



April 24, 2019

The Honorable Scott Wiener  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5100  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

RE: Statement of Concern with regard to SB 50 (Wiener) - Housing, Opportunity, Mobility, Equity, and Stability Act

Dear Senator Wiener:

The City of San Bruno would like to take an opportunity to notify you of the City's concerns on the proposed Senate Bill 50 as it relates to the City of San Bruno.

San Bruno is a suburban community with three freeways (101, I-280 and I-380), a high capacity bus route along El Camino Real, a BART station, and a Caltrain station. As such, San Bruno's development regulations are tailored to the various needs and characteristics of the community. Many neighborhoods, commercial areas, and other uses (schools, day cares, parks, medical offices, hospitals) are not within walking distance or accessible by transit. Access to transit is also constrained by the City's hilly topography. For example, there is an over 800-foot elevation change between the San Bruno Caltrain station and the farthest residential neighborhood to the west of the city. This requires that our development standards reflect the unique access challenges posed by the natural environment.

SB 50, as proposed, would allow a residential development eligible for an equitable communities incentive to receive waivers from local regulation such as: (1) maximum controls on density and minimum controls on automobile parking requirements; (2) up to 3 additional incentives or concessions under the Density Bonus Law; and (3) specified additional waivers if the residential development is located within a one-half mile radius of San Bruno's BART and Caltrain stations and within one-quarter mile radius of a transit stop on a "high quality transit corridor" which may include bus routes in San Bruno on major corridors such as El Camino Real.

San Bruno's specific concerns regarding SB 50 are as follows:

- **SB 50 disrespects local values and penalizes communities that have adopted thoughtful approaches to increasing housing supply**
  - The City of San Bruno is not a NIMBY community. San Bruno has adopted long-range planning documents including a General Plan and Specific Plans, as well as voter-approved ballot measures that allow dense residential development near transit stations.

San Bruno adopted a Transit Corridors Plan (TCP) in 2013 and the City voters approved Measure N in November 2014, which removed height and density barriers in a 155-acre area. The amended height restrictions allow an additional 40 feet and 4 stories (up to a maximum of 90 feet and 7 stories in some areas). In addition, the measure eliminated all density maximums for residential uses to allow for new dense housing development around transit centers –*which aligns to the core goal of SB 50.*

San Bruno's TCP provides a blueprint for the transformation of the City's downtown and adjacent nearby commercial corridors into a walkable, mixed-use district capitalizing on proximity and access to transit.

The TCP is an implementation measure for the City's "General Plan 2025", which was adopted in 2009. Extensive community engagement was made in the development of this plan and the ballot measure, including two advisory committees, resident surveys, community workshops, and numerous public meetings as well as Planning Commission and City Council study sessions. This meaningful, collaborative local process shows that San Bruno is a community that supports new residential growth near transit.

The TCP goals, polices, development standards and design guidelines are founded on a vision for the future articulated by the San Bruno community and stakeholders. This community vision aspires to an economically vital downtown which is an exciting destination for workers, residents and visitors; more dense mix of commercial and residential uses with high quality architecture to attract and sustain activities throughout the day and night; and a welcoming pedestrian oriented environment with new plazas and streetscape improvements. The overall goal is to facilitate new development that relies less on the automobile and promotes travel by transit, bicycling, and walking.

San Bruno's development regulations and our Transit Corridors Plan are tailored to the needs and character of the community, while simultaneously providing greater density along major bus routes and near the San Bruno BART and Caltrain stations. SB 50 disrespects these local standards and the lengthy community engagement processes that created them.

*We hope that you give consideration to modifying SB 50 to exempt localities that adopt Transit Corridor Plans, which increase height and density near transit centers, from any additional statewide requirements.* This modification will reward communities that have undergone thoughtful planning processes with their residents and businesses to accommodate housing growth.

- **SB 50 strips local control with respect to parking**

- While SB 50 attempts to preserve local control with respect to environmental review, local labor standards, local fees, community engagement processes and architectural review, it strips a local government's ability to determine the appropriate parking standards for their community. In San Bruno, parking is often the most contentious and problematic issue for neighboring residents when new development is proposed.

San Bruno's parking standards are important to ensure that new development does not create undue impacts on existing neighborhoods. The current version of SB 50 appears to prevent San Bruno from establishing minimum parking standards for projects within ¼ mile and ½ mile of our Caltrain station. This prohibition erodes the City's ability to regulate new developments and obtain mitigations for parking issues, which are ever-present today (and San Bruno is just in the early stages of build out and implementation of the Transit Corridors Plan).

Nearly all of the developable area for high density housing near San Bruno's transit centers borders low density residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are comprised of predominately single family homes and 2-6 unit apartment buildings (often 1-2 stories in height). Additionally, many of these existing neighborhoods have significant parking challenges. The City of San Bruno is currently undergoing an effort to explore solutions for a built environment from the mid-1900's that does not accommodate today's reality –in which transit is not an option for everyone and vehicle ownership rates are higher than the existing neighborhood streets and infrastructure can handle. This is the precise problem that should be avoided by SB 50. *The solution to increasing transit usage and reducing vehicle ownership does not begin by preventing cities from setting reasonable parking standards for today's reality in their existing neighborhoods.*

It is also important to note that the property owners and developers that approach cities to entitle and construct high density rental housing projects are frequently not long-term holders or operators of the properties. They are investors who may (and often) sell the project after it is entitled or upon completion of construction and occupancy. Given the significant demand for housing on the Peninsula, our community will be negatively impacted if new developments do not include sufficient parking. Without locally tailored parking regulations that can be waived/amended based on unique project by project circumstances, our community and others across the State will suffer.

- **SB 50 erodes the ability of local governments to obtain design changes and community benefits to mitigate negative impacts**
  - At present, developers already receive incentives/concessions from local standards under the State Density Bonus Law when they provide land or build affordable housing, senior housing, or include specified levels of affordable childcare facilities within proposed projects. Additional waivers of local development standards will erode the ability of local legislative bodies to obtain design changes and community benefits that mitigate impacts of new high density housing projects on existing residents and surrounding neighborhoods. For example, San Bruno's standards with regard to set-backs from property lines and step-backs from low density residential dwellings (single family homes) are critical design elements that must be considered on a project-by-project basis. Allowing developers to waive these standards will negatively impact the health and well-being of existing neighborhoods.

In closing, San Bruno appreciates your willingness to meet with the C/CAG Legislative Committee and applauds your passion and willingness to tackle the housing crisis that is affecting Californians in the Bay Area and across the State. Unfortunately, as written, we cannot support the proposed legislation. In its current form, SB50 will harm San Bruno and other communities across the State. We strongly encourage you to consider the issues that we have raised in this letter and avoid penalizing localities that have adopted Transit Corridor Plans, which increase height and density near transit centers, from any new statewide requirements. San Bruno looks forward to working collaboratively with you and other State legislators on strategies and funding mechanisms to enhance public transit and housing further, in ways to ensure that local issues are thoughtfully considered and incorporated during the development process.

Sincerely,



**Rico E. Medina, Mayor**

*on behalf of the San Bruno City Council*

*Irene O'Connell, Vice-Mayor*

*Laura Davis*

*Marty Medina*

*Michael Salazar*