

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
Response to Public Comments

The Draft 2017 TIP was released for public review and comment from June 24, 2016 through July 28, 2016 and a public hearing was held on July 13, 2016 to receive public comment. The following is a list of the public comments submitted to MTC along with staff's responses to these comments. No comments were made during the public hearing. This list does not include the project listing changes requested by project sponsors. The correspondence and public hearing transcript for the Draft 2017 TIP are available at <http://mtc.ca.gov/our-work/fund-invest/transportation-improvement-program-tip/draft-2017-tip>.

No.	Name	Agency/Organization	Dated	Response
1	Andrea Mirenda	Public	Email 7/27/2016	Response #1
2	Cathy Jennings	Public	Email 7/29/2016	Response #1
3	Charlie Cameron	Public	Letter 7/22/2016	Response #1
4	Bob Moss	Public	Email 7/28/2016	Response #1 and #2
5	Rand Strauss	Public	Email 7/28/2016	Response #1 and #2
6	Alex Hakso	Public	Email 7/29/2016	Response #3
7	Anne Nichols	Public	Email 7/27/2016	Response #3
8	Jean Severinghaus	Public	Email 7/3/2016	Response #3
9	Karim Hyder	Public	Email 7/28/2016	Response #3
10	Holly Westphal	Public	Email 7/27/2016	Response #1 and #3
11	Mark Fassett	Public	Email 7/29/2016	Response #1 and #3
12	Mewi	Public	Letter 7/28/2016	Response #1, #2, and #3
13	Jim Burt	Public	Email 7/30/2016	Response #1, #2, and #4
14	Larry V.	Public	Email 7/28/2016	Response #1, #2, and #5
15	Linda Curtis	Public	Email 7/27/2016 and 7/28/2016	Response #1, #2, #3, and #5
16	Michael Ferreira, Victoria Brandon, Rebecca Evans	Three Sierra Club Chapters	Email 7/26/2016	Response #6

Category 1: Responses to Comments Related to Specific Projects

The Regional Transportation Plan (Plan) establishes long-range investment priorities and strategies to operate, maintain, and improve the surface transportation network in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Plan currently in effect for the Bay Area is called Plan Bay Area and was adopted in 2013. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) helps carry out the Plan's strategies in the short term by committing certain funding resources to implement specific programs and project improvements that help support implementation of the Plan. MTC staff forwarded project specific comments to the sponsoring agencies for clarification of next steps and opportunities for input for service planning or project development for specific programs and projects. Interested parties are encouraged to contact project sponsors directly for specific project concerns or to stay informed throughout project development.

Comment and Response #1

Several commenters opposed local projects in the TIP such as implementing bus rapid transit (BRT) on El Camino Real in Santa Clara County or installing express lanes on US 101 in San Mateo County. Some commenters also opposed specific elements of project designs. Other commenters expressed support for local projects in the TIP such as the construction of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on US 101 in San Mateo County or the extension of Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit service beyond the initial operating segment. MTC has notified the project sponsors of the comments submitted.

MTC includes local projects in the TIP after the project sponsor demonstrates project funding, scope and schedule consistent with Plan Bay Area. The decision to include a project in the TIP does not represent an allocation or obligation of funds, or final project approval. Before securing funding and approval for project implementation, the project is subject to environmental review and final approvals from federal, state, regional or local agencies depending on fund sources, and project-specific required actions. The environmental process will include additional opportunities to comment on the scope, design elements and impacts of a project.

MTC's Guide to the San Francisco Bay Area's Transportation Improvement Program outlines the various opportunities available to the public and interested stakeholders to get involved in the transportation planning and project development process (see TIP Appendix A-3). The guide is also available at MTC's offices at 375 Beale St., San Francisco and online at:

<http://mtc.ca.gov/our-work/fund-invest/transportation-improvement-program>.

Comment and Response #2

Some commenters suggested that MTC include specific new projects in the TIP, namely the addition of a second BART tube across the Bay and lowering the Central Expressway in Santa Clara County so that it is separated from cross-traffic.

Large capital projects such as these must be included in an adopted regional long range plan before they can be included in the TIP. Neither of these projects is included in the currently

adopted Plan. However, MTC is currently working with a number of partners in the region to evaluate short, medium and long term needs for transit capacity serving the Transbay corridor. A second Transbay tube is being considered as part of this study. Projects selected for further development will then need to be included in the Plan before advancing beyond planning and environmental analysis in the TIP.

Other suggested projects were increased Caltrain service frequencies, a transit pass for residents of the City of Berkeley and changes to local bus routes and service. These projects could potentially be implemented without being included in the TIP if they were not federally funded and did not require a federal action.

MTC's Guide to the San Francisco Bay Area's Transportation Improvement Program outlines the various opportunities available to the public and interested stakeholders to get involved in the transportation planning and project development process (see TIP Appendix A-3). The guide is also available at MTC's offices at 375 Beale St., San Francisco and online at: <http://mtc.ca.gov/our-work/fund-invest/transportation-improvement-program>.

Category 2: Responses to Comments Related to General Categories of Projects

Staff also received comments regarding general categories of projects. These comments did not identify specific projects, so the comments were not forwarded to sponsoring agencies.

Comment and Response #3

Some commenters opposed general categories of projects such as BRT projects with dedicated lanes or the purchases of diesel buses and equipment. Other commenters expressed support for grade separated rail transit, expanded local bus service or bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

MTC's Guide to the San Francisco Bay Area's Transportation Improvement Program outlines the various opportunities available to the public and interested stakeholders to get involved in the transportation planning and project development process (see TIP Appendix A-3). The guide is also available at MTC's offices at 375 Beale St., San Francisco and online at: <http://mtc.ca.gov/our-work/fund-invest/transportation-improvement-program>.

MTC also works with our partner agencies to develop programs that fund or incentivize specific categories of projects. Information about these programs and their development can be found online at: <http://mtc.ca.gov/our-work/fund-invest>.

Category 3: Responses to Comments Regarding Advocacy for Transportation Funding

Staff also received comments urging MTC to advocate for additional funding and policy changes.

Comment and Response #4

One commenter requested MTC to propose steady sources of funding, such as increasing the gas tax or reforming Proposition 13.

MTC continues to support numerous efforts to establish new sources of federal, state, regional and local funding for transportation. Each year MTC adopts a federal and state advocacy program to prioritize its efforts to ensure that the Bay Area benefits from new opportunities, defend against proposals that may reduce funding for Bay Area transportation, advance our goal of a safe, efficient and well-maintained regional transportation system. Information about MTC's advocacy program can be found online at: <http://mtc.ca.gov/our-work/advocate-lead/state-and-federal-advocacy>.

MTC urges members of the public to track and support developments related to increased transportation funding at all levels of government.

Category 4: Responses to Comments Regarding Land-Use Decisions

Staff also received comments pertaining to land-use trends and policies.

Comment and Response #5

One commenter opposed the construction of high-density residential developments along arterials, while another commenter suggested developing real estate located above transportation facilities.

SB 375 requires MTC to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy that demonstrates that land-use development patterns and the proposed transportation network can work together to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. To help achieve these goals, some funding programs, such as the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) County Discretionary Program, include policies that incentivize cities to build housing. While the TIP includes funding from these programs, the TIP itself is focused on near-term transportation investments and does not include land-use decisions. Local jurisdictions retain the authority to adopt local land-use policies and make specific land-use decisions through their individual processes.

Category 5: Responses to Comments Regarding the Relationship of the TIP to the Plan

Staff received comments from the Sierra Club on the connection between the TIP and the policies and priorities established in the Plan.

Comment and Response #6Meeting Greenhouse Gas Emissions Targets

The Sierra Club noted that the Draft Transportation-Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the Amended Plan Bay Area and the 2017 Transportation Improvement Program “indicates that the draft 207 TIP will not result in the greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction per capita target for the year 2035 [15%, relevant to the Plan] as required by the Air Resources Board under the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375).”

Transportation conformity is required under section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7506(c)) to ensure that federally funded or approved highway and transit activities are consistent with (“conform to”) the purpose of the state air quality implementation plan (SIP). Conformity to the purpose of the SIP means that transportation activities will not cause or contribute to new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS).

In addition, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency’s transportation conformity rule (40 CFR Parts 51 and 93) establishes the criteria and procedures for determining whether metropolitan transportation plans, TIPs, and federally supported highway and transit projects conform to the purpose of the SIP. Transportation conformity applies to designated nonattainment and/or maintenance areas for transportation-related criteria pollutants: ozone, PM2.5, PM10, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen dioxide. Specifically, regional transportation conformity for transportation plans and TIPs is demonstrated by performing a regional emissions analysis for the applicable NAAQS pollutants in nonattainment areas.

Currently, there are no federal requirements for consideration of GHG impacts in a regional conformity analysis for a TIP or transportation plan. Therefore, to reduce confusion, the air quality and climate implications text and Table 6 will not be included in Appendix E of the Final Conformity Analysis.

Additionally, the Plan focuses extensively on GHG emission reductions and demonstrates that the combination of land use and transportation investments result in the region meeting its goals of 7 and 15 percent reductions in GHG emissions by 2020 and 2035, respectively. Any estimation of GHG reductions is relevant to the Plan. In contrast, the TIP covers only a four year period and includes only a subset of transportation projects and programs from the Plan.

References:

http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/air/main_sections/conformity.htm

<https://www.epa.gov/state-and-local-transportation/policy-and-technical-guidance-state-and-local-transportation#requirements>

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/conformity/

Prioritizing Transportation System Investments

This commenter also requested that funding in the proposed TIP should not be directed to highway and roadway expansion projects and should instead be directed to pedestrian, bicycle and transit projects in order to be supportive of the Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS).

As mentioned in response to the previous comment (#6), there are no federal requirements for consideration of GHG impacts in a regional conformity analysis for a TIP or transportation plan and the "Draft Environmental Impact Report for MTC's Transportation 2035 Plan" is a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) *state* requirement – unassociated with federal requirements for the Draft Conformity Analysis.

Additionally, the performance analysis of the Plan evaluates if the full complement of transportation projects and programs included in the Plan, taken together with land use changes, advance the region's goals and objectives identified in the Plan. As a subset of projects and programs from the Plan, the investments included in the proposed TIP are consistent with the top priority of the Plan to operate and maintain the region's existing transportation system. Nearly two-thirds of the \$6.3 billion in committed funds over the four-year period of the TIP, is directed to maintaining the existing transportation system. In addition, the majority of funding programmed on State Highway System projects (82%) and local road projects (54%) rehabilitates, maintains, and operates the existing system.

It should also be noted that two significant federal programs for transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and complete streets projects are not yet programmed in the TIP. Nearly \$2 billion in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula funds expected to be available during the TIP period have not been programmed and therefore are not reflected in the TIP. The program of projects for these funds is anticipated to be adopted and programmed into the TIP in 2017. In addition, most projects from the second cycle of the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG 2) have not yet been programmed into the TIP. The OBAG 2 program, with more than \$150 million in annual federal funds, supports a range of priority multi-modal projects throughout the region. These projects will be incorporated into the TIP as the program is adopted.

High Level of Near-Term Highway Investment

The Sierra Club also noted that the proposed TIP should not front-load highway and roadway projects in the TIP and should instead use its funds to reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and therefore GHGs.

The TIP is required to be fiscally constrained by program and by year. However, the TIP does not reflect the universe of federal, state, and local revenues that will be available over the four year period. Some of these funds will be incorporated as their individual funding programs are developed and adopted, such as the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) or regional allocations of FTA formula funds. Other funds are typically not reflected in the TIP at all, including the vast majority of local and state funds that will go to operate, maintain, and manage the region's existing transportation system.

It should be noted that although the TIP presents only a partial picture of the subset of transportation projects that will be implemented during the four year period, the full picture of the projects, programs and strategies that will be completed within the region is captured within the Plan. As mentioned above, although there are no federal requirements for consideration of GHG impacts and/or CEQA obligations in a regional conformity analysis for a TIP or transportation plan, the Plan does demonstrate that the combination of land use and transportation investments result in the region meeting its goals of 7 and 15 percent reductions in GHG emissions by 2020 and 2035, respectively. Any estimation of GHG reductions is relevant to the Plan itself. In contrast, the TIP covers only a four year period and includes only a subset of transportation projects and programs from the Plan.

Equitable Distribution of Funding

This commenter also noted that the proposed TIP and its underlying projects should be changed to eliminate the inequitable distribution of funds to low income and minority transit riders.

The investment analysis of the proposed TIP indicates that although the investments in the TIP are distributed equitably overall, a variance in the share of transit investments by trips for passengers living in low-income households and in the benefits of investments to minority transit riders. It is important to note, however, that the TIP does not reflect the full picture of transportation investments in the Bay Area over the long-term. As noted above, the TIP only includes four years of near-term fund programming. Also, since the TIP primarily documents projects that require federal actions or use federal funds, it tends to include more large capital projects than rehabilitation programs. Additionally, funding shown in the TIP is included in the year that project phases begin or are obligated and does not reflect the actual flow of funding and expenditures within these phases. While rehabilitation programs will have their funding spread across many years, large capital projects tend to have their funding lumped into a single year even if the funds will actually be expended over a number of years, some of which may be outside the scope of the TIP. When compared to the investments described in the Plan, the 2017 TIP only reflects about 15% of average annual transportation spending in the Bay Area.

An example of the issues described above is the fact that the 2017 TIP Investment Analysis is heavily influenced by two projects, BART's Railcar Procurement Program and Caltrain's Electrification project, as these projects have large capital phases that are beginning in the near future. Together, these projects account for over one third of all transit funding in the 2017 TIP. As these systems are used by a lower proportion of low-income and minority riders than the regional average, the results of the analysis show lower investments benefiting low-income and minority riders. Prior iterations of the TIP Investment Analysis that showed a less variable distribution have been influenced by other large capital projects, such as SFMTA's Central Subway project and VTA's BART Warm Springs to Berryessa Extension project, that are still ongoing, but in the current TIP period require less funding action. Additionally, approximately \$2 billion in transit formula funding for FY2016-17 through FY2019-20 is yet to be programmed and is not included in the proposed 2017 TIP. While BART and Caltrain will still receive a large

portion of these funds, the program will also distribute funds to a wider variety of transit operators.

MTC will revisit the investment analysis in the future (estimated for summer 2017, to coincide with adoption of Plan Bay Area 2040) and these transit funds are expected to be included. Additionally, MTC will continue to include updated demographic data sources in future iterations of the investment analysis. Since the draft analysis was released, BART's demographic data have been updated to account for weekend ridership.

Since the equity analysis of the Plan includes more projects and programs than just those that are federally focused and transportation funding is captured from more years, it is not disproportionately influenced by the types of projects described above.

It should also be noted that this analysis only assesses investments and does not directly assess the resulting benefit and burden of specific projects or programs, such as travel time savings or improved accessibility to jobs or other destinations.

Addressing the Effects of Climate Change on Transportation Infrastructure

The Sierra Club also noted that the TIP does not recognize the urgency of climate change and its effects on transportation and transit infrastructure. The commenter requested that the TIP identify projects and funding that will mitigate climate change impacts on Bay Area transportation infrastructure.

In recognition of the risks and challenges related to planning for long-term sustainability and resilience of our transportation assets in the face of climate change, MTC and other regional, state, and federal partners have been working together over the last four years to study how and where the Bay Area is vulnerable to current and future flooding in order to develop strategies to reduce these risks.

MTC was recently awarded a grant from Caltrans to plan for ensuring the Bay Area's transportation system becomes more resilient to increased flooding and sea level rise, while also improving the safety and sustainability of our communities, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The \$1.2 million study, to be completed by MTC in cooperation with the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), Caltrans District 4, and the Bay Area Regional Collaborative (BARC), will develop a regional vulnerability assessment focused on the Bay Area's transportation infrastructure, Priority Development Areas (PDAs) as identified in the Plan, and vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The project will also develop a suite of adaptation strategies to improve the resilience of Bay Area transportation assets and communities for inclusion in Plan Bay Area as well as other appropriate local and regional planning and programming documents. The results of the study could address the commenter's request in a future TIP to identify projects that mitigate the risks and damages caused by climate change.