

ATTACHMENT B

BILL: ASSEMBLY BILL 761
AS INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 13, 2023

AUTHOR: ASSEMBLYMEMBER LAURA FRIEDMAN (D – GLENDALE)

SUBJECT: TRANSIT TRANSFORMATION TASK FORCE

STATUS: PENDING REFERRAL

ACTION: SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Directors adopt a SUPPORT position on Assembly Bill 761 by Assemblymember Friedman, as introduced.

ISSUE

This bill was introduced on February 13, 2023 to add and repeal provisions related to transportation in the Government Code.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Require the Secretary of Transportation to, by July 1, 2024, establish and convene the Transit Transformation Task Force. The task force would include stakeholders from around the state, including from local transit operators. The bill would require the task force to engage all parties to develop policies to grow transit ridership and improve the transit experience for all users of those services, and to submit to the Legislature by January 1, 2025, a report on the task force's findings. The provisions of the bill would be repealed on January 1, 2028.

DISCUSSION

Existing law establishes that the Secretary of Transportation is required to report to the Governor on legislative, budgetary, and administrative programs related to transportation matters of public interest. This bill would require the Secretary to oversee the formation of the Transit Transformation Task Force for the purpose of creating a report that details policies that would grow transit ridership and improve the transit experience for all users.

The report would be required to, among other things, include details on transit services and rider demographics, existing operations and capital funding sources, the cost to operation transit systems projected for the next ten years, costs and operational impacts related to federal, state and local mandates, including the California Air Resources Board's Innovative Clean Transit regulations, workforce policies impacting service, and state and local policies that impact service efficiency and transit ridership.

The bill includes provisions related to the categories of recommendations that the report must include. Among these are recommendations related to how to improve mobility and increase ridership, such as service and fare coordination between transit agencies or increasing frequency and reliability through sharing of real-time transit information. Other categories of recommendations include changes to land use policies, strategies to ensure a safe and clean rider experience, strategies related to workforce recruitment and retention, replacing farebox recovery ratios and efficiency criteria with other performance metrics, and new options for state revenue sources to fund transit operations and capital projects. This list of recommendations provides a look into the holistic approach the task force would be approaching the issue of transit transformation from, one that ensures that we examine both direct and indirect strategies to grow ridership and improve the rider experience.

Metro staff have been working with our partners in the state legislature, as well as the California Transit Association, to address the “transit fiscal cliff” that agencies around the state are facing in the near future. This bill creates an opportunity to continue our partnership with the legislature to address the transit fiscal cliff and to develop permanent dedicated support so that transit can remain a lifeline service and a key strategy to reducing greenhouse emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

For these reasons, staff recommends that the Board adopt a SUPPORT position on AB 761 (Friedman).

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The impact to safety is still being determined.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The estimated financial impact of this action is still being evaluated.

EQUITY PLATFORM

This bill supports Metro’s commitment to equity by focusing on both increasing ridership, which expands economic and social opportunity for disadvantaged communities, and by improving the transit experience for all riders. Additionally, air quality impacts from a decrease in vehicle miles traveled have a disproportionate benefit to residents in Equity Focus Communities, who often bear the brunt of air pollution in heavily-traveled corridors.

Staff also believe that the diversity of stakeholders cited in the bill’s provisions will allow for a robust report of strategies to improve transit and recover ridership. These stakeholders include not only representatives from transit operators, but would also include local governments, MPOs, labor organizations, transportation advocates, and academics, among others.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Staff recommendation supports strategic plan goal #1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling; and goal #2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Staff has considered adopting either a work with author or oppose position on the bill. A work with author or oppose position would be inconsistent with Metro's Board approved 2023 State Legislative Program Goal #4: Support Legislation, regulatory action, and funding initiatives that support transit riders and enhance the customer experience.

NEXT STEPS

Should the Board decide to adopt a SUPPORT position on the legislation; staff will communicate the Board's position to the author and work to ensure inclusion of the Board's priorities in the final version of the bill. Staff will continue to keep the Board informed as this issue is addressed throughout the legislative session.