

## **Regional Transit Governance Seminar Revealed Several Challenges, Opportunities for Coordination Among Various Operators**

*Video is now available on YouTube*

San Jose, CA – May 19, 2015 – A video is now available from a regional transit governance seminar held at the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco on Tuesday, March 31. The three-hour event offered up insights, challenges, and workable solutions to the universal problem of coordinating regional transit when so many operators may overlay the same geographies. More than 200 community people and policy makers attended. The full program is posted on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/1ebSeyl>

At the event, transportation experts, transit operators, and public officials also presented the findings of two new reports, *Getting to the Route of It: The Role of Governance in Regional Transit* and *Seamless Transit*.

For *Getting to the Route of It*, the [Eno Center for Transportation](#) and [TransitCenter](#) studied transit systems in the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Boston, Dallas/Fort Worth, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and the New York City Tri-State area. While each region has its unique challenges, the research yields key themes and common lessons. In fact, the San Francisco Bay Area was praised for its governance standards.

“While how we fund transit sometimes seems like the most vexing issue, it’s as important to look at how our transit agencies are structured and managed,” said David Bragdon, executive director of TransitCenter. “Although the Bay Area has a multitude of agencies, the performance standards set by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission are a national model for making sure that money is spent most effectively for economic and social outcomes as well as transportation benefit.”

*Seamless Transit* is [SPUR](#)’s most recent transportation policy report. It found that 80 percent of the growth in the San Francisco Bay Area is planned near transit. It also addresses several questions. Will the fragmented system, with over two dozen transit operators, meet the needs of local cities? How does fragmentation affect riders and potential riders? How can operators and governing entities deliver a cohesive transit system with a seamless experience for riders?

The general consensus was that people should expect regional transit systems – not just local systems. In fact, the most successful systems put the rider first. Panelists also asked why more people don’t use transit when they’re already paying for it with their taxes.

In addition, some common problems were seen in many regions. For example:

- Jim Beall, chair of the California Senate Transportation Committee, said that even the cleanest cars can cause congestion. “We don’t want clean congestion,” he said. “We need viable alternatives to driving cars. Transit is a big part of that solution.”
- Ratna Amin, transportation policy director at SPUR, said that a transit trip that involves more than one operator is simply more difficult for a rider to understand. Where do schedules coincide? Are transfers accepted? Is the fare structure the same? She said that improving and coordinating transit maps does increase ridership.
- Ms. Amin added that, on a per-capita basis, transit ridership in the San Francisco Bay Area is

declining, which is a negative indicator. She also pointed to another bad sign – long-distance daily work commutes from outside the region are increasing. This is likely due to the high cost of owning or renting a home locally.

- Joshua Schank, PhD, president and CEO of the Eno Center for Transportation, said, “He who controls the governance controls the money.” He noted that the governor of New York is not held accountable for the performance of New York City’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority. He also held Dallas as an example of a poorly-run system because the State of Texas makes it difficult. Therefore, Dr. Schank recommended that regions should have a performance-based capital planning system.
- Steve Heminger, executive director of the local region’s Metropolitan Transportation Commission, said that a major issue is the low cost of driving. People will not leave their cars behind because using them doesn’t hurt economically.
- Mr. Heminger also noted the challenges of unstable funding for transit. Ridership can fluctuate with employment, and tax funding can vary with the economy. “It changes so often that it can cause vertigo,” he quipped.

**Several other transit leaders presented.**

Other presenters included Hon. Cindy Chavez, vice-chair, VTA, and member, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors; Grace Crunican, general manager, Bay Area Rapid Transit; Rick Ramacier, general manager, Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (County Connection); and Ed Reiskin, director of transportation, San Francisco MTA.

Event sponsors included Eno Center for Transportation, TransitCenter (which also provided funding), SPUR, and the Mineta Transportation Institute.

**Tweet this:** #SFTransitGov seminar, held at Calif. Commonwealth Club, is now on YouTube <http://bit.ly/1ebSeyl>. How to improve transit. @cwclub

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