



# City of Palo Alto

## City Council Staff Report

(ID # 10939)

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**Report Type:** Consent Calendar

**Meeting Date:** 12/16/2019

**Council Priority:** Fiscal Sustainability, Grade Separations, Transportation and Traffic

**Summary Title:** FASTER letter to Hill and Berman

**Title:** Approval of the Letter to Senator Hill and Assemblymember Berman Regarding the FASTER Program Proposal

**From:** City Manager

**Lead Department:** City Manager

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that Council direct staff to submit the letter in Attachment A to Senator Jerry Hill and Assemblymember Marc Berman regarding the FASTER program and the City's transportation priorities.

### **Discussion**

[FASTER Bay Area](#) is a proposed November 2020 ballot initiative sponsored by the Bay Area Council, SPUR, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, and others. The current goal is to raise up to \$100 billion over 40 years for transportation projects in the Bay Area through a 1% increase in sales tax. One of the ways a measure may appear on a ballot is through state legislation; this is the route, rather than a petition, chosen by the FASTER sponsors. The legislation currently identified for this measure is SB 278 (Beall).

As the legislature reconvenes on January 6, it is important to begin actively engaging in the process shaping the FASTER proposal in December. Once the legislature is back in session, hundreds of bills on a variety of topics will become active again, will be introduced, or will be the subject of policy hearings. The legislative process will start moving quickly and as such, it's important to make known to our delegation the City's transportation priorities at the beginning of this process. Doing so will help ensure our priorities are contemplated before SB 278 is amended, and before policy discussions begin in earnest.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Staff has had preliminary meetings with other Cities to discuss the FASTER proposal,

and our City's state legislative advocate has met with Transportation Committee staff. Importantly, staff expects this letter to be only part of our engagement in the FASTER process. We will continue to share Council's priorities with legislators and stakeholders throughout the legislative session.

**Environmental Review**

This report is not a project for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act; an environmental review is not required.

**Attachments:**

- Attachment A: FASTER Letter from the City of Palo Alto

December 17, 2019

The Honorable Jerry Hill  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5035  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Marc Berman  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 6011  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 278 (Beall)/FASTER Proposal – Projects and Principles from the City of Palo Alto**

Dear Senator Hill and Assembly Member Berman:

On behalf of the City of Palo Alto, thank you for your support and leadership related to transit-oriented development and for investing in California's infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond. A major priority of the City Council is addressing traffic and focusing on transportation priorities. Working closely with City staff and regional stakeholders, Palo Alto has identified some key projects that we feel would benefit not only our community, but the broader Bay Area. We are encouraged by the potential funding for transportation infrastructure projects through SB 278 (Beall), and the subsequent FASTER proposal and we seek your support on this legislation.

Widespread equity in funding transportation projects through SB 278/FASTER will be a major issue for many Bay Area communities. SB 278 provides an exciting opportunity to equitably benefit the entire Bay Area. As you are aware, Santa Clara County experiences extreme traffic congestion and transit crowding, particularly during commute times. Therefore, FASTER should seek to get to the heart of these congestion and crowding issues by funding improvements to both public transit and surface streets. To assist in identifying initiatives aimed at such improvements, Palo Alto offers three key elements as priorities within the funding framework from Senator Beall's SB 278 and the FASTER program:

- 1)** Caltrain grade separations, ensuring coordinated and efficient construction while respecting the outcomes of community planning processes;
- 2)** Sustainable funding for Caltrain operations, recognizing that the FASTER proposal could supersede the opportunity for voters to address Caltrain operations through a three-county measure; and,
- 3)** A clear and accountable governance structure for funding allocations. To ensure equity, achieve proper funding levels, and fully engage the community, we support leveraging sales tax as a funding mechanism, as is currently contemplated, mandating geographic equity in expenditures, proper oversight to ensure system coordination and fund management, and requirements to effectively engage a cross-section of stakeholders in program development.

Palo Alto, in discussion with our neighboring communities in Santa Clara County, is confident that you recognize the need for a concrete decision-making and operating framework for a seamless

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transportation strategy which can rely on diverse funding mechanisms. We urge you to ensure that both the legislature and involved parties clearly understand, and have the opportunity to shape, the intent behind ensuring the larger success of FASTER. We anticipate providing additional recommendations in the near future, based on coordination with other cities and as the legislative proposal takes shape.

Palo Alto looks forward to continuing to work with you to address traffic and transportation priorities. We appreciate your leadership on these and other issues facing our communities. Again, thank you for your work in supporting the future of California's transportation systems and infrastructure. We look forward to engaging in continued discussions regarding SB 278 and the FASTER proposal.

Sincerely,

Eric Filseth  
Mayor  
City of Palo Alto

Cc: Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Santa Clara Cities Association  
Valley Transportation Authority  
Townsend Public Affairs