



Bay Area Update: Transit and Plan Bay Area 2050+

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission is the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area’s transportation planning, financing and coordinating agency.

MTC is responsible for developing the Bay Area’s long-range transportation investment strategy and land use plan to make progress on federal, state and regional goals related to asset management, safety, mobility, congestion relief, climate and affordability. MTC is also responsible for collecting, administering or otherwise distributing approximately \$3.5 billion annually to move that plan from a vision to on-the-ground improvements for Bay Area residents.

The Bay Area’s latest long-range plan, Plan Bay Area 2050+ (see pages 8-9), emphasizes sustaining and strengthening the transit system as the backbone of the region’s economy and quality of life. The sections that follow outline how MTC is advancing that vision by supporting secure, stable, and long-term transit funding and through initiatives designed to improve the rider experience and grow ridership.



Photos: Noah Berger and Karl Nielsen.

Transit at a Crossroads: Federal Partnership Remains Vital

The Bay Area's \$1.3 trillion economy depends on a well-functioning transit system. While transit ridership remains below pre-pandemic levels, almost 1 million trips are still taken each day. Even a small shift can have outsized impacts: Research shows that just 3% to 5% fewer vehicles on the road can cut traffic delays by up to 70%. If a small portion of transit riders stop riding and drive instead, congestion will not just worsen — it could overwhelm the region's roadways.

Bay Area transit ridership has recovered to about two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels. But the shift to remote and hybrid work means ridership is unlikely to return to previous levels in the near future. Despite this, public transit remains essential, particularly for the region's most economically vulnerable residents. Severe service cuts would make life in the Bay Area even less affordable while pushing more people to drive, increasing congestion for everyone.

2026 Offers Opportunity to Prevent Service Cuts and Gridlock

Thanks to \$4.5 billion in federal COVID relief funds, state and regional emergency contributions, and their own cost-saving measures, Bay Area transit agencies have been able to maintain service. However, emergency funds will be fully depleted by FY 2026-27.

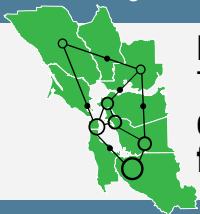
Workers and students depend on transit.

Who Depends on Bay Area Transit?



People:
1 million daily riders in Oct. 2024

Schools:
Tens of thousands of K-12 students rely on public transit to get to school.



Economy:
The Bay Area's more than **\$1 trillion economy** depends on a well-functioning transit network.

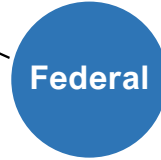
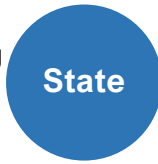
Workers:
15,000 transit workers throughout the Bay Area



Photos: Noah Berger.

Transit's New Business Model Requires Continued Partnership

SB 125 TASK FORCE was charged with identifying and evaluating potential new revenue sources.



BAY AREA VOTERS can increase transit funding via a transportation revenue measure.*

FEDERAL FUNDS are essential to transit state of good repair and expansion.

TRANSIT TRANSFORMATION Implement rider-focused improvements to attract new riders to the system.

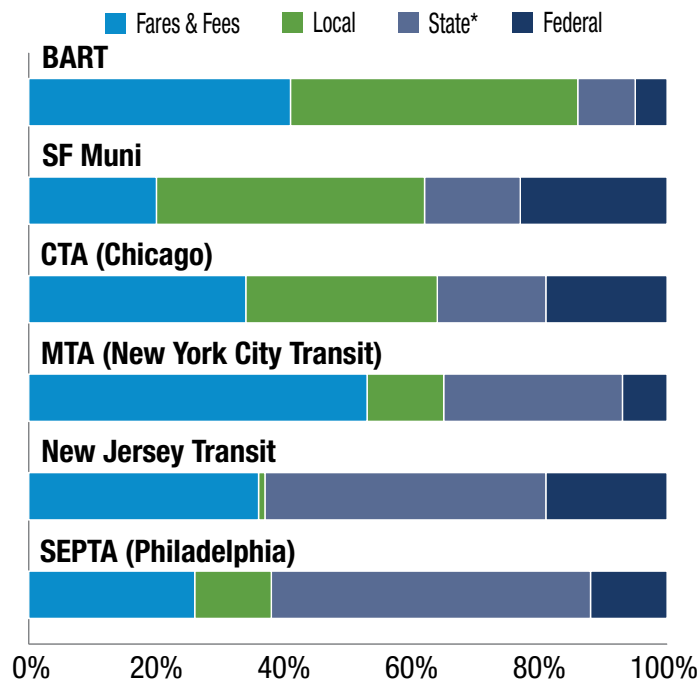
*If the initiative qualifies for the ballot.

TRANSIT OPERATORS should regularly adjust fares to keep pace with inflation, explore new local revenues and identify ways to operate more efficiently.

The California Legislature in 2025 passed Senate Bill 63 (Wiener/Arreguín), authorizing a multi-county sales tax to sustain transit operations, invest in transit capital and fund targeted road repair. The Connect Bay Area Transit Committee, a non-governmental

citizens group, is gathering signatures to place the tax on the November 2026 ballot via a citizen's initiative. Without additional funding, AC Transit, BART, Caltrain and SF Muni will face major service cuts, limiting mobility for those who depend on transit.

Who Pays for Transit? A Look at Funding Sources Across Major U.S. Agencies (2019)




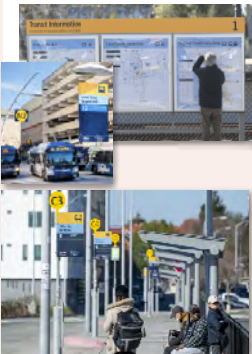



* Includes capital and operating expenses.

Federal Partnership Remains Key to Transit's Long-Term Success

Sustaining Bay Area transit requires a new funding model — one that improves service, strengthens local and state commitments, and maintains robust federal investment.

MTC is coordinating with Bay Area transit operators on various “Transit Transformation” initiatives to attract new riders. Transit agencies also must do their part to identify ways to enhance efficiency. Additionally, while fares and local taxes — including a new regional measure — will remain primary funding sources, long-term success depends on sustained partnership from the State of California and the federal government. Federal formula funds help keep transit infrastructure in good condition, which is key to reliability.

Focus Areas of Transit Transformation Action Plan

Fares and Payment	Better Maps and Signage	Transit Network	Accessibility	Funding
<p>Simpler, consistent, and equitable fare and payment options.</p> 	<p>Make transit easier to navigate and more convenient.</p> 	<p>Transit services managed as a unified, efficient and reliable network.</p> 	<p>Transit services for older adults, people with disabilities, and those with lower incomes are coordinated efficiently.</p> 	<p>Use existing resources more efficiently and secure new, dedicated revenue to meet funding needs.</p> 

Transforming Bay Area Transit by Putting Riders First

Bay Area transit ridership continues to trend upward, but Bay Area transit agencies and MTC are not slowing down efforts to implement the Bay Area Transit Transformation Action Plan. The plan was adopted in 2021 and identifies more than two dozen deliverables needed for a more connected, efficient and customer-focused network that lets residents and visitors alike navigate the nine-county region with speed, safety, convenience and confidence.

In the first five years, MTC and Bay Area transit agencies have delivered in several key areas:

Fares and Payment: MTC and its transit agency partners are developing new fare tools to encourage more ridership, including piloting an all-agency transit pass known as the Clipper® BayPass. With the launch of Next Generation Clipper, the Bay Area began piloting a new transfer policy that waives transfers from bus to bus, and lowers the cost of transferring from a bus to BART, Caltrain or a ferry by \$2.85.



Clipper enables riders to transfer seamlessly between all Bay Area transit options.

(Photo: ©Noah Berger)



©Noah Berger

Clipper® BayPass Delivers Unlimited Transit Access

Bay Area transit agencies and MTC in 2022 launched Phase 1 of the Clipper® BayPass pilot to study the impact of a single pass that provided some 30,000 Bay Area students and residents living in affordable housing communities access to the myriad bus, rail and ferry services in the nine-county region.

An evaluation of the program yielded impressive results: Clipper BayPass holders took about 35% more transit trips than their peers and transferred between systems 74% more often, highlighting

the program's potential to expand transit ridership, and with it, the benefits of increased mobility, less congestion, and more money in Bay Area residents' pockets.

An employer-focused Phase 2 of the pilot launched in 2024. Clipper BayPass is being sold to employers who would like to provide an employee benefit of unlimited transit trips. In the first year of both pilots, Clipper BayPass participants took more than **3.6 million transit trips**.

Better Maps and Signage: In 2024, MTC and transit partners debuted prototypes of a common mapping and wayfinding system for use by all Bay Area transit agencies to make navigating multiple systems friction-free.

The prototype maps and signs were evaluated at El Cerrito del Norte BART Station and the Santa Rosa Transit Mall/Downtown Santa Rosa SMART station. Public feedback will help ensure final designs make traveling by transit more intuitive and convenient for all.



Transit riders at El Cerrito Del Norte BART Station check out the prototype. (Photo: ©Noah Berger)

Regional Transit Connections

Conexiones de transporte público regional 區域交通連接

About this map

This map shows where you can go by bus, train, or ferry in the Bay Area. It highlights transit services that directly connect populated places, attractions, and parks around the region. Visit 511.org/transit or transit agency websites for more information.

Regional transit services

- Bus
- Rail
- Ferry

Transit service frequency

- Every 1-65 min and 7 days/week
- Every 60+ min and/or fewer than 7 days/week

Walking transfer

Transferable may be 5-10 min walk

Local transit services

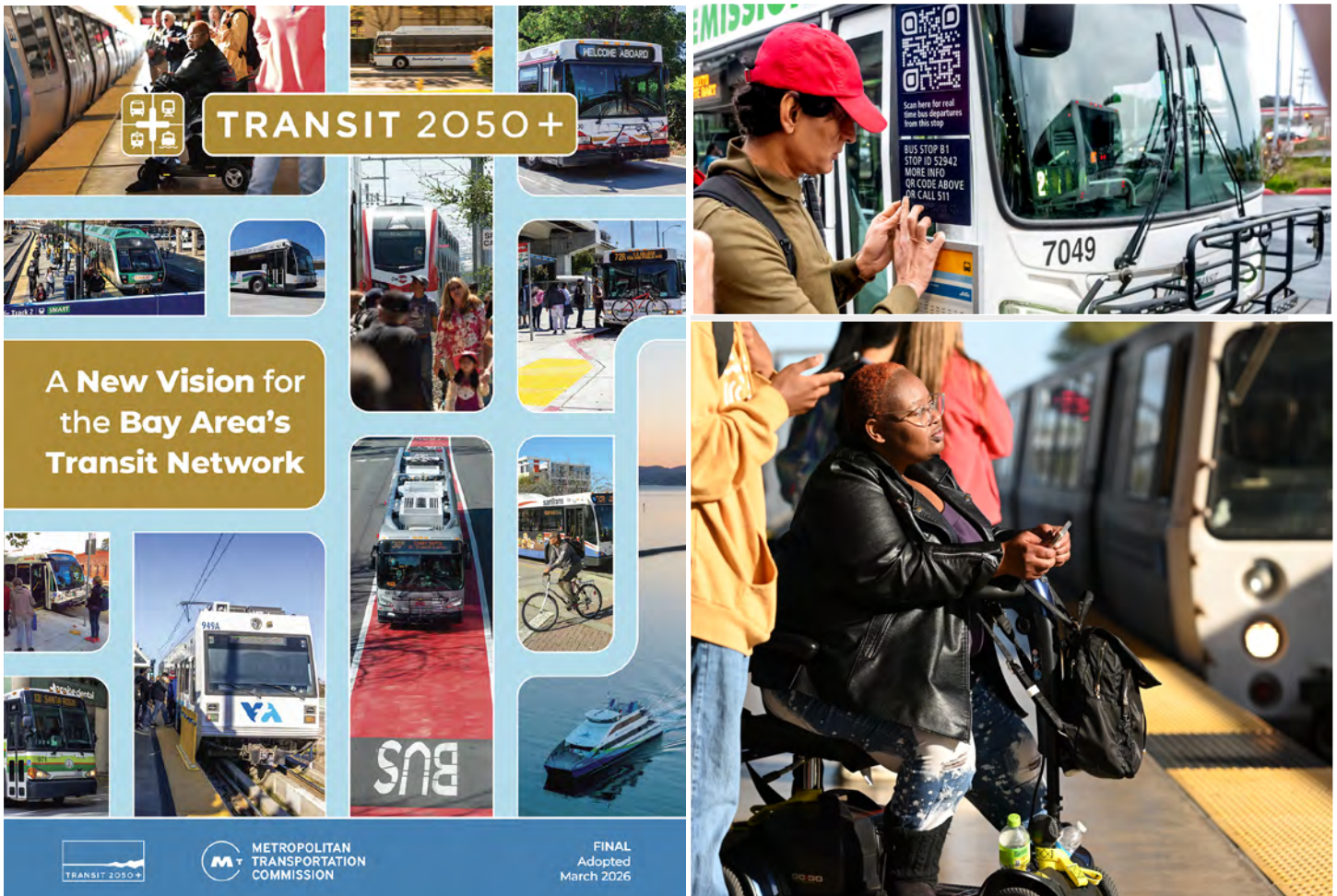
Parks accessible by transit services

How to pay

Clipper

Fares

Agency	Code	Clipper	Agency	Code	Clipper
AC Transit	AC	Yes	San Mateo County Transit	SCT	Yes
Alameda-Contra Costa Express	ACE	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes
Alameda Regional Connector	ARC	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes
Alameda Regional Connector	ARC	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes
Alameda Regional Connector	ARC	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes
Alameda Regional Connector	ARC	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes
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Alameda Regional Connector	ARC	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes
Alameda Regional Connector	ARC	Yes	San Francisco Bay Ferry	SBF	Yes



Cover image of the Transit 2050+ report – A New Vision for the Bay Area's Transit Network.

Transit Network: MTC has invested over \$100 million in transit performance initiative projects, including \$40 million in flexible federal highway funds to make transit faster and more reliable, including bus travel to and from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. These investments are already speeding up commute times for those taking buses over the Bay Bridge. MTC in 2024 also completed Transit 2050+, the first comprehensive connected network plan for a faster, more frequent, connected Bay Area transit network.



MTC helps Bay Area transit agencies meet the mobility needs of people with disabilities.

(Photos: ©Noah Berger)

Accessibility: MTC and transit agency staff have completed a Bay Area Paratransit Eligibility Transformation Action Plan report and are now working to prioritize and implement the recommendations in the report. This is an important step in standardizing eligibility practices for programs that benefit people with disabilities.

Funding: Since 2021, MTC, transit agencies, advocacy organizations, the business community, labor and other groups worked together to secure state funding to sustain service. MTC also contributed \$300 million in regional discretionary funds to the effort. These actions will help mitigate cuts through November 2026, when voters are expected to consider a transit measure. (See pages 1-2).

Plan Bay Area 2050+

Adopted earlier this year by MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments, Plan Bay Area 2050+ updates the visionary, performance-based long-range plan known as Plan Bay Area 2050, which was adopted in 2021.

At the heart of Plan Bay Area 2050+ are 35 strategies spread across transportation, housing, the economy and the environment that aim to make the Bay Area a thriving, economically vibrant place for all residents.

Plan Bay Area 2050+ refines select strategies to incorporate new financial realities and integrate other lessons learned over the last four years. A parallel planning process called Transit 2050+ aimed to address the challenges posed by the Bay Area's robust but complex transit system and to account for rapid changes in commute patterns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It takes a customer-focused approach to identifying transit priorities so that the end result is a more reliable and integrated transit system that will attract more riders.

Plan Bay Area 2050+ is the Bay Area's Regional Transportation Plan, as required by federal law, as well as the region's state-mandated Sustainable Communities Strategy.



Plan Bay Area 2050+ summer outreach spanned the entire region, from Vacaville in the North (above) to San José in the South Bay (below). (Photos: Flor Haus, above; Karl Nielsen, below)

Performance Drives Project Selection

MTC has a long history of using performance to inform decision-making and Plan Bay Area 2050 was MTC's most robust exercise in performance-driven planning to date. Using a data-driven, academically rigorous performance assessment framework, MTC evaluated over 90 major transportation projects across three divergent future scenarios to determine the projects' cost-effectiveness and resilience to conditions outside MTC's control, like changes in federal policy and

global market conditions. Many high-performing projects shared a common theme: They leverage the significant investments the Bay Area has made in the transportation network over many years and provide new benefits under all of the scenarios we tested.

This assessment was carried forward for Plan Bay Area 2050+ with minor updates and helped the Bay Area prioritize transportation projects for inclusion in the fiscally constrained Plan Bay Area 2050+.



BART Core Capacity leverages the region's historic rail investments to provide significant new benefits across all future scenarios.



Investments in micromobility improve safety and cost-effectively enhance mobility throughout the Bay Area



Bay Area Forward optimizes existing infrastructure to deliver low-cost, high-impact congestion relief through operational efficiencies.



A seamless, integrated transit fare system complements transit investments and delivers significantly higher transit ridership.



Photo: Karl Nielsen.

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Photo: Courtesy of VTA.



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