TRANSIT TRANSFORMATION TASK FORCE (TTTF) MEETING #5

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA ITEM: 4

SUBJECT: Findings and Policy Recommendations for the Report to the Legislature

a. Process briefing to establish findings and policy recommendations.
b. Findings and policy recommendations on transit prioritization.

ACTION:

a. Approve, deny, or amend initial policy recommendations on transit prioritization.
   o Approve (the whole list.)
   o Deny (the whole list.)
   o Amend – propose adjusting any of the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION:

a. Approve or amend initial policy recommendations on transit prioritization.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 125 established and convened the Transit Transformation Task Force (TTTF) to include transit representatives from various organizations to develop a structured, coordinated process for engagement of all parties to develop policy recommendations to grow transit ridership and improve the transit experience for all users of those services. The TTTF includes members representing transit operators, both small and large operating in urban and rural jurisdictions, the Department of Transportation, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, regional transportation planning organizations, transportation advocacy organizations with expertise in public transit, labor organizations, academic institutions, the Senate Committee on Transportation, the Assembly Committee on Transportation, and other stakeholders. The legislature enacts the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), in consultation with the TTTF, to prepare and submit a report of findings and policy recommendations. This report includes identifying where statutory changes would be needed to implement recommendations, based on the task force's efforts to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature and the financial and technical feasibility of those recommendations. Section 13979.3, subdivision (e) and section 13979.3, subdivision (f) include the required topics that must be addressed in the report, with section 13979.3, subdivision (e)

requiring a detailed analysis on the listed topics and section 13979.3, subdivision (f) requiring recommendations on the listed topics.

DISCUSSION

a. PROCESS TO ESTABLISH FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force will be well served by developing a structured, coordinated process for engagement of all TTTF members, Technical Working Group (TWG) members, and subject matter experts (SME) to solicit and develop policy recommendations on the required key topics to improve transit. The TTTF's role is to direct the overall effort, make policy recommendations on key topics, and review the final report as part of CalSTA's consultation with the body. The TWG shall make policy recommendations, support data analysis, and provide technical expertise ahead of TTTF meetings. The SME interviews are focused, one-on-one interviews with individuals representing academia, private industry, state government, or community leadership to support the TTTF with expertise on a key topic. Policy proposals from all three levels of engagement will be recorded, consolidated, and categorized into a list of principles, strategies, and policy recommendations for the TTTF. During the TTTF meetings, individual policy recommendations will be discussed and voted on to form "draft" policy recommendations. Any TTTF member can make a motion to approve, amend, or deny policy recommendations, followed by another TTTF member to second the motion. The Chair will allow for deliberation and public comment. Then, TTTF members will vote on the stated motion. The motion will pass if it receives majority votes. CalSTA will prepare the approved "draft" policy recommendations into finalized findings and policy recommendations for the final report, along with the identified legal and program changes. The TTTF will then vote to approve the final report.

FINDINGS, PRINCIPLES, STRATEGIES, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The Staff Report will present the key topic and establish the underlying context for the topic area. This includes a brief overview of the topic, rationale behind why this topic should be discussed, and research questions that can help form policy recommendations. Findings are factual statements, that help guide the recommendations. Findings will include information collected from the TTTF, TWG, or SME's, including initial data analyses and/or case studies.

Three levels of organization – principles, strategies, and policy recommendations— are used to best support the overall development of the report.

Principles are value statements of the report organized around themes such as increasing ridership, safety, equity, sustainability, etc. that categorize the recommendations in the report. The principles help group the other strategies, recommendations, and actions but are primarily high-level statements to express what is needed to achieve our goals.

Strategies form the "issue areas," often drawn from SB 125 enabling legislation. The strategies are larger, strategic moves to enhance transit. Strategies tightly group the individual policy recommendations into an issue area and focus section of the report.

Policy recommendations are specific steps and initiatives that can be considered by stakeholders, such as the Legislature, the Executive Branch, state or local agencies, or transit operators. The policy recommendations are the small, specific items which are grouped into strategies for a particular issue area.
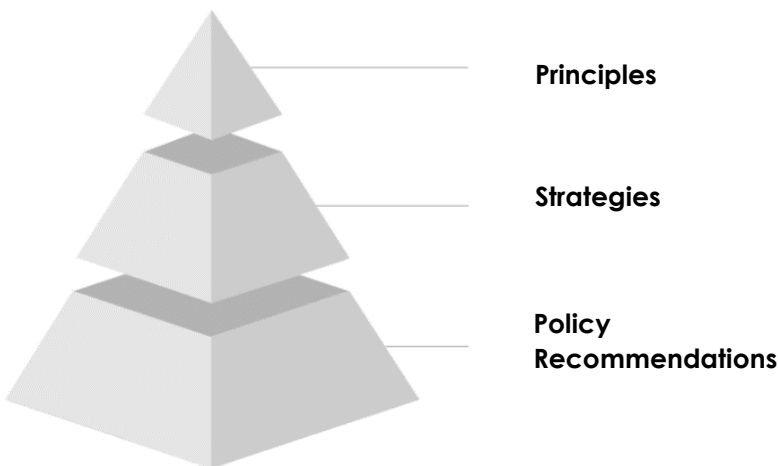

Figure 1: Principles, Strategies, and Policy Recommendations Structure

b. TRANSIT PRIORITIZATION

Government Code section 13979.3, subdivision (f) states that the report shall include recommendations regarding how to improve mobility and increase ridership on transit, including increasing the frequency and reliability, through strategies that include, but are not limited to, the sharing of real-time transit information such as arrival and departure times and predictions, service alert data, and transit prioritization on roads. This staff report contains an initial set of findings and recommendations on transit priority developed through discussions with SMEs, the TWG, and the TTTF.

FINDINGS

During the past 15 years, bus speeds have been declining statewide. Bus speeds have declined by 3% in the United States, and 7% in California between 2002 and 2019. This has contributed to an 18% decrease in ridership in California. Slower speeds frustrate riders and force transit operators to use additional operational resources to maintain existing services frequencies.

During the TTTF Meeting #4 in San Francisco, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) staff presented on the Van Ness Improvement Project in San Francisco, California. This project illustrated how transit services can increase frequency and reliability through transit prioritization. Van Ness Avenue specifically faced heavy amounts of local interregional traffic as an extension of Highway 101. The SFMTA set a goal to reduce travel times on Van Ness by 30%. The project implemented a BRT route, including a dedicated center-running bus lane, dedicated station platforms, all-door boarding, transit signal priority (TSP), and eliminating most left-turns for cars. This improved three customer experience service elements, speed, frequency, and availability. Specifically, the project:

- Increased ridership on 49 Van-Ness/Mission line to 130% of pre-pandemic levels,
- Reduced trip times by 36% northbound and 26% southbound on weekday trips, and
- Improved variability of travel time up to 45% on weekdays.

Key questions presented to the TTTF for discussion during meeting 4 include:

- What would need to change to implement transit prioritization at a scale and speed sufficient to achieve the transformational ridership goals laid out in SB 125?
- How could the SB 125 report be used to facilitate these changes?

The TTTF discussed these questions and developed policy recommendations during TTTF meeting 4.

The detailed policy recommendations are shown in Table 1 below.

PRINCIPLES, STRATEGIES, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table includes an initial list of principles, strategies, and policy recommendations regarding transit prioritization.

Table 1: Transit Prioritization Principle, Strategies, and Policy Recommendations

PRINCIPLE: *Better service, better outcomes.*	
STRATEGY	**POLICY RECOMMENDATION**
A. Standardize, support, and scale transit priority infrastructure.	**A.1.** Establish statewide procurements for Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and other infrastructure that can be leveraged to lower costs and encourage standardization.
	A.2. Update the CA MUCTD to include TSP 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. On the state right of way, encourage implementation of transit priority and BRT features, such as bus-only lanes or queue jumps. 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 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.
B. Expedite delivery of transit-supportive infrastructure.	**B.1.** Allow for exemption or preemption of local permitting requirements on identified priority transit routes.
	B.2. Extend the SB 922 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.
C. Coordinate and collaborate to	**C.1.** Develop a framework on roles and responsibilities for TSP and BRT implementation for use statewide.

deliver infrastructure across jurisdictions.	**C.2.** Convene a statewide working group for cities and transit agencies to discuss and solve common issues in implementing TSP.
	C.3. Assist with funding TSP & other transit amenities on a state-owned facility using SHOPP dollars.
D. Establish flexibility with State funding sources.	**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.