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TTTF Working Draft Report – Tranche 1 UPDATED

(TTTF Meeting #12 August 26, 2025)

SB125 Transit Transformation Task Force Report

CalSTA
CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Version History

Version #	Date	Notes
Tranche 1 - 0.1	3/17/2025	Drafted narrative content in Sections 2, 3, and 4
Tranche 1 - 0.2	4/16/2025	Revised Section 2 and drafted Executive Summary to address Task Force feedback

Tranche 1 - 0.3	5/30/2025	Revised and released Tranche 1 of the Working Draft Report for Task Force review at TTTF Meeting #11.
		Tranche 1 includes:
		• Executive Summary
		• 1.0 Background
		• 2.0 Recent California Transit Trends and Challenges
		• 3.0 Guiding Principles
		• 4.0 Principles, Strategies, and Recommendations
		  ○ Strategies and recommendations on transit prioritization (1.f.1.D), first/last mile access to transit (1.f.1.E), and transit accessibility
		  ○ Strategies and recommendations on transit safety and cleanliness (1.f.1.C)
		• Appendix A: Detailed analysis requested under SB125 1.E
		• Appendix B: Corresponding remediated recommendations

Tranche 1 - 0.4	7/20/2025	Revised Tranche 1 of the Working Draft Report based on Task Force feedback received via email in preparation for the rescheduled TTTF Meeting #11 on August 1, 2025.
Tranche 1 - 0.5	8/15/2025	Revised Tranche 1 of the Working Draft Report based on Task Force feedback received during TTTF Meeting #11. Tranche 1 includes: • Updated Appendixes A, B, and C

Contents

Executive Summary

California stands at the threshold of a bold new era in public transportation—one where transit is not just a service, but a cornerstone of a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future. Public transit already plays a critical role in people's lives across the State, enabling mobility, connection, and economic opportunity. However, the ~~State~~ transit in California can build on these strengths: with the right investments, ~~and~~ policies and service improvements, the ~~State~~California has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a world-class transit system that meets the moment on climate, housing, and community resilience.

Transit is more than just a way to get from place to place—it is a vital component in California's vision for more equitable, prosperous, and environmentally sustainable future. Forward-thinking legislation has laid a powerful foundation by recognizing transit as a cornerstone of the State's ambitious climate goals. For example, over the past two decades, California has passed laws to encourage transit-oriented development, funding for transit improvements to reduce car dependency, and has positioned transit as a key solution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.[1] These laws elevate public transit not only as a solution to meeting the State's climate goals, but also as a catalyst for reimagining how Californians live, move, and connect. From integrated regional planning and transit-oriented development to clean energy innovation, California is charting a path where transit drives progress across every corner of the State. To achieve this vision, California's transit system must be effective, efficient and reliable to deliver for residents. ~~However, transit must be an effective, efficient~~

California's recent housing legislation underscores a growing commitment to building vibrant, transit-connected communities where people can thrive without needing to rely on a car. Recent legislation has enabled affordable and mixed-income housing to be built along transit-friendly commercial corridors, and has expedited approval processes for urban infill projects, including many near transit.[2] By unlocking housing opportunities along

[1] Green Tariff Shared Renewables Program (SB 43: 2014); Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375: 2008); Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32: 2006).
[2] Affordable Housing and High Road Jobs Act (AB 2011: 2022); Middle-Class Housing Act (SB 6: 2022); Land use: streamlined housing approvals: multifamily housing developments (SB 423: 2023).

commercial corridors and near high-quality transit, these laws are paving the way for walkable neighborhoods that are affordable, accessible, and sustainable. They break down outdated zoning barriers and accelerate the creation of homes in the very places where transit can offer the greatest benefit—connecting residents to jobs, schools, services, and each other. Together, these visionary policies lay the foundation for a more inclusive and climate-resilient California. However, for these laws to work, we need robust, reliable public transportation to serve Californians.

Across California, transit agencies are already proving what is possible when we invest in people, safety, and community. For example, BART's Ambassador Program has redefined the rider experience by fostering a sense of presence and care on the system, helping restore trust and safety for thousands of daily riders. In Los Angeles, a groundbreaking, collaborative approach to Measure M united communities and secured transformative, long-term funding to reshape regional mobility. And when disaster strikes, transit acts as a lifeline, playing a critical role in mass evacuations and emergency response, such as during California's recent wildfires. These successes show that when transit is supported, it becomes more than just infrastructure—it becomes an engine for resilience, equity, and shared prosperity.

Transit in California is at a pivotal moment—facing real challenges, yet holding immense promise. Declining ridership, rising costs, and ~~outdated funding models~~ lack of funding test the resilience of our systems, even as operators navigate the effects of complex social issues such as the effect of homelessness, the opioid crisis, and more. Still, transit remains essential to achieving a livable climate, equitable access to opportunity, vibrant communities, and a thriving economy. Transit reduces traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions by moving people with fewer vehicles and it supports economic activity by enabling access to jobs, education, healthcare, and commerce, particularly for those who cannot drive to due to age, ability, or income. California's population is aging, and transit connects elderly or disabled riders to vital accessible services.

Additionally, t~~T~~ransit ~~also~~ fosters more livable, inclusive communities by reducing the need for extensive parking and encouraging walkable neighborhoods. For individual users, public transit can offer an affordable, convenient alternative to car ownership, and increases mobility and

independence for society at large. With leadership, smart policy, and sustained financial investment, we can transform public transit into a fast, reliable, and dignified alternative to driving—one that connects millions more people to what matters most. By building transit-supportive housing, ~~stabilizing~~ increasing funding, ~~and~~ embracing innovation, and continuously improving the effectiveness and efficiency of service, California can lead the nation in creating a transportation system that is truly built for the future.

TK: Tranche 2 / Tranche 3 Updates to the Exec Statement

Vision

Public transit is the backbone of a prosperous, affordable, climate-resilient, and equitable California—empowering every Californian to move freely, reliably, and sustainably.

1.0 Background: SB125 and the Transit Transformation Task Force

The Transit Transformation Task Force (TTTF or Task Force) was established through SB125 (Chapter 54, Statutes of 2023), which required CalSTA to convene selected transit leadership and subject matter experts from the State, local agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations and other transit stakeholders. The Task Force's mandate was to develop policy recommendations to grow transit ridership and improve the transit experience for all users. CalSTA, in consultation with the Task Force, must prepare and submit a report of findings and policy recommendations to the Legislature by October 31, 2025.

To develop these findings, the Task Force met [placeholder] times around the State between December 2023 and October 2025 to discuss and develop recommendations on the topics stipulated in SB125.

In addition to the Task Force meetings CalSTA formed a Technical Working Group (TWG) as an advisory body to support the Task Force. TWG members included representatives from CalSTA, Caltrans and technical partners who were identified as subject matter experts. The TWG members attended monthly meetings to provide expertise and insight on key transit topics for the Task Force to consider.

Lastly, CalSTA conducted over [placeholder] individual interviews with subject matter experts (SME), including TTTF, TWG members and other individuals identified by the Task Force and TWG as experts in their field. The information obtained during SMEs interviews were used to inform TWG and Task Force meetings.

2.0 Recent California Transit Trends and Challenges

Public transit in California is at an inflection point. Across the State, as overall transit ridership has declined, transit reliability has also declined, as increasing traffic congestion over time has reduced transit operating speeds in mixed flow conditions. At the same ~~there~~time, California has also experienced a noted decline in the perception of transit security.

Urban transit operators face different challenges than suburban and rural operators. Yet across the board, ~~Simultaneously,~~ the cost to operate transit has risen faster than inflation, causing some California transit agencies to face immediate funding challenges in a post COVID revenue environment. California also has ambitious climate goals, requiring a reduction of VMT by 30% from 2019 levels by 2045.[3] This goal will require a robust, complete, and connected transit network per the CARB scoping plan. A transformed transit system is needed to meet California's safety, equity, climate, and economic goals.

Public transit created the original cities and streetcar suburbs of California~~, . and in~~In the 21st century, as transit faces increasing competition from new technologies including autonomous vehicles and app-based ride hailing services, public transit can once again be the mode of choice. Research has shown that fast, frequent, and reliable transit service increases transit ridership and mode share at a rate exceeding the rate of investment, while infrequent, slow networks have declining or stagnant ridership.

Some of the recent California transit trends and challenges include:

- **Regulatory and policy barriers** that hinder progress on delivering effective transit solutions. These include outdated regulations, the absence of transit-first policies, and the fact that transit operators have limited control of the underlying infrastructure. The mandated transition to zero-emission vehicles poses additional operational and financial challenges for agencies. Within the context of the Transportation Development Act (TDA), agencies have also struggled to meet farebox recovery and State Transit Assistance (STA) efficiency requirements under current State law.

[3] California Air Resources Board 2022 Scoping Plan Appendix E Sustainable and Equitable Communities.

Since full usage of transit funding for both operating and capital is tied to meeting these requirements, agencies may be disincentivized to provide service at times or in areas that are more costly, which ultimately reduces accessibility for transit-dependent riders.

- **Transit ridership has been declining over time,** and this decline accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Transit ridership in California had already started to decline in the 2010s with ridership falling by approximately 11% from 2010 to 2019. There are many drivers of transit ridership decline. Recent research by UC ITS[4] demonstrates that the drivers include sprawl due to housing costhousing costs, the availability of drivers' licenses for undocumented people, and the emergence of TNCs and other means of shared mobility., and One driver is slower service, as One key driver is transit speed, as bus speeds declined 7% from 2002 to 2019.[5] California transit ridership reached its low in April 2020 during the pandemic, with bus boardings down by 73% and rail boardings down by 84% compared with the previous year.[6][7] This required transit agencies to rethink routes and frequencies and shift policies to meet demand in a post-COVID environment, often determining how to most efficiently allocate service. While ridership has improved following the pandemic, the number of unlinked passenger trips in 2024 was still approximately ~23% lower than 2019 (or pre-COVID) levels, and ~35% below the 2008 peak levels However, this recovery is uneven, with higher performing transit, such as the Van Ness BRT, increasing ridership to 130% of pre-pandemic levels.[8]
- **COVID-19 changed the way in which riders use transit.** Before the pandemic, transit service typically followed a traditional commuting pattern—riders came into a central business district in the morning and

[4] University of California Institute of Transportation Studies: "Did Extending Driver Licenses to Individuals Without Legal Presence Affect Transit Ridership in Orange County?" (2024), p 1. Manville, M., Taylor, B.D., Blumenberg, E. *et al.* Vehicle access and falling transit ridership: evidence from Southern California. *Transportation* 50, 303–329 (2023).

[5] Ridership and bus speed data from the National Transit Database.

[6] University of California Institute of Transportation Studies: "Changing Transit Ridership and Service During the COVID-19 Pandemic" (2022), pg. 1.

[7] University of California Institute of Transportation Studies: "Did Extending Driver Licenses to Individuals Without Legal Presence Affect Transit Ridership in Orange County?" (2024), p 1. Manville, M., Taylor, B.D., Blumenberg, E. *et al.* Vehicle access and falling transit ridership: evidence from Southern California. *Transportation* **50**, 303–329 (2023). University of California Institute of Transportation Studies: "Changing Transit Ridership and Service During the COVID-19 Pandemic" (2022), pg. 1.

[8] National Transit Database (2012-2023). Number of unlinked passenger trips. Full citation forthcoming.

leave in the evening. However, after the pandemic travel patterns became less predictable, with more riders traveling during the day to different locations for a variety of reasons. This increase in "anywhere-to-anywhere, all-day travel" represented a departure from the traditional commuter pattern. However, servicing these trips is key to making transit work for all, as the historical Central Business District (CBD) oriented systems failed to meet the needs of many Californians.

- **Transit fleet reliability has declined.** Despite transit agencies spending more on operating expenses, service reliability generally deteriorated, falling by about 18% across all modes.[9] While some transit agencies have improved reliability by adopting newer fleets and preventative maintenance practices, others have faced unexpected operational challenges that have led to less reliable service.[10] Additionally, early rollout of ZEV buses and vehicles has caused operational and reliability challenges for those agencies.
- **Safety is a growing concern.** The number of assaults on California public transit doubled between 2013-2023.[11] To address this, agencies such as BART and LA Metro have increased police and community support officers on their transit systems, which has begun to reverse these trends. Finally, the state's housing and homelessness crisis has presented challenges for operators, who are ineligible for state homelessness assistance and support funding compared to peers such as cities and counties, who may or may not allocate resources to assist agencies.
- **Costs have increased, contributing to near-term funding challenges.** Transit agencies in California are facing increasing financial pressures as costs have risen faster than inflation. Over the past decade, operating expenses have grown approximately [13-18% - TBC] above inflation and capital costs have increased by about [2-6% - TBC] above inflation.[12] State transit agencies' revenues have grown about [18%- TBC] for this same time period.[13]

[9] Service reliability as measured by mean distance between failures (MDBF). Full citation forthcoming.
[10] University of California Institute of Transportation Studies: Changing Transit Ridership and Service During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2022). Full citation forthcoming.
[11] University of California Institute of Transportation Studies: Changing Transit Ridership and Service During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2022). Full citation forthcoming.
[12] National Transit Database data on operating expenditures and capital costs. Full citation forthcoming.
[13] National Transit Database growth in total funding from 2013 to 2023. Full citation forthcoming.

- **Some transit agencies are facing a near-term funding crisis.**[14] Agencies that relied heavily on passenger fares pre-COVID, such as BART, Metrolink, and Caltrain face fiscal cliffs due to decreased ridership and increased operating costs. Additionally, agencies like the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) have lost revenue from other sources such as parking fees, which have dropped by about 30% compared to pre-pandemic levels.[15] Temporary federal relief funds, such as those from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CCRSA) Act, helped mitigate these shortfalls but are now either depleted or nearing exhaustion.[16]
- **Looking ahead, broader transit funding may face further risks due to shifting economic and ZEV adoption trends.** The rise in zero-emission vehicle sales and greater fuel efficiency is expected to reduce fuel tax revenues, which support the State Transit Assistance (STA) program. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, STA funding could decline by approximately $300 million—about one-third of its total funding—by 2035.[17] Other funding sources, such as sales tax revenues and cap-and-trade auction proceeds, are subject to economic fluctuations, making future revenue streams uncertain. This uncertainty makes it hard for transit agencies to plan for growth and build a robust, reliable system.
- **When transit agencies experience revenue losses, they may resort to service cuts to maintain financial stability.** However, this can trigger an operational spiral where reduced service discourages ridership, further eroding revenue and necessitating additional cuts. Moreover, capital projects such as fleet upgrades and infrastructure improvements will be delayed or downsized, impacting the user experience and further discouraging ridership. Additionally, the transition to ZEV vehicles may result in higher costs and less service, depending on reliability and cost of zero-emission vehicles. Avoiding this downward spiral is critical for California to meet its climate and equity goals.

2.1 Transformational funding, services, and outcomes

[14] California Transit Association: Transit Funding Crisis, published March 24, 2023.
[15] Full citation forthcoming.
[16] California transit agencies need more state support. Full citation forthcoming.
[17] Full citation forthcoming.

To achieve California's climate, equity, and prosperity goals, a fundamental change to how we approach transit service and funding is needed. Collectively, we can deliver better outcomes with more funding, changes to policy, and more.

These ambitious goals require ambitious changes. This report helps lay out a policy pathway that would lead to a transformative increase in transit ridership, in line with the required increase to meet our climate goals. This shift would not only reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and emissions but also redefine the way people move, live, and experience their communities.

To achieve this, public transit must become a viable and competitive alternative to driving. In urban areas, this means reducing travel times so that a transit trip is fast, frequent, and reliable while providing competitive travel to alternatives such as driving. Just as critically, the user experience must be elevated, making transit comfortable, safe, clean, reliable, and seamless for riders. In less urban areas, preserving access to the network and broader destinations are a critical lifeline for communities and should be preserved and strengthened.

At the same time, developing housing and mixed-use spaces near high-quality transit must accelerate to achieve 1.4 to 2.4 million transit-supportive homes across the State.[18] By aligning land use policies with ambitious transit expansion, California could make a decisive impact on its housing crisis—creating vibrant, walkable communities where people can live affordably and access opportunities without depending on a car.

Financially, a thriving transit system must be operationally sustainable. This requires increased, predictable ~~and~~, and flexible government funding streams, greater cost efficiency in capital and operational spending, and diversified revenue sources—including fares, real estate assets, toll revenues, and innovative funding mechanisms. By ~~stabilizing and~~ strengthening transit finances, California can create a system that is not only resilient but also capable of continued growth and service improvements.

TK Additional Tranche 3 materials

2.2 Accelerating progress on CalSTA's Core Four Priorities

[18] Full citation forthcoming. Research collaboration by UrbanFootprint, HDR, Mapcraft Labs, and Economic & Planning Systems (link).

Public transit will be the backbone of future mobility options in California. By addressing its transit challenges, increasing transit ridership, and improving the overall transit experience, the State will also be supporting CalSTA's "Core Four" priorities.

- **Safety**: On average, 12 people are killed every day on California roads, and traffic deaths are at a 16-year high.[19] Transit offers a safe alternative to driving, boasting lower crash rates than vehicle travel and lower, less costly crime rates than vehicle crimes.[20] A robust public transit system will support the State's effort to provide safe mobility options and reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero.
- **Equity:** CalSTA aims to create an equitable and accessible transportation network for all Californians. Over half of the State's public transit riders transit riders are low-income and non-white. According to 2021 U.S. Census data, almost 60% of California residents who commute via public transit have a household income below $35,000.[21] In San Francisco, 57% of Muni riders are people of color and 70% of riders make less than $50,000 a year.[22] Additionally, many Californians cannot drive due to their age, abilities, or other factors. According to 2023 statistics, approximately 30% of Californians (including children) do not have a driver's license.[23] A robust public transit supports California's commitment to transportation equity.
- **Climate Action:** Nearly 50% of all climate-changing pollution in California comes from the transportation sector, and this demands our action for a cleaner California. Meeting California's emissions targets will require a reduction in California's overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) alongside the shift to zero-emission vehicles. As part of California's plan to reach its mandated carbon neutrality by 2045, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) targets a reduction in VMT of approximately 30% by 2045.[24] Transit

[19] CalSTA 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, p. 8. https://calsta.ca.gov/-/media/calsta-media/documents/2024-2026_calsta_strategic_plan-v10-a11y.pdf.
[20] Victoria Transport Policy Institute, *Safer than You Think: Revisiting the Transit Safety Narrative*, by Todd Litman (June 2025), p. 26.
[21] SPUR: How California Can Help Transit Survive — and Thrive March 17, 2023. Full citation forthcoming.
[22] https://www.sfmta.com/press-releases/press-statement-munis-impending-fiscal-cliff.
[23] U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, Highway Statistics Series. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2023/dl201.cfm. This is percentage may in be higher, because not all people who have license can afford to drive or have access to a vehicle at a given time.
[24] CARB 2017 scoping plan. Full citation forthcoming.

can move many more people than vehicles, and shifting California out of their cars and onto transit will support this reduction in VMT.

- **Economic Prosperity**: Transportation policy done right creates well-paying jobs, provides affordable options, and powers California's economy. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), transit investments have a 5:1 economic return. These benefits arise through a few different channels including direct time and cost savings from users, concentration of economic and recreational hubs around transit, and stimulus from capital investment spending.[25]

In addition to supporting these Core Four priorities, transforming transit is also aligned with California's housing and land use goals. California has a goal of building 2.5 million new homes by 2030, with no less than one million units for lower-income households.[26] Access to high-quality transit is needed to support higher density land-use both around where people live and their destinations. In turn, higher-density of land-use also supports future growth in ridership.

[25] https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-Public-Transit-2020.pdf Full citation forthcoming.
[26] A Home for Every Californian: 2022 Statewide Housing Plan. Full citation forthcoming.

3.0 Guiding Principles to Transform Transit in California

The TTTF's guiding principles for the report identify at the highest level, how a transformational increase in ridership and user experience could be achieved. The Legislature, Administration, Agencies, Regions and other stakeholders should consider these principles key to unlocking transformation, which are presented in unranked order:

- **Principle: Transit should be operationally and financially sustainable**

Achieving a more efficient and fiscally sustainable transit system is essential to delivering reliable, high-quality service now and in the future.

~~For example, if 2009-2019 trends continued to 2035, operating costs could double and capital costs could triple,[27] threatening the ability to provide reliable services.~~ There is an immediate need to address the fiscal cliff numerous transit operators are facing with new funding. And to ensure long-term sustainability, California and its transit agencies must adopt a multi-faceted approach that includes increasing short-term funding flexibility, improving cost efficiency, and identifying new revenue sources for the future. Operational improvements such as strengthening workforce opportunities, optimizing fleet and asset management, and improving the implementation of Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) requirements will be critical to maintaining service levels and meeting evolving demands. By prioritizing financial resilience, transit systems can continue to serve communities effectively and equitably for years to come.

- **Safety is fundamental**

Safety and cleanliness are essential for a well-functioning public transit system, directly impacting both riders and operators. In California, some transit systems face significant challenges, including assaults on workers and passengers, other crimes, inadequate security presence, poor lighting, and issues related to mental health and homelessness. If riders do not feel safe, other aspects of transit service become irrelevant, making security and cleanliness top priorities. A safe and clean transit environment fosters trust, encourages ridership, and promotes equitable access. Key strategies to enhance safety include strengthening physical and technological security,

~~[27] Full citation forthcoming. Analysis from the National Transit Database data on revenues, operating expenditures and capital costs assuming cost trends continue into the future.~~

increasing coordination between transit agencies and social services, standardizing safety policies statewide, and securing dedicated funding for long-term improvements. By addressing these challenges holistically, transit systems can create a more secure and welcoming experience for all.

- **Principle: Provide fast, reliable, connected, and convenient transit services.**

~~Improving the speed, frequency, and reliability of~~Providing fast, reliable, connected, and convenient public transit services is essential to ~~–~~making ~~it a~~transit competitive and preferable alternative to car travel. Making public transit faster, more frequent, and more reliable would ~~help make it an attractive alternative and~~ persuade more Californians to choose transit over car travel while also delivering direct benefits to existing riders and indirect benefits to drivers by reducing congestion.

Improving transit's speed, frequency, and reliability requires a multi-pronged approach. Implementing transit prioritization strategies, such as dedicated bus lanes and traffic signal priority, can significantly reduce delays, increase ridership, and improve operational efficiency. In addition, improving transit scheduling, mapping, and wayfinding can help reduce transfer times and improve inter-regional travel. Lastly, improving first- and last-mile access to transit (by reducing the time it takes for riders to get to and from stations) can also reduce total travel times.

- **Principle: Provide transit that is accessible and easy to use for all**

An equitable transit system must be designed to serve everyone—regardless of age, ability, language, or familiarity with transit. Yet for too many Californians, transit remains physically inaccessible, operationally inflexible, or simply too confusing to use. Paratransit and dial-a-ride services, while mandated as critical complements to fixed-route transit, are often costly, difficult to navigate, and limited in availability, creating barriers for seniors and people with disabilities. At the same time, the broader transit system can be unintuitive for riders, with complex wayfinding, inconsistent signage, and confusing booking systems. Improving accessibility and ease of use requires both targeted and systemwide changes. Enhancing coordination across paratransit providers, modernizing booking and dispatch systems, and integrating accessible planning into broader transit investments will

expand access while controlling costs. At the system level, ensuring intuitive wayfinding, multilingual information, and simplified fare and service structures will create a more seamless and welcoming rider experience. Ultimately, designing for accessibility and ease of use supports not only those who need it most, but improves transit for everyone—making it a more viable, dependable, and inclusive option across California.~~Xxxxxx~~

- **Principle: Develop high quality public transit systems to support complete communities**

Transit and land use are deeply linked, with higher-density areas generating greater ridership, fueling economic growth, and supporting more destinations near transit. Increasing the density of housing, jobs, and services near high-quality transit would make public transportation more accessible, convenient, and successful. In California, population and job density around major transit hubs remains below levels that correspond to higher ridership systems, limiting transit's effectiveness and increasing costs. Land located near major transit hubs could potentially be made higher-density through policy changes that would allow for more. In particular, state, local, and transit agency-owned land offers significant potential for high-density, mixed-use, and affordable housing development, but realizing this requires policy changes to streamline zoning, entitlements, and permitting. Strengthening partnerships with developers and improving planning processes would create walkable, transit-oriented communities that reduce car dependence while driving economic and environmental benefits. Beyond accessibility and livability, transit-oriented development presents financial opportunities, as seen globally—agencies in Hong Kong and Paris generate substantial revenue through real estate assets. Expanding such models could enhance transit's long-term sustainability while advancing economic and equity goals.

4.0 Principles, Strategies, and Recommendations

Principle: Safety is fundamental

Topic Area: Safe and Clean Environment for Passengers and Operators (1.f.1.C)

Safety and security challenges within transit systems impact both transit workers and riders. Research has shown that the rates of fatal crashes and crime are both lower on public transportation than on roadways, and that safety risks on public transit are relatively low, and transit travel is significantly safer than vehicle travel.[28] Yet some public transit systems in California face safety and cleanliness challenges, including assaults on transit workers and riders, crime, inadequate security presence, poor lighting, and issues related to mental health and homelessness. Safety is a fundamental requirement for effective transit service—and if riders do not feel safe, other aspects of the system become irrelevant, making safety and cleanliness top priorities. Ensuring a secure and clean environment fosters trust, encourages higher ridership, and promotes equitable access to transit. Additionally, safety concerns are closely tied to ridership levels, as greater passenger presence can contribute to a perception of increased security, while cleanliness enhances the overall sense of safety.

Key strategies and recommendations that support providing a safe and clean riding experience for riders and operators include:

Strategy J: Implement physical security measures for frontline transit workers and riders.

Recommendations

- J.1. Install protective doors for bus operators consistent with safety operations and per union agreement.
- J.2. Improve surveillance and response capabilities by constructing emergency communications equipment and systems, increasing security

[28] Victoria Transport Policy Institute, *Safer than You Think: Revisiting the Transit Safety Narrative*, by Todd Litman (June 2025), p. 26.

cameras, and quality of cameras, and implementing technology to identify prohibited individuals.

- J.3. Update signage in and around stations for better navigation and safety, including reducing speed limits around transit stops.
- J.4. Increase lighting and other safety features in the areas surrounding transit stations to ensure safety on a first/last mile trip.

Strategy K: Improve coordination with Health & Human Services Agencies to ensure comprehensive health-related safety and security responses.

Recommendations

- K.1. Increase presence of safety professionals on transit systems through safety ambassadors, crisis intervention specialists, and/or uniformed officers, leveraging coordination with local police departments.
- K.2. Coordinate with health and human services agencies to implement services for unhoused people on and around transit systems.

Strategy L: Ensure coordination at the State level between agencies.

Recommendations

- L.1. Develop statewide safety and security standards (e.g., guidance on directing individuals to wraparound services, addressing mental health and substance abuse challenges.)
- L.2. Examine opportunities to regionalize prohibition orders within the existing legal framework.
- L.3. Establish parity in penalties for assault and battery against transit operators, ticketing agents, and all other transit employees.
- L.4. Encourage commercial development (e.g., platform kiosks, station stalls, exterior shops) at stations to improve perceived safety.
- L.5. Implement surveys for priority populations (e.g., seniors, women) to monitor safety of transit systems.

Strategy M: Provide dedicated safety and security funding.

Recommendations

- M.1. Provide dedicated funding for improving safety infrastructure (e.g., protective barriers, lighting) at transit stations and bus stops, and employing safety-related personnel.

- M.2. Provide dedicated funding for de-escalation and violence mitigation training specific to transit employees.
- M.3. Allow transit agencies to be eligible for homelessness funding programs.

Principle: Provide fast, reliable, connected, and convenient transit services

Topic Area: Transit Prioritization (1.f.1.D)

Transit prioritization refers to the strategies and infrastructure improvements that enhance the speed, frequency, reliability, and efficiency of bus and light rail transit by reducing delays caused by general traffic congestion. Transit prioritization is needed when buses and light rail vehicles operate in mixed right-of-way scenarios with vehicle traffic. Transit prioritization strategies and infrastructure include dedicated bus lanes, Transit Signal Priority (TSP) for buses, and transit stops that are strategically placed to minimize delays and allow passengers to board and alight efficiently. Enhancing the reliability and speed of bus services through transit prioritization can improve ridership revenue and operational efficiency by delivering better service with fewer resources.

However, scaling these initiatives is challenged by the high costs and lengthy timelines associated with road modifications, including planning, design, environmental reviews, community input, permitting, and construction. For instance, the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project in San Francisco increased bus speeds between 25% - 36%, and ridership reached 130% of pre-pandemic levels. Despite these benefits, the project took nearly 20 years to complete.

Key strategies and recommendations to accelerate and reduce the cost of delivering transit priority infrastructure at scale include:

Strategy A: Standardize, support, and scale transit priority infrastructure.

Recommendations

- A.1. Establish statewide procurements for technology, equipment, and materials that are needed for Transit Signal Priority (TSP), preemption, and other infrastructure that can be leveraged to lower costs and encourage standardization.
- A.2. Update the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) to include TSP and preemption for transit routes where

applicable. Create TSP guidelines & standards that can be leveraged in any jurisdiction. Work to encourage collaboration between cities and agencies to enable TSP at scale.

- A.3. Encourage implementation of transit priority and bus rapid transit (BRT) features on the state right of way, such as bus-only lanes or queue jumps and ensure that the State Highway Network can be used by Transit riders.
- ~~A.4. Authorize transit buses to be equipped with "yield to bus" signs, to establish yield requirement for auto travel.~~
- A.5. ~~Extend~~ Make permanent the authorization for transit agencies to use readily available camera technology to discourage illegal parking in transit-only lanes and at transit stops where parking is already prohibited under existing law, as well as other violations.

Strategy B: Expedite delivery of transit-supportive infrastructure and strategies.

Recommendations

- B.1. Allow for exemption or preemption of local and State permitting requirements on identified priority transit routes.
- B.2. ~~Extend~~ Make permanent the SB 922 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions for transit prioritization projects, general purpose lane to bus-only lane conversions, highway shoulders to part-time transit lanes conversions.
- B.3. Establish a by-right permitting mechanism for transit infrastructure – bus shelters, transit priority, TSP, etc. inside each city and on the State right of way.
- B.4. Establish a statewide TIGER team to assist with the implementation of BRT / Bus Only lanes statewide to assist with planning, engineering and implementation in all jurisdictions.

Strategy C: Coordinate and collaborate to deliver infrastructure across jurisdictions.

Recommendations

- C.1. Develop a framework on roles and responsibilities for TSP and BRT implementation for use statewide.
- C.2. Convene a statewide working group for cities, counties, MPOs, and transit agencies to discuss and solve common issues in implementing TSP.

Strategy D: Establish flexibility with State funding sources.

Recommendations

- D.1. Fund planning and engineering resources at the State level for easier implementation of transit priority infrastructure at the local level.
- D.2. Update state funding programs and guidelines to encourage the delivery of transit priority infrastructure.

Topic Area: First- and Last-Mile Access to Transit (1.f.1.E)

First- and last-mile access in transit refers to the connections that enable passengers to travel from their starting location to a transit station (first mile) and from a transit station to their final destination (last mile). These connections may include walking, biking, and micro-mobility options (such as e-scooters, bike-share, and ride-share programs). Ensuring that riders have first- and last- mile access is essential, as transit use declines by 90% when riders must walk more than a half mile. For California transit riders, a significant portion of overall travel time is spent getting to and from transit services, which can contribute to longer total trip times.

The most effective way to improve first- and last-mile access to transit is to increase the density of housing, jobs, recreational facilities, and healthcare services around high-quality transit infrastructure. By ensuring that essential destinations are located closer to transit, communities can improve accessibility, enhance transit efficiency, and encourage greater ridership.

Key strategies and recommendations to improve first- and last-mile access to transit include:

Strategy JJ: Reform planning process to improve access to transit.

Recommendations

- JJ.1. Empower and resource regional agencies to designate key transit hubs and station, in consultation with cities, counties and transit agencies, where clear standards, wayfinding, and rules will apply~~, tied to JJ2.~~
- JJ.2. Streamline permitting processes and timelines for delivering active transportation projects near transit hubs and stations.
- JJ.3. Assess conditions and collect data on sidewalk, mobility lanes, and transit hubs and create GIS maps highlighting existing accessibility infrastructure, including sidewalk quality and continuity, street furniture such as benches and lighting, and transit hub features such as signage and shelter to identify and address locations.
- JJ.4. Create a statewide registry of bus stops, each with a unique ID, and include stop amenity information.

Strategy KK: Ensure consistent and flexible funding for active transportation and first- and last- mile access to transit.

Recommendations

- KK.1. Increase funding for active transportation (e.g. Active Transportation Program funding) with reduced variability ~~and reduced administrative burden~~ from year-to-year, to increase first and last mile access to transit~~.~~
- KK.2. ~~Encourage existing and~~Reduce administrative burden to improve the use of existing and new State funding for active transportation projects~~. that better increase first/last mile access to transit.~~

Strategy LL: Coordinate and collaborate to provide first- and last- mile access to transit across jurisdictions.

Recommendations

- LL.1. Ensure interagency coordination on first- and last- mile planning, implementation, and maintenance between Caltrans, MPOs, local jurisdictions, CBOs, and transit agencies.
- LL.2. Create opt-in State Purchasing Schedule agreements for bikeshare infrastructure, service providers, and participants in California e-bike incentives and bike lending programs.

Principle: Provide transit that is accessible and easy to use for all

Topic: Accessible Transportation and the Transit Needs of Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

Accessible transportation services, including paratransit and dial-a-ride, face growing challenges for both operators and riders. While federal law mandates paratransit as a complement to fixed-route transit, these services are operationally complex, costly to operate, and require significant subsidies. Since 2010, paratransit costs have risen sharply, outpacing the growth of the populations that depend on them, straining financial and operational resources. Although the costs to deliver paratransit services are high, the quality of the services are low, and barriers to paratransit use (such as requiring 24-hour reservations) limits the mobility and access of people with disabilities.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach to improving service coordination, quality, efficiency, and accessibility. For paratransit and dial-a-ride services, enhanced coordination between providers could streamline operations, reduce redundancies, and improve ride availability. Improving booking and dispatch systems, potentially through technology-driven solutions, can enhance efficiency and minimize delays for users. Cross-cutting strategies such as better integration of planning and funding could support long-term sustainability, ensuring that accessible transportation services keep pace with rising demand while remaining financially viable. A proactive approach will be essential in meeting the mobility needs of seniors and people with disabilities while maintaining operational feasibility for transit agencies.

Strategy MM: Coordinate paratransit services efficiently between transit agencies and non-profit, private, and healthcare providers.

Recommendations

- MM.1. Support and coordinate with transit agencies to conduct statewide training, procurement, vehicle maintenance, and insurance costs. ~~through the sustainable transportation planning grant (STPG) or similar programs.~~

- MM.2. Empower transit agencies to provide more 'one-seat ride' services, or services to limit the number of transfers when services originate and/or end within an agreed upon expanded service area by creating frameworks for revenue sharing and paratransit service coordination.
- MM.3. Encourage healthcare providers and social service providers to engage in strategic planning with transit operators to better plan and coordinate public and private transport to healthcare in jurisdictions, to identify optimal times for healthcare appointments, allowing for shared rides.
- MM.4. Encourage legislature to change Medi-Cal managed care reimbursements to a per capita payment model per trip (rather than per medical recipient). Use ongoing revenue streams to subsidize and reimburse transit agencies that provide microtransit and paratransit services.

Strategy NN: Develop customer-facing and backend tools to improve the process of booking and dispatch of rides.

Recommendations

- NN.1. Encourage transit operators to improve information describing paratransit services and required eligibility documentation to use paratransit services and the ride request process.
- NN.2. Create an ADA accessible statewide eligibility verification service for transit agencies that provides information on service eligibility and Medi-Cal/Medicaid enrollment.
- NN.3. Provide opt-in software services to transit operators to optimize digital booking, dispatch and/or routing to increase operational efficiency and reduce wait and trip times.

Strategy OO: Improve accessibility of transit stops for all riders.

Recommendations

- OO.1. Conduct inventories of transit stop accessibility (e.g., ramps, wayfinding/signage, audio announcements) in line with the Master Plan for Aging initiatives, and explore statewide standards and guidelines for access to transit information.

Strategy PP: Reform planning process for paratransit.

Recommendations

- PP.1. Utilize ADA transition plans to guide spending, including identifying accessibility barriers, outlining methods for modifications, scheduling of improvements, and assigning responsibilities for implementation.
- PP.2. Prioritize expanding subsidized housing near transit for seniors and people with disabilities to increase their access to transportation.
- PP.3. Explore options to better serve ADA needs including discounted or free travel on fixed route or discounted taxis rides.
- PP.4. Identify partners to enhance information on public and private paratransit service offerings to make it easier for users to book rides and compare trip options, cost, and accessibility features.
- PP.5. Provide technical assistance to transit operators that either do not provide paratransit services, or use their own certification process, in conjunction with statewide guidelines.
- ~~PP.6. Encourage the linking of paratransit, microtransit, and fixed route planning.~~

Strategy QQ: Explore options to improve funding mechanisms for paratransit.

Recommendations

- QQ.1. Conduct a needs assessment for accessible transportation in CA, covering the following topics: funding for paratransit due to increased demand of paratransit and service improvements, including in areas not currently covered by paratransit. Align needs assessment with the goals listed in the Master Plan for Aging Initiatives and address concerns, with robust public engagement with people with lived experience.
- QQ.2. Encourage cost sharing agreements between transportation providers and healthcare providers, including improving Medi-Cal cost recovery programs for operators.
- QQ.4. Review and reconsider ICT requirements for paratransit vehicles.
- QQ.5. Provide greater flexibility to MPO/RTPAs to determine priorities for Section 5310 funds.

Appendix A: Detailed analysis requested under SB125 1.E

[See Attachment 3]

Appendix B: Table of all strategies and recommendations under SB125 (1)(f)

[See Attachment 2]

Appendix C: Existing Adopted Policy

[See Attachment 4]