

CALIFORNIA CAN'T SURVIVE WITHOUT TRANSIT



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

June 29, 2020

This document anticipates the difficult questions transit executives and/or representatives speaking on behalf of California transit agencies may face during meetings or interviews related to the California Transit Association's request for transit funding relief. All answers are designed to bridge back to key messages that support the statewide "California Without Transit" frame and messages.

What transit service cuts has your agency made locally?

Like many public transportation agencies throughout the state, (Agency) has been forced to suspend or dramatically reduce service. Within the resources available to us, we have done our best to maintain service for essential and frontline workers and disadvantaged communities. We recognize that these riders often have no other transportation options.

State or federal funding assistance is critical to our survival and our ability to meet the needs of the communities we serve, which is why (Agency) has joined transit agencies across California in asking lawmakers for funding relief.

Which service reductions could become permanent?

The severe and lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transit's revenue streams – including at (Agency) – threaten the viability and availability of transit services in the near- and long-term, and the economic, and even physical, well-being of the individuals and communities we serve.

Without additional state or federal funding, it could take years for public transit to recover from today's crisis, resulting in the elimination of important mobility options for millions of Californians, job loss, and the unnecessary delay of California's economic recovery, which is why we are joining transit agencies across California in asking lawmakers for funding relief.

Who will be adversely affected most by reductions in transit service?

Reductions to transit services will create disproportionately adverse social and economic impacts on minority, underserved and vulnerable communities. (Cite local data/demographics, if possible)

In fact, a recent survey conducted by Transit App found a sharp shift in rider demographics that clearly demonstrates that a California without transit would severely and disproportionately affect Blacks, Latinos, females, low-income riders, and essential workers.

We are coming out of a global pandemic, and the CDC recently issued guidelines encouraging people to drive solo in cars to stay safe. How can public transit argue with that?

The CDC fails to recognize the transportation realities of millions of Americans and the fact that public transit provides essential transportation for people to get to work, medical, school and other necessary appointments. Many riders have no other transportation options.

The CDC also fails as a matter of environmental policy. If the mobility options offered by public transit were to disappear, California risks seeing spikes in worsened health outcomes associated with air pollution caused by increased automobile traffic.

COVID-19 is highly contagious. With social distancing so important right now, isn't mass transit just a breeding ground for COVID-19?

Recent studies conducted in Paris and Austria found that case clusters in April and May were *not* traceable to riding transit. In fact, many of the highest-profile outbreaks in the U.S. occurred far from the nation's buses and subways.

(Agency) has spent more than (\$amount) in additional PPE purchases and costs associated with more intensive cleaning to ensure the health and safety of our workers and riders. We have also implemented social distancing practices on our transit vehicles and in our facilities.

Public transit systems are indispensable to the functioning of California communities, transporting essential workers to jobs, while also acting as a major engine of economic stability and equity, which is why funding assistance is critical to preventing a California without transit.

You've received federal bailout money. Isn't that enough?

The CARES Act provided short-term relief to address the most immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transit agencies. However, it will not stabilize transit or cover anticipated losses in the long-term.

Combined, transit agencies statewide face a funding shortfall that exceeds the funding provided in the federal CARES Act by more than \$3.1 billion over the coming year. This emergency funding would address critical outstanding funding needs at transit agencies statewide and allow public transportation to play a more active role in the state's recovery.

How were decisions about specific cuts made?

Like all public transit agencies throughout the state, (Agency) responded to decreased ridership, lost fare revenue and new operational expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, (cite specific examples).

(Agency) is an integral part of the communities we serve. Without additional state or federal funding, it could take years for public transit to recover from today's crisis, resulting in the elimination of important mobility options for millions of Californians, job loss, and the unnecessary delay of California's economic recovery – which is why we are joining transit agencies across California in asking lawmakers for funding relief.

Didn't you have a reserve fund or savings to guard against having to make cuts like this?

The real issue is that public transit in California is facing an existential crisis due to the severe and lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transit agencies statewide are experiencing a combined budget shortfall of \$3.1 billion – threatening mobility options for essential workers and disadvantaged communities that need transit most – which is why we are asking lawmakers for relief funding. Additional state or federal funding will address critical outstanding funding needs at transit agencies statewide, allow public transportation to play a more active role in the state’s recovery, and help prevent devastating permanent cuts.

How much revenue has (Agency) lost locally?

(Agency) has lost (amount) due to impacts of COVID-19, which is part of a broader story.

Statewide, transit ridership and fare revenues have plummeted by as much as 90% at many agencies, and sales tax revenues that are key to funding public transit are also expected to decline. Combined, transit agencies statewide face a funding shortfall that exceeds the funding provided in the federal CARES Act by more than \$3.1 billion over the coming year.

Without additional state or federal funding, it could take years for public transit to recover from today’s crisis, resulting in the elimination of important mobility options for millions of Californians, job loss, and the unnecessary delay of California’s economic recovery – which is why we are joining transit agencies across California in asking lawmakers for funding relief.

How much revenue do you need? And what will that cover?

Combined, transit agencies statewide face a funding shortfall that exceeds the funding provided in the federal CARES Act by more than \$3.1 billion over the coming year. The request for state or federal funding relief would address critical outstanding needs at transit agencies statewide, allow public transportation to play a more active role in the state’s recovery, and help prevent devastating permanent cuts.

Without state or federal action, public transit in the communities we serve may not recover – threatening mobility options for essential workers and disadvantaged communities that need transit most.

What happens if (Agency) doesn’t receive revenue?

Lack of funding threatens the viability and availability of transit services in the near- and long-term, as well as the economic, and even physical, well-being of the individuals and communities we serve.

Without state or federal action, it could take years for public transit in our community to recover, and many underserved communities will suffer disproportionately adverse economic and social impacts.

Schools, public safety, and health care are all facing funding cuts and requesting state assistance. Why should we prioritize transit with limited state (or federal) resources?

We understand there are serious and competing needs for limited state (or federal) resources. However, robust and accessible public transit is absolutely vital to support our state’s economic recovery, to meet our state’s ambitious environmental goals, and to ensure equal opportunity for communities of color and disadvantaged communities.

Without state or federal action, public transit in our community may not recover, and many underserved communities will suffer disproportionately adverse economic and social impacts, which is why we are asking the Legislature and Congress for \$3.1 billion in funding relief.

People aren't going to be commuting/traveling back at pre-COVID levels for a while. Why does (Agency) need the same level of services?

California's public transit systems provide transportation options for millions of riders every year, including mobility for underserved and vulnerable populations. Many of these people do not have other transportation options.

A robust, accessible public transit system is vital to support our state's economic recovery, to meet our state's ambitious environmental goals, and to ensure equal opportunity for communities of color and disadvantaged communities – which is why we are asking lawmakers for funding assistance.

How much has your agency spent on PPE and other protective measures for employees?

(Agency) has spent more than (amount) in additional PPE purchases and costs associated with more intensive cleaning, but that is just part of the story. Combined with steep declines in fare box and tax revenues, transit in California is facing an existential crisis.

(Agency) is an integral part of the communities we serve. Without state or federal action, public transit in our communities as we know it may not recover, which is why additional state funding relief is critical to our survival.

How will relief funds be prioritized? Will it go to management/operations costs?

This emergency funding would be used to backfill lost revenues and maintain transit service, allowing public transportation to play a more active role in the state's recovery and continue serving the communities in which we operate.

And if new relief funding is sufficient, we would begin to build back our service levels, as riders come back and need more robust service options.

How many employees has (agency) fired/furloughed?

Due to the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, (Agency) made the difficult decisions related to (actions). The real issue here is the long-term viability of our transit agency.

Without additional state funding, these reductions could become permanent, limiting mobility options for essential workers and disadvantaged communities that need it most, which is why we are joining transit agencies across California in asking lawmakers for funding relief.