



April 22, 2018

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

Re: Public Participation in Board Meetings

Dear Board of Directors and Mr. Li:

The members of Sacramento Transit Riders Union (SacTRU) have been troubled recently by several interactions between the Board and members of the public. Some of the Board members' comments and actions have been perceived as hostile, disrespectful and as intentionally meant to discourage the public from participating in the SacRT decision-making process. Our members hope that this issue can be discussed at the upcoming Board Retreat and that additional training can be provided in the future.

Members of the public take time from work and out of their personal lives to attend and participate in Board meetings. Public participation affords stakeholders an opportunity to influence decisions that directly affect their lives. We understand the desire for speed and efficiency within meetings, but we believe that intimidating and belittling members of the public during public comment, especially those with underlying disabilities whose ability to participate in public comment may be jeopardized, is not the best way to achieve this.

Responding with targeted dismissive comments, speaking in condescending tones, and using technical rules to silence members of the public is not only disrespectful, it is intimidating the public into silence and creating a barrier to participation. Implicit bias refers to unconscious, negative beliefs about minority groups and training is available to develop strategies to identify and reduce discriminatory behavior towards these groups. Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities comes from a general lack of information and misunderstanding about best practices for serving their unique needs as individuals. Cultural sensitivity training, such as that focused on individuals with cognitive disabilities, teaches respectful strategies to best interact with individuals with disabilities such as allowing individuals sufficient time to verbally communicate their message, being polite, not mimicking or mocking their speech, or be patronizing in your response.

We believe that the Board sets the tone for the entire agency. Incorporating cultural sensitivity and implicit bias training into Board activities, such as the upcoming Board retreat, and staff trainings can help improve communication and relationships with members of the public as well as demonstrate the Board's commitment to equitable community practices.

We ask that a discussion of this issue and cultural sensitivity and implicit bias training be incorporated into the upcoming Board Retreat and meetings going forward. Please include this letter in the public record.

Sincerely,

Sac TRU