

CITY OF



ONTARIO

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June 28, 2019

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CITY MANAGER

SHEILA MAUTZ
CITY CLERK

JAMES R. MILHISER
TREASURER

The Honorable Eloise Gomez Reyes
California State Assembly
State Capitol Building, Room 2175
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 1457 – Letter of Concern

Dear Assembly Member Reyes,

The City of Ontario would like to thank you for your advocacy and assistance in enhancing the quality of life for residents in the Inland Empire region. The ongoing cooperation between your office and our regional transit agency to create a new transportation district shows your dedication and commitment to the County of San Bernardino. Assembly Bill 1457 will provide helpful measures to protect the members of Omnitrans as the agency takes steps towards becoming a passenger rail operator.

Unfortunately at this time, we believe there are a number of outstanding issues that need to be settled between Omnitrans and its member agencies before moving forward with enacting a new statute that will drastically change the membership of the organization. Due to these reasons, the City of Ontario respectfully requests that you please hold further action on AB 1457 until we are able to resolve these lingering challenges. While we understand that the legislation will be useful as rail operations begin in the coming years, ironing out the various obstacles that are directly before us should be our top priority before implementing new requirements.

The San Bernardino County Transportation Authority and Omnitrans are currently engaged in discussions through an ad hoc committee created earlier this year to resolve Omnitrans' growing operating deficit (we believe primarily due to a decline in ridership). If the deficit remains unresolved, the organization could face severe cutbacks in order to balance its operations, which would in effect impact public transit users across the County. The Committee, comprised of Board members from both agencies, is discussing and analyzing different approaches to mitigate the ongoing financial problems.

Further, as you know, the Federal Transit Administration will not allocate federal funding for new projects in the region if they believe Omnitrans is unable to successfully manage such new operations. Thus, not addressing the deficit forthwith may well jeopardize the organization's ability to obtain funding necessary for the advancement and completion of various projects in the County of San Bernardino. To this end, before AB 1457 moves forward, the City of Ontario would like to ensure that there will be no funding implications for the West Valley Connector project, which seeks to create a 35-mile-long bus rapid transit system connecting western cities of the County.

In order to ensure that we stop the growing deficit facing Omnitrans and do not jeopardize future projects by losing federal funding, we respectfully ask that the ad hoc committee be given the time to develop alternatives for address current issues before enacting new legislation. Turning AB 1457 into a two-year bill will allow for all options to be explored, without limiting the scope of potential solutions.

Thank you for your courtesies and cooperation regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul S. Leon". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Paul S. Leon
Mayor

Cc: The Honorable Senator Connie M. Leyva
The Honorable Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez