



24 April 2024

24-218: AC Transit Support Requested for Transit-Supportive Legislation

Dear AC Transit

- President Young,
- Vice President Shaw,
- Director Peeples,
- Director Beckles,
- Director Walsh,
- Director Syed,
- Director McCalley,
- General Manager Hursh,
- District Secretary Nemeroff,
- External Affairs Representative Jones,
- Director of Legislative Affairs and Community Relations Burgos, and
- Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications Greene,

We're writing to ask AC Transit to register your key support today for SB961, SB1031, and SB 960, in advance of important committee hearings and floor consideration coming within the next month.

1. **SB 961 - Wiener- Vehicles: safety equipment**, as amended April 16th, will require 50% of new vehicles sold beginning in 2029 and all new vehicles sold beginning in 2032 to have a passive speed assist system that cues the driver when the speed limit is exceeded by more than 5 miles per hour, similar to existing seat belt reminders and lane assistance in new cars sold today. AC Transit has an active interest in the deployment of this technology to the vehicle fleet, which will help to prevent crashes and reduce their severity, whether between cars and AC Transit riders on their way to & from the bus or between cars and AC Transit buses themselves. The report on this item recommends a "WATCH" position "because the bill may be preempted by federal law." Per the state legislature's bill analysis, "NHSTA currently is researching intelligent speed technology in order to evaluate potential rulemaking in response to requests from NTSB." However, that is a sizable distance from having an imminent federal rule that will preempt SB 961. In fact, the federal NTSB was at yesterday's State Senate Transportation Committee hearing to support the passage of this bill in California. California often leads on important safety legislation. It would be a positive story for the state to pass SB 961 with AC Transit's support and to then have that preempted by nationwide speed assistance standards, but such a federal standard is nowhere near a certainty. Rather than "pumping the brakes," AC Transit should register its SUPPORT for speed assistance technology in SB 961 to support safety on the roads for its operators and passengers.
2. **SB 1031 - Wiener/Wahab - the Connect Bay Area Act** was also amended on April 16th, following MTC amendments that General Manager Hursch participated in creating. The amendments address the concerns raised in the staff report about the component of

the bill that initiates a nonbinding study of transit agency governance and pros and cons of consolidation. SB 1031 was heard at the Transportation Committee yesterday, where AC Transit spoke with a “neutral” position on it, saying that agency comments were being discussed with bill authors. We are not aware of the Board taking a position on SB 1031 to date, and the Board should be informed of the specific policy positions that Management is advocating so that it can provide feedback. This committee comment highlights that AC Transit cannot be truly neutral in this discussion, and a “WATCH” position would not be appropriate at this time. SB 1031 continues to move through committees, including the Revenue and Tax Committee just this morning. There are strong voices in SUPPORT of and OPPOSED to SB 1031, and AC Transit needs to lend its support to ensure passage of this funding measure that is critical to its mission. As amended, the bill will authorize MTC to set up a tax measure that will share some of the revenues from wealthier counties while guaranteeing AC Transit at least \$25 million per year in operating funds. AC Transit can express any further desired amendments in the context of its broader support for this measure. AC Transit should align with MTC and BART’s position to SUPPORT SB 1031.

3. **SB 960 - Wiener - Transportation: planning: complete streets facilities: transit priority projects** appears on the Board agenda in the Matrix of State Legislation. This bill would require Caltrans to adopt a transit priority policy: “As the owner and operator of the state highway system, the department should play a pivotal role in improving public transit by advancing transit priority corridors to speed up transit vehicles stuck in traffic and make transit more convenient and attractive for current and future transit users.” This state legislation requiring Caltrans to move transit priority forward in its projects would improve AC Transit’s infrastructure and operations on state corridors such as Ashby, San Pablo, and International, and AC Transit would no longer need to drive Caltrans to accept these improvements. The Board should plainly adopt a SUPPORT position on SB 960.

The state legislative process moves quickly in this season, and we appreciate that the staff report for tonight’s meeting was drafted before amendments to these bills were published. These transit-supportive bills have now significantly advanced their language and have been heard in the State Senate Transportation Committee, where External Affairs staff have been able to continue to track them. Rather than continuing to watch, the time is now for AC Transit to register its support as the bills move on to more general committees and the Senate floor.

Sincerely,

Transbay Coalition