SAN JOAQUIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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AND
THE COUNTY OF SAN
JOAQUIN

September 11, 2020

The Honorable Pauline Cutter, Chair
Alameda County Transportation Commission
1111 Broadway, Suite 800
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Chair Cutter:

I am writing to help address the question of what the San Joaquin Council of Governments and our member jurisdictions are doing to support the development and eventual operation of a future Valley Link commuter rail program from the San Joaquin Valley to Alameda County. We have worked with the Tri-Valley, San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority over the past three-plus years to help advance the cause of a continuously growing number of commuters from the northern San Joaquin Valley to various locations in the Bay Area. I am sure we will continue to work with the Authority to make this program a success.

The following are a list of positive steps we and our member jurisdictions and agencies have taken to advance Valley Link and passenger rail service across the Altamont:

- The 2018 adopted San Joaquin County Regional Transportation Plan included a Valley Link description promoting the advancement of an environmental document and related engineering studies. I believe we were the first Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to do so.
- The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) conducted an environmental document with AECOM called ACE Forward that programmatically looked at passenger rail service across the Altamont. The effort involved a combination of state and San Joaquin County sources of funding. This substantial effort gave Valley Link a head start on its environmental document. I believe it has been described as equivalent to about a $3 million effort in advancing the Valley Link environmental work.
- The San Joaquin Council of Governments board of directors has discussed the potential for a future sales tax measure for transportation purposes on a countywide basis. Funding for passenger rail service across the Altamont (ACE and Valley Link) would be a component. The SJCOG Board has not taken affirmative action on a potential measure but has directed the exploration of a possible 2022 measure. For context, the 2006 Measure K Renewal included almost 13% of its measure for the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission for ACE. Also, the 2006 measure was passed with 78% of the vote.

- In 1990, the voters of San Joaquin County passed the original Measure K half-cent transportation sales tax. This included funding to begin the Altamont Corridor Express service (ACE). Later Alameda County and Santa Clara County joined in providing funding for the service; a cooperative effort that has been a great success.
- The City of Tracy has scheduled Measure Y on the November ballot to promote Transit Oriented Development primarily to pave the way for Valley Link.
- The City of Tracy is also in the process of preparing for Council consideration a transfer of land to Valley Link for a maintenance facility on the San Joaquin side of the Altamont.
- San Joaquin COG and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission continue to work cooperatively with MTC, ACTC, BART, LAVTA, and Caltrans District 4 on the Executive Steering Committee for Valley Link
- San Joaquin COG is just beginning our update to the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan. Three months ago we amended the Plan to include a portion of the capital construction of Valley Link in the Tracy area. We have been in discussion with MTC over coordinating our approaches in our Plans for both the Altamont Corridor Express and Valley Link.

I hope this information proves helpful to you and your board in your deliberations. SJCOG looks forward to continued coordination with ACTC, LAVTA, MTC, BART, SJRRC, and the State of California in improving the plight of the long-distance commuters through enhanced passenger rail service across the Altamont Pass with ACE and Valley Link.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew T. Chesley
Executive Director