

CONSENT CALENDAR

April 29, 2025

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Lunaparra (author)

Subject: Supporting State and Regional Funding for Bay Area Public Transit

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution Supporting State and Regional Funding for Bay Area Public Transit

BACKGROUND

Our nation has been underfunding public transit relative to other forms of transportation for decades. In particular, California, as a state, has been underfunding transit operations relative to many other states for decades. In 2019, transit agencies in the Bay Area received, on average, less than 16 percent of their operating funding from the state, compared to 21 percent state funding in Chicago, 30 percent in New York City, 44 percent in Boston, and 50 percent in Philadelphia. California spends over 80% of its transportation budget on infrastructure and services in support of personal automobiles.

The residents and economy of the City of Berkeley depend on public transit, particularly AC Transit, BART and East Bay Paratransit. BART experienced ridership of over 50 million in calendar year 2024, while AC Transit experienced ridership of nearly 40 million for fiscal year 2024. Our communities are at risk of losing public transit service and suffering fare increases, as a result of the expiration of federal operations funds for transit. Transit service is fundamental to access for affordable housing and cuts to service combined with increased fare costs impede development of new affordable housing. Reliable, frequent, affordable, safe and sustainable public transit is essential to the mobility needs of many in our community, including youth, elders, disabled people and the estimated 30% of us who do not have drivers' licenses, as well as those who simply cannot afford to own and drive an automobile.

Major cuts to public transit would cause massive ripple effects for our local economy. Without good quality public transit, fewer customers and employees will be able to access businesses, fewer fans will be able to attend concerts and sporting events, and thousands of low income people will lose their only transportation option. There are 800,000 jobs within a 15-minute walk to a BART station and major cuts to public transit could cause traffic on the Bay Bridge to increase by 72% and cause commutes for key routes connecting the East Bay to San Francisco to increase by up to 10 hours per week.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

BART is facing a budget shortfall of \$385M and AC Transit is facing a shortfall of \$60 million annually, and will face drastic service cuts by 2027. To address this, State Senator Arreguín, together with Assemblymember Gonzalez, has submitted an urgent budget request to increase public transit funding by \$2 billion in the next fiscal year. Senators Arreguín and Weiner have introduced a bill to authorize a multi-county transit ballot measure, SB 63. In order to generate the needed funding on the timeline needed to avert service cuts, that bill must be signed this year, and a measure brought to the voters no later than November 2026.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

It is crucial to our climate goals that more people use public transit to reduce vehicle miles traveled and get more people using zero-emission vehicles sooner, since public transit vehicles are required to be zero-emission earlier than any other segment. Cutting service threatens our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while increasing traffic congestion and costs for cash-strapped households.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Cecilia Lunaparra, 510-981-7170
Jonah Gottlieb, Chief of Staff

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

SUPPORTING STATE AND REGIONAL FUNDING FOR BAY AREA PUBLIC TRANSIT

WHEREAS, The residents and economy of the City of Berkeley depend on public transit, particularly AC Transit, BART and East Bay Paratransit; and

WHEREAS, Our communities are at risk of losing public transit service and suffering fare increases, as a result of the expiration of federal operations funds for transit systems; and

WHEREAS, Transit service is fundamental to access for affordable housing and cuts to service combined with increased fare costs impede development of new affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, Reliable, frequent, affordable, safe and sustainable public transit is essential to the mobility needs of many in our community, including youth, elders, disabled people and the estimated 30% of us who do not have drivers' licenses as well as those who simply cannot afford to own and drive an automobile; and

WHEREAS, It is crucial to the State's climate goals that more people use public transit to reduce vehicle miles traveled and get more people using zero-emission vehicles sooner, since public transit vehicles are required to be zero-emission earlier than any other segment; and

WHEREAS, Cutting transit service threatens our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while increasing traffic congestion and costs for low income households; and

WHEREAS, Our nation has been underfunding public transit relative to other forms of transportation for decades and California spends over 80% of its transportation budget on infrastructure and services in support of personal automobiles; and

WHEREAS, Major cuts to public transit would cause massive ripple effects for our local economy. Without good quality public transit, fewer customers and employees will be able to access businesses, fewer fans will be able to attend concerts and sporting events, and thousands of low income people will lose their only transportation option; and

WHEREAS, There are 800,000 jobs within a 15-minute walk to a BART station and major cuts to public transit could cause traffic on the Bay Bridge to increase by 72% and cause commutes for key routes connecting the East Bay to San Francisco to increase by up to 10 hours per week; and

WHEREAS, California, as a state, has been underfunding transit operations relative to many other states for decades. In 2019, transit agencies in the Bay Area received, on average, less than 16 percent of their operating funding from the state, compared to 21 percent state funding in Chicago, 30 percent in New York City, 44 percent in Boston, and 50 percent in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, BART experienced ridership of over 50 million in calendar year 2024, while AC Transit experienced ridership of nearly 40 million for fiscal year 2024; and

WHEREAS, BART is facing a budget shortfall of \$385M and AC Transit is facing a shortfall of \$60 million annually, and will face drastic service cuts by 2027; and

WHEREAS, AC Transit plans for over \$500 million over the next 25 years to make transit faster, more frequent and more reliable; and

WHEREAS, State Senator Arreguín, together with Assemblymember Gonzalez, has submitted a budget request to increase public transit funding by \$2 billion in the next fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, A bill to authorize a multi-county transit ballot measure, SB 63 (Wiener, Arreguín), has been introduced in the state Legislature this year; and

WHEREAS, In order to generate the needed funding on the timeline needed to avert service cuts, that bill must be signed this year, and a measure brought to the voters no later than November 2026.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, The City of Berkeley supports the vision shared by rider, climate and labor groups of a measure that (1) provides enough funding to preserve and increase transit service levels across the region and distributes the funds equitably, (2) is funded primarily with progressive sources, rather than a sales tax, to ensure that the burden of paying for improved transportation options does not fall most heavily on those with the least resources, and (3) prioritizes funding for transit operations, and does not prioritize funding for projects which could increase carbon emissions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The City of Berkeley urges Assemblymember Wicks and Senator Arreguín to champion a bill that achieves that vision in the Legislature this year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The City of Berkeley urges Assemblymember Wicks, Senator Arreguín, and their colleagues, as well as Governor Newsom, to support the current \$2 billion budget request and further budget actions that significantly increase the state's support for transit operating needs on a sustainable basis; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that upon passage, a copy of this Resolution be sent to Governor Gavin Newsom, State Senator Jesse Arreguín, and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks.