



Statement from FASTER Bay Area

March 17, 2020

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group, the Bay Area Council and SPUR, along with a broad coalition of partners, have been working for well over a year towards creating a truly transformational transportation plan that addresses transit needs now and for the next 50 years. Named FASTER Bay Area, the idea is that with the right investment and the right plan, public transit can flourish in the Bay Area.

The plan had been to place this measure on the ballot in the nine-county Bay Area in November 2020 and to ask the voters to join us in the creation of a world-class, seamless, integrated transit system. That system would better serve the transit-dependent, would improve the transit experience with fast and frequent service to lure choice riders out of their cars.

Under normal circumstances, this was a very challenging task. Developing a revenue mechanism that was sufficiently funded and a framework that would actually achieve the type of transformation that we all believe is critically necessary is complicated and requires transit operators and legislators to agree to transform business as usual. FASTER has been working with Senator Jim Beall, one of the State's greatest champions of public transportation, to draft legislation that would authorize the regional vote in November 2020.

These are not normal circumstances. With the global threat of COVID-19 hitting our community hard, we have had to re-evaluate our plans. Considering the uncertainty of the legislative season, the urgent need to focus all our attention on immediate challenge of COVID-19 and the complexity of what we are trying to accomplish with FASTER, it has been determined that we need to push out beyond the 2020 election cycle and continue our efforts on a different time frame.

FASTER's proposed investment framework and structural changes are still a critical priority for our organizations and partners. We believe the additional time we will have will make the FASTER Framework even stronger by allowing us to build on the robust work that has been done to date.

We have held close to 500 meetings, from open community forums to discussions with transit agency boards and local government leaders. We listened to and learned from representatives of equity, environmental, labor groups, as well as chambers of commerce and trade groups. We are especially grateful for the insights of the smart, hard-working Technical Advisory Group with representatives from transit agencies throughout the region. In addition, we are thankful to MTC

Chair Scott Haggerty, Vice-Chair Alfredo Pedroza, Executive Director Therese McMillan and their staff for their ongoing guidance and partnership throughout this process.

We have developed an investment framework as well as a host of key policy and institutional changes to ensure the system worked like one seamless system. We included measures to advance social equity that have not been done before in California, like a fairness credit that would ensure that low-income residents would not have to pay for the new system while guaranteeing transit fare discounts of at least 50% -- in perpetuity, to these same residents. These and other aspects of the proposal are available at [FASTERBayArea.org](https://www.fasterbayarea.org).

This step to pivot away from November 2020 was not taken lightly, but our timeline was incredibly tight. Since it would need to be “urgency” legislation (i.e., enacted in the same year it is passed) the bill would need to get at least a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote in both the State Assembly and Senate, rather than 50%+1. It would also need the Governor’s signature by June 24 rather than the September 30 deadline for non-urgency bills.

This was already an extremely tight timeline, especially as FASTER is proposing a wide variety of transformative policy changes. With the massive amount of focus that we will need on COVID-19, we were concerned that the critical yet complex elements that are core to FASTER’s mission, such as a **focus on high-frequency transit**, strong and objective metrics to pick only the best projects and the creation of a Network Planner function, were no longer possible in this timeframe. If we are going to raise and spend \$100 Billion for transformative investments, we need to get it right.

FASTER will continue to work towards passing legislation to authorize a Bay Area ballot initiative but we will no longer be proposing that it be eligible for the November 2020 ballot. This change will give us more time to work with the Bay Area’s transit operators, elected officials, stakeholders, and the broader public.

As we look ahead we remain committed to working together towards a network that is truly seamless, fast, frequent and reliable enough to get people out of their cars; a network that is built based on outcomes that best serve the customers. We invite all stakeholders and community members who believe that we can build such a system to join us in this effort.
