

San Mateo County Transit District

2026 Legislative Program

Purpose

Legislative and regulatory actions have the potential to significantly benefit San Mateo County Transit District (Agency) programs and services. They also have the potential to present serious challenges that threaten the Agency's ability to meet the county's most critical transportation demands.

The 2026 Legislative Program establishes the principles that will guide the Agency's legislative and regulatory advocacy efforts through the 2026 calendar year, including the second half of the 2025-26 State Legislative Session and second session of the 119th Congress.

The program is intended to be broad enough to cover the wide variety of issues that are likely to be considered during that time and flexible enough to allow the Agency to respond swiftly and effectively to unanticipated developments. The program is in alignment with existing Board-adopted policies and procedures. Expansion of the program beyond those adopted policies and procedures would require Board approval.

Objectives

The 2026 Legislative Program is organized to guide the Agency's actions and positions in support of three primary objectives:

- Maintain and enhance funding opportunities to support transit in general as well as the Agency's specific projects, programs and services;
- Seek a regulatory environment that streamlines project delivery and maximizes the Agency's ability to meet transportation service demands; and
- Reinforce and expand programs that build and incentivize public transportation ridership and improve safe and quality transportation choices.

Issues

The Legislative Program is structured to apply these core objectives to a series of State and Federal issues falling in these categories:

- Budget and Transportation Funding Opportunities
- Transportation Project Requests and Needs
- Regulatory, Legislative, and Administrative Actions

Should other issues surface that require the Board's attention, actions will be guided by the three policy objectives listed above. If needed, potential action on issues that are unrelated to these policy goals will be brought to the Board for consideration.

Advocacy Process

Staff will indicate on each monthly legislative update to the Board recommended positions for pending bills or policy initiatives. Once the Board has an opportunity to review the recommended position, staff will communicate the position to the relevant entities (such as the bill author, relevant legislative committees, agencies, or stakeholders). If legislation falls outside of the scope of the Board's adopted Legislative Program, Board approval will be required prior to the Agency taking a position. In rare circumstances, should a position on a bill or legislation fall outside the

scope of the Board's adopted Legislative Program and be needed in advance of a Board meeting, staff will confer with the Board Chair.

Public Engagement Strategies

Staff, led by the Communications Division and its legislative consultants, will employ a variety of public engagement strategies to support the 2026 Legislative Program, including:

- Direct Engagement
Engage policymakers, sponsor or support legislation, submit correspondence and provide public testimony that communicates and advances the Agency's legislative priorities and positions.
- Coalition-based Engagement
Engage stakeholders to build awareness about specific issues and participate in local, regional, statewide and national coalitions organized to advance positions that are consistent with the Legislative Program.
- Media Engagement
Build public awareness and communicate the Agency's legislative priorities by issuing press releases, organizing media events, and using social media.

The adopted legislative program will guide the Agency's legislative advocacy efforts until approval of the next program.

State and Regional

Budget and Transportation Funding Opportunities

- Work with the Agency's state legislative delegation, state and regional agencies, transit systems and transit associations to identify and advance opportunities for funding supporting the Agency's transportation priorities and operations.
- Advocate for full funding of all state programs supporting the Agency's operations and capital initiatives.
- Champion efforts to secure additional funds for transit operations and capital projects.
- Work to ensure committed funds are appropriated and available in a timely manner and not withheld or diverted for other purposes.
- Advocate for flexible funding mechanisms that can adapt to changing transit demands.
- Support local and regional funding options that preserve and enhance funding for the Agency and sister agencies.
- Support efforts to reduce barriers to transit funding for voter-approved ballot measures, legislation, and other funding mechanisms.

- Assess and participate in the development of transit-related ballot measures relevant to the Agency's interests.
- Work to ensure the Agency is competitive for all applicable Cap-and-Invest programs, including discretionary funding.
- Advocate against efforts to impose unjustified and/or overly burdensome financial regulations and requirements on granting funding impacting Agency initiatives.
- Evaluate efforts to replace or supplement the gas tax with other funding mechanisms and advocate for maintaining current levels of funding dedicated to transportation operations, projects and programs.

Transportation Project Requests and Needs

- Collaborate with regional transit agencies, business, community, transportation and other stakeholders to enhance, support and advocate for equitable transportation access and mobility in the Bay Area.
- Champion policies and projects to improve safety and encourage the use and development of public transit, first/last mile and other multimodal transportation options and infrastructure throughout San Mateo County and the region.
- Engage with legislators, government officials and stakeholders to build support for the efficient and cost-effective development of the Dumbarton Rail Corridor and related projects. Work to maintain all existing Agency rights to the corridor, enhance its development potential, and limit regulatory and other hurdles.
- Advocate for regional and state transit-supportive policies that improve bus stops, bus speed and reliability, bike and pedestrian safety and accessibility on streets in the SamTrans network, including El Camino Real.
- Advocate for the Agency to be able to develop its property in the manner most beneficial to Agency needs and goals.
- Engage with state or regional efforts that directly link transportation funding and/or policies to housing and provide for higher density housing projects near transit stations.
- Support partners in the development of grade separation projects in San Mateo County.
- Support policies that encourage the use of transportation demand management (TDM) and efforts that provide more TDM tools and funding opportunities.

- Work to ensure state and regional policies support the Agency's employee recruitment and retention goals.
- Work to ensure state and regional policies improve operator, employee, and passenger safety.
- Champion efforts to prioritize San Mateo County projects in regional plans such as Plan Bay Area.

Legislative, Regulatory, and Administrative Actions

- Advocate for regional and state policies that remove barriers and promote effective implementation and delivery of transportation projects.
- Engage with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and other regional bodies, the Legislature, sister agencies, and stakeholders on policies related to regional coordination to enhance the transit experience in the Bay Area.
- Ensure requirements for transit agencies do not result in tradeoffs with unintended consequences for transit riders and the community.
- Evaluate and engage in efforts to modernize the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to expedite delivery of Agency projects.
- Advocate for funding for zero-emission buses and charging/refueling infrastructure to facilitate compliance with the Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation.
- Advocate for the re-establishment of the partial sales and use tax exemption for zero-emission buses.
- Work to ensure state regulations related to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reduction and Climate Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) implementation align with the goals of the Agency.
- Evaluate and engage with legislation that makes additional changes to the Brown Act. Support changes that clarify application of Senate Bill 707 (2025) and promote government efficiency while continuing to provide flexibility for Board and non-elected advisory/oversight committee members participating in meetings remotely, and increase participation in public meetings.
- Monitor new litigation related to the Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) and participate in conversations to advance the Agency's interests.
- Evaluate state and regional efforts to update implementation of Sustainable Communities Strategies and work to ensure the Agency's projects remain eligible for funding.

- Advocate against efforts to impose unjustified and/or overly burdensome regulations or restrictions impacting Agency initiatives.

Federal

Budget and Transportation Funding Opportunities

- Work with the Agency's federal legislative delegation, members of the administration, federal departments, national organizations, other transit systems and associations to identify and advance opportunities for funding or legislative policies supporting the Agency's transportation priorities and operations.
- Identify, pursue and support federal funding opportunities, including but not limited to Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending requests and discretionary programs—for operations and capital projects.
- Work to ensure committed funds (discretionary and formula) are available in a timely manner and not withheld or diverted for other purposes.
- Advocate for flexible funding mechanisms that can adapt to changing transportation needs and demands in San Mateo County.
- Work to ensure the Agency remains competitive and eligible for all applicable federal discretionary funding programs.
- Advocate for the preservation of previously awarded funding for transportation projects in San Mateo County.
- Support efforts to ensure tax provisions that benefit Agency priorities are included in any tax or finance proposal.
- Advocate against efforts to impose unfunded mandates, unjustified and/or overly burdensome financial regulations and requirements on granting funding impacting Agency initiatives.

Legislative, Regulatory and Administrative Actions

- Advocate for programs and policies in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill and any other applicable Federal policy or regulatory initiative that are beneficial to the Agency's goals.
- Support a regulatory environment that will help transportation projects in San Mateo County move through the different stages of planning, environmental, and construction phases.

- Support opportunities to improve the ability of the Agency to conduct safe and efficient transportation operations, administration, planning and project delivery.
- Work to ensure federal policies improve operator, employee, and passenger safety.
- Advocate for the Agency to be able to develop its property in the manner most beneficial to Agency needs and goals.
- Collaborate with transportation providers, transportation advocacy groups and other stakeholders to coordinate support for regulations that maximize benefits for transportation programs, services and users.
- Evaluate and engage in efforts to modernize the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) to expedite delivery of Agency projects.
- Advocate against efforts to impose unjustified and/or overly burdensome regulations or restrictions impacting Agency initiatives.
- Support policies that will allow for effective public private partnerships and alternative project delivery methods.