible to fill existing positions to continue to provide the current level of service. She noted that the SFMTA has hired more operators in the last two fiscal quarters than it had in the previous six fiscal quarters.

Commissioner Preston asked if the SFMTA was slowing transit operator hiring in any way.

Ms. Mawhorter responded that the SFMTA was not slowing transit operator hiring and was hiring transit operators as fast as possible.

Following the Caltrain portion of the presentation, Chair Mandelman acknowledged and thanked Commissioner Walton for serving as the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors representative on the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board.

Commissioner Walton expressed the opinion that the only solution to the transit fiscal cliff is for the state and federal leadership to provide support to transit systems. He stated that he hoped the Transportation Authority and transit providers affected would work together to demand support on this issue from state and federal leadership.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, Chair Mandelman thanked the presenters.

Vice Chair Melgar concurred with Commissioner Walton's point that the region's transit system needed help from the state and federal governments. She remarked that the narrative surrounding transit recovery has largely revolved around Downtown recovery and restoring transit to the pre-pandemic pattern, and questioned if that was a realistic assumption. She noted that Muni provides transportation to areas other than Downtown, including commercial corridors and educational institutions in other districts, and that public transit was essential to the health of those institutions. She asked what efforts could be made in collaboration with those institutions to increase ridership, discourage driving and parking, and assure people that public transit would provide reliable service.

Julie Kirschbaum, SFMTA Director of Transit, thanked Vice Chair Melgar for the question and noted that it spoke to Muni's service strategy since the pandemic to think more broadly and nimbly about changing travel patterns and needs. She stated that Muni's formula for increasing ridership had succeeded where they have been able to implement it, citing the revised routing of the 22 Fillmore as an example, which now serves more riders than it did before the pandemic. She emphasized the importance of addressing the transit fiscal cliff, and stated that if it's not addressed, Muni would be unable to adapt to changing travel patterns and would instead have to consider how to eliminate Muni lines while doing the least damage to core ridership. She noted that it would be impossible to reduce Muni service and meet San Francisco's economic,



environmental, and equity goals.

Commissioner Preston expressed frustration at the inability of the City and the region to focus on public transit recovery. He noted that the Economic Recovery Task Force didn't include a single sentence about public transit in its report, and that almost nothing was heard from the Mayor on public transit recovery. He noted that Senator Wiener was working on securing funding for public transit recovery. He expressed that San Francisco was good at detailing the consequences of not funding transit, but not at treating public transit like a non-negotiable service in the way it treats water or electricity. He suggested that SFMTA and other regional transit operators communicate a clear rallying cry to constituents about what money was needed to avoid those consequences and how exactly constituents could demand it. He acknowledged that it was necessary to consider the consequences of not addressing the transit fiscal cliff and said he hopes it motivated leaders to secure funding. He reiterated his asked that a clear demand to support the efforts of state legislators be developed and that the public be involved in a more concerted effort to acquire the needed funds. He stated his belief that the Board would be in full support of what was developed to that end.

Chair Mandelman stated that in June 2022, he had been concerned that San Franciscans were unwilling to vote for transit funding, but that the November voting cycle showed that San Franciscans were willing to vote for transit funding if the case was made for it in the right way. He emphasized the need for the Mayor's Office, the Board, and transit providers to find a path to funding for San Francisco's transit providers.

During public comment, Sebastian Petty, Transportation Policy Manager at SPUR stated that public transit was essential to the lives of millions of Californians and the economic, environmental, and equity future of the Bay Area and California. He noted that public transit was especially essential in San Francisco, because the city has chosen and depends on public transit like no other city in California. He affirmed that the transit fiscal cliff was a severe and systemic issue. He stated that it would take time and coordination between many tiers of government, such as the Regional Network Management strategy discussed earlier in the meeting, to develop a sustainable business model for transit, but that such transformation would be impossible if continued transit operations weren't supported now. He stated that SPUR was part of a coalition of civic groups, operators, and local government that was urging the state to provide near-term relief funds for transit and urged the Board to support transit in acquiring needed funding.

Francisco Da Costa stated that he has been monitoring regional transportation for the last 40 years. He commended the presenters from BART and Caltrain for their presentations, but stated that Muni tended to convolute things, and that their presentation offered no solutions.

Edward Mason recommended that Caltrain work with local corporations to develop a bulk transit pass system for employees to replace corporate commuter buses. He stated that such a system would boost Caltrain ridership.

Aleta Dupree commended the presenters. She stated that Jeff Tumlin had shown her a warm welcome and shared the importance of Muni with her a few weeks ago. She expressed frustration with the phrase 'essential workers' and the potential of inferring that others were not essential. She stated that people like herself, who were disabled, were also essential because they paid fares. She asked that reduced fare be preserved during the current transit crisis. She asked that the Board embrace the idea that all people are essential.

Roland Lebrun stated that Caltrain spent \$100 million a year in pandemic relief funds to operate



more trains than ever, resulting in a drop in ridership. He stated that Caltrain was not enforcing fare payment for passengers who did not tag their Clipper cards, and that as a result the reported ridership was lower than actual ridership. He expressed the opinion that additional oversight was needed before approving more funding for Caltrain.

## **Other Items**

### **12. Introduction of New Items – INFORMATION**

There were no new items introduced.

### **13. Public Comment**

Aleta Dupree complimented the Central Subway and stated that it improved her ability to access San Francisco. She also spoke in support of the Clipper program.

Anastasia Yovanopoulos stated that she hoped to be able to continue to give public comment remotely. She then asked the Board to consider that San Francisco had a smaller population now due to people leaving during the pandemic and that things had been scaled back.

Roland Lebrun complimented Transportation Authority staff for improving accessibility to the Community Advisory Committee meetings and asked if it would be possible to provide video recordings and transcripts of those meetings in the future.

### **14. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 a.m.