September 15, 2015

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1250 (Bloom) – Vehicles: buses: gross axle weight – Signature Request

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the California Transit Association, I write to you today to voice our support for AB 1250 (Bloom), and to respectfully request that you SIGN this important measure. The Association is the SPONSOR of AB 1250, which would provide much-needed relief from an ongoing challenge related to California's decades-old bus axle weight limit.

Current law generally prohibits a publicly owned or operated transit system from procuring a transit bus whose gross weight on any single axle exceeds 20,500 pounds. Tension between this law – the goals of which are to reduce damage to roadways – and other laws intended to further societal goals, like improving air quality and enhancing mobility for qualified persons under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, has resulted in some transit operators being caught between unintentionally conflicting policy and regulatory objectives. In 2012 and 2014, the Association sponsored legislation, backed by transit agencies, bus manufacturers and local governments, which provided a path forward for resolving this challenge; namely, it was discovered then that transit buses may not always comply with the state’s bus axle weight limit.

Recognizing this tension, you signed AB 1706 (Eng) [Chapter 771, Statutes of 2012] and AB 1720 (Bloom) [Chapter 263, Statutes of 2014] to provide temporary relief from California’s bus axle weight limit while we continued work on a long-term solution. As a result of these efforts, current law, until January 1, 2016, exempts from the general prohibition a transit system that is procuring a new transit bus that is of the same or lesser weight than the bus it is replacing, or if it is incorporating a new fleet class into its inventory, and its governing board makes certain findings and notices all affected local governments. Without legislative action, that temporary procurement process goes away, and the old bus axle weight limit will go back into effect on January 1, 2016.

The version of AB 1250 before you today represents the best compromise for a long-term solution, as developed by the California Transit Association, the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, and with the input of the California Department of Transportation.

AB 1250 clarifies that transit buses procured pursuant to a solicitation issued before January 1, 2016 or during option periods in multi-year contracts not exceeding five years, or January 1, 2021, whichever is earlier, are exempt from the old bus axle weight limit and from the axle schedule described below. More significantly, the bill provides long-term relief from the conflicting policy and regulatory objectives that have long influenced the weight of transit buses in California, by:

- Acknowledging that transit buses in operation today may not always comply with the state’s old bus axle weight limit, for the appropriate reasons discussed above (i.e. cross-cutting laws and...
regulations compelling heavier vehicles), and codifying more realistic and statutorily-enforceable schedules of new bus axle weights that are specific to standard transit buses and articulated or zero-emission buses; while,

- Decreasing the allowable bus axle weights over time, on descending schedules from 2016 to 2022, thus driving bus suppliers and public transit operators to design, manufacture and ultimately put into operation increasingly lighter transit buses.

The bill would also convert the measurement and enforcement of bus axle weights to curb weight (from today’s gross weight), implicitly acknowledging that a transit bus’s weight changes throughout the day with ridership, and thus creating an objective measure for the maximum weight of any transit bus that “rolls off the factory floor.” This shift would also underscore that the role of each transit operator is to maximize ridership while operating within prescribed federal, state and local safety parameters.

Given the substantial progress that has been made on crafting a bill that acknowledges and addresses the major concerns of the various impacted stakeholders, we again respectfully request that you SIGN this bill.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me directly at (916) 446-4656 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Joshua W. Shaw
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Richard Bloom, California State Assembly
Camille Wagner, Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Michael Martinez, Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Michael Mullaney, Assistant Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor