

East Bay Paratransit

1750 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612

Mr. Donald Queen
648 Kearney St., El Cerrito, CA, 94530

February 14, 2023

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 361 set to expire on February 28, 2023

Dear Governor Newsom,

On February 28, 2023, AB 361 teleconference procedures are set to expire putting into effect AB 2449 through January 1, 2026. Public agencies are required to transition back to in-person public meetings held in full compliance with the Brown Act, which presents some challenges to the communities we represent.

The Service Review Advisory Committee (SRAC) for East Bay Paratransit, which is one of the largest paratransit services in the Bay Area, not only represents the interests of riders whose disabilities prevent them from using fixed route transit but consists of many members that are disabled themselves. This advisory body, as well as the community, has adjusted to the flexibility, security, and convenience that virtual participation has provided, and many public agencies have benefited from increased public engagement as well. At our most recent meeting on February 7, 2023, the committee unanimously agreed to send this request as many of the members expressed concern that they would have to quit the committee under the new requirements.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a spotlight on the archaic nature of the Brown Act and the barriers it creates for an inclusive public discourse process that allows for equal and safe access for all.

The current Executive Order that essentially waives the Brown Act requirement that members of the Committee attend meetings in person has enabled those who are immunocompromised to remain safe from potential infection while participating in public discourse. It allows Committee members with medical conditions, disabilities, and/or mobility limitations to have their voices heard without compromising their safety and security. And while a hybrid meeting setting that combines in-person and remote attendance for all meeting participants removes barriers to participation for the public, it

poses unnecessary risks to the health, safety, and security of Committee members who cannot attend meetings in person and must open their teleconference location, often their home, to the public in order to participate as productive members of the Committee.

We are asking for your immediate intervention to extend the Brown Act requirement waiver and uphold the continued allowance of virtual public meetings for appointed advisory bodies with memberships comprised of seniors and people with disabilities who are vulnerable and otherwise high-risk and/or immunocompromised.

Respectfully,



Donald Queen

On behalf of the Service Review Advisory Committee (SRAC) East Bay Paratransit

Cc:

AC Transit Board of Directors

BART Board of Directors

Michael Hursh, AC Transit General Manager

Robert Powers, BART General Manager

Senator Nancy Skinner

Senator Steve Glazer

Senator Aisha Wahab

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks

Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan

Assemblymember Mia Bonta

Assemblymember Liz Ortega

Assemblymember Alex Lee

AC Transit's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), Chair

Alameda County Transportation Authority, (ACTC) Chair, Planning and Paratransit Committee (PAPCO)

Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA), Chair, Paratransit Coordinating Council (PCC)

Chair, BART Accessibility Task Force (BATF)