



**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT**  
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2020

April 16, 2020

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PRESIDENT

Mark Foley  
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Robert Powers  
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The Honorable Holly Mitchell  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Special Subcommittee on COVID-19 Response  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Dear Senator Mitchell:

As I am sure you know, transit agencies across the state have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District – or BART – is no exception. BART is an all-electric rail rapid transit system that connects the San Francisco Bay Area. It is the backbone of the Bay Area’s transportation system, serving more than 400,000 passengers every workday.

The recently passed Federal CARES Act includes much needed immediate relief for local transit agencies. We are grateful to our federal leaders for assuring that significant transit funding was included in the package, and to our state leaders for advocating in support of these critical funds.

However, in the mid- and long term, additional support will be needed. Transit agencies in California will face a continuing crisis in the coming months that could threaten the viability of some operators and will threaten service levels for all transit agencies, including large agencies such as BART.

Continued BART service is critical to insure essential workers – first responders, health care workers, postal carriers, sanitation workers, and grocery store employees – have access to their workplaces. However, as the vast majority of Californians shelter in place, BART ridership is down 94% and a reduction in ridership is expected to continue for some time as the economy struggles to regain balance. Although we are proud of our high farebox recovery ratio, which exceeds 60%; BART’s operating budget is dependent on ridership and particularly vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to lost ridership, BART’s other funding sources will be dramatically impacted as the economy continues to slow and sales tax revenue falls. A significant portion of BART’s operating revenue comes from sources including local sales taxes and State Transit Assistance funds, all of which will suffer dramatically in a downturned economy. In addition, BART is currently absorbing new operating costs in our efforts to assure that our trains and stations are clean and that our heroic workforce and riders remain safe. We currently estimate that our operating budget loss for FY20 year-end will be \$174 million.

As the pandemic emerged, BART conducted an exhaustive review of ridership and train carloads and continues to closely monitor ridership to assure we balance critical service and cost savings, even as we run longer trains to insure essential workers are able to exercise social distancing. We took swift action to reduce operating costs as ridership levels declined, including significant service cuts. We eliminated extra commuter trains where possible and reduced weekday and weekend service hours. As of April 8, BART moved to 30-minute headways Monday-Friday, effectively cancelling every other train.

In addition to service cuts, BART has scaled down its operating budget by implementing a District-wide hiring freeze, except for BART Police; cancelling all overtime funded by the operating budget unless required for critical operating and maintenance functions; shifting some positions funded by the operating budget to capital funded work; and suspending employee travel.

Sustainable and reliable public transit is vital in this time of crisis to assure that essential service workers can still get to and from their jobs. As other Bay Area transit agencies, such as WETA and the Capitol Corridor, have reduced service, it has become all the more imperative that BART maintain operations. In addition, a robust transit system will be critical to our recovering economy when life begins to return to normal and millions of people head back to work and school, travel, eat out at restaurants, and vacation.

Public transit is also essential to creating equity in our society, to providing the mobility necessary to meet the needs of seniors, working-class citizens, and lower-income families. If we are going to meet California's clean air goals and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a viable and robust public transit system will be necessary.

We are still determining how severe the COVID-19 impact will be to BART in the mid- to long term, and how long those impacts are likely to last. Although we don't know to what degree yet, we are sure that additional support will be needed.

We look forward to working closely with you and other federal and state elected leaders over the coming months to assure BART's continued operations and to assure the long-term sustainability of public transit upon which millions of Californians rely.

Sincerely,



Bob Powers  
General Manager

cc: Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Special Subcommittee on COVID-19 Response  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
President pro Tem Toni Atkins  
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Senator Jim Beall  
Assembly Member Jim Frazier