

TA

CORRESPONDENCE

as of 9-27-2024



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.778.6700
www.mtc.ca.gov

September 20, 2024

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Alix Bockelman
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Brod Paul
Deputy Executive Director,
Local Government Services

Carlos Romero
Chair, San Mateo County Transportation Authority 09/26/24 AM 11:34 EXEC
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070

Adam Rak
Chair, City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County
555 County Center, Fifth Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

April Chan
Executive Director, San Mateo County Transportation Authority
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070

Sean Charpentier
Executive Director, City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County
555 County Center, Fifth Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

RE: Addressing the Transit Emergency Facing the Bay Area

Dear Ms. Chan and Messrs. Romero, Rak and Charpentier,

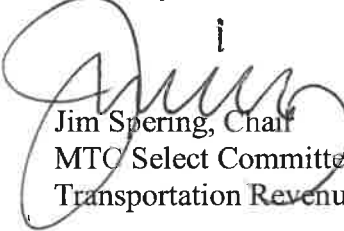
Thank you for meeting with me on Tuesday regarding a potential framework for a four-county (minimum) funding measure to provide critical funding to help address the fiscal emergency facing Bay Area transit operators, particularly BART and Caltrain serving your county. The proposal we discussed (Scenario 1) is funded by a half-cent sales tax and is focused on the acute need facing transit operators in the near term while also providing flexibility to address each county's specific *local* priorities starting in year 9 and with 90% of the funds going directly to counties in the latter half of the measure. This structure strikes a balance across transportation priorities and retains an important incentive for transit agencies to continuously improve so that they can grow their ridership (and consequently, their fare revenues) and pursue alternate transit operating funding over the long-term.

At our meeting, you made it clear that this framework is not hitting the mark for you. While we will be presenting Scenario 1 to the Select Committee next Monday, I very much want to hear your alternative proposal for addressing the transit fiscal crisis and averting service cuts that would decimate our transportation system and diminish our economy and quality of life in the Bay Area.

Operators serving your county face a funding gap attributable to your county of between \$70 million to \$130 million per year starting in FY 2026-27, depending on the shortfall that is targeted.

I believe that we can only tackle this issue with close collaboration and ideas generated by leaders in every county. I look forward to hearing your approach for how San Mateo County will close this funding gap. Your response can continue to improve upon the work of the Select Committee and further inform the Legislature of additional funding approaches as we work together to meet this shared crisis. Please contact me directly at 707-718-0330 or provide a response by email to me at jimzspering@cs.com with a copy to Sandy Guerra sguerra@bayareametro.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Spering", is written over a circular stamp. The stamp contains the text "Jim Spering, Chair" and "MTC Select Committee on Bay Area Transportation Revenue Measure".

Jim Spering, Chair
MTC Select Committee on Bay Area
Transportation Revenue Measure

cc:

David Canepa, Supervisor, San Mateo County
Gina Papan, Councilmember, City of Millbrae
Alfredo Pedroza, Chair, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Andrew Fremier, Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Alix Bockelman, Chief Deputy Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

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Carlos Romero
Chair, San Mateo County Transportation Authority
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070

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From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](#); [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#); [Mima Crume](#)
Subject: SMDJ article on whether 101 widening has improved or worsened congestion
Date: Monday, September 23, 2024 8:58:02 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[Questions over express lane congestion impact](#) [Local News](#) [smdailyjournal.com.pdf](#)

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Dear SMCTA Board, CAC, and C/CAG Board,

Thank you for your service to the transportation needs of SM County residents.

I wanted to share [the attached article from today's SMDJ](#). It covers the recent C/CAG meeting where multiple Board and community members asked why the JPA was not sharing data on whether the recently completed 101 Widening and Express Lane project in the southern part of the County had achieved its stated goal of reducing congestion. The SMCTA CAC has asked for answers to this question multiple times over the past year but has been told that such a study needs to come at the request of the JPA (despite the CAC acting as a liaison between the public and the SMCTA Board).

In this meeting, Board Members Stacy Jimenez shared her constituents' skepticism that the almost \$600M project had improved congestion for those unable to pay for the Express Lanes:

“The main comment that I get from my residents is, ‘I’m stuck, and it feels like it’s slower now unless I use the express lane,’” said Stacy Jimenez, C/CAG board member and Foster City councilmember.

In addition, C/CAG Board Member and Hillsborough Mayor Christine Krolik urged the JPA to respond to the public's questions on whether congestion had worsened since the widening of 101, despite promises to the contrary.

I hope that going forward the public will have access to congestion data so that it will know whether taxpayer dollars were well spent and whether future widenings will benefit all SM County residents, instead of just those who are able to afford the Express Lanes.

Thanks,

Mike Swire
Appointee, SMCTA Citizen Advisory Committee
Chair, C/CAG Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
(writing as an individual)

https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/questions-over-express-lane-congestion-impact/article_1764b2e6-798a-11ef-a132-eb1cef05d0de.html

FEATURED

Questions over express lane congestion impact

Highway 101 express lane use sees increases, but some say traffic is worse for non-toll lane drivers

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Sep 23, 2024



Icons for social media sharing: Facebook (f), X, Email, Print, Copy, Bookmark, and LinkedIn (in).

The Highway 101 express lane has generated a modest increase in revenue, but some board members and transit advocates are concerned it's only worsened traffic congestion for those who are unable or unwilling to pay the toll.

The express lane opened toward the beginning of last year and stretches 22 miles from the Santa Clara County line to Interstate 380. The tolls adhere to a variable pricing structure, in which costs fluctuate depending on traffic congestion. Average daily trips have increased from 52,000 to 56,000 between the first and fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023-24 — which ended on June 30.

The majority of trips cost drivers under \$3, according to data presented at a recent City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County meeting, though it can be over three to four times that cost during peak hours.

While express lane drivers travel 11 miles per hour faster on average than non-toll lanes during peak hours, the lack of data on its overall impact on highway traffic has given some board members pause.

“The main comment that I get from my residents is, ‘I’m stuck, and it feels like it’s slower now unless I use the express lane,’” said Stacy Jimenez, C/CAG board member and Foster City councilmember. —

Mike Swire, member of the Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee, echoed similar sentiments, adding that updates on the effectiveness of express lanes have largely focused on revenue, not whether it's decreasing overall traffic.

“The marketing of the project was that this will improve congestion in San Mateo County. It was not marketed as only improving it for the wealthy people who can afford to pay for the lane,” Swire said. “We are hearing consistently now from the public that there has not been a reduction in traffic ... we've been asking over a year for data that shows congestion before and congestion after.”

About 42% of the trips showed that express lane drivers were carpooling with two or more passengers, though Lacy Vong, policy program manager for the San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Powers Authority, said the figure is likely inflated due to many individuals misdeclaring the number of people in the car.

But Executive Director Sean Charpentier has said that it takes awhile to see substantial changes in traffic patterns, and comparing commute patterns before, during and after the pandemic are not apples-to-apples comparisons. He added that over time, large employers will provide more shuttles for their workers. And the impacts of the newly-launched express lane bus routes have yet to show up in the data, which lags a few months behind.

The issue has also surfaced during ongoing discussions over a potential expansion of the express lane north of Interstate 380.

alyse@smdailyjournal.com

(650) 344-5200 ext. 102

alyse@smdailyjournal.com

(650) 344-5200 ext. 102



Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Daily Journal staff

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