TTTF Meeting #8
Staff Report on Options for Additional Funding

AGENDA ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: Additional discussion on options for additional funding

ACTION: For discussion only

CONTEXT

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) convened the Transit Transformation Task Force (TTTF) on December 8, 2023, with the goal of meeting the requirements of Senate Bill 125 (SB125) and identifying paths to increase ridership and improve transit experiences for all users.

The purpose of this Staff Report is to provide additional information on transit funding in California to support discussion on these topics at TTTF Meeting #8, including SB125 section 1.f.6: *New options for revenue sources to fund transit operations and capital projects to meet necessary future growth of transit systems for the next 10 years*.

The facts and figures referenced in this document are based on four primary sources: The California State Controller's Office on State and local funding programs, U.S. Department of Transport data on Federal transportation funding, National Transit Database, and previous discussions with the TTTF and Technical Working Group on funding.

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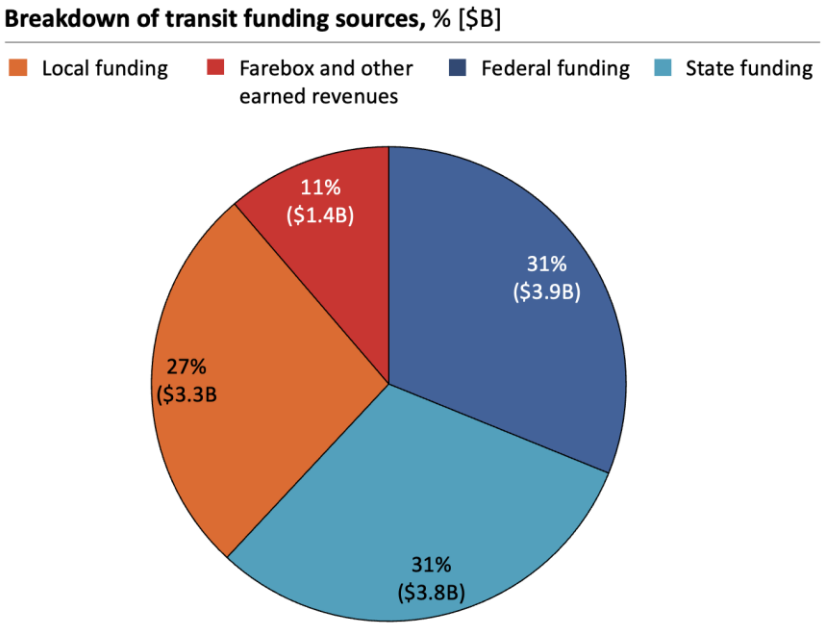
1. BACKGROUND ON TRANSIT FUNDING IN CALIFORNIA

Transit agencies in California received approximately $12.5 billion in revenues in FY2022-23 across a diverse array of funding sources to run, maintain, and expand transit systems.[1] These revenues grew by about 5% per year from 2013 to 2023.[2] California transit dollars are split across federal (~$3.9B), state (~$3.8B), local (~$3.3B), and farebox revenue (~$1.4B).[3] Some of the largest sources of funding for transit are detailed below. Although much of the federal funding, and some of the local tax measures listed are restricted to capital uses, most of the funding sources have the ability to be used for capital or operating purposes. Additionally, local and state monies are often used to serve as local match for federal requirements.

Exhibit 1: Breakdown of transit funding sources in California: FY22-23, % [$B][4]



Transit agencies in California receive a significant share of their funding from State sources. Approximately $3.8B or 31% of the funding is from State programs, most of which comes through the Local Transportation Fund (~$1.2B), State Transit Assistance and State of Good Repair (~1.1B) and Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (~$0.7B).[5] State programs are funded through three main mechanisms: Transportation Development Act (from sales taxes, diesel taxes), Senate Bill 1 (from gas taxes, vehicle registration fees) and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (from cap-and-trade auction fees).[6] California State funding for transit is the fifth highest among States and Territories with the 10 largest transit systems when measured as a share of total funding, and is higher than the average of other States. California has the 12th highest share of State funding across all States and Territories.[7]

Exhibit 2: Largest 10 individual government funding programs (excl. fares and other revenues)[4]

[1] All the following information sourced from the State Controller's Office, USDOT / Federal Transit Administration, National Transit Database (farebox revenue)
[2] National Transit Database growth in total funding from 2013 to 2023
[3] See Footnote 1
[4] See Footnote 1
[5] See Exhibit 2
[6] Road Repair and Accountability Act (SB 1), Transportation Development Act (TDA), California Air Resources Board
[7] California data is based on sources listed in Footnote 1. National Transit Database is used for all other States

Largest California transit government funding sources

Local funding | Federal funding | State funding

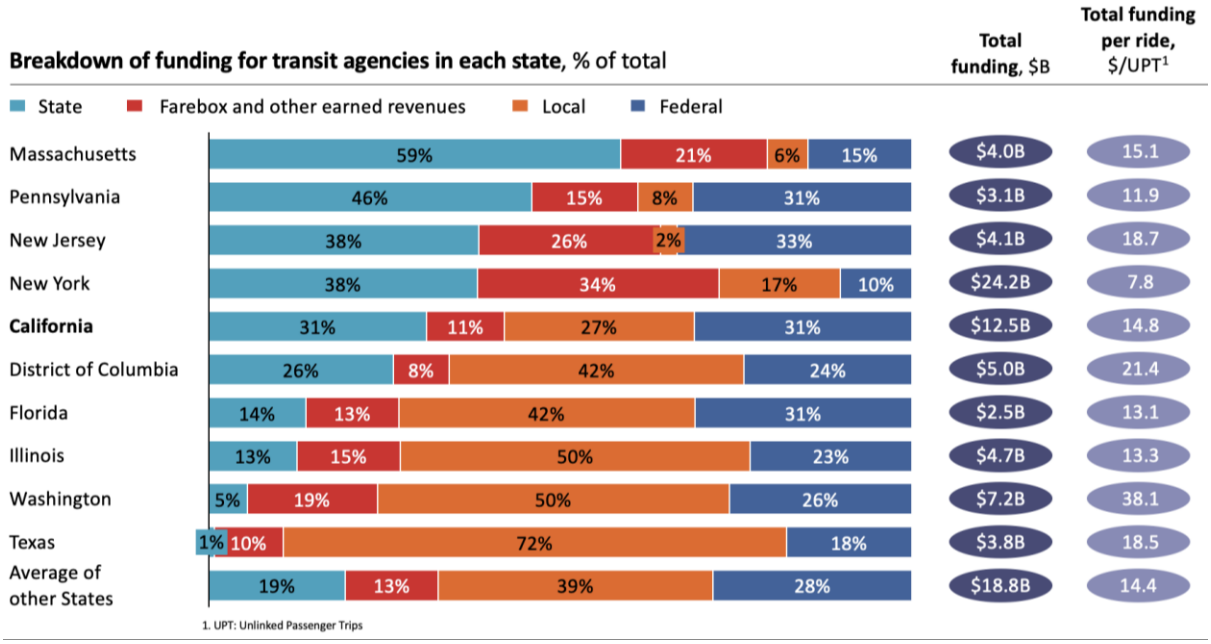
PRELIMINARY

Type	Funding source	Amount of funding, $B*	Primary source of funds	Funding decision-making entity	Enabling mechanism
Federal	5309 - FTA Capital Program Funds	1.6	Federal general revenues	Federal	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
Local	Local tax measures in addition to the Local Transportation Fund	1.5	Sales tax	Regions	Transportation Development Act (TDA)
State	Local Transportation Fund (LTF)	1.2	Sales tax	Regions	TDA
Federal	5307+5340 - Urbanized Area Formula Program	1.2	Federal general revenues	Regions	IIJA
State	State Transit Assistance + State of Good Repair	1.1	Diesel tax and transportation improvement fee	Regions	TDA (STA), SB1 (SOGR)
Local	Taxes raised directly by transit agencies	0.8	Sales taxes, highway tolls, vehicle licensing fees	Regions	Agency-specific legislation
State	Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)	0.7	Gas/diesel taxes and vehicle registration fees	California State	GGRF, Senate Bill 1
Federal	5337 - State of Good Repair Grants (SOGR)	0.6	Federal general revenues	Regions	IIJA
Local	Local funds from bridges, tunnels, tolls	0.3	Bridge and tunnel tolls	Regions	Region-specific legislation
State	Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (e.g. Transit-Oriented Development)	0.2	Cap-and-trade proceeds	California State	GGRF

* Only 10 largest programs listed, which comprise $9.2B in total; other Federal, State and Local sources total $1.9B, with farebox revenue accounting for the remaining $1.4B

There are also some additional Federal and State funds for infrastructure, that today are largely used for roads, that may also be eligible to be used for transit. Some of the largest include the Federal Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG)($1.2B), the Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) ($0.5B) and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) ($0.5B).[3] Currently, some of these funds are spent on transit projects, at the discretion of the allocating agency (either the State of CA or the Regions). The total amount of funding inside the IIJA FHWA formula programs to CA is ~$4.5B a year.

Exhibit 3: Transit funding source breakdown across largest 10 states by total revenue[9]



[9] California data is based on sources listed in Footnote 1. National Transit Database is used for all other States

Some transit agencies in California currently face near-term funding challenges.[10] Agencies that had a high farebox recovery ratio pre-COVID such as Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), Metrolink and Caltrain face fiscal gaps due to a reduction in post-pandemic ridership. In 2024, BART, for example, had only 47% of pre-pandemic ridership.[11] Other transit agencies, such as the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) face a fiscal gap due to low parking revenue, which has declined by about 30% relative to pre-pandemic levels.[12] These and other transit agencies received short-term federal funding relief under the CARES[13] Act and CRRSA[14] to address this shortfall, but these funds have already been exhausted or may soon be exhausted, depending on the transit agency.[15]

Other funding sources may also face headwinds in the medium term. Due to the rising sales of zero emission vehicles and increasing fuel efficiency, fuel tax funding is expected to decrease, with the Legislative Analyst's Office[16] indicating State Transit Assistance (STA) program funding could decline by up to ~$300 million, roughly a third of total STA funding,[17] by 2035. Gas taxes are also a source of SB1 funded programs.[18] The Technical Working Group also noted that the cyclicality of funding from other sources such as sales taxes and cap-and-trade auction proceeds also makes it difficult to predict funding availability in the medium term.[19]

This report sets out several options for evolving transit funding in California for the TTTF to consider.[20] These options are organized by time horizon and include:

- **Short term:** increasing flexibility in funding
- **Medium term:** making improvements in operational and capital cost efficiency
- **Long term:** developing new sources of revenue including potentially new government funding, value capture from property development, and enhancing farebox revenue

2. OPTIONS TO IMPROVE FUNDING

A. Short-term: Increase flexibility in funding

A1. Current distribution of government funding

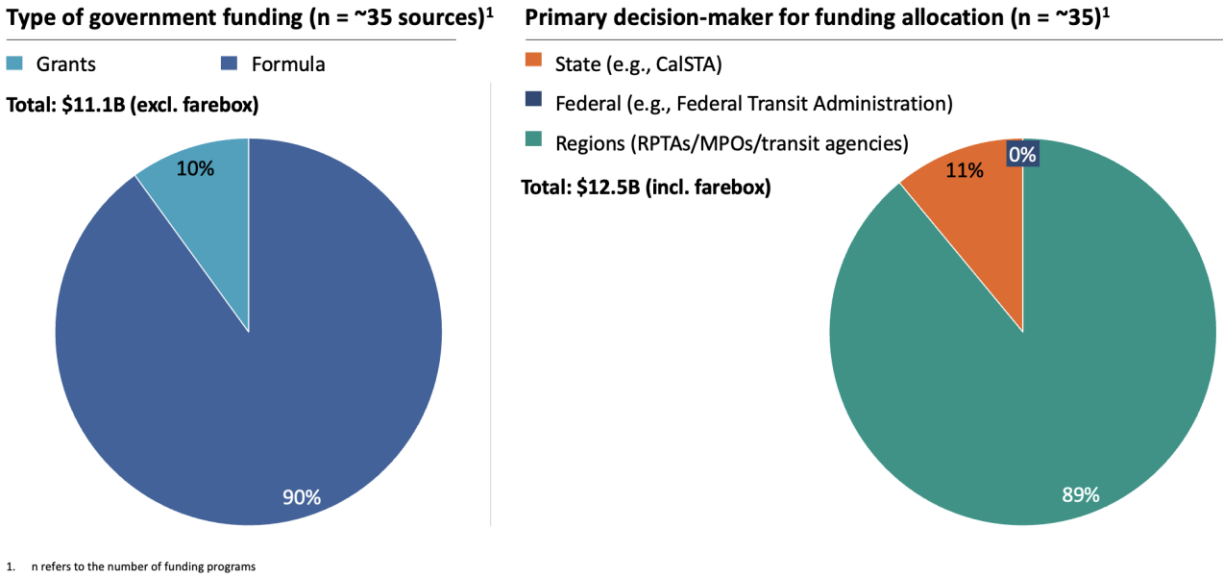
Transit agencies in California, receive 90% of government funding through formula programs.[21] Some of the largest sources include State funding under the Transportation Development Act (e.g., Local Transportation Fund, State Transit Assistance) and Federal 5307 Urbanized Area and State of Good Repair Programs. These are distributed based on metrics such as population and transit service levels. The remaining 10% of funds are discretionary grants that require transit agencies, Caltrans and/or their Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)/Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) to apply. Examples include the State

[10] California Transit Association: Transit Funding Crisis
[11] Bay Area Ridership Data
[12] SF Muni's Impending Fiscal Cliff
[13] Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
[14] Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations
[15] California transit agencies need more state support
[16] Decrease relative to 2023 revenue; scenario assumes emissions reduction goals following the California Air Resources Board Scoping Plan
[17] State Transit Assistance (STA) provides discretionary funding that are apportioned to transit agencies considering their population and revenue
[18] Road Repair and Accountability Act (SB 1)
[19] Summary of discussion at Technical Working Group Meeting #7 on January 14, 2025
[20] Solutions below identified by Technical Working Group (TWG) and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) identified by CalSTA
[21] See Footnote 1. Program definitions taken from government funding program websites

Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) at the State level and Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) at the Federal level.

Approximately 90% of funds are primarily allocated by RTPAs and MPOs together with transit agencies.[22] This includes most of the formula funding (e.g. Federal 5307 Urban Area Program Funds, State Transit Assistance, Local Transportation Funds, Low Carbon Transit Operations Program) as well as revenues raised directly by transit agencies through fares, sales taxes or property taxes. The State and Federal government are primarily responsible for allocating either discretionary grant program funds, or in the State's case, 60% of FHWA Formula funds (with the other 40% allocated by the regions) which may, in some cases, go to Transit.

Exhibit 4: California transit funding from all government sources (Local, State, Federal) across funding type and primary decision-making entity[23]



Transit agencies decide how to best allocate funding between operations and capital projects. Between 2013 and 2023, 62% of transit funds were applied to operations, while the remaining 38% were applied to capital projects.[24] Of the capital funds, 20% were applied toward existing projects, and 18% were used for capital expansion.[25] Transit agencies in other states applied more funding than California to operations on average over the past 10 years (71% in other States compared to 62% in California).[26]

Most of the 40+ funding sources have distinct program rules, reporting and performance requirements. As presented by the Task Force, this leads to a system that increases administrative burden and requires frequent waivers for resolution,[27] making it difficult to track

[22] See Footnote 1. Primary decision-maker is the entity with the largest amount of discretion in how funds are allocated
[23] See Footnote 1
[24] TTTF Meeting 7, which took place on 12/10/2024
[25] TTTF Meeting 7, which took place on 12/10/2024
[26] National Transit Database Funding Applied to Capital and Operations
[27] TTTF Meeting 7, which took place on 12/10/2024 and discussions with the TTTF Technical Working Group

progress and outcomes in a consistent manner. In turn, this may reduce accountability and make compliance more complex, which is a heavier relative burden for smaller agencies that may lack administrative staff.[28]

A2. Potential actions to increase funding flexibility in how funds are used

Potential actions for discussion by the TTTF include:

i. **Exploring reallocation of funds from other sources:** Transit agencies could reallocate money which is currently committed to funding other transit programs. Potential options may include:
    - **Reallocating funds between capital and operations:** Funding could be reallocated from capital to operations. For example, 71% of SB125 funding was recently committed towards capital expenses by regions, with the remaining 29% committed to operations.[29]
    - **Reallocating other transportation funds:** As described in the Background on Transit Funding section above, there are some additional funds for other transportation purposes, that could be reallocated towards transit operations or capital (either short or long term).[30] Funds that are reallocated in this manner could potentially be supplemented through other sources (e.g., August re-distribution of Federal funds). The State of California and the regions could be more aggressive at obligation, which could allow us to approach the obligation limit and capture more funds. This could additionally benefit Californians by spending funds sooner, which means construction cost inflation would be less likely to incur cost overruns.[31]

ii. **Providing further flexibility in how funds can be used.** Transit funding guidelines or rules could allow for greater flexibility, provided the use of funds continues to align with overall program goals.[32] The main sources of funding for transit in California could be reviewed for opportunities to increase flexibility.

iii. **Consolidating application and reporting processes**: Task Force members highlighted the need to reform current State funding structures, suggesting approaches to streamline application and reporting processes.[33] This could include consolidating grant applications (i.e. one application which is considered against multiple grants), and harmonizing data reporting requirements with National Transit Database requirements. These measures could maximize funding potential and reduce administrative overhead.[34] As an example of what this could look like, Pennsylvania (PA) created a Public Transportation Trust Fund (PTTF) as a stable and dedicated funding source, consolidating contributions across various sources (e.g., toll proceeds from PA Turnpike Commission, sales taxes) and allocating funding based on need and system performance.[35]

[28] Conversations with the TTTF Technical Working Group
[29] SB125 Fund Split Analysis
[30] Based on California State Controller's Office, Federal Department of Transport, and State government guidelines

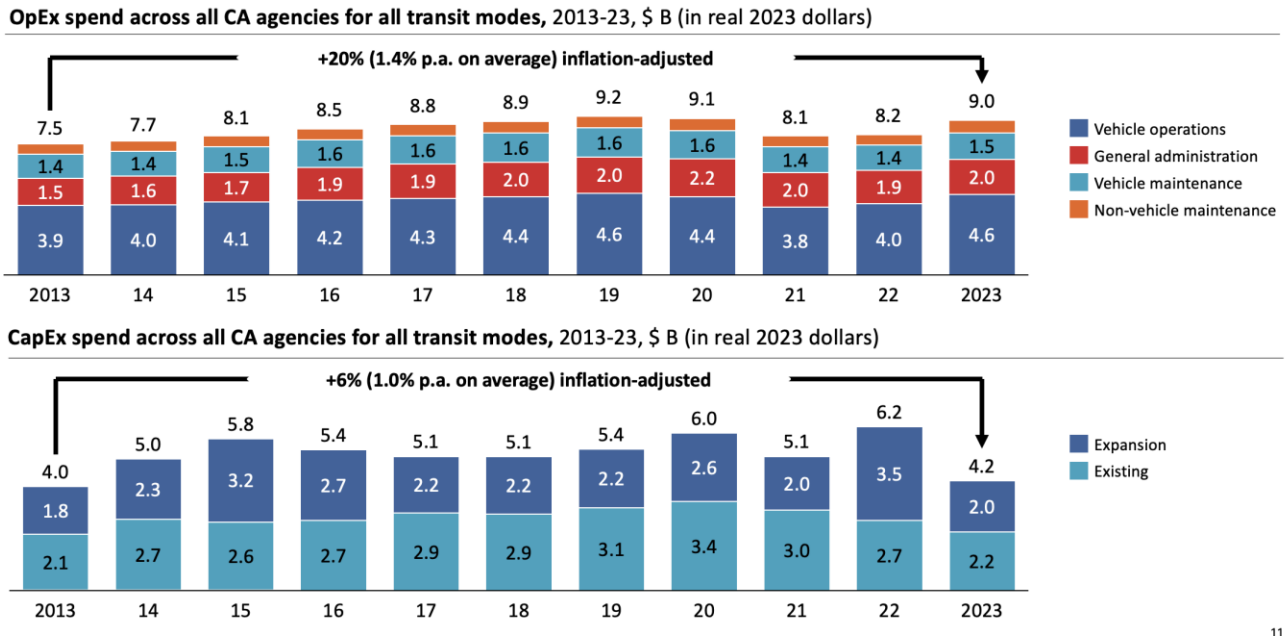
[32] Potential solution identified by the TTTF Technical Working Group and SMEs identified by CalSTA
[33] TTTF discussions at meetings #5 and #7
[34] TTTF discussions at meetings #5 and #7
[35] PA agencies set their own performance targets relative to past performance and peer group performance, using measures such as passengers per vehicle revenue hour, operating revenue/costs per vehicle revenue hour, and operating costs per passenger Under this system, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation provides assistance to help meet targets and withhold funding if targets are not met.

B. Medium-term: Improve operational and capital cost efficiency

B1. Potential costs to operate, maintain and provide for the future growth of transit

While farebox revenues have fallen for some transit agencies, costs have increased faster than inflation over the past decade. Operating expenses have grown about 20% above inflation in the last ten years and capital costs have increased 6% above inflation (though given the uneven timing of capital spend, the choice of starting and ending year impacts these growth rate estimates).[36] In the future, transit agencies could also have to contend with the costs of replacing increasingly aging systems, that can create a step change in costs when technology or other components become obsolete.

Exhibit 5: CA transit operating and capital expenditure growth over the past decade[37]



Operating costs could double by 2035 ($9 billion up to $18 billion), and capital costs could triple ($5 billion up to $17 billion) if trends continue.[38] Operating expenses (OpEx) increases could be driven by continued unit cost inflation (e.g. in wages and pensions, maintenance, fuel), as well as possibly raising service levels to meet goals. Capital expenditures (CapEx) could grow due to several factors, including increased investment in infrastructure to support service expansion, rising costs for transportation projects, and potential procurement, facility and operational expenses related to implementing Innovative Clean Transit plans.

[36] National Transit Database data on operating expenditures and capital costs
[37] Source: National Transit Database, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
[38] Analysis from the National Transit Database data on revenues, operating expenditures and capital costs assuming cost trends continue into the future

B2. Examples of measures that could be taken to improve operational and capital cost efficiency

In the next two to five years, improvements in cost efficiency by transit agencies could improve their fiscal position. The TTTF identified several options to improve efficiency including:

- **Operations:** For example, optimizing the timing and bundling of maintenance tasks, centralized procurement, upgrading fleets to improve fuel efficiency, investing in staff training and retention initiatives to reduce turnover costs and streamlining schedules.[39] Improving the reliability and speed of bus services through transit prioritization can also help boost ridership revenue and increase operating efficiency by requiring fewer resources to operate better services.
- **Capital:** For example, bundling projects by scope, location, and size to enhance productivity and efficiency,[40] building in-house engineering capabilities for recurring projects, streamlining permitting processes, designing projects with a focus on value, and coordinating State of Good Repair work across assets to minimize costs and disruptions. Additionally, Task Force recommendations on how to address capital construction cost could lead to more efficient operations with higher ridership.

In the last TTTF meeting, the Task Force also identified several ways that California could support these efforts, including:[41]

- **Creating base procurement standards, and centralized product lists** from vetted suppliers and state-wide shared procurement contracts (e.g., for vehicles and/or equipment parts).
- **Procuring software tools** for those that want them including for asset management, predictive maintenance or simple life-cycle costs assessments. An alternative could be to vet external tools and add them to vetted procurement lists.
- **Facilitating the development of shared facilities and training programs,** such as those focused on vehicle maintenance, to support maintenance and infrastructure needs.
- **Providing technical assistance** such as additional data analytics to identify where transit prioritization or schedule coordination could improve inter-regional travel, or support in navigating permitting requirements.

C. Long-term: Grow new sources of revenue

C1. Options for new revenue sources

In the long-term, increasing ridership and new sources of revenue could be needed to more permanently improve the stability and predictability of transit funding. The options the Task Force and Technical Working Group have so far identified include:

- **Government sources of funds:** There are a range of potential sources, all of which may come with potential limitations or tradeoffs. These could include sales tax, fuel taxes, cap-and-trade proceeds (which are current sources of funding) and hotel

[39] All strategies are sourced from TTTF Meetings 4 and 5 which took place on 5/16/2024 and 8/29/2024, respectively
[40] All strategies are sourced from TTTF Meetings 4 and 5 which took place on 5/16/2024 and 8/29/2024, respectively
[41] All the following strategies are sourced from TTTF Meeting 7 which took place on 12/10/2024

taxes (mentioned in a previous TTTF meeting). As an illustrative exercise, see Exhibit 6, for how much these taxes would need to change to increase transit revenues by 10% (or $1.25B). However, any change to funding arrangements for California's transit system could require navigating some constraints. At present, the largest source of government revenue for transit is local taxes, but given California's maximum local sales tax cap, it may be difficult to adjust tax policies to enable increased transit funding.[42] Other transportation-related taxes and fees could be increased (e.g., vehicle titling fees, commercial vehicle road use tax (based on Gross Vehicle Weight Rating), automotive gasoline tax), but this may prove difficult as existing rates are already high relative to peer states.[43] The Legislature could choose to reallocate additional funding toward transit from other sources, such as the general fund, Local Transportation Fund, or Highway Trust Fund federal dollars. However, these funds already have competing priorities, limiting their availability for transit.

- **Fare and roadway revenue:** TTTF also identified measures to boost ridership and associated fare revenues, including increasing transit-orientated development, improving service speeds through transit prioritization, and improving safety and security. Additionally, both the State of California and the regions have significant existing and planned investments in managed lane facilities and pricing programs that could generate significant revenue, depending on the types of projects built and selected.[44]
- **Property and related activities:** To generate additional revenue, California could consider creating value from property and related activities.[45] The TTTF has already identified several options including property development on agency-owned land, expanding the use of Tax Increment Financing districts, and other related property revenues such as leasing retail. The agencies facing the most severe fiscal challenges (e.g., BART, SF MUNI, Caltrain, Metrolink) may be best positioned to grow directly generated sources given their location in major metropolitan centers. However, these sources of revenues generally start off as a smaller revenue stream compared to other sources and could take time to develop.
- **Other directly generated revenue:** TTTF identified other smaller revenue sources that could grow over time, including sponsorships and partnerships, advertising, private charters, and right-of-way leasing for telecom.[46]

Exhibit 6: Illustrative Scenarios: Amount taxes could need to be raised to increase transit funding by 10%[47]

[42] State Controller's Office
[43] California drivers pay nation's highest gas taxes for roads and bridges in poor condition; Proposed Reauthorization of AB 8 Vehicle Fees; Gas Taxes by State, 2023, Tax Foundation
[44] Strategies were identified by the Technical Working Group and Subject Matter Expert (SME) identified by CalSTA
[45] Strategies were identified by the Technical Working Group and Subject Matter Expert (SME) identified by CalSTA
[46] Strategies were identified by the Technical Working Group and Subject Matter Expert (SME) identified by CalSTA
[47] Source: Legislative Analyst's Office , CA Budget Summary, State of California Franchise tax board, State Corporate Income Tax Rates and Brackets, 2024, Gasoline State Excise Tax Rates for 2025; Funding Regional Transportation with Sales Tax Revenue: 2024 Update; Transportation Development Act (TDA)

ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY

Amount by which existing taxes would need to rise to increase California transit funding by 10% (or $1.25B)

Types of taxes	Used to fund transit in California?	Amount by which existing taxes would need to rise to increase transit funding by 10% (or $1.25B)	Current level in California	Current range in other states	Total funding being generated in California, $B/year
Sales tax for the Local Transportation Fund	Yes	+ 0.26%	0.25% on goods	0.375% to 1.05%	$1.2B
Fuel tax for transportation	Yes	+ 10 cents	59 cents / gallon	~9 to 59 cents / gallon	$7.5B
Express lane toll revenue[1]	Yes	+ 500% in revenues through additional toll miles or raised rates	565 miles of express lanes	N/A	$0.25B
Hotel tax - *noted in prior TTTF meeting*	No	+ 5.1%	12.3% (weighted average)	1% to 17%	$3.0B
Cap & Trade from the GGRF for transit	Partial	+ 33% of GGRF allocation[2] or + 164% of GGRF funding[3]	~20% of GGRF goes to transit	N/A	$3.8B

1. Toll revenue includes tolls from the following transit agencies/express lanes: LA Metro, OCTA, San Diego, Bay Area, and VTA express lanes | 2. To generate an additional $1.25B in transit funding, an additional 33% of the total $3.8B of GGRF funding would need to be allocated from other priorities toward transit | 3. If allocation levels do not change, overall GGRF funding would need to grow by 164% to generate an additional $1.25B in transit funding

Exhibit 7: Potential sources of revenue identified by TTTF, TWG, and SMEs[48]

Revenue potential: High $ $ $ Med $ $ Low $

Real estate options identified by the TWG and other SMEs	Illustrative scale
Real estate development through public-private partnerships where private partners build developments and transit agencies get ground rent and/or share of ongoing revenue	$ $ $
Retail and commercial leases within stations and owned properties providing rental income and enhanced foot traffic	$ $
Transit Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts to fund expansion projects, e.g., Chicago Red Line metro	$ $ $
Funding for operations from private developers for VMT mitigation, for example through direct payments, or through providing transit passes for residents	$ $
Air right sales to private developers for further development above rail or bus stations	$ $
Long-term ground leases or property sales for underutilized land or spaces	$ $
Parking fees from park-and-ride lots and/or street parking	$
Electric Vehicle charging or hydrogen re-fueling in agency owned parking areas that could be offered also to private bus and truck fleets	$

[48] Air right sales occur when entities sell space above owned properties for the development of new residential or commercial spaces; Source: Technical Working Group Meeting held on October 10, 2024, and Subject Matter Expert interviews held by CalSTA in September – October 2024

Other options identified by the TWG and other SMEs	Illustrative scale
Growth of diversified business activities including operational and consulting activities in other geographies	$ $ $
Advertising opportunities including selling station naming rights, dynamic digital billboards and seasonal or event-based campaigns	$
Fiber optic leases with telecommunication companies for installation, operation and maintenance of fiber optics	$
Coordinating with medical organizations to fund services to medical centers or move their offices closer to transit to reduce paratransit costs	$
Sponsorships and partnerships such as with sporting events (transit incl. in game tickets), tourism (e.g., Visit California cards) and companies/universities (transit passes)	$
Charter bus services permitted for a wider scope of activities	$
Filming and other media activities on transit properties	$

C2. Other potential changes to improve funding processes

In addition to identifying new sources of revenue, there are other changes to funding processes that the Task Force could consider recommending. These include:

- **Creating incentives for regions to increase spend on transit:** California could look to incentivize regional spending by providing matching funding opportunities for agencies working to operate, maintain, and build transit infrastructure.[49] For example, in October 2024, over $1.3 billion was awarded from the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) to improve transit and passenger rail service in California, with the projects awarded leveraging more than $8.6 billion in matching local, federal and other state funding.[50]
- **Aligning incentives across government departments to support transit under other funding programs:** For instance, investments in streets and roads (e.g., implementing transit prioritization) can improve bus speeds, reducing the amount of operating expenses needed to deliver the same level of service.[51] Housing and commercial developments that are dense and located near transit can boost ridership, while investments in health and human services can enhance safety.[52] However, agencies responsible for funding improvements to the built environment and public health may not directly benefit from increased ridership and farebox revenue. This can create misaligned incentives between government departments.

3. CONCLUSION

Addressing these challenges will require California to manage short-term fiscal challenges, improve operating and capital cost efficiency in the medium-term, and grow long-term revenue streams from property and other sources.[53] This requires looking not just at agency

[49] Strategy identified by Technical Working Group (TWG) and Subject Matter Expert (SME) identified by CalSTA
[50] CalSTA: Governor Newsom Announces Over $1.3 Billion for Public Transportation Projects
[51] National Cooperative Highway Research Program
[52] Bay Area Economy: Optimizing Land Uses at Transit Stations; Transit Cooperative Research Program
[53] Strategies were identified by Technical Working Group (TWG) and Subject Matter Expert (SME) identified by CalSTA

balance sheets, but the whole of the transportation infrastructure and industry. While it will be difficult, California has the opportunity to create a more resilient and efficient transit system that meets the needs of Californians while advancing goals for sustainability and mobility.