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**Sent:** Wednesday, September 3, 2025 11:51 AM

**To:** CITYCOUNCIL-List <CITYCOUNCIL-List@alamedaca.gov>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written comment for item 6-A of 9/3/25 Mayor's Economic Development Advisory Panel/Economic Recovery Task Force

Hello,

I will be making a public comment on item 6-A for the 9/3/25 Mayor's Economic Development Advisory Panel/Economic Recovery Task Force and wanted to share a written copy with linked citations.

Just to start off, I wanna say that I love the water taxi. It's way better than the tube. I've been stuck waiting a few times because it was either at capacity or there was a long break in the

schedule, so I'm really excited for you guys to get the funding for a second boat.

I don't own a car and work in the Northern Waterfront District and like many of my coworkers would absolutely love to become an AlamedaTMA member. This is especially true because many people at my work relied on the previous free bus shuttle. I talked with my HR department and they were somewhat open to it, but the main question I got asked was "how am I supposed to justify to upper management purchasing transit passes for only x% of people who use public transit?" So my first thought was "the same way we justify providing free parking spaces for only x% of people who drive." So I did some googling and realized that there's actually a 30 year old state law on this exact subject that unfortunately goes unenforced here in Alameda.

For those of you who don't know, "parking cash-out" law has been on the books since 1992 but often goes unenforced. What this law does is require qualifying companies to offer employees who don't drive to work the ability to "cash-out" their parking space and receive cash or alternative transit subsidies instead, anywhere from \$600 to \$4500 a year depending on the cost of parking (<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/californias-parking-cash-out-law>). And because cash is taxable as income and a transit pass is not, employers would be strongly incentivized to allow their employees to become AlamedaTMA members.

In addition to encouraging AlamedaTMA membership, simply enforcing parking cash out law could be huge for individuals and families who have already forgone the luxury of car ownership and are struggling to pay rent, as well as a great incentive for those who can to stop contributing to rush hour congestion and road maintenance costs. These people deserve to be properly compensated for the true economic consequences of their decision.

Alameda just needs to do two things to enforce this law. Firstly, simply adopt a financial penalty for businesses that do not comply. The state law explicitly grants the city the power to do this. Secondly, change zoning to require that commercial leases have their parking "unbundled" and listed as a separate, adjustable line item in the lease (<https://www.spur.org/news/2021-12-07/how-reviving-forgotten-california-law-can-make-commuting-more-sustainable>). This makes calculation of the cost of parking easy and allow businesses to save money by reducing their parking footprint. Additionally, it also benefits commercial lessors as it allows them to identify land unclaimed by leasees that is prime for in-fill development to produce new jobs, homes, and property tax revenue. As you are all well aware, we have huge swathes of asphalt all over Alameda. Much of this goes unparked and is for all intents and purposes vacant land, but just hasn't been formally recognized as such. This is not a radical policy and in fact is already required of all new residential development in most of California ([https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?\\_af=1](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?_af=1))

[bill\\_id=202320240AB1317](#)). Alameda can go farther by requiring that all commercial and residential leases in Alameda, for development both new and old, offer only unbundled parking.

Zoning in California tends to shy away from enforcing land use changes on existing properties. There's some reasoning behind this. Existing properties are already built and if a property needs to be torn down to change uses, that's pretty upsetting to the owner, and pretty economically wasteful. However, this would not be a change to existing land use, it would be a change to new tenancy leases. Admittedly, yes, a change in the allowed lease would encourage a change in land use, but it would only encourage one that tears down parking lots, not buildings, and unlike buildings, there is very little physical capital invested in parking.

It's not fair that tenants and employees who don't or can't drive are made to pay for parking they don't use. It's a distortion of the market that benefits the wealthy. Not only that, it's a highly inefficient use of valuable land. Unbundling parking and enforcement of parking cash out law supports public transit, reduces car congestion, protects the environment, encourages new development during a housing crisis, costs nothing to implement, and provides financial relief to the city infrastructure budget and those who need it most and so should be implemented in Alameda.

Thanks,  
-Mitch Ball