



February 12, 2018

Regional Transit Board of Directors
Henry Li, General Manager/CEO
1400 29th Street
Sacramento, CA 95816

Re: Route Optimization Study – Stakeholder Meetings

Dear Board of Directors and Mr. Li:

The Sacramento Transit Riders Union (Sac TRU) requests that SacRT begin holding stakeholder meetings early and frequently to facilitate meaningful public participation throughout the policy and design planning phases of the Route Optimization Study.

The timeliness of public involvement prior to decisions being made is essential to give meaningful public involvement in transit planning and to prevent predetermined outcomes. Public trust is eroded if outreach appears to be just “going through the motions.” It is likely that the final decisions in this project will involve hard choices and trade-offs on issues and values that community members care deeply about. Acknowledging and describing these difficult trade-offs and choices promotes greater understanding among diverse perspectives. An ideal result of public engagement is that participants believe decision makers have respectfully heard and will carefully consider their perspectives, whatever the final decision. Failing to involve the public until the end of the process, after proposals and recommendations are made to the board, undermines public trust in the final decisions.

Public participation is a process, not a single event. It should consist of a series of activities and actions by SacRT and consultants over the full lifespan of the ROS project to both inform the public and obtain input from them. Public participation affords stakeholders the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives. Additional care should be given to the hardest-to-reach and most-impacted members of the public, including those that are transit dependent, non-English speakers, seniors and members of the disability community.

Not all public participation is the same. Conducting meaningful public participation involves seeking public input at the specific points in the decision making process and on the specific issues where such input has a real potential to help shape the decision or action. The Houston Metro route optimization, also a Jarrett Walker project, incorporated significant community input, including a series of interactive workshops, public meetings, online surveys and forums, and a Stakeholder Task Force that guided the development of the project, including goals and recommendations. Public participation should directly engage the public in decision-making and give full consideration to public input.

SacTRU urges the scheduling of stakeholder meetings and robust public outreach during this process which will be the most significant change to the Sacramento Regional Transit system in decades. The public should be and essential part of this planning process from the beginning. We oppose predetermined outcomes and urge SacRT to pursue community based solutions. We believe including the public in the decision-making process will lead to better transit choices and more enduring support for the final outcomes of this process. Please include this letter in the public record.

Sincerely,
Sac TRU