



September 2, 2020

Ms. Therese McMillan, Executive Director
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, #800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

RE: Plan Bay Area 2050 Draft Blueprint Strategies

Dear Ms. McMillan:

On behalf of the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA), I would like to acknowledge MTC staff for the work that has been done on Plan Bay Area 2050 and the enormous efforts that have culminated in the Draft Blueprint and proposed Strategies. We very much appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft Blueprint.

We are largely supportive of the outcomes of the Blueprint Strategies and appreciate that many of Napa's highest priority projects and improvements are included in the Plan, as well as other critical North Bay projects such as SR 37. NVTA staff believes many of the proposed strategies will help usher the Bay Area towards an affordable, connected, diverse, healthy and vibrant region for future generations to thrive.

NVTA supports the strategy that would **Enhance the complete streets network to promote walking, biking and other micromobility options**. Napa County has a higher than average percentage of commute by walk mode trips and has made large investments in the Valley's active transportation system, such as the Vine Trail Class I facility that will connect all jurisdictions in Napa County to the Vallejo Ferry Terminal. Regional and state strategies that prioritize complete streets investments will greatly assist Napa County in meeting its own active transportation goals and advance important active transportation projects in Napa Valley.

NVTA is also supportive of **Affordable Housing Strategies** that would reduce the cost burden of housing and transportation for low-income households and would promote the development of housing around transit priority areas and high resource areas. Napa County has benefited greatly from funding that helps preserve Priority Conservation Areas and NVTA is therefore strongly in favor of the proposed strategy **Protecting the high-value conservation lands**. This is an important strategy not only for the preservation of greenspace but as a resiliency measure. Not only will this strategy help preserve and protect the region's natural diversity but wildfire events in recent years have demonstrated the enormous loss of life and property that can result from developing in these areas.

NVTA has some concerns and reservations about three of the proposed strategies:

Implement Per-Mile All Lane Tolling on all Freeways. We have concerns that the all lane tolling strategy may pose an equity question as it concerns low-income workers. Napa has many low-income workers that commute from surrounding areas that offer greater housing affordability, and while there may be a sound

policy argument for tolling as it relates to meeting Plan Bay Area 2050 emission targets, it should be coupled with a strategy to address equity as the Plan moves forward.

Enable Seamless Mobility and Reform Regional Transit Fare Policy. These proposed strategies will require substantially more funding if there is to be a high-quality connected regional transit network. NVTAs acknowledges that there is room for improvement in the Bay Area's transit system, we are, however, concerned that investing in better regional transit service may come with opportunity costs that would negatively impact local service that are frequently designed for and used by vulnerable communities that are transit dependent.

A frequent and connected regional express bus system is a more logical approach for prioritizing the region's scarce resources, rather than the historical focus of prioritizing costly fixed guideway projects. Nevertheless, a rapid and connected express bus project will demand cooperation and partnership from both the region's transit agencies and agencies that manage the region's major corridors if buses are to compete with automobiles. MTC's leadership will be key to transforming the culture of how the region uses and manages its vast network. It will also require out-of-the-box thinking on how we currently use our roads and momentum to transform them to ease deploying transit on these corridors. For better or for worse, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a policy window showing how local roads can be repurposed resulting in reducing and calming traffic, which has engendered bicycling and pedestrian activities like no other period in our lifetime.

NVTA strongly supports reforming fares and adopting a regional fare policy. The region's existing fare structure is a significant barrier for most riders, but a major financial barrier for low-income riders, who must seek housing in the far corners of the region because of affordability; many of whom pay more than \$30 a day to get to work on transit. Resources will need to be identified in the plan to sustain the Clipper START program and to provide other incentives that will encourage transit use and achieve equity.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft Blueprint Strategies. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Miller', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kate Miller
Executive Director

cc: NVTA Board of Directors