



December 8, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Bay Area transit systems continue to struggle in the face of dramatically reduced ridership and revenues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge was already the most significant crisis in the history of public transportation, and now it has persisted far longer than any of us would have predicted.

Since the beginning, our workers have been on the front lines, doing their jobs as essential workers, responsible for providing other front line workers with a way to safely travel to and from essential jobs.

Now that the availability of a vaccine is on the horizon, we are proud to echo the attached call from the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). Specifically, we urge you to work to ensure that transit, paratransit, and school transportation workers are prioritized along with other essential workers to receive the vaccine following the critical need to vaccinate the State's healthcare workers.

Even with reduced ridership, an average of 8 million monthly riders continue to depend on Bay Area transit services. These riders are the healthcare workers, grocery clerks, caregivers, emergency services personnel and others doing the critical work that has kept California functioning during the pandemic. They cannot continue to do so without access to reliable public transportation, and are therefore dependent on the health of the transit workers that serve them every day.

Our agencies have worked hard to ensure the public health of riders and transit workers during this crisis. We coordinated to develop the Riding Together: Bay Area Healthy Transit Plan, which includes a baseline set of measures aimed at minimizing virus transmission on our systems. Among those measures is the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all workers and a requirement that all riders wear face coverings. Prioritizing transit workers for vaccination as the attached letter suggests would ensure that our State is aided by a fully healthy transit workforce ready to carry a growing number of workers back to their jobs as our communities shelter in place, and then prepare to reopen safely.

Thank you for everything that you and your team have done and are doing to address this crisis, and thank you for considering the need to make sure transit workers are recognized for the daily sacrifices they continue to make on behalf of all of us.

Sincerely,



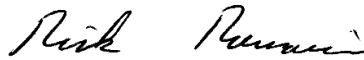
Michael Hursh,  
General Manager  
Alameda-Contra Costa  
Transit District



Diane Feinstein,  
Interim Transportation  
Manager City of Fairfield



Rachel Ede,  
Deputy Director  
City of Santa Rosa  
Transportation and Public  
Works



Lori DaMassa,  
Transit Coordinator  
City of Vacaville

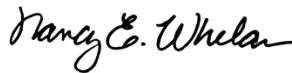
Rick Ramacier,  
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Denis Mulligan,  
General Manager  
Golden Gate Bridge, Highway  
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General Manager  
Livermore Amador Valley  
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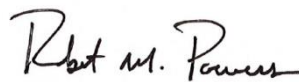
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City Manager  
Union City Transit



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Cc: Members, MTC Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force  
David Kim, Secretary, California State Transportation Agency



# Amalgamated Transit Union

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Office of the International President

November 30, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
State Capitol  
Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The recent promising news of multiple quality vaccines for the coronavirus has lifted the spirits of all Americans, including the hundreds of thousands of transportation workers who have been on the front lines working through this very dark period in our nation's history. On behalf of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), the labor organization representing the majority of these brave workers, we urge you to **provide early vaccine access and availability for our members in the transit and school bus industries.**

This week, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which is advising the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on who should get the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine agreed on initial priorities. The committee generally concurred that healthcare workers should get the first doses of vaccine, while essential workers should be in the second priority group because they often don't have the luxury of working from home and tend to be racially and demographically diverse. **We urge you to follow these guidelines and include transit and school bus workers in the category of essential workers.**

Nationwide, thousands of transit workers have tested positive for the coronavirus, and nearly 100 ATU members have died due to COVID-19. Our members are getting sick at a rate that is much higher than the general population because we are continuously exposed to large crowds of transit-dependent riders at close range, often times without the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep us safe. In addition, the air flow in transit buses flows from back to front carrying debris, viral particles and other pollution lofted in the air as aerosols and fine particles – an invisible enemy that is killing our members. And as if navigating a massive vehicle through heavy traffic and all sorts of weather conditions while enforcing rules and regulations was not dangerous enough, now our members are serving as the “mask police” during this politically-charged time.

Similarly, since school started up this fall in certain areas, school bus workers have been considered heroes for simply reporting to work each day, and rightfully so. In addition to their normal duties, they must make sure that children are seated far enough apart to avoid the spread of COVID-19. They are also tasked with sanitizing the vehicles, hoping that their employers provide the proper PPE to keep them safe. Even before the pandemic, the school bus industry was

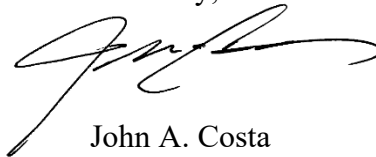
facing a severe driver shortage, and it has only gotten worse in the last year. Many school bus drivers (often older Americans) are just too fearful to return to the job without a vaccine. It takes a minimum of 12 weeks to get a new driver certified with a Commercial Driver License (CDL) and receive training before they can be put behind the wheel of a bus carrying schoolchildren. These factors are causing route cancellations, exposing children to much less safe ways to get to and from school.

**In addition, our members and the industries we represent can play a critical role in vaccination logistics.** Moving forward, we would welcome the chance to work with your office and local government, and of course transit systems to get masses of people to medical facilities or other staging areas for vaccinations or to transport medical personnel, equipment, and the vaccines to the population at large. But like the healthcare workers who are rightfully first in line because of the role they play in fighting the coronavirus, our members also need priority access and availability. I would also note that our membership is overwhelmingly made up of people who have been disproportionately affected by the virus — especially minorities, lower-income people, and older Americans — an added reason to move them up in line.

Transit and school bus workers are true heroes, and there are safer and easier ways for them to earn about \$15-20 per hour. The least we can do as a nation is to recognize the sacrifices that these workers and their families have made during this health crisis by providing them with early access to the coronavirus vaccine and to make it available to them. It is the right thing to do for the workers and it's in the best interest of the millions of people -- big and small --- who rely on their services.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



John A. Costa  
International President

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Albert Garcia, PR/BA, ATU Local 1225, San Francisco, CA  
Cesar Buenaventura, PR/BA, ATU Local 1309, San Diego, CA  
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Miguel Navarro Jr., PR/BA, ATU Local 1574, San Mateo, CA  
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Georgia Graham, Transportation Manager, City of Lodi, Transit Division  
Ivette Iraheta, Grant Administrator, City of Madera Transit Department  
Jared Hall, Transit Division Manager, City of Petaluma, Petaluma Transit  
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Angie Dow, Executive Director, Kings County Area Public Transit Agency  
George L. Sparks, Administrator, Pomona Valley Transportation Authority  
Beth Kranda, Executive Director, Solano County Transit (SolTrans)  
Michael Hursh, General Manager, AC Transit (Alameda Contra-Costa Transit District)  
Rick Ramacier, General Manager, Central Contra Costa Transit Authority  
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Denis J. Mulligan, General Manager Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District  
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P. Scott Graham, CEO/General Manager, OMNITRANS  
Larry Rubio, Chief Executive Officer, Riverside Transit Agency  
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Paul C. Jablonski, Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS)  
Robert Powers, General Manager, San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)  
Gloria G. Salazar, CEO, San Joaquin Regional Transit District  
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Allan J. Mucerino, Superintendent, Alvord Unified School District  
Brad Tooker, Superintendent, Dry Creek Joint Elementary School District  
Christopher R. Hoffman, Superintendent, Elk Grove Unified School District