



Re: Creating Regional Guidelines and Public Awareness Campaign to Support Carpooling during COVID-19

Many Asian countries that have seen a return to high levels of transit ridership have instituted mandatory temperature checks. As it seems politically unlikely that would be possible in the Bay Area, many people may be reluctant to return to transit for some time. Accordingly, carpooling will need to play an ever-increasing role in how people choose to get around the Bay Area to stop the pending Carmageddon.

Up-to-date Guidance. This will require MTC to rapidly develop and issue guidance for carpooling across the region and continue to update that guidance as necessary if an outbreak of COVID-19 occurs. MTC guidance should be developed in consultation with CDC guidelines and carpool providers who are experts in this field. The guidance and agreement between MTC and app providers should be fluid such that guidance can be updated and reissued as knowledge about COVID-19 continues to develop.

Certification. Though MTC has issued carpool safety tips, MTC should take these tips a step further in offering guidance that takes advantage of the technology provided by carpooling apps and work with app providers to make sure drivers and passengers can affirmatively certify to one another 1) they are coronavirus free; 2) passenger and driver are both wearing masks; 3) have hand sanitizer available in car; 4) drivers have disinfected common surfaces between carpools; 5) windows are kept open when possible during the ride to increase airflow; 6) limit the number of passengers to allow for as much physical distancing as possible in the vehicle and 7) enable either passenger or rider to reject a ride if conditions aren't met.

Incentivizing Carpooling. MTC should also identify funds from federal and state sources that can be used to pay people to carpool. One option could be working with Clipper to ensure that money on people's Clipper cards can be transferred to carpool fees until it is safe to take transit again. One obstacle to this has traditionally been that carpooling is not eligible for pre-tax dollars under federal law because there was no way to verify the trip. Given the change in widespread technology that has made verification feasible, MTC and others can partner to urge Congress to change pre-tax rules as part of any additional COVID-19 legislation or the upcoming highway bill. It is necessary to recognize carpool as a key public health strategy nationwide.

Public-Private Partnerships. We also encourage MTC to explore adopting the use of carpools to replace transit lines that have low-ridership and will not be feasible in our new financially constricted world. On-demand carpooling provides public mobility in a cost-effective and safe way.

Public Awareness Campaign. We ask that MTC issue the above guidance to help instill confidence to our community in this mode of transportation as we see commutes begin to resume throughout the Bay Area. Without such guidance, uncertainty among the public as to whether carpooling is a safe mode of transportation at this time will prevail and we will inevitably see a sharp rise in SOV use. MTC should promote this guidance through broad outlets to communicate this message to a wide audience to ensure the public is informed of the safety benefits carpooling can offer during this time.