July 19, 2021

MTC Public Information
Attn: Draft EIR Comments, Plan Bay Area 2050
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105

Subject: Plan Bay Area 2050
Retaining the State Route 262 Safety and Interchange Improvements Project

Dear MTC Official,

The purpose of this letter is to urge that the State Route 262 Safety and Interchange Improvement project is retained as a priority within Plan Bay Area 2050. SR 262, also known as Mission Boulevard, is a one-mile long cross-connector route between Interstate 680 and Interstate 880. ***The Draft EIR for Plan Bay Area includes consideration of excluding the SR 262 project*** as part of EIR Alternative 1 (Transit-Rich Area Focus Alternative). The project should be adopted as a priority element of Plan Bay Area 2050 due to the following reasons:

SR 262 is a Traffic "Fatality Hot Spot" - The City of Fremont is among the nation's leading Vision Zero cities working to eliminate traffic fatalities. The SR 262 corridor has the highest rate of traffic fatalities in all of Fremont. Since 2019, there have been three fatal traffic crashes at intersections along the corridor when "out of town" vehicle drivers struck and took the lives of two people walking and one person riding a motorcycle. The plan for the SR 262 upgrade project includes design features that could have prevented these fatalities.

SR 262 Now Divides the Community With a "Wall of Traffic" – The Warm Springs District in south Fremont is now severely divided by the continual flow of regional traffic in the SR 262/ Mission Blvd corridor. Traffic flow across the corridor, primarily at Warm Springs Boulevard, is accordingly limited due to signal timing priority given by Caltrans to regional through traffic along the State Route. This effectively creates a "wall of traffic" that divides the community. Accessibility is constrained across the corridor and divides people from accessing the nearby Warm Spring BART station and commercial businesses. AC Transit bus service across the corridor is rendered unreliable and slow, and traffic conditions and the auto-oriented state highway design are not conducive for people who walk and bicycle. The proposed SR 262 upgrade project would grade separate Warm Springs Boulevard and greatly improve multimodal access and circulation for the local community. Fremont staff envisions that the local commercial district that is along SR 262 could be revitalized into a vibrant "town center" for the community by eliminating the at-grade SR 262 traffic barrier that exists today.

SR 262 is Among the Most Congested State Routes in the Bay Area – It is hard to imagine that there is any other segment of the state highway system in the Bay Area that is as continually congested as the one-mile SR 262 connection between I-680 and I-880. Prior to the start of the Covid pandemic, the westbound morning "peak commute" period would extend from 5:00 am to 11:00 am and the eastbound evening commute went from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm. SR 262 supports goods movement to and from the nearby Tesla factory which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The corridor is also heavily used on weekends for travel by Silicon Valley residents to and from popular recreational destinations like Lake Tahoe. On Sunday afternoons, traffic queues on

southbound I-680 have extended more than a mile leading to the SR 262 off-ramp, creating traffic hazards on the freeway. It was commonplace that even on weekends, traffic congestion in the corridor causes navigation apps to divert traffic and create gridlock on local streets, with the historic Mission San Jose District commercial area being most affected.

SR 262 is a Critical Gap in the Regional Express Lane Network – As the Bay Area is developing a growing network of Express Lanes, SR 262 stands as a major gap in the system. Projects are in place, under construction, or funded to complete a robust system of Express Lanes connecting the bedroom communities along the I-580 (Livermore, Pleasanton) and I-680 (Walnut Creek, Dublin) corridors to the major Silicon Valley job centers along the I-880 (San Jose, Milpitas) and I-237 (Santa Clara, Sunnyvale) corridors. However, a gaping hole in the network is the connection through the SR 262 (Fremont) corridor. Over 50 miles of investment has and is being made, but the effectiveness of the network is significantly limited by the missing link in the one-mile SR 262 cross-connector between I-680 and I-880. The proposed SR 262 project helps close this gap and accommodates, as a future construction phase, a set of direct connector ramps that seamlessly connect the median express lanes along I-680 and I-880.

Overwhelming Community Support for SR 262 Upgrade – In 2019, the City of Fremont completed a Mobility Action Plan in response to strong community concerns about growing traffic congestion. An extensive community outreach effort was conducted to hear community concerns and ideas on a variety of mobility topics including, traffic congestion, travel alternatives, traffic safety, and emerging technologies. The plan was guided by a 14-member community task force and resulted in a 5-year "plan of action" for Fremont to pursue. The single project having the most intense support was for the SR 262 Upgrade from the residents in southern Fremont.

In conclusion, the SR262 project seems to be narrowly classified in Plan Bay Area 2050 as a strategy to just "address highway bottlenecks." However, the project aligns with and supports elements of many other Plan Bay Area 2050 strategies that include:

- advance regional vision zero policy
- enhance streets to promote walking and bicycling
- enhance local transit reliability
- build an integrated regional express lane and express bus network
- transform aging malls into neighborhoods

On behalf of the City of Fremont, I strongly urge MTC to retain the State Route 262 Safety and Interchange Improvement project as a priority within Plan Bay Area 2050.

Sincerely,

Hans F. Larsen
Public Works Director