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Expand definition of zero-emission vehicle infrastructure to include Personal Rapid Transit (PRT)

CEC Board Members,

The CEC has nurtured a nascent EV industry. Today, much of CEC's annual Clean Transportation Program helps boost the market for zero-emission vehicles and grow to scale the supporting infrastructure of chargers. While that focus is both required and appreciated by those of us driving and promoting EVs, another technology is now nascent – Personal Rapid Transit (PRT).

PRT is an elevated, zero-carbon, electric, on-demand, private, non-stop point-to-point, and networked transit system with many small neighborhood stations. PRT promotes transportation equity, mobility for handicapped, and safety for elders – simply put, it will improve the lives of people.

According to itself, “This 2022–2023 Investment Plan Update establishes funding allocations based on identified needs and opportunities, including a focus on zero-emission vehicle infrastructure.” PRT presents an opportunity to view differently zero-emission vehicle infrastructure. Rather than individually owned EVs that sit idle 95% of the time, PRT cabs are community-owned EVs with up to 40% daily utilization rates.

“The investment plan also prioritizes jobs, economic stimulus, and equity.” Building out PRT infrastructure will create jobs, provide an economic stimulus by reducing transportation costs, and increase equity with a low-fare, high-service-level transit option that competes well with privately-owned cars. Perhaps most importantly to CEC is the potential for applying Clean Transportation Program funds toward PRT projects that benefit all communities served by the network.

Although only a fraction of residents to be served by the Milpitas PRT project are considered low-income, the potential to cover large areas of metropolitan cities with PRT networks creates opportunities to benefit both low-income and disadvantaged communities. Consider the potential of PRT compared to the \$7B 4-station BART Burrow that will send our local commuter rail underground for 6 miles. Applying that \$7B to a PRT network would benefit residents and businesses across 100 square miles with 24/7 service from any of 800 stations to any other station. See the contrast in this image: <https://milpitasprt.com/wp-content/uploads/BART-PRT-flyer.pdf>

To help achieve the state's climate policies, “CEC investments will focus on filling the gaps that may not otherwise be addressed by the private market.” In the South San Francisco Bay Area, public transit delivers poor service for approximately 5%

of the people at a cost that requires an 85% subsidy. While transit agencies throughout California struggle for small increases in ridership, over a dozen studies predict that adding a PRT network to the existing public transit options increases ridership by multiples “ 200% to 1000%. See <https://milpitasprt.com/technology/service-levels/#share>

It could be argued that neither the private nor public sectors are filling the gap in transit options. Thus, LoopWorks comes to this public stakeholder process saying that adjustments to the allocations are warranted. By supporting the Milpitas PRT project, CEC’s investment in the nascent PRT industry could kick off an estimated \$1T industry. What other nascent technology offers potential as great as PRT? CEC could support LoopWorks in any of 3 rounds of financing: \$600K for initial stakeholder coordination, \$6M for engineering services, and \$60M to build the dual-loop demonstration system.

“The CEC will continue to explore new public-private partnerships and leverage limited resources to determine how Clean Transportation Program funding can best be invested to maximize the benefits of this funding.” LoopWorks recommends that a portion of the \$97 million allocated for Emerging Opportunities be made available to a technology that could boost the results that CEC is pursuing.

Learn more about PRT technology, LoopWorks, and the Milpitas PRT project at MilpitasPRT.com