



October 14, 2016

Ken Kirkey
Metropolitan Transportation Commission &
Association of Bay Area Governments
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Plan Bay Area 2040 Preferred Scenario

Dear Mr. Kirkey,

Since 2005, *New Voices Are Rising*, a project of the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment, has led classes and workshops for high school students from schools serving predominantly low-income students of color in Oakland and nearby cities, to help students understand and engage on environmental and planning issues that affect their communities. *New Voices* has reached more than 1000 students through those classes, and led multi-week intensive trainings for more than 100 students from low-income communities of color.

For our students and their families, with very limited resources, a 13% increase in the portion of family income consumed by housing and transportation, as projected under the draft preferred scenario – would mean untenable cuts in spending for other necessities including food, clothing, and medicine.

Our students' families already are suffering severely in the current bay-area housing crisis. Last summer, when we interviewed student applicants for our summer program, the most common concern that students raised was a fear there might not be a place for them and their families in a changing Oakland because of rising rents. One of our students this past summer was facing a possible eviction. Many families are struggling tremendously just to pay their current rent.

Our students need affordable housing. They need a Plan Bay Area that incorporates guidance and incentives for all Bay Area local jurisdictions to increase the number of housing units that are affordable to all residents, including low-income and very low-income residents. They need a Plan Bay that includes guidance and incentives that reward local jurisdictions that adopt anti-displacement measures. They need MTC and ABAG to actively lobby in Sacramento, and if necessary in Washington, DC for laws that support inclusionary

zoning for rental property, and for restoration of redevelopment funding to support affordable housing.

Our students also need affordable, reliable, public transportation. Last summer, students living in East Oakland were often late to training sessions because their transit trips involved multiple transfers, with multiple points where something could go wrong. Although the draft preferred scenario moves in right direction by reducing the percentage of transit assets past their useful life, there is still a tremendous need to invest in transit to increase reliability and reduce waiting times.

Free multi-agency youth transit passes that work on BART as well as AC transit would go a long way toward reducing the proportion of family income consumed by transportation for our students. Similarly, discounted multi-agency transit passes – or simply discounted Clipper Cards – for low-income Bay Area residents would help make transportation affordable for our students’ family members. This would also benefit our students who have graduated high school, and gone on to join the working world. Some of those young people, who are now in their mid-twenties, have commuted to Oakland from as far away as Hercules, and find that much of the money they save in rent is then spent on public transportation.

In the past years of developing Plan Bay Area, MTC and ABAG have developed a wealth of information about the transportation and housing challenges facing the Bay Area, and especially those facing the Bay Area’s low-income residents. As you go about revising the draft preferred scenario, we urge you to include a thorough discussion of what is needed to reach the stated goals of reducing displacement pressure from current levels, reducing the portion of family income required to cover housing and transportation, and meeting the goals of increasing the reliability of transit service – even if the measures required are outside MTC’s current authority. MTC and ABAG can provide guidance and incentives to local jurisdiction, and invest resources in lobbying State and Federal decision-makers who have the authority to enact the needed laws and/or allocate the needed resources.

Two of our students are submitting their own comments on the draft preferred scenario. We also anticipate reaching out to high school students and other young residents of Oakland and nearby cities, to encourage them to provide input into the Plan Bay Area process, and we look forward to continuing to work with MTC to engage youth in this important effort.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jill Ratner

President, Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment
Director, New Voices Are Rising Project