



June 1, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of the State of California

The Honorable Toni G. Atkins
Senate President Pro Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
California State Assembly

Re: State Budget Funding to Avoid Public Transportation Fiscal Cliff

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tempore Atkins, and Speaker Rendon,

As public transit systems grapple with the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic, **we write to urge that you take action to provide limited, near-term public transportation operations funding in this year's state budget.**

Transit systems across the state are at risk of drastic service cuts due to large near-term operating budget shortfalls precipitated by slower than expected ridership recovery, inflation-driven increases in operating and capital costs, and the exhaustion of federal relief funds.

In the absence of new state funding to address these budget shortfalls, many agencies may soon be forced to implement major service cuts. If transit service becomes less frequent, and thus less attractive to riders, these potential cuts would result in further ridership and revenue losses, which would necessitate still more service cuts. Additionally, some agencies may need to increase fares or slow down much needed capital projects, putting at risk the state's ability to leverage billions of dollars in once-in-a-generation federal transit infrastructure funds right when we need to be investing in improving public transportation to increase ridership.

Our public transportation systems have faced their share of difficulties — both longstanding and new — since the onset of the pandemic. Near-term operations funding from the state will help provide agencies with time to identify long-term, sustainable funding and operational models that will improve transit service and protect against future service declines.

Thank you, Pro Tempore Atkins and Speaker Rendon, for your strong and continued support of public transportation funding in this year's state budget. Your support for preserving transit capital funding by reversing Governor Newsom's \$2 billion proposed cut in the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) is crucial in not only protecting our progress in sustainable infrastructure investments, but also in reducing capital cost pressures that would widen transit agencies' operating shortfalls.

Governor Newsom, we thank you for expressing willingness to engage with stakeholders and the legislature on identifying solutions to transit operating shortfalls. And we understand that the state is projecting a budget shortfall that makes addressing this fiscal cliff more difficult than in a year with a better fiscal outlook. We look forward to engaging in discussions, **but a commitment to discussions, regardless of the fiscal outlook, is not enough.**

Allowing the state's transit systems to unravel, as they continue to recover and stabilize operations from pandemic ridership declines, would have long-term, possibly irreversible, devastating impacts on California's transportation system and climate goals. The resulting service cuts would lead to fewer mobility options for Californians, especially low-income transit-dependent riders, and increased driving, congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Transit is not optional — it is an essential service for millions of Californians as they go about their daily lives, whether going to work, school, home, doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, or any other number of trips. Transit is also an essential tool in meeting the ambitious goals that science and our constituents demand to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and avoid increased traffic congestion.

We urge you to work with the legislature to not only come to agreement on reversing the \$2 billion proposed TIRCP reduction, but also take action in this year's budget to provide transit operations bridge funding to help agencies avoid these shortfalls. Furthermore, this funding should be connected to transit agency commitments that improve safety, security, cleanliness, reliability, seamlessness, and rider convenience that will help public transportation not only survive this period, but regrow ridership and thrive in a post-pandemic world.

Thank you for your attention and dialogue on this matter as we urge your action.

Sincerely,



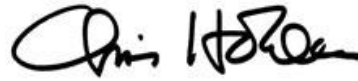
Scott Wiener
Senator, 11th District



Lena A. Gonzalez
Senator, 33rd District



Buffy Wicks
Assemblymember, 14th District



Chris Holden
Assemblymember, 41st District




Dave Cortese
Senator, 15th District



Josh Newman
Assemblymember, 29th District



Matt Haney
Assemblymember, 17th District



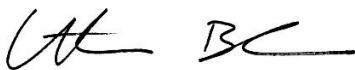
Damon Connolly
Assemblymember, 12th District



Ben Allen
Senator, 24th District



Josh Becker
Senator, 13th District



Catherine Blakespear
Senator, 38th District



Steven Bradford
Senator, 35th District



Bill Dodd
Senator, 3rd District



John Laird
Senator, 17th District



Caroline Menjivar
Senator, 20th District



Susan Rubio
Senator, 22nd District



Lola Smallwood-Cuevas
Senator, 28th District



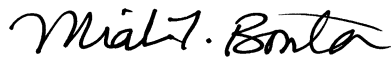
Aisha Wahab
Senator, 10th District



Dawn Addis
Assemblymember, 30th District



Marc Berman
Assemblymember, 23rd District



Mia Bonta
Assemblymember, 18th District



Isaac Bryan
Assemblymember, 55th District



Juan Carrillo
Assemblymember, 39th District



Ash Kalra
Assemblymember, 25th District



Alex Lee
Assemblymember, 24th District



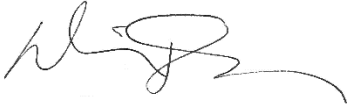
Evan Low
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Tina McKinnor
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Liz Ortega
Assemblymember, 20th District



Diane Papan
Assemblymember, 21st District



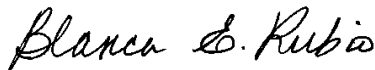
Sharon Quirk-Silva
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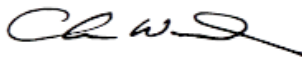
Freddie Rodriguez
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Assemblymember, 13th District



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Cc:

CalSTA Secretary Toks Omishakin

CalSTA Undersecretary Mark Tollefson

CalSTA Chief Deputy Secretary for Rail and Transit Chad Edison

Deputy Cabinet Secretary James Hacker

California Air Resources Board Executive Officer Steve Cliff