



179 Cross Street, Suite A  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
(805) 781-4472 Fax (805) 781-1291  
[www.slorta.org](http://www.slorta.org)

## Public Comments for May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 RTA Board of Directors Meeting

*Below are comments received verbatim if by email, or summarized if verbally provided by telephone. Note that the sender's email address has been redacted. These comments will be posted on the RTA website as soon as possible. Any additional comments received after May 4<sup>th</sup> at 3PM, will be read aloud at the teleconference meeting.*

### Comments received as of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 3:00 PM:

From: Eric Greening <**REDACTED**>

Sent: Tues 04/27/21 8:07 AM

Subject: **Eric Greening comments on agenda item A-7 for RTA Board meeting of May 5<sup>th</sup>**

"Before making comments on Item A-7, I'd like to clarify that comments I sent to RTAC on Friday, April 23rd at 3:35 pm can and should be added as correspondence for Item C-1, the budget; if for some reason this can't be done, please let me know, so that I can make similar comments that do get into the record. I would also suggest contacting Todd Katz to determine whether he wishes for comments he sent to RTAC on Thursday, April 22nd at 6:31 pm to be included in the record for Item C-1. Since RTAC was not able to assemble a quorum, we took no collective vote on the proposed budget, and made no collective comments, but if we had had the opportunity, I would have supported an RTAC motion to approve the proposed budget with the caveat that many unpredictable elements in the coming fiscal year could cause a revisit.

Back to A-7. The staff recommendation is not to offer the Youth Ride Free program in 2021. Given that, based on signals from the Governor, we MIGHT be able to anticipate an end to the "Stay at Home" order and to certain mandates and guidelines about "social distancing" on June 15th, I would suggest that instead of cancelling the program, it be made contingent on an end to the six-foot distancing policy, and on resumption of the standard fare structure, should those changes occur at any time prior to mid-August.

The younger members of our society have borne a disproportionate burden in the pandemic responses that have been decreed, and have seen their educational and social lives massively disrupted. Their mental health has been strained. Young people are also the portion of our demographic least likely to spread, or to be seriously harmed by, Covid-19. After more than a year of carrying a disproportionate burden in responding to a virus they have little role in propagating, I would assert that, if mandates or guidance end or shrink the six-foot distance requirement, allowing greater passenger loads to be safely carried on fixed route buses, opportunities for young people to use the service for social and/or recreational, as well as educational, ends needs to be seen as ESSENTIAL to their well-being. For this

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reason, I urge the Board not to foreclose the possibility of the youth being able to regain, before summer is over, some semblance of what was once normal life.

Covid-19 is still new enough that peer-reviewed science is still emerging. The six-foot metric for "social distancing" has become an orthodoxy based on increasingly ingrained habit, but recent research seems to indicate that, except in the case of liquid droplets coughed or sneezed, it is largely irrelevant to danger of transmission of an airborne virus. Transmission can occur over much larger distances in stuffy, badly ventilated indoor settings, while immediate proximity is relatively risk-free in well-ventilated settings. I appreciate the improvement of ventilation systems that has been attained on the RTA fleet, and the apparent lack of any documented transmission of the virus among drivers and passengers to date. People who are symptomatic need to stay home; a stray cough or sneeze can be mitigated by a mask (masks don't stop viruses any more than a chain link fence stops a fly, but they catch droplets and immobilize the droplets' viral load until the droplets evaporate, which limits the duration of their usefulness to about the duration of a bus ride.) but apart from that, the six-foot distance is an arbitrary measure and may soon be considered largely obsolete. See, in Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, the recent study called "A Guideline to Limit the Airborne Transmission of Covid-19."

In other words, I see no reason to hesitate in increasing the practical capacity of fixed-route buses as soon as the State changes its rules in that regard, and see no reason not to allow the youth to ride free once those changes are made. Again, the program should not be cancelled this summer, but made contingent on an end to, or reduction of, the six-foot rule, and on a return to standard fares for other passengers.

Happy Cinco de Mayo, Eric Greening"

From: Todd Katz <~~REDACTED~~>  
Sent: Thurs 04/22/21 6:31 PM  
Subject: **Re: RTAC Meeting Agenda 04.22.21**

"Greetings --Here's my feedback on the agenda for the cancelled RTAC meeting:

- \* B-1-1 -- under Strategic Direction the statement "Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled" ... should this be clarified to show that this refers to private vehicles and not public transportation vehicles? (or am I mis-reading?)
- \* B-1-2 -- under the Mission statement should there be a mention of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals (which are referenced on p. B-1-5)?
- \* B-1-15 -- item c) ... would it be possible to add a phrase explaining what "Employment Risk Management Authority" insurance is indemnifying against? (I've no idea.)
- \* C-1-2 -- a minor point rather than "Greening motioned" please use "Greening moved"

\* C-1-3 -- "Mr. Greening also asked..." ... did the note-taker capture the answer to Mr. Greening's question?

#### GENERAL COMMENT

The following is a generalized comment based on my experience on four transportation-related city/county committees:

I think it would be very helpful to readers/reviewers/members if more graphical charts were used ... for example when there are, say, five funding sources, a vertical bar chart would quickly show -- for example -- the amount already secured from each source and the amount hoped for from each source in the context of the overall total possible review from that source.

By the same token, when there is an expense/obligation items, a vertical bar chart could show the percentage secured/guaranteed, the percentage expected but not yet secured, and the percentage shortfall of overall need for that budget item.

Then these separate revenue or obligation items could be pulled together into a single chart which would provide a useful visual representation of how the particular agency (this comment isn't particularly directed at RTA) is doing in regard to obligatory expenditures or revenue goals/status.

I'd be happy to provide more detailed feedback on this if that would be useful.

#### RECENT ARTICLE ON EVs

Finally, I'd like to call your attention to a NYTimes article about a company experimenting with making cost-effective, small batches of EV vehicles, including buses:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/21/business/arrival-electric-vehicles.html>

Cheers, Todd"

From: Eric Greening <**REDACTED**>  
Sent: Fri 04/23/21 3:35 PM  
Subject: **Re: RTAC Meeting Agenda 04.22.21**

"Hello!

Thanks to Todd Katz for his constructive comments, all of which make sense. My own understanding on vehicle miles traveled is that it incorporates all vehicles (even trucks), but that any person who shifts from a single-occupant car to a full bus reduces VMT impact by having a small proportionate share in the VMT of the bus, rather than being fully responsible for the VMT of the car. If I remember correctly, the answer to my question about whether future budget adjustments could be expected was that they might happen. Anyway, we'll revisit the minutes when we have a quorum to approve them. I like his chart idea.

My own questions and comments are: first, that the Executive Director's Report was to be oral, meaning we haven't heard/seen it yet. Will it be in written form in the packet for May 5th, so that we can ask questions and make comments on it in advance of this meeting?

Second, there are several places in the item on the 2021-22 budget in which the term "current fiscal year" is used, with no clarity about whether the year in question is the year during which the words are written and read, or the fiscal year of the proposed budget. Examples are on P B-1-4: Our respective SRTP's expire at the end of the current fiscal year" (and I wonder what "expire" means; I don't believe they cease to be valid planning documents, only that they become ripe for updating) and in the last paragraph of #7 on page B-1-7.

There are a lot of unanswered questions about how events beyond our control will unfold during fiscal year 2021-22, so the recognition thereof that is present is appropriate, and might even be further emphasized. The Governor is presently leading us to expect an end to the "tier" system and a degree of "opening up" starting June 15th; it is not clear whether this will affect the present social distancing measures that limit the capacity of each bus, nor how any change at this time or some subsequent time might affect travel and commute patterns. Commutes to office type jobs may remain reduced from pre-covid times even if the pandemic substantially recedes as workplaces reduce demand for office space and utilities by continuing to encourage employees to work from home at least part of the time. On the other hand, there might be a considerable rebound on trips to employment for which personal presence is needed, and for pent-up medical, social, recreational, religious, and cultural trips. It is already my impression as a rider that, after being largely absent for a year, youth out seeking recreation are back, and a few seniors who had long been hesitant about going out seem to be showing their (masked) faces again.

Despite the inevitable uncertainties we face, Tania Arnold has done her usual impeccable job putting together a solid and credible budget, and I, for one, do urge the Board to approve it, with the caveat that we may, as the year unfolds, have the necessity or opportunity to respond to developments we can't yet anticipate.

Many thanks, Eric"