



January 23, 2024

Alfredo Pedroza, Chair
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

MTC Commission Meeting Item 7a: Regional Transportation Revenue Measure Enabling Legislation

Dear Chair Pedroza:

We are rapidly approaching a critical period for transportation and mass transit in the San Francisco Bay Area; on behalf of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, I want to thank you for your continued commitment to improving transit and transportation throughout our region. Your efforts, along with those of Senator Wiener and his colleagues in the Legislature and the dedicated staff at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, have been instrumental in addressing the current challenges facing public transportation.

Those challenges include the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on ridership and revenue and the structural changes to our local economy and work patterns that the pandemic prompted. Meeting the needs of all nine counties through recommended language for a regional transportation revenue measure's enabling legislation and future ballot language will be a formidable task. Cooperation and collaboration will be essential. In that spirit, we wish to bring attention to specific areas that we believe are of concern to both VTA and other regional agencies who face the same issues.

Ensuring a proportionate return to source is a top priority. Santa Clara, the region's largest county and biggest economic driver, has faced transportation fiscal challenges since the early 2000s that necessitated severe cuts to transit services, reducing them to 1990 levels despite a significant increase in our county's population and demand for service. VTA made these difficult decisions to maintain its fiscal sustainability which is why VTA does not show the same fiscal crisis as some other agencies. Unfortunately, we continue to operate at this reduced service level with the lowest service per capita in the Bay Area. We are actively working to raise this service level and align it with the other systems in the Bay Area. However, achieving this goal requires a reliable return to source.

Additionally, it is crucial that any regional tax measure does not undermine VTA's ability to renew local measures. Currently, four sales tax revenue measures in Santa Clara County fund 61.5% of our operating costs. Three of these measures face an impending sunset date. These funds are integral to VTA's operations. Without the ability to renew these measures, VTA could be forced to make the kind of service cuts that prompt a transit "death spiral."

Finally, VTA is legally obligated to cover BART operations and maintenance costs within Santa Clara County. We strongly urge that all future relief measures take this type of obligation into account in their distributions.

We ask that MTC address these concerns and the similar challenges that our partners across the region face in the proposed enabling legislation. VTA endorses an outcome-driven, customer-focused measure and supports using inclusive language in the legislation. Through this approach, we will be able to collaboratively craft a measure that aligns with our region's overarching goals and maximizes the likelihood of securing voter approval. The success of the proposed measure hinges on our ability to provide a compelling justification to voters throughout the Bay Area, including the regions' largest voting bloc in Santa Clara County.

Chair Pedroza, you and the entire leadership at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission have our thanks for your unwavering dedication to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation in the Bay Area and for recognizing how crucial a successful ballot measure is for the future of transportation in our region.

In community,



Cindy Chavez
Chairperson, VTA Board of Directors



Margaret Abe-Koga
VTA Board of Directors

cc: Board of Directors
MTC Commissioners