



May 1, 2020

Mr. Scott Haggerty
Chairman
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco CA 94105-2066

RE: Valley Link, Altamont Corridor Vision Plan Phase 1, and ACE Rail Service Increase in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

Dear Chair Haggerty:

The Bay Area Council is pleased to provide this letter to strongly support the inclusion of the Valley Link, Altamont Corridor Vision Phase 1, and ACE Rail Service Increase programs to be included in MTC's fiscally constrained RTP. To achieve our region's goals for the economy, the environment, housing and transportation, we need a robust and sustainable passenger rail system that will equitably serve our residents and work force with a better quality of life and access to jobs, educational opportunities and health care facilities. We believe that Valley Link, Altamont Corridor Phase 1, and ACE Rail Service Increase improvements are vital elements of this rail system and essential to the future of our region.

Valley Link

The Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority) is working expeditiously to achieve near-term congestion relief for the more than 98,500 Bay Area workers now commuting daily from their homes in Northern San Joaquin County – including those delivering our most vital services in the Bay Area. On average, these commuters currently spend an estimated 78-minutes each way. Overall traffic is projected to increase by an estimated 75% in 2040 on I-580 and truck traffic is expected to increase by 58%. The 42-mile, 7-station Valley Link project will link the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station in the Tri-Valley with communities and households in the Northern San Joaquin Valley with 25 Valley Link daily round trips-- providing an estimated 28,000 daily rides in 2040. This will result in the reduction of an estimated 99.4 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per year in 2040 and the reduction of an estimated 33,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In addition, through a Board-adopted TOD Policy, Valley Link will support the advancement of transit-oriented development adjacent to its stations which will further reduce VMT and GHG emissions within the station environs.

A Board-adopted Sustainability Policy identifies implementing strategies to achieve a zero emissions system and the use of battery-electric and hydrogen vehicle technologies is currently under investigation. The adopted Sustainability policy also includes a commitment to encourage engagement in planning and decision-making for the project to ensure a meaningful level of participation from disadvantaged communities and low-income communities and households. It further directs the maximization of benefits to these communities and households in the project planning and design of Valley Link. Four of the proposed stations in San Joaquin County are within disadvantaged community geographic areas and/or designated as low-income



communities. Extensive community outreach and surveys aimed at reaching these communities was conducted last year and anecdotally revealed that many of these persons are Bay Area workers.

Valley Link has widespread support from all sectors of the Northern California Megaregion and at project inception, has an unprecedented 1/3 of its funding already identified as available through local sources - a total of \$648 million. Project development continues to advance with urgency; environmental clearance is nearly complete and a targeted revenue service date is set for 2027.

Altamont Corridor Vision Phase 1

The Altamont Corridor Vision Phase 1 Improvement Program is the result of a partnership between the Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Valley Link), the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (Altamont Commuter Express [ACE]), and the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (San Joaquins). The Bay Area improvements of this Phase 1 Program include \$1.1 billion for the implementation of 8.6 miles of new alignment through the Altamont Pass (between Greenville Road and the San Joaquin County line) to be used by both Valley Link and ACE services. This new alignment through the Altamont Pass would include a 3.5-mile tunnel and enable speeds up to 125 mph which would decrease train travel times through the Altamont Pass by an estimated 15 minutes – a 30% travel time savings in the corridor. This improved travel time will lead to expanded services on both the Valley Link and ACE systems and maximize the ridership potential and benefits of both systems - including a projected 70% increase in Valley Link ridership. When combined, the complimentary Valley Link and ACE service would result in a total reduction of 300 VMT annually and the reduction of over 134,000 metric tons of GHG emissions in the first decade. The enhanced service will be a catalyst in the promotion of TOD throughout the Valley Link and ACE systems. Consistent with the Draft 2020 CHSRA Business Plan, it will also expand equitable access by providing the Bay Area with integrated connectivity to the Merced – Bakersfield HSR Interim Operating Segment for a California that links our interconnected regions.

ACE Rail Service Increase

The ACE Rail Service Increase program is focused on making the necessary improvements to enable ACE to expand to 10 daily round trips between the Northern San Joaquin Valley/Sacramento and San Jose. The ACE service carried over 1.5 million passengers in 2019 with only four daily round trips. Increasing the frequency of ACE service to Silicon Valley is key to improving the Megaregional connection between the Bay Area and the Central Valley, reduces VMT in the Altamont Corridor, and reduces GHG emissions and improves air quality in the region. Key improvements to facilitate 10 daily round trips include expanding the Tamien layover facility, siding track expansion, grade crossing improvements, station improvements, maintenance facility expansion, and improvement for the Alviso Wetlands in the existing transportation right-of-way. Station improvements include parking expansions at the Fremont and Vasco ACE stations, and additional station improvements at Downtown Livermore and in the Pleasanton area. Also, two new ACE trainsets will be purchased to accommodate additional ACE trips.

The Valley Link, Altamont Corridor Vision Phase 1, and ACE Rail Service Increase programs are critical for the equitable and sustainable future of the Bay Area and we request that these transformational projects be included in the fiscally constrained MTC RTP being developed this



year. The Authority, with guidance from the Executive Steering Committee comprised of senior leadership from the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), Caltrans, MTC, the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG), Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC), the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (ACE) and BART, has been working expeditiously to advance the Valley Link Project. A 15-member governing Board comprising representatives from the cities, counties and transit districts from both sides of the Altamont have provided collaborative policy oversight for Valley Link and have to-date guided policies and programs aimed at maximizing the sustainability of the system, transit-oriented development at stations and equitable access for priority populations. We expect that with continued guidance and oversight, we will continue to expand equity and a fully integrated fare system that may include the consideration of a seamless and means-based fare.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to the advancement of these important programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gwen Litvak', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gwen Litvak
Senior Vice President, Public Policy
Bay Area Council

CC: MTC Executive Director, Therese McMillan
Deputy Executive Director, Alix Bockelman