September 10, 2020

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

Subject: Support for ACTC Approval of Tri-Valley-San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority Request for a 2014 Measure BB Transportation Expenditure Plan Amendment

Dear Chair Cutter:

I have been directly involved in efforts to expand rail connectivity in the Tri-Valley since 1999 in various capacities, including as a federal and state legislative staffer, local elected official, and advocate for business and labor interests. Given my personal history, involvement, and knowledge of the project, I have been following the recent discussion and public comments regarding Valley Link with great interest.

During the past 21 years that I have been working on this effort, one noteworthy highlight that is particularly relevant to this item is when I served on the Measure BB Executive Steering Committee in 2014. One of the key principles as we were crafting the TEP was ensuring that the top transportation priorities of each of the four planning areas were addressed for purposes of equity. In 2014, the leaders of the eastern planning area (i.e. the Tri-Valley) identified BART to Livermore as one of those priorities. Today, the leaders of that same planning area are respectfully requesting that the successor project to BART to Livermore (i.e. Valley Link) be incorporated into the amended plan to fulfill the will of the voters of Alameda County for rail connectivity in the Tri-Valley. By approving this Amendment, the carefully crafted principles of regional equity through the fair distribution of projects and priorities within the four planning areas which comprise the TEP will be preserved. Notwithstanding the numerous benefits of Valley Link, by denying this Amendment it creates an injustice to the residents of eastern Alameda County by subjecting them to worsening congestion and air quality while shattering the foundational principles of the equitable distribution of resources that were the cornerstone of the TEP.

I have both spoken and written about the project's benefits previously, and I am aware that dozens of letters of support from key stakeholders have been written recently that have further articulated all of the reasons the TEP Amendment should be supported. I trust that you will review those carefully. Unfortunately, I believe that there are also mischaracterizations of Valley Link being circulated by opponents of the project. In order that you can make an informed decision. I wish to draw your attention to the attached "Myths vs. Facts" document that I have submitted with this letter. I apologize in advance for the length of this document, but I felt it was critically important for you to have this information.

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and it is my sincere hope that you will fulfill the long-awaited promises to the residents of the Tri-Valley and the vision of MTC Plan Bay Area 2050, the MTC Regional Rail Plan, and the State Rail Plan by voting to support Valley Link.

Sincerely,

Tim Sbranti

Tim Sbranti
Strategic Initiatives Director, Innovation Tri-Valley Leadership Group (2018-present)
Deputy Chief of Staff/District Director, Congressman Eric Swalwell (2015-2018)
Mayor, City of Dublin (2008-2014)
Councilmember, City of Dublin (2002-2008)
District Aide, State Senator Tom Torlakson (1999-2001)

Myth vs. Fact

Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority Request
Amendment to 2014 Measure BB Transportation Expenditure Plan

Myth: Measure BB Funds will be spent outside of Alameda County
Fact: This is simply not true.
No expenditure of Measure BB funds will be made outside of Alameda County. The proposed TEP amendment states that funds are for construction only in Alameda County and shall not be used until full funding commitments are identified and approved for an initial operating segment.

Myth: Valley Link primarily benefits non-Alameda County residents
Fact: The economies of the Northern California Megaregion are interconnected and residents and businesses throughout Alameda County will benefit from Valley Link
The project as defined will benefit Alameda County residents and businesses as well as San Joaquin County. Benefits of the project, including data specific to Alameda County residents is noted:

- 57% of the project track mileage is in Alameda County
- 74 round trips in 2040
- 10,137 daily boardings in the Tri-Valley in 2040
- 33,000 daily boardings in the full corridor in 2040
- 99.4 million annual reduction in vehicle miles travelled (VMT)
- 33,880 to 42,650 metric tons per year reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG)

Valley Link is vitally needed to support the interconnected economies of the Northern California Megaregion: both the Bay Area and San Joaquin County. An estimated 93,400 of our Bay Area workers are now living in Northern San Joaquin County, including those delivering our most vital services – firefighters, police, nurses and teachers, many of whom have been priced out of the communities they serve by rising housing costs. Valley Link will connect our displaced workforce to housing and jobs, help companies attract and retain employees in Alameda County and cease the tide of companies seeking to move elsewhere.

It is also worth noting that the primary goods movement corridor from products being shipped to and from the Port of Oakland and other businesses in Alameda County to the Central Valley and Southern California are transported over the Altamont Pass. If improvements are not made to this corridor, this critical freight movement will come to a grinding halt, causing immeasurable harm to businesses and customers in Alameda County.

Myth: Valley Link will duplicate ACE service
Fact: They are complimentary and coordinated services
Valley Link will not duplicate ACE service. It will provide fast and frequent rail service to BART – operating 74 daily roundtrips a day with a focus on serving Tri-Valley, Oakland and San Francisco bound commuters. Expansion of the current ACE 4-daily roundtrip service is constrained due to operations on Union Pacific tracks in mixed freight.

Valley Link and ACE are working in partnership towards a long-term Altamont Corridor Vision that, consistent with the California State Rail Plan, will evolve into a coordinated megaregional system – providing connectivity to the future California High Speed Rail service. As plans for this long-term vision

are advanced, Valley Link will continue to plan upon providing fast and frequent service to a BART connection in the Tri-Valley with focus on serving the Oakland and San Francisco commute – while the ACE service will focus on longer-haul service with fewer stations and faster service to the Silicon Valley.

Myth: Valley Link will create sprawl
Fact: Valley Link will support compact development at stations
Valley Link provides a sustainable commute option to the more than 93,400 Bay
Area workers who currently travel from their homes in Northern San Joaquin County to jobs in the Bay Area – where they've simply been priced-out. The Valley Link Board has adopted a transit-oriented development (TOD) policy, modelled after MTC's Resolution 3434 TOD requirements, that encourages local jurisdictions to conform to a minimum corridor threshold average of 2,200 units of housing within a half mile radius of stations and complete station area plans. These plans will address, at a minimum, future land use changes, station access needs, circulation improvements, pedestrian-friendly design, and other key features in support of transit-oriented development. Station area planning is currently underway for the Isabel, Downtown Tracy and River Island stations. The Dublin/Pleasanton, Isabel and Southfront stations are in Priority Development Areas (PDAs) established by MTC/ABAG.

Myth: Valley Link does not support the objectives of SB375
Fact: Will achieve significant reductions in greenhouse emissions
The primary focus of SB 375 is the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Valley Link will reduce GHG by getting commuters out of their cars and onto trains. An estimated 75% of the 93,400 Northern San Joaquin Valley residents commuting to work in the Bay Area are driving alone. Ridership on Valley Link is projected to be an estimated 33,000 riders per day in 2040. This will result in the reduction of over 99.4 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and the reduction of between 33,880 and 42,650 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) per year depending on the vehicle technology. 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 greenhouse emissions within the station environs.

Another goal of SB 375, as stated in Plan Bay Area 2040, was for the nine-county Bay Area region to provide sufficient housing for all new workers in the area. Not only has the region failed to achieve this goal, with the cost of a new housing unit in the area now estimated at $700,000, the goal of providing housing that is affordable to such workers may be unattainable. In contrast, the areas to be served by Valley Link provide many options for moderate income and affordable housing. By creating a commute option that allows those workers to reach jobs in the Bay Area region without increasing GHG emissions and congesting the area's roadways, Valley Link creates a win-win for both regions that might otherwise by unattainable.

Myth: A bus alternative would be more cost-effective
Fact: The bus alternatives fall way short
Express bus/BRT and enhanced bus alternatives were studied in the Project Feasibility Report and will be further examined in the EIR that is currently underway. Bus alternatives were also studied extensively in the BART to Livermore EIR that was certified by the BART Board in 2018. This review of bus alternatives have included a review of all possible ways to maximize the effectiveness of bus operations in this corridor - including a "bus on shoulder" alternative. In short, the bus alternatives appear to be less costly than rail but have much longer travel times, dramatically lower ridership and significantly less air quality improvement and environmental benefits.

Myth: Interstate 580 lanes will be lost in the Tri-Valley
Fact: No lane loss and minimal disruption is anticipated
There will be no loss of existing highway lanes or Express Lanes on I-580. Valley Link is currently working in partnership with Caltrans and ACTC (agency that oversees the I-580 Express Lanes) – planning to ensure minimal disruption during construction. It is important to note that the highway right-of-way was preserved (as feasible) for a potential BART extension in the I-580 median. Extensive efforts were made throughout the years to not preclude potential rail expansion when modifications to the

interstate were made and developments were planned in its proximity. When the decision was made to advance the I-580 Express Lanes, these efforts were continued. Although design and environmental review is still underway, it appears that impacts to existing infrastructure and land uses adjacent to I-580 will be minimized as a result of these efforts.

Myth: Insufficient study of alternatives
Fact: The Study of alternatives has been exhaustive and underway for many years
BART conducted extensive alternatives analysis, as both part of the 2010 Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and as part of the subsequent Project EIR certified in 2018. The 2010 Program EIR included analysis of 10 alignment alternatives. The Project EIR included extensive analysis of four alternatives plus a no project alternative. The alternatives included an Express Bus/Bus Rapid Transit Alternative and an Enhanced Bus Alternative. The analysis included detailed evaluation of potential benefits and impacts, including but not limited to: ridership, vehicle miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions, capital and operating costs, travel times, integration with land use, and cost-effectiveness. The BART Project EIR found mixed performance results for the alternatives. While the cost per new rider for the Express Bus/BRT option was lower than for the rail alternatives, the rail alternatives carried significantly more riders and resulted in a higher reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

When the BART Board directed the General Manager to not advance an alternative, it effectively passed over to the Authority the ability to plan for a connection to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station in July 2018. In developing the Valley Link Feasibility Report, and continuing in the EIR, the Authority is evaluating alternatives, building off of the work done by BART as well as by ACE as part of the ACE Forward analysis. The Feasibility Report found, consistent with the BART findings, that the potential ridership benefits and greenhouse gas emission reductions were significantly higher for the rail alternative.

Myth: COVID-19: It's better to wait and defer decision
Fact: Valley Link will support economic recovery – inaction is costly
The time to advance this cost-effective solution is now – estimates show each year of delay will escalate cost by approximately $60 million per year. In developing the region's long-range transportation plan, Plan Bay Area 2050, MTC's direction is to assume that long-term travel and development patterns do not significantly change as a result of COVID-19; rather those impacts are largely concentrated in the early (first 10) years of the Plan. Projects under development within the Bay Area must be consistent with MTC's long-range plan – and Valley Link has been rated as one of the top projects and designated for near-term implementation.

Additionally, a decision now will provide the Valley Link project additional advantage and leverage when seeking competitive funds from State and federal opportunities in the near future. It is also worth noting that as the economy has slowly started opening up, one of the few corridors in the entire Bay Area to begin seeing congestion return is I-580 in the Tri-Valley. This proves that delaying action will actually stifle economic growth when it is needed the most.

Finally, Valley Link will play a significant role in the region's economic recovery. Cost-effectively connecting our region's work force to jobs, particularly among the service sector where telecommuting is not an option. Importantly, it will create an estimated 22,000 jobs during construction with an economic impact estimate of $3.5 billion, and 400 more per year when operational that will result in labor income of over $19 million per year and $69 million in business sales annually.

Myth: San Joaquin County commitment inadequate
Fact: The inter-regional cooperation occurring is unprecedented
The Authority is working closely with the county and cities in San Joaquin County, SJCOG and the state to secure additional funding for the project. Important to note is that SJOG was the first agency to contribute funding for the Valley Link Feasibility Report ($300,000), the City of Tracy has committed to the donation of a key 200-acre parcel under City ownership to the project to be used for an operation and maintenance facility. The property has an estimated value of $40 million. In April 2020, the SJCOG

Board approved an amendment to its 2018 Regional Transportation Plan to include the Valley Link project, including identification of $163.9 million for the project in the plan from future measures and state funds. Additionally, the SJCOG has included the project in their Congested Corridors Plan to access funding from the California Transportation Commission. Finally, SJCOG is preparing for a potential Transportation Sales Tax in 2022 that will provide both capital and operating funds for the Valley Link project.

Myth: Lack of outreach community support in Livermore
Fact: Outreach is a priority and community responsiveness a key goal
To-date there has been extensive public outreach in Livermore, first as part of the BART to Livermore project and subsequently when the Authority developed the Project Feasibility Report. The City of Livermore also conducted significant outreach as part of the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan, which is closely tied to rail service in Livermore. The project has received overwhelming support from residents, all of the Tri-Valley jurisdictions, civic groups and chambers of commerce and business groups and interests – each and every time an opportunity to provide advocacy and support has occurred.

A key mandate of AB758 and project goal adopted by the Authority Board is to be, "responsive to the goals and objective of the communities it will serve." To meet this goal, the Authority conducted an extensive community outreach program in the entire project area throughout the development of the Project Feasibility Report. This included community workshops in each of the station areas, including Livermore, and an online survey (available in English and Spanish) which was distributed widely through social media, employer newsletters, email blasts and the project website. In keeping with Board adopted Sustainability Policy Goals on Equitable Access, this community outreach included a focus on non-traditional, creative, grassroots approaches including pop-up events at public gatherings. In the Tri-Valley, an extensive number of pop-up events were conducted and included booths at the Farmer's Markets in Pleasanton, two days at the St. Patrick's Day Parade Event in Dublin, at the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station, on the BART train, at ACE stations, Las Positas College on Club Day and at Contreras Market in Livermore. In addition, presentations were made to numerous civic and Chamber of Commerce meetings as well as briefings to City Councils upon request.

Myth: An EIR and full funding commitment is needed before decision is made
Fact: This has not been required of other projects
Valley Link should not be unfairly singled out. As with all projects in the 2014 TEP, the project must meet specific environmental deadlines and comply with regional, state and federal requirements. The TEP does not require that a project complete an environmental document before inclusion in the plan, nor does it require that full funding be in place. Every project in the 2014 TEP has a funding shortfall; the sales tax dollars are intended to be leveraged with other local, regional, state and federal funds to deliver the projects. Most of the named capital projects in the 2014 TEP did not have completed EIRs when the TEP was approved by voters. Only 4 of the 21 specifically named capital projects in the TEP had an approved EIR when the TEP was approved by voters.