



Office of 4th District
Supervisor James Gore

July 19, 2021

Therese McMillan, Executive Director
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Association of Bay Area Governments
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

SUBJECT: Draft *Plan Bay Area 2050* and Draft *Plan Bay Area 2050* Environmental Impact Report Comments

Dear Ms. McMillan:

On behalf of our Northern Sonoma County communities, we are writing to request the modification of your Draft Plan Bay Area 2050 to include SMART to Healdsburg and Cloverdale in the Draft document's financially constrained transportation network so that SMART can compete for state and federal resources for our region. Our jurisdictions have aggressive goals that are similar to your regional planning goals: creation of affordable housing, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, climate resiliency, healthy communities, and economic opportunity for all.

The past four years of continuing fires has exacerbated our pre-existing housing shortage. We continue to strive to achieve more housing for all in our communities. In addition to our local goals, the recent 2023-2031 draft Regional Housing Needs Allocation for Sonoma County proposes significant increases for Northern Sonoma County jurisdictions. Windsor would increase 126%, Healdsburg 203%, and Cloverdale 32%. These increases at the more affordable levels are greater and will come with more financing challenges for our jurisdictions. For example, in the case of Healdsburg, the Very Low and Low affordability levels would go up 512% and 354%, respectively. This is generally the most difficult category to finance and build, since it requires a much higher level of funding to close the affordability gap between what households at that income level can afford and what it costs to build and maintain the units. It will be critical for SMART rail service to come north for us to be able to attract transit-oriented development financing, public and private, to be able to build the units allocated to us by the region. Depriving us of the ability to expand SMART north will make the challenge of financing these housing projects more difficult, if not impossible.

SMART provides a lower emission transportation alternative that has demonstrated utility for longer trips. The average passenger trip length on SMART is 25 miles. Northern Sonoma County residents and employees accumulate more vehicle miles traveled per capita than any other part of the county. Providing people who travel greater distances with a time and cost competitive alternative like SMART will result in reducing vehicle miles traveled and emissions.

We are all working to improve our preparation and resilience for whatever the future holds. SMART provides a useful tool in that preparation, whether for greater supply chain redundancy for emergency personnel or equipment delivery during events or for evacuation purposes. SMART will also bring dedicated dark fiber strands for public agencies and schools, providing broadband capacity for our communities now so reliant on this utility for education, health access, and emergency service communications.

And SMART's role in transporting people to and from work between our communities would be enhanced by our ability to grow a climate friendly economy through transitioning to freight rail for materials and goods transport. This would keep trucks off the highway and make our transportation network more efficient, safe and less harmful to our environment.

Completing the SMART network to Healdsburg and Cloverdale would make the investment in the Santa Rosa and Windsor stations more effective. Our communities are heavily connected, with employees traveling in both directions throughout the day. Truncating the SMART system in Windsor is depriving our communities of the benefit of this publicly owned asset and is depriving the communities where SMART is operating of reaping the full rewards of having the railroad shift people out of their cars.

We request Plan Bay Area 2050 be revised to add SMART to Cloverdale back into the transportation documents and the financially constrained transportation project list. SMART has nearly completed construction of the extension to Windsor and is now the owner of the existing un-rehabilitated railroad tracks through Healdsburg and the Alexander Valley to Cloverdale and the Mendocino County line. It is important to support SMART's efforts to bring in outside state and federal resources to complete this project so it can be used for passenger rail for longer trips, pedestrian and bicycle access for local trips, freight rail so we can grow our economy in an environmentally friendly way and provide greater broadband access for our communities.

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with you further to obtain our mutual goals.

Sincerely,



Sam Salmon, Mayor
Town of Windsor



Evelyn L. Mitchell, Mayor
City of Healdsburg



Marta Cruz, Mayor
City of Cloverdale



James Gore, Supervisor
Sonoma County 4th District