



December 13, 2017

Sacramento Area Council of Governments  
Barbara VaughanBechtold, Associate Planner  
1415 L Street, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SacTRU Comments on Unmet Transit Needs**

Dear Ms. VaughanBechtold:

The Sacramento Transit Riders Union (Sac TRU) supports increased investment in public transportation and smart strategies to grow cities around public transportation and transit oriented development. SacTRU believes access to public transportation is a civil right and that full funding for public transit is imperative in order to ensure that low-income and vulnerable communities have access to jobs, housing, health care, education, grocery stores, and childcare among other needs. Dependent transit riders are often underrepresented in the decision and policy making process at Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) and Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG).

The Unmet Transit Needs program is meant to identify and address public transit services not currently provided for persons who rely on public transit to reach: employment, medical assistance, shop for food or clothing, to obtain social services such as health care, county welfare programs and educational programs.

Our members have identified the following unmet transit needs that they would like to be addressed:

- **RT provide free transfers for all fares.** Currently, only riders who use a phone App or Connect Card have access to a free 90 minute transfer. We believe that this negatively impacts riders who regularly use cash fares and may not be able to easily access these programs which are available in English only and require a form of credit card to participate. We request that additional funding be made available for free transfers for all fares.
- **RT bring back the Free Senior Fare for riders over 75.** We asked staff to look at the SF Muni model and possibly pursue a similar fare structure. We request that additional resources be made available to benefit these senior riders.
- **Extending night and weekend service on all bus routes and light rail.** Specifically, we have had workers and residents from Folsom express the difficulty of working or commuting downtown when service ends at 7:00pm.
- **Better access and service to newly developed work centers.** Specifically, we have had workers request more services for the Amazon distribution center in Metro Air Park and at the Golden 1 Center. As part of the Route Optimization study being done by Regional Transit, specific attention should be given to improving access to new and developing employment centers, so that transit dependent riders can better access jobs in our community.
- **Better real-time communication with riders.** Many RT stations have Digital Messaging boards and audio systems installed, but they are not currently used to provide timely updates on accidents and delays that occur. Our members would request that additional resource be provided to enable these systems to push out real-time updates and information to riders.
- **RT conduct an inventory of all existing bus stops within the system, as a part or independently from the ROS project.** As seen in Attachment 1 of this letter, there are many bus stops that are not ADA compliant. Our members have complained of unprotected stops,

stops located far from curb cuts, or that lack any infrastructure at all. We believe an inventory of the condition of all existing stops will help address ADA compliance issues. We would not want the result of this survey to be the removal of noncompliant stations, which would increase travel time for riders, but rather that smart solutions be used to address these issues. Specifically, our members identified problem areas along Fair Oaks Boulevard, Arden Way, and Bruceville as well as on Route 67, 69 and 55.

- **Better wayfinding information be provided to riders at bus stops and light rail stations in English and other languages.** Currently many stations and stops lack any information on catching transfers, rout timetables, and basic information in languages other than English. We request additional funding to improve the signage around stations and stops.
- **Replace the elevators at the Watt/I-80 station.** The elevators at this station are regularly broken, requiring RT to spend resources running a shuttle bus and requiring riders to potentially add time and stress to their commute. Our members are concerned that if resources are not provided to RT to revamp the station and replace the elevators the station may be closed and bus routes relocated, negatively impacting their travel time. We would request that additional funding be made available to prevent the closure of the station, to replace the elevators, and to better maintain the station.
- **Permanently extending student fare discount pilot program.** RT recently adopted a fare discount for students in the Sacramento region. Sacramento has the highest student fares in the state, per an article in the Sacramento Bee. Students should have to miss school because they don't have bus fare.
- **Filling permanent staffing positions, specifically in the planning and engineering departments.** Over the last several months it has become apparent that RT is severely understaffed, and are relying on contractors to meet project deadlines. This appears to be due to not filling vacancies that have been budgeted and not budgeting for enough employees. This impacts riders because customer service and the planning department are understaffed and are not capable of meeting their rider needs. We believe that developing a highly skilled workforce, spending our tax dollars on local workers and companies, and reducing the need to repeatedly outsource work should be a goal of RT management. Route Optimization should be a continual process for the agency, not a one-time project, and our system would be better served in the long run by investing in employee training or hiring technical experts to fill positions, rather than repeatedly contracting out basic work to consultants who may not have a comprehensive understanding of our transit system and rider needs.
- **Fixing AC in Light Rail Trains.** Last summer riders had to ride in trains that were over 100 degrees. This is a danger for public health and safety and should be immediately addressed by allocating funding to replace trains that are no longer able to function.
- **Install new connect card scanners.** Many of our riders try to scan their cards and find the ticket machines with broken screens, damaged and unresponsive. In order for this new fare to be effective, riders need the be able to access it in an easy and efficient way. Additional signage at stations explaining how to use the machines and who to contact in case of problems should be added to all stations, in multiple languages.

**SacTRU believes fully-funded and equitable public transportation is essential in ending systematic institutionalized poverty in isolated communities by creating opportunities to break the cycle of generational poverty and should be a focus of our region's development.** Please include this letter in the public record.

Sincerely,

SacTRU

## Attachment 1

Please see the attached photos of the existing bus stop on 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 47<sup>th</sup> street in Supervisor Kennedy's District. We are sure you will see that serious safety issues exist at the stop, and there is absolutely no aesthetic quality of the stop to make anyone *choose* to ride anywhere from it if they absolutely don't have to.

