

BILL: SB 951

AUTHOR: SENATOR MIKE MCGUIRE
(D-HEALDSBURG)

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION: GOLDEN STATE PATRIOT PASS PROGRAM

STATUS: SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE
HEARING SCHEDULED: APRIL 6, 2016

ACTION: SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board adopt a SUPPORT position on SB 951 (McGuire).

ISSUE

Senator Mike McGuire has introduced SB 951, a bill that would establish the Golden State Patriot Passes Program to provide veterans in the state of California with increased access to transit services.

SB 951 would:

- Create a pilot program funded annually through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to provide veterans with free access to transit services.
- Require Caltrans to select three transit operators to participate in the pilot program.
- Designate \$3 million annually from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for the program.
- Require the selected transit operators to provide a local match to any funds received for their participation in the program.
- Require the selected transit operators in partnership with Caltrans to report to the legislature on cost, ridership, and estimated reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The bill also specifies that the Golden State Patriot Passes pilot program would be funded through January 1, 2022.

DISCUSSION

According to Senator Mike McGuire, there is a dire need for greater access to services for the states 2 million military veterans. Los Angeles County, specifically, is home to over 325,000 veterans, with the number increasing annually. The Department of Veteran Affairs finds that over 30 percent of all disabled veterans aged 35-52 live in poverty nationwide, with limited access to transportation and other services. The Golden State Patriot Passes Program, as outlined by the author would provide veterans with access to transit services at no cost; with valid proof of veteran benefit status (Veterans' ID card).

SB 951 would create the Golden State Patriot Passes pilot Program that would match state funds with local dollars to provide free access to transit for all veterans in specified rural, suburban, and urban counties. Veterans would simply need to show a Veterans' ID card upon entering the transit system. The pilot program would authorize Caltrans to select three transit service providers to participate and award funds in varying amounts, based on service area and need.

Metro would be eligible to participate in this pilot program, and if selected, the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction funds would become available with a local match requirement. The bill specifies that a transit agency that serves an urban area is to be selected and awarded no more than \$2 million to implement the program. Sonoma County has implemented a similar program in 2014, and notes an increase in veteran ridership by 34 percent.

The bill successfully passed the Senate Transportation Committee with a vote of 10-0. It now moves on to the Senate Environmental Quality Committee for a vote.

Staff is recommending that the Board of Directors adopt a SUPPORT position on the measure SB 951 (McGuire).

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Staff has determined that there is no direct impact to safety as a result of this proposal.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff has determined that there is not an immediate fiscal impact to the agency as the result of the provisions outlined in this bill. There could be potential impacts as a result of potential funding received from the state to implement the Golden State Patriot Passes program and the local match requirements, if Metro is selected to participate in the program.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board of Directors could consider adopting an OPPOSE position on this legislation; however, this would be inconsistent with our agency's efforts to increase mobility in the region and reduce GHG emissions.

NEXT STEPS

Should the Board decide to adopt a SUPPORT position on SB 951 staff will communicate the Board's position to the author and work to ensure the successful passage of the measure. Staff will continue to keep the Board informed as this issue is addressed throughout the legislative session.