



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: Seamless Transit Principles

DATE: September 2, 2021

Approved

Date: 09/02/21

RECOMMENDATION

Agendize for the September 14th City Council meeting consideration of adopting a resolution supporting the Seamless Transit Principles.

BACKGROUND

San José is a growing transportation hub with numerous transit systems running through its veins. Unfortunately, we are part of a fragmented system regionally which in a 2015 SPUR report described as “much more pronounced in the Bay Area than in other U.S. regions that have multiple operators, and the only large region without an operator that carries more than half of the transit market.”¹

The Seamless Transit Principles, compiled by the non-profit Seamless Bay Area, is the cornerstone of a vision for a unified, world class public transit system. They are:

1. Run all Bay Area transit as one easy-to-use system
2. Put riders first
3. Make public transit equitable and accessible to all
4. Align transit prices to be simple, fair, and affordable
5. Connect effortlessly with other sustainable transportation
6. Plan communities and transportation together
7. Prioritize reforms to create a seamless network

We have seen in metropolitan areas across the country where despite differing city, county, special district or even state jurisdictions, a unified transit system improves user experience and increases ridership, farebox revenue generation as well as overall economic benefits. As one of three large cities in the Metropolitan Bay Area, interconnectivity between all our transit systems and its operating bodies not only makes sense but will be vital to our region’s effort in creating a more sustainable future.

¹ SPUR (2015) *Seamless Transit*. Retrieved at https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/2015-04/SPUR_Seamless_Transit.pdf

DRAFT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS The San Francisco Bay Area, despite being an exceptional place to live, faces an uncertain future due to several interrelated crises -- decreasing housing affordability, increasing congestion, rising pollution, widening inequality, and the recent COVID-19 public health crisis – all of which are exacerbated by an inadequate and poorly-performing public transportation system;

WHEREAS, Despite billions of dollars of investments in new transportation infrastructure over the past five decades, public transit in the Bay Area has failed to attract large numbers of new riders, and has never been used by more than 12% of the population for commute trips since 1970; by contrast automobiles have always been used for over 75% of commute trips;

WHEREAS The quality of and usage of public transit in the Bay Area has declined in recent years, with transit trips per capita declining by 10%, average bus speeds declining by 9%, and transit commute times increasing by 11% between 2001 and 2016;

WHEREAS The California Air Resources Board reported in 2018 that no California regions, including the Bay Area, are on track to meet their greenhouse gas reduction targets, with increasing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and declines in transit ridership cited as a primary factors;

WHEREAS Using public transit in the Bay Area is inconvenient and costly for many types of trips, requiring riders to: use multiple transit systems operated independently with little coordination; pay multiple separate fares; experience unpredictable transfers; and navigate different wayfinding systems and brand identities;

WHEREAS Low income people, many of whom have experienced displacement and have long commutes requiring multiple transit services, are among the most adversely affected the Bay Area's poorly integrated public transportation system, experiencing a significant financial burden from needing to pay multiple separate transit fares or being forced into costly vehicle ownership;

WHEREAS Regions with high-ridership public transportation systems are, by contrast, characterized by highly integrated networks of quality local and regional transit services that make traveling without a private automobile convenient and easy for all types of trips, featuring aligned routes and schedules, coordinated transfers, high quality transit hubs, common branding and customer information, and other common regional customer experience standards.

WHEREAS Regions that have successfully integrated and simplified transit fares have experienced many broad social benefits, including a shift in travel from private cars to public transit, an increase in overall public transit usage, and expanded mobility options and cost savings for riders.

WHEREAS, A well-functioning and coordinated transit system plays a critical role in supporting public health and safety during an emergency, with 31% of Bay Area essential workers relying off public transit to get to work. It also plays a critical role in supporting

an economic recovery. During and in the aftermath of major disruptions to our transit system, close coordination among agencies facilitates prioritization of the most critical needs, efficient deployment of resources, and clear communication to customers.

Resolution

(1) NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF SAN JOSÉ AS FOLLOWS:

THE CITY OF SAN JOSÉ affirms its commitment to advance planning, design and operations to forward the needs of an improved transit system and working collaboratively with State agencies, MTC, municipalities and other public agencies develop a highly integrated regional transportation system that provides convenient, seamless, and affordable transit for customers.

The SAN JOSÉ CITY COUNCIL supports the Seamless Transit Principles listed in Attachment (A), and agrees to be publicly listed as a supporter.

ATTACHMENT A

The Seamless Transit Principles

Viewable at: www.seamlessbayarea.org/seamless-transit-principles



1) Run all Bay Area transit as one easy-to-use system

Public transit should work as one seamless, connected, and convenient network across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Getting around on transit should be as fast and easy as driving a car. Coordinated bus, rail, and ferry routes and schedules should encourage effortless transfers. Consistent and clear customer information, branding, and maps should make using transit simple and dignified.



2) Put riders first

Riders should feel comfortable when using transit and be treated like valued customers. Public transit agencies must do more to listen to riders and continuously improve service. They must prioritize riders' needs above all else, and overcome all operational, political and bureaucratic barriers to provide an excellent and seamless customer experience.



3) Make public transit equitable and accessible to all

People of all income levels, ages, abilities, genders, and backgrounds should have access to world-class public transit. People who are the most reliant on transit are best served by a universal, inclusive, regionally integrated, connected system that is used by all. People with limited means to pay for transit should be provided with discounts.



4) Align transit prices and passes to be simple, fair, and affordable

Transit should provide good value for money. Fares across the region's 27 public transit agencies must be aligned into a consistent, fair, and affordable system that encourages using transit for all types of trips and doesn't punish riders for transferring. Cost-effective monthly passes should work across the Bay Area and should be widely available to individuals, employers, and schools.



5) Connect effortlessly with other sustainable transportation

A person's journey does not end when they get off a bus or exit a station. Excellent pedestrian, bicycle, and other pollution-free transportation options should seamlessly connect public transit to communities and destinations, supporting door-to-door trips that don't require a car.



6) Plan communities and transportation together

High quality public transit should be at the heart of communities across the Bay Area. Transportation should be closely aligned with our region's land use, promoting a connected network of transit-oriented, walkable communities that expands access to affordable housing and job opportunities, and reduces car travel and greenhouse gas emissions.



7) Prioritize reforms to create a seamless network

A regionally integrated, world-class transit system won't happen on its own -- it will take leadership, unprecedented levels of cooperation, and changes to existing local, regional, and state policies. The cities, counties, public transit agencies, regional authorities, business leaders, advocacy groups and elected representatives of the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California megaregion must prioritize the broad public interest and urgently work together collaboratively to advance critical reforms. Our future depends on it!