

SENATOR SCOTT WIENER'S TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM

**Make Transit Work, Build
Faster, And Save Lives**



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DEMOCRAT FOR CONGRESS

Make Transit Work, Build Faster, And Save Lives



Public transit is part of San Francisco’s lifeblood, and our city cannot function with a languishing transit system. I’ve been a daily Muni rider, and frequent BART rider, since I moved to San Francisco in 1997. It’s my primary way of getting around the city, and I regularly experience Muni’s good, bad, and ugly. There’s a ton of good, such as much faster and more reliable buses than years ago, a highly successful bus rapid transit line on Van Ness, and an improved Central Subway – as well as continuing challenges, such as the T line to the Bayview, where you can often jog faster than the train runs.

For decades, the federal government has set us up for failure as it favored highways while underinvesting in transit operating and capital funding, delivery capacity, and safety outcomes.

We need more public transit, and we need service that’s fast, safe, and reliable and that gets people where they need to go. We also need to build and run these systems without burning through budgets so we get faster, more reliable transit going to more places.

As a San Francisco Supervisor and later as a California State Senator, I’ve focused intensively on keeping transit running, removing obstacles in the way of climate-friendly transportation projects, and directing public funding toward results riders can actually experience. I’ve done so by passing critical reforms and successfully increasing transit investment. I also helped build San Francisco’s vision for a more expansive subway system, when, in 2015, I published an essay entitled [“San Francisco Should Always Have a Subway Under Construction”](#). I stand by the vision of building out more subways, and in Congress I’ll fight to bring home funding to see them through.

In Congress, I will build on the transportation policies San Francisco and California have led on, improve them where needed, and expand what works nationwide. I will champion transit in Washington as I have in San Francisco and Sacramento and work to ensure San Francisco finally gets a major helping hand from the federal government.

SENATOR SCOTT WIENER'S TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM



Fund Transit Operations So Cities Can Function

Despite being the backbone of the urban economy, large transit systems receive no permanent dedicated federal operating support. When revenues fall, agencies like Muni, BART, and Caltrain are forced into service cuts and fare increases. The pandemic has likely reshaped how travel demand is distributed across cities, leaving already fragile balance sheets even more exposed. This instability is the result of federal policy choices, not an inevitability.

I've long championed increased funding for public transit. As a member of the Board of Supervisors, I wrote and passed a ballot measure tying Muni funding to population growth. That ballot measure, today produces over \$60 million annually for Muni, and without it, we already would have seen significant service cuts. In California, I fought to secure emergency operating funding to prevent Muni, BART, Caltrain, and other transit systems from collapsing after the pandemic. I then authored and championed a law authorizing a historic long-term regional funding ballot measure tied to a seamless rider experience, network integration, and accountability for safety, cleanliness, and reliability. That approach will stabilize service and create space to improve it, but it should not be limited to one region. And as an economic engine for the rest of the country, it should not fall on San Francisco taxpayers alone to keep these systems afloat.

In Congress, I will work to make transit operating support a core federal responsibility by advancing policies that include:

- ✓ Permanent federal operating assistance for large urban transit systems through increased formula funding
- ✓ Increased flexibility for states and regions to redirect federal highway funds to transit operations
- ✓ Authority for states to dedicate highway toll revenues to transit service
- ✓ Clear authorization for Amtrak to fund state-supported routes
- ✓ A federal employer transit contribution requirement for large employers
- ✓ Full parity in commuter benefits for transit, biking, and micro-mobility, not just for driving

Operating funds keep service on the street, stabilize the workforce, and prevent far more expensive system failures later by letting transit agencies dedicate more resources to state of good repair.



Make Federal Capital Funding Predictable And Usable

Transit agencies across California have experienced the consequences of unpredictable federal funding. Discretionary grants arrive late or inconsistently. Agencies delay hiring, rely heavily on consultants, and absorb cost increases driven by time rather than engineering.

California's experience shows that predictability lowers costs and improves delivery.

At the federal level, I will work to reform capital funding by supporting:

- ✓ An increase in capital funding and a shift toward predictable formula-based transit funding allocated to states and regions
- ✓ Distribution of funds to support projects identified in state and regional transit and rail plans
- ✓ A higher federal share for major transit capital programs
- ✓ Reforms to discretionary grants that clarify award timing and funding levels
- ✓ Greater emphasis on delivery readiness and cost discipline when awarding funds
- ✓ The establishment of dedicated funding for building out a National High-Speed Rail Network

Stable funding allows agencies to build in-house expertise and deliver transit capital projects more efficiently and consistently, so we're always growing our transit systems and transit construction workforce.

I will also support transit permitting reform — both at the environmental and the design and construction stages — to help foster faster project delivery, greater schedule reliability, and cost control. This greater reliability will unlock more private investment to supplement public dollars for transit construction through public-private partnerships and innovative and successful build-own-operate project delivery methods.

San Francisco has a variety of transformative public transit projects at various stages of planning, design, and review. In Congress, I will work closely with local and regional stakeholders to bring home federal funds for transit capital projects and ensure we cut red tape at the federal level to make them happen. Projects in development include:

- ✓ Completing [the Portal](#) to connect Caltrain and future California High-Speed Rail to the Salesforce Transit Center in downtown San Francisco
- ✓ [Westside rail connections](#) along Geary and 19th Avenue to ease traffic and expand transit access in the Richmond and the Sunset
- ✓ [Central Subway extension](#) to North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf
- ✓ Building out a [complete network of rapid bus lanes](#) to continue the remarkable improvements to bus speed and reliability Muni has made in recent years

SENATOR SCOTT WIENER'S TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM

- ✓ Add a [Caltrain Stop in the Bayview](#) to restore service to the neighborhood
- ✓ New transbay rail crossing [\[Link21\]](#) to connect San Francisco, the Peninsula, the East Bay, and the Northern California mega-region with regional rail
- ✓ [Expanded ferry terminals and service](#) on the San Francisco waterfront
- ✓ [Pennsylvania Avenue Extension](#) to grade-separate Caltrain and High-Speed rail throughout all of San Francisco

Additionally, I support planning and funding more rail projects in the city, whether infill stations on existing BART or Muni lines, or new rail connections that we haven't considered pursuing due to a lack of funding.



Stop Environmental Review From Being Used To Block Transit

Environmental laws should protect the environment, and we must not allow them to be hijacked to obstruct climate-friendly projects like improved public transit. California demonstrated that environmental review can protect communities without becoming a veto against climate-friendly infrastructure. As a state senator, I authored and passed a landmark law exempting light rail, rapid bus, bike, and pedestrian projects from CEQA (the California Environmental Quality Act) when they reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Those reforms helped unlock bus rapid transit, new light rail lines, station upgrades, and safety projects statewide.

I will take this work national. At the federal level, NEPA too often discourages agencies from seeking federal funding at all. In Congress, I will modernize NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for transit and safety projects by advancing reforms such as:

- ✓ Expanded categorical exclusions for climate-beneficial transit projects
- ✓ Enforceable timelines for federal environmental review
- ✓ Limits on duplicative review when state analysis has already occurred, or vice-versa
- ✓ Parity between transit and highway projects in federal review standards, where standards for highway projects are currently more relaxed

Environmental law should protect people and places and encourage climate-friendly projects to get built, not institutionalize delay for reasons that frequently have nothing to do with the environment.

SENATOR SCOTT WIENER'S TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM



Align Transportation and Housing Policy

San Francisco's housing affordability crisis makes clear that transportation policy cannot succeed without land use reform. I authored California's landmark law requiring cities to allow denser housing development within a half mile of high-quality public transportation stops. More housing near transit means lower carbon emissions, higher transit ridership, and more sustainable communities.

At the federal level, I support policies that:

- ✓ Make it easier to build housing on transit and highway agency land
- ✓ Expand funding for infill stations and upgrades that unlock existing investments
- ✓ Align transportation funding with land use outcomes that increase ridership



Rebuild Federal Expertise and Project Delivery Capacity

San Francisco's experience navigating transit recovery showed that federal oversight can be helpful when it brings real expertise, and deeply counterproductive when it is reduced to paperwork.

The Department of Transportation has lost substantial institutional capacity during the Trump Administration, particularly as a result of transit-hater Elon Musk's DOGE hatchet job. Rebuilding that capacity is essential.

I support creating a national transit center of excellence within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and strengthening the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) role as a delivery partner. In Congress, I will work to:

- ✓ Expand FTA authority to conduct post-project evaluations and operational reviews
 - ✓ Require systematic cost benchmarking across federally funded transit projects
 - ✓ Use evaluation findings to inform future funding decisions
 - ✓ Allow federal funds to be used for in-house staffing at transit agencies
 - ✓ Provide direct federal technical support on procurement, contracting risk, and delivery strategy
- Strong federal standards should give transit leaders cover to make difficult changes while still enforcing accountability.

SENATOR SCOTT WIENER'S TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM



Lower Costs by Fixing Procurement and Codes

Transit projects in the United States cost far more than comparable projects abroad. In San Francisco and across California, overruns have often been driven by rigid procurement rules and mid-project code changes that add cost without improving safety.

At the federal level, I will pursue cost reforms that include:

- ✓ Modernizing Buy America rules to allow limited pilot use of proven off-the-shelf vehicles
- ✓ Targeted waivers of certain federal safety standards to enable controlled experimentation
- ✓ Requirements that federally funded projects comply with codes in effect at project approval, as opposed to the moving target of changing codes
- ✓ Support for joint procurement across transit agencies to reduce rolling stock costs

Lowering costs is essential if we want to build more transit with the dollars we already spend.



Treat Regional Transit Like the Network Riders Experience

Bay Area riders experience transit as a single system, even though it is operated by many agencies. Fragmentation undermines reliability and discourages ridership. California has increasingly tied funding to integration because the alternative leads to poorer rider outcomes.

At the federal level, I will support policies that:

- ✓ Strengthen metropolitan planning organizations as regional network managers
- ✓ Tie increased federal funding to fare integration and schedule coordination
- ✓ Require open-loop payment systems while protecting discount programs
- ✓ Expand FTA oversight focused on rider outcomes rather than formal compliance

Federal conditions must be applied carefully so they improve service rather than destabilize it.



Reduce Traffic Deaths and Make Streets Safer

Traffic violence is a public health crisis. San Francisco and California have led on Vision Zero and complete streets. I've been part of that work by championing street safety improvements in San Francisco, by passing a state law to require these improvements, and by authoring or co-authoring legislation to promote safer driving, including legislation to require speed warning systems in cars and automated speed enforcement. I passed legislation - SB 960 (2024) - to require the state department of transportation (Caltrans) to follow its own complete streets policy, stop passing up opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and actually make progress in meeting increased pedestrian and bike safety investment targets. Yet, outdated federal standards still prioritize speed over safety.

In Congress, I will work to reduce traffic deaths by advancing policies that include:

- ✓ Formalize in law a national Vision Zero commitment across USDOT programs
- ✓ Stronger federal vehicle safety standards, including intelligent speed assistance
- ✓ Safer vehicle size and design standards to protect pedestrians and cyclists
- ✓ Speed governors for heavy trucks
- ✓ Conditions on highway funding that require safety improvements on state roads
- ✓ Expanded funding for connected active transportation networks through the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program. We need to build and maintain more sidewalks, bike lanes and other active transportation improvements to protect pedestrians and bicyclists, and encourage more people to walk, bike, and roll



Help E-Bikes and Shared Micromobility Succeed

E-bikes, e-scooters, and other micromobility vehicles exploded in popularity during the pandemic and are bona fide modes of sustainable transportation that are actively helping to reduce car trips. I will fight to incentivize e-bike, e-scooter, and bike share throughout the country.

In Congress, I will fight to:

- ✓ **Increase E-bike and e-scooter subsidies** and make e-bike maintenance expenses an eligible commuter subsidy expense
- ✓ **Expand shared micromobility program funding**

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program has been used under President Biden's Infrastructure Law to fund the Bay Area's Bay Wheels program. We should enhance the ability of other discretionary programs to fund shared mobility programs like bike share, as well as active transportation improvements

SENATOR SCOTT WIENER'S TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM



Decarbonize the Transportation Sector

We must decarbonize the transportation sector to address climate change. I have supported California's leadership in eliminating tailpipe emissions through zero emission vehicle (ZEV) sales requirements and expanding mass transportation to get people out of cars and reduce vehicle miles traveled. But the federal government, under Republicans, has repeatedly sabotaged these efforts. In Congress, I will push the federal government to lead.

Specifically, I will fight to:

- ✓ Establish new ZEV sales requirements and align them with existing California policies
- ✓ Increase subsidies for medium and light-duty ZEVs, including transit buses, trucks, and groundside port equipment, which are harder to decarbonize
- ✓ Strengthen protections for states to establish their own enhanced vehicle emissions standards