

California State Senate

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SEVENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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CAPITOL OFFICE
1021 O STREET, SUITE 6710
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4007

DISTRICT OFFICE
1515 CLAY STREET SUITE 2202
OAKLAND, CA 94612
TEL (510) 286-1333

SENATOR.ARREGUIN@SENATE.CA.GOV

March 4, 2025

Senate President pro Tem Mike McGuire
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Scott Wiener
1021 O Street, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Laura Richardson
1021 O Street, Suite 7340
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for \$2 billion in new flexible funding to save and improve public transit

Dear Pro Tem McGuire, Senator Wiener, and Senator Richardson:

Public transit is the backbone of our state's economy, and it is essential for California to meet its climate and air quality commitments and make our state more affordable. Unfortunately, many transit agencies across the state continue to face dire fiscal challenges, and any cuts and closures will disproportionately impact essential workers, people of color, and working class families.

Therefore, we respectfully and urgently request \$2 billion in new flexible funding for public transit over 2 years beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026 to help transit operators address operating shortfalls and deliver capital projects while they simultaneously work towards more sustainable revenue sources.

The effects of the pandemic have been dramatic and ongoing, and it has impacted agencies unevenly because each agency has a different mix of revenue sources. Some agencies, especially those that were largely self-supporting pre-pandemic, continue to suffer the most, including the San Francisco Muni, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), AC Transit, and Caltrain, among others. Multiple public transit agencies are running out of time, and are likely to hit their fiscal cliffs before 2028.

Already, several operators are having to take difficult steps to manage shortfalls by eliminating routes, reducing frequency, and cutting service hours. Additionally, several operators are maintaining large and untenable vacancy rates, deferring maintenance, and halting capital projects, among other concerning changes. These cutbacks are painful to our most vulnerable communities and make it impossible to recover and regrow ridership, ultimately taking away good-paying union jobs and increasing the cost of repair and replacement in the long-run.

In the next few years, California will be on the world stage as host to the World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Olympics). Millions of spectators will need to use public transit to get to game events and other tourist destinations. Completing new rail and bus lines and making first- and last- mile connections are needed to help spectators move safely, reliably, and comfortably. Yet there is significant uncertainty about whether the federal government will approve outstanding funding requests to prepare for these events. When Los Angeles (LA) accepted the honor of hosting the Olympics, the City committed to a car-free Olympics in order to avoid traffic congestion, support our climate goals, and leave lasting benefits for Angelenos. Paris used the opportunity to expand their bicycle network – now one of the best in the world. However, LA remains far from achieving its goal of car-free games. Failure is not an option – now is the time to accelerate our investments for the benefit of both visitors and residents and fill Californians with pride, while showing the world that we can set up to the challenge.

Safe and reliable public transit is essential for making California more affordable, and is a critical strategy to addressing our housing crisis. Today, car ownership is the second largest expense for Californians, second only to housing.¹ Without predictable and adequate funding for public transit, California will not be able to tackle the affordability crisis in any real way nor realize our shared dream of a *California for All*. In the Bay Area, public transit is relied upon for getting to and from work, with more than 800,000 jobs within walking distance to a BART station and over 70% of all BART trips start or end in BART.

For all these reasons, we urge you to provide \$2 billion in new flexible funding for public transit over 2 years beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026. Given this year's budget projection and ongoing economic uncertainty, there may be limited flexibility of state resources. However, we must prioritize investing in public transit as our most vulnerable communities cannot afford to lose this public service nor can we fail on the global stage.

¹ Most households pay more than 15% of their income on transportation, and that number is growing.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact Luis Amezcua at luis.amezcua@sen.ca.gov or (916) 651-4007.

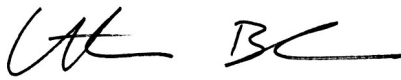
Sincerely,



JESSE ARREGUÍN
Senator, 7th District



JOSH BECKER
Senator, 13th District



CATHERINE BLAKESPEAR
Senator, 38th District