

California Legislature

February 24, 2017

Dave Cortese
Chair, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Rebecca Saltzman
President, BART Board of Directors
P.O. Box 12688
Oakland, CA 94604

Dear Mr. Cortese and Ms. Saltzman,

The undersigned group of legislators writes on behalf of our constituents in the East Bay who are alarmed by recent suggestions that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) will seek to impose a toll increase on the Bay Area's seven state-owned bridges to fund transportation infrastructure projects, including the purchase of new rail cars for Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). Given the direct financial impact that a toll increase would have on our constituents, especially those commuting to and from the East Bay, we feel that it is prudent to request clarification on the purpose and scope of this proposal. Please respond to the following questions:

1. A toll increase would disproportionately impact drivers in the East Bay. What is the specific benefit these residents would receive by financing new BART rail cars? Taking into account that Solano County currently contributes nearly 20 percent of total bridge toll revenue, yet has no BART service, in what ways would the money raised benefit the bridge users who are paying for the new rail cars?
2. The BART Board awarded a contract for new rail cars in 2012. What was the plan to finance the rail cars when the contract was awarded? Why is financing for the new rail cars not already in place?
3. The largest proposed toll increase would raise \$1 billion but still leave MTC and BART \$600 million short of the currently estimated cost of the new rail cars. How will that final \$600 million be raised? What guarantees can you give East Bay residents about the service reliability and resiliency of the BART system if these new tolls are enacted, and how likely is it residents will see another rate increase in the future?

4. MTC's recently completed \$256 million headquarters was largely financed by bridge tolls but was allowed to run 53 percent over budget. Why were these excessive costs financed and why was that extra money not directed toward paying some portion of the new rail cars, a cost MTC and BART knew was coming?
5. The oversight committee for the recently passed \$3.5 billion bond has not yet been established. Why is it prudent to consider new revenue sources when effective oversight mechanisms for current and pledged funding are not yet in place? What assurances do we have that money from a toll increase cannot and will not be used to offset increases in wages and/or bonuses for employees and administrators?

Transportation infrastructure is integral to the continued economic success of our Bay Area communities. It is our responsibility as legislators to ensure that any funds raised for the purpose of maintaining this infrastructure are spent in the most cost effective, equitable way possible. As guardians of the public trust, our constituents depend on us to provide oversight on complex issues such as these. While this list of questions is not exhaustive, and we reserve the right to continue this dialogue in the future, we look forward to receiving your responses as we work together to effectively manage the transportation needs of our districts.

Sincerely,



TIMOTHY S. GRAYSON
Assemblymember, 14th District



STEVE GLAZER
Senator, 7th District



CATHARINE BAKER
Assemblymember, 16th District