



February 25, 2020

Chair Suen and Members of the Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA) Board,

It is with a profound sense of urgency that Sacramento Metro Advocates for Rail and Transit (SMART) and SacMoves submit these comments in response to the draft Ordinance and Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) in the February 26, 2020 Agenda Packet. As you know, our broad-based coalition of business, labor, and community groups has been actively engaged with the STA Board, staff, consultants, stakeholders, and community members from all walks of life and all corners of Sacramento County throughout this process. We did not expect that the Board would ultimately approve everything we proposed. However, we do expect our elected leaders to endorse a plan that moves us in the right direction to transform Sacramento's transportation future.

At the February 12th Board meeting, we were surprised to learn about the 60/40 "compromise" split between roads and transit. While we recognize that the Board appears committed to this outcome as a compromise among some of the stakeholders in this process, this backsliding of investment in transit is both shortsighted and risky. We also believe it will be that much harder to convince two-thirds of voters to approve a new measure if they are asked to reduce the allocation for transit now compared to 16 years ago when voters overwhelmingly renewed Measure A with 75% of the vote - long before rampant wildfires and fossil fuel emissions drove climate change to become the primary imperative of state law and transportation funding.

The 2004 measure allocated **43.35%** of the half-cent sales tax revenue for **rail and transit (or 52.35% combined for rail, transit, and bus/carpool lanes)** and 41% for traditional road-only maintenance and new road capacity projects (or 50% counting bus/carpool lanes).¹

¹ The existing Expenditure Plan is Exhibit A to Ordinance No. STA 04-01, adopted by the Board on July 29, 2004, and posted on STA's website. That plan also allocates revenues from Developer Fees (35% for local roads, 20% for transit congestion relief, 20% for freeway safety and congestion relief, 15% for smart growth incentive programs, and 10% for open space acquisition and preservation as transportation project environmental mitigation). Staff has proposed a similar Developer Fee program with similar allocations in the new draft ordinance.

Attachment 1 provides a more detailed breakdown of the current staff plan compared to the existing Measure A, the staff's December 2019 plan that allocated 41.5% for transit, and the SMART/SacMoves plan that allocated 50% for transit.

If the Board is intent on sticking with the 60/40 compromise plan, then it becomes all the more important for the Expenditure Plan to incorporate language ensuring that the projects funded by the measure align with our agreed upon guiding principles and policies. To that end, we have actively engaged your staff over the last few weeks to incorporate such policy language into the Proposed Ordinance and Expenditure Plan.

As a result, the revised ordinance now incorporates our additions to the preamble to more clearly articulate our region's vision of a seamless transportation network offering a wide range of accessible, affordable, and efficient transportation choices coupled with better air quality, safer neighborhoods, and a stronger economy.

Unfortunately, this same draft systematically excludes the very policy language that would apply these guiding principles in any meaningful way to the Expenditure Plan. By rejecting language requiring the Expenditure Plan to align with these guiding principles, the revised staff draft falls far short of what is needed to ensure that its guiding principles and policies are actually carried out in the implementation of the Ordinance and TEP. The revised draft likewise excludes language that would ensure that the projects proposed by local jurisdictions will, in fact, promote bicycle and pedestrian access and safety, integrate transportation modes, and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

While we encourage the STA to revisit the funding split, Attachment 2 to this letter provides a detailed mark-up in redline format to show our proposed revisions to the Proposed Ordinance and TEP without changes to the Board's announced 60/40 compromise. We respectfully request that the Board direct your staff to incorporate this proposed language into the ordinance and expenditure plan, whether or not you decide to adjust the allocation percentages. What follows is a summary of the reasons for this added policy language in several key areas.

Fix It First and Complete Streets

Our coalition strongly supports the priority given in the Proposed Ordinance and TEP to Fix-It-First projects and recognizes that Complete Streets improvements are specifically called out as a component of projects that fit under the Local Streets and Roads allocation. However, the incorporation of Complete Streets principles into proposed projects is permissive rather than mandatory. Our vision for bicycle and pedestrian safety, improved air quality, and reduced congestion will only be achieved if Complete Streets principles are systematically integrated into all road projects, whenever feasible. In the attached redline, we propose a set of criteria that projects in the five-year-plan must meet to show consistency with Complete Streets principles.

Vehicle Miles Traveled and Mitigation

The Proposed Ordinance and TEP fail to acknowledge the impact on the expenditure plan from recent state laws and guidelines regulating vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions under SB 375 and SB 743. Programmatic and project-level environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be required to show mitigation of impacts from increased VMT and GHG. Our proposed language would incorporate into the expenditure plan a more cost-effective and forward-looking approach to ensure that each jurisdiction's five-year plan can realistically achieve or mitigate to a no-net-increase level in per capita VMT cumulatively and promote land uses that provide a 15% reduction of VMT in future development.

The failure to address VMT and GHG reduction requirements up front would not only impact the funding of specific projects later on, it would undermine public confidence if measure funds are spent or reserved for projects that cannot be delivered as promised. Moreover, a failure to align the expenditure plan with these state laws will put state and federal matching funds at risk, further reducing the value and promise of the Measure.

We have also asked that STA participate in the creation and funding of an Advance Mitigation Program (AMP) to mitigate the impacts of transportation projects. The Developer Fee program is the logical candidate to establish seed funding for an AMP.

Road Traffic Health and Safety

The Proposed Ordinance and TEP acknowledge that the funding allocated to the category of "Local Street and Road Repair and Transformative System Improvements" may be spent on safety improvements including providing safe routes to school. We believe that the principles of Vision Zero, i.e. eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries, and Safe Routes to School, should be systematically incorporated into all proposed projects and ask that agencies receiving funding demonstrate consistency with these principles.

Local Projects of Regional Significance

SMART/SacMoves supports staff's innovative approach to include local freeway interchange projects and other transformative projects, including transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and other transportation facilities that improve regional connectivity into a new category called "Local Projects of Regional Significance." However, we do not believe it is appropriate to leave the criteria for how these funds should be allocated to an undetermined future Board action as proposed in the current staff draft. Instead, the Board should direct staff to seize this opportunity to tie the guiding principles into the allocation process by requiring projects funded in this category to undergo a rigorous cost-benefit analysis, including consideration of how the projects align with the ordinance's guiding principles and the expenditure plan's implementation guidelines and policies.

Plan Amendments

We support the Expenditure Plan amendment process requiring a review of the expenditure plan every 10 years as specified in Section XXXIII of the Ordinance. We have proposed language to add compliance with changing laws and standards as a basis for amendment, in addition to the other reasons stated in the ordinance about changing transportation needs and priorities, demographics, and technology.

In conclusion, at this critical juncture in Sacramento's growth, we need the best possible plan for Sacramento's future, one that puts us in a better position to compete for jobs and for state and federal dollars and to comply with state and federal air quality, transportation, and climate change requirements. We appreciate that STA has made significant strides in the last three months toward conforming the TEP to the essential principles that will support our collective goals for the region, but we ask the Board to direct staff to incorporate the revisions summarized in this letter and the attached mark-up into the ordinance and expenditure plan package presented for final approval on March 12, 2020. Please do not miss this historic opportunity to transform Sacramento's transportation future.

On behalf of the SMART/SacMoves, we are yours truly,

/s/

Steve Cohn
Roger Dickinson
Emel Wadhwani
Glenda Marsh
Sue Teranishi
Chris Holm
Deb Banks

Attachment 1. Table: Comparison of TEP Allocation Plans

Attachment 2. SMART/SacMoves' redlined changes to Ordinance and Expenditure Plan