SAMTRANS

CORRESPONDENCE

as of 10-30-2020

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0115

California Legislature

October 13, 2020

The Honorable Scott Haggerty
Chair, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale Street, #800
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Concerns about MTC Potential Work from Home Mandate

Dear Chair Haggerty:

We commend you and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) staff for your work on Plan Bay Area 2050 (Plan) to make our region a more sustainable, prosperous and equitable place. We are writing to express our concern about the inclusion of a Work From Home Mandate in Plan Bay Area. While requiring or encouraging work from home during the pandemic makes sense, we do not agree that a Work From Home Mandate is a viable or appropriate long-term strategy for the Bay Area.

We understand that the Work From Home Mandate was included late in the process of developing the Plan, and is intended to help meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals set out by the State pursuant to SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008). We are concerned, however, that the Work From Home Mandate was not adequately vetted, may not achieve a reduction in transportation greenhouse gas emissions, and may have additional negative consequences for our constituents and our region as a whole.

In particular, we are deeply concerned about the inclusion of a blanket Work From Home Mandate because:

1. It is likely to meaningfully reduce fare revenue for our public transit systems — systems that are absolutely essential to the Bay Area's future prosperity — and further damage the financial health of these systems. As is clearly stated throughout the rest of the Plan, well-funded transit systems are of critical importance for equity, climate and our region's quality of life. Well-funded transit systems are particularly important for workers who cannot work from home, who are disproportionately low-income and people of color, as well as for seniors, the disabled, youth, and other transit-dependent groups. Draining funds from our transit systems will badly harm these low-wage workers, who simply cannot work from home.

2. A Work From Home Mandate is likely to dramatically reduce the number of office workers in our region's downtowns, threatening the livelihoods of non-

office downtown workers in service industries and causing severe impacts to local city budgets. In counties like San Francisco and Santa Clara, over 50% of workers are Work From Home-eligible. Additionally emphasizing working from home undermines other strategizes in the Plan such as walkable urban neighborhoods and increased housing density near employment and transit centers, two data supported strategies proven to reduce transportation related GHG emissions.

3. This mandate doesn't acknowledge the difference between downtown offices in walkable neighborhoods near transit where the majority of workers commute by sustainable modes, and suburban office parks where almost everyone drives alone to work. In San Francisco, for instance, fewer than 30% of workers eligible to Work From Home drive to work. What would be the rationale for requiring office workers who walk to work to work from home?

4. The mandate fails to account for equity. Low wage and service workers are typically not able to work from home — their jobs simply don't allow it. Moreover, even for lower wage office workers whose job may allow work from home, they are more likely to live in smaller homes with large families or multiple roommates, and thus not be able, realistically, to work from home. They should not be required to do so.

5. This mandate would likely result in people leaving the region or moving further from their workplace or from transit that can transport them to their workplace. Such a mandate could also be used as a rationale for those who assert that building sufficient housing for all those who will live in our region is not necessary.

6. There is meaningful evidence that Work From Home mandates increase greenhouse gas emissions. While working from home may eliminate a commute trip, errands and other non-work trips can increase, increasing daily VMT. Additionally, teleworkers tend to live farther from job centers, in lower-density environments, leading to longer, more auto-dependent commutes when they do go into the office, and higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions from home energy usage. The region's efforts to avert deepening our climate crisis should not rely on a strategy that could actually worsen our climate crisis.

Instead of a blanket Work From Home mandate, we suggest MTC pursue efforts to reduce trips and VMT by adding to the existing PBA2050 strategies that:

- Locate more new housing near transit and jobs,
- Locate new office space near transit and housing,
- Invest more in transit rather than highway widening, and
- Implement aggressive but flexible policies that give Bay Area residents the option of shifting their commute and non-commute trips onto sustainable modes and reduce unnecessary commute and non-commute trips.

Policies that MTC pursues to enable employees to work from home must be designed to ensure that such policies do not result in an increase in GHG emissions, a decrease in transit ridership and transit funding, or inequitable outcomes.

We look forward to working together to move our region toward a more sustainable future. Thank you for your work, collaboration, and attention.

Sincerely,

Senator Scott Wiener

Assemblymember David Chiu

Senator Nancy Skinner

Senator Mike McGuire

Senator Jerry Hill

Assemblymember Philip Y. Ting

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks

Assemblymember Marc Berman

Assemblymember Evan Low

Assemblymember Bill Quirk

Assemblymember Tim Grayson

Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry

Assemblymember Kevin Mullin

Assemblymember Jim Wood

Assemblymember Kansen Chu

Assemblymember Rob Bonta

Cc: Therese McMillan, Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

From: Rick Nahass
To: Public Comment
Subject: Clipper START Participation Oct 7 Agenda Item
Date: Friday, October 23, 2020 8:48:57 AM

To: the SamTrans Board
Re: Oct 7 Board Meeting SamTrans Participation in Clipper START

It was good to hear the sentiment of the SamTrans Board Members concerning the regressive effect of sales taxes on low-income citizens during the presentation of the Clipper START program. I urge you to approve SamTrans participation at 50% SamTrans fare discounts.

Perhaps the 'sentiment' can be progressed by requesting that SamTrans Planning include a program to connect with local low-income advocacy groups to determine better approaches to fund low-income riders out of available funds. In this way there would be an occasional official agenda item for presentation to the Board, a way to both strengthen and not lose sight of all the riders SamTrans is competing for.

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