



April 29, 2008

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
Senate President pro Tempore-elect
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 375 (Steinberg) -- Transportation planning: travel demand models:
sustainable communities strategy: environmental review – Statement of
California Transit Association Principles**

Dear Senator Steinberg:

On behalf of the members of the California Transit Association, I am writing to thank you and your staff for supporting public transportation. Bill Craven was particularly helpful in recently sitting down with and briefing our Legislative Committee relative to your goals in moving SB 375.

The California Transit Association represents the state's public transportation systems, as well as private sector suppliers to the transit industry. While our organization has not yet taken a formal position on your measure, I was directed to share with you these principles, for your consideration as the bill moves forward.

Public Transit Is An Essential Component of Any Strategy to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

It is our understanding that you intend SB 375 to, in part, create incentives for cities, counties and regional transportation planning agencies to plan for and fund more and better local and regional public transit systems. We thank you for envisioning this goal, and note that increased investment in and use of public transportation by more Californians will directly improve and protect the personal health of all Californians. Our car-centered transportation system is a major contributor to pollution and poor air quality in many regions of the state, and enhancing transit service, providing an attractive alternative to many Californians, should be a goal of the state in its overall strategy of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; this goal will prove particularly attainable in areas where new commercial and residential development is planned and built close to existing transit services.

Attached to this letter is a fact sheet providing you and your staff specific data relative to transit's contributions to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving our environment.

Concerns of Local and Regional Governments

Those who govern and manage public transit systems work closely with their colleagues at the local and regional government level to ensure seamless, efficient and effective transit service planning and delivery. In fact, many “transit systems” are actually operated by departments or divisions of cities or counties. Where joint powers authorities are organized solely for purposes of providing transit, by definition those systems are run by city and county officials. And, even when the service is provided by a special transit district created in California law, those agencies are almost always governed by board members appointed by local cities and counties.

And, in all these cases, the local transit system staff work closely with the regional transportation planning agency, local county transportation commission, and / or metropolitan planning organization staff to coordinate the planning of transit capital investment projects and the programming and funding of projects and local transit operations. Moreover, some of our Association members providing transit service are *also* the county or regional planning entity or have transportation capital programming responsibilities for their jurisdiction (such as Los Angeles Metro, the Orange County Transportation Authority, or the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority).

For these reasons, we recommend that any new procedures or requirements established by SB 375 mesh with the existing responsibilities of cities, counties and the planning entities, and that the bill set goals which can be achieved by cities and counties under the larger framework of existing planning law. We have reviewed the positions adopted by the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the Self-Help Counties Coalition, and the California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG), and we hope you will give careful consideration to their concerns in future amendments.

Transit-Specific Concerns

Even with the changes to SB 375 suggested by our regional and local partners there remains a strong likelihood that the enhancement of transit service you are trying to achieve with this legislation would not be possible. Our members note that the bill provides no actual new funding to transit agencies, funding that we believe will be necessary to ensure transit can help meet the greenhouse gas emission reduction goals of the bill through the provision of expanded levels of service. Given the fact that it is unlikely that the state will otherwise increase overall transportation funding in the near term, we are concerned that not only would transit agencies not be able to meet the higher demand needed to make SB 375 work, this legislation might cause some cities or counties to shift existing transportation funds in such a way as to actually reduce transit service in some areas.

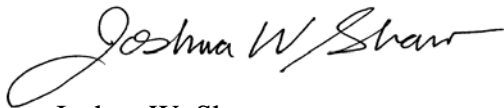
In the absence of new funding, and given the recent trend of massive reduction in state transit funding, the passage of SB 375 might actually make investments in transit service specifically targeted at greenhouse gas emission reductions the prime or only possible

transit investments, to the detriment of other transit goals. Additionally, our members with multi-modal transportation planning and operations responsibilities might have to contend with cuts to or shifts from revenue streams they currently count on to fund a variety of transportation investments.

In closing, the California Transit Association and its members are strongly committed to the goals of enhancing public transportation use and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We look forward to working with you to find ways to ensure stable and growing transit funding adequate to meet your goals as expressed in SB 375 as well as for the many purposes for which local communities invest in public transit.

We hope these comments are useful to you and your staff. I am available to answer any questions you might have. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Joshua W. Shaw
Executive Director

Cc: Bill Craven, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water
Brian Kelly, Office of Senate President pro Tempore Don Perata
Erica Martinez, Office of Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez
Rusty Selix, California Association of Councils of Governments
Sarah West, Self-Help Counties Coalition
DeAnn Baker, California State Association of Counties
Bill Higgins, League of California Cities
Executive Committee, California Transit Association
Legislative Committee, California Transit Association