

**November 18, 2024**

**Subject: Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024**

The Bay Area Climate Change Council catalyzes climate action across the Hamilton-Burlington Bay Area. Our council unites a broad spectrum of participants, including municipal leaders, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, business sectors, and community advocates.

This letter is in response to the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024, “Bill 212.” The bill proposes several changes that would affect municipalities’ ability to continue their independent efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and further develop low-carbon transportation options.

Both Hamilton and Burlington have set ambitious goals to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The proposed expansion of road infrastructure could significantly hinder these goals by reinforcing car dependency, diverting resources from sustainable transportation, and reducing the appeal and convenience of public and active transportation options. At present, about 17% of the Bay Area’s greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation, primarily from fossil-fuel powered vehicles, underscoring the importance of prioritizing sustainable alternatives to road expansion.

As an organization, we believe that Bill 212 will negatively impact low-carbon transportation in the Bay Area in several keyways:

- Expanding roadways reinforces car dependency and counteracts low-carbon goals by encouraging single-occupancy vehicle use over public or shared transportation. This shift leads to higher per capita emissions, worsening traffic congestion and pollution.
- Large-scale road projects require significant funding, often reducing the budget available for sustainable transportation solutions. Unless specifically adapted, new road infrastructure typically supports traditional fuel-powered vehicles, which delays integration of low-carbon transport options.
- New road networks often occupy land that could otherwise support low-carbon transport options like protected bike lanes, sidewalks, and dedicated transit lines. Prioritizing road construction dedicates valuable urban and suburban space to cars, leaving less room for infrastructure that supports sustainable transportation alternatives.
- Increased vehicle traffic on new roadways contributes to air quality deterioration from vehicle emissions. Poor air quality discourages active transportation, such as cycling and walking, especially along major roads, due to health risks. Clean air is essential for promoting active transport, and its absence undermines the success of initiatives that encourage low-carbon mobility.

The proposed changes in Bill 212 would create significant challenges for advancing low-carbon transportation in the Bay Area, particularly concerning the potential effects on ridership after the

completion of the Hamilton LRT project, which has received funding support from the province and federal government. An emphasis on road expansion, focusing on personal vehicles, could undermine the recently announced investments aimed at improving and enhancing greener public transit in the Burlington area. Transit projects are not just modes of transportation; they play a crucial role in shaping the future of urban landscapes and significantly reducing environmental footprints. Further expansion of the LRT and Subways would offer cascading benefits to the overall public.

We urge the province to rethink its approach to road expansion and instead pursue a comprehensive, sustainable transportation strategy that prioritizes low-carbon mobility options in line with our region's emissions reduction goals. Focusing on sustainable transport is essential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting Hamilton and Burlington's commitment to achieving net zero by 2050.

We strongly encourage the province to invest in sustainable transportation solutions, including enhanced public transit, expanded cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian-friendly urban designs. Low-carbon transportation options not only help reduce congestion but also enhance local economic outcomes. By adopting these sustainable solutions, we can achieve our goals of easing traffic and stimulating the economy without the need for additional road infrastructure.

**We call on the province to work collaboratively with local stakeholders and municipalities to develop transportation strategies that foster climate resilience, enhance community health, and support sustainable growth.**

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