



July 21, 2008

Dear Chair Dodd and Metropolitan Transportation Commissioners,

We are pleased to submit this letter on behalf of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition, a partnership of 110 organizations working for a more socially just and environmentally sustainable Bay Area. As you know, the Transportation and Land Use Coalition is very supportive of the ambitious goals that you have adopted for the 2009 RTP. Many members of the public, MTC's advisors, and other regional agencies have also supported the critical goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing VMT, and making our transportation system safer and more affordable.

We are strongly supportive of the efficiency program that MTC staff has proposed. The proposed investments will help us meet our RTP goals by creating safe bicycle and pedestrian access, ensuring well-planned communities, and providing funding towards access for low-income communities.

MTC's Planning Committee further affirmed their commitment to the RTP goals at their July 11 meeting when they asked staff to provide information on how the committed projects support the RTP goals and which projects are funded with money that may still be redirected. At that time, they invited the advocacy community to come forward with a list of projects for reevaluation. We thank you for being open to having this discussion.

In reviewing the list of committed expansion projects and the list of projects staff is proposing to fund with STIP and ITIP funds, we have identified three types of projects that MTC should reevaluate: roadway expansion at gateways, HOT lane candidates, and roadway expansions parallel to transitways. For each project, we have included a proposal for alternative investments that support the RTP goals within the same corridor.

We appreciate the need to move ahead quickly with the RTP process and have therefore narrowed down our project list to 9 projects based on the following criteria:

- The project includes a significant contribution of regional discretionary funds that could be redirected.
- The project is likely to increase VMT and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The project is not in the construction phase.
- There is a clear, existing alternative to the project.

#### Expansion at Gateways

Expanding highway capacity at county gateways effectively encourages additional trips into that county. In addition to increasing VMT and emissions, in-commuting moves bottlenecks "downstream" and induces travel by additional vehicles that reduce the roadway available for intra-county trips.

That's why Alameda County's Congestion Management Agency has a gateway policy to limit new trips from outside the region by not increasing the capacity of the highways leading into the county. It's also why ACCMA has opposed the inclusion of the westbound truck climbing lane over the Altamont Pass as proposed by Caltrans. The project works against the RTP's goal of reducing VMT by proposing to build infrastructure that will bring more vehicle traffic into the region. It is not in the current list of projects to be funded, but we believe it is still under consideration. If in fact funds become available, they should instead be used to improve parallel transit in the corridor. The wisdom of preventing additional VMT, congestion, pollution, and roadway wear and tear is applicable to other projects included in the funding proposals:

#### Marin-Sonoma Narrows

The Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project seeks \$176 million in ITIP funds to add HOT lanes to Highway 101. This stretch of highway between Novato and Petaluma acts as a natural limit to out-commuting from Sonoma. Constructing this project would encourage many more people to drive south from Sonoma County, increasing VMT, emissions, and creating additional congestion in Marin. If the widening project was cancelled (with the

safety and flood protection portions allowed to proceed), it would encourage people traveling to work in the south to take the SMART train. Bus service could also be enhanced in this corridor with queue jumps for preferential access to the narrows. This infrastructure decision would send a strong signal to the development community that their future residential and commercial projects would benefit from being sited in the SMART station areas.

*Alternative Investment:* Shift the \$176 million in proposed ITIP funds to the SMART project, to reduce the need to use debt financing. The SMART project meets MTC's RTP goals of reducing congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving physical safety, and improving affordability. Reduced debt service will allow more trains daily, with lower fares and more shuttle buses, thereby increasing ridership and the accompanying environmental benefits.

#### Highway 101 (Between Monterey and Route 25)

Santa Clara County is requesting \$233 million (\$27 in discretionary funds and \$206 in ITIP funds) for a project that would widen Highway 101 between Monterey Highway and Route 25, including an interchange (RTPID 21714). It has no committed funding. Similar to Alameda County's truck climbing project and the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project, this project would open the gateway for additional vehicle travel into the region. The previous widening of Highway 101 south of San Jose had a disastrous impact on Caltrain ridership from Gilroy, resulting in higher climate emissions. This project would result in additional VMT and greenhouse gas emissions.

*Alternative Investment:* These funds should be spent instead on expanding Caltrain service to Monterey and San Benito Counties, in coordination with funding from those counties.

#### Route 152 Widening

We are also concerned that the Trade Corridor proposal to widen Route 152 (RTPID 230294) will encourage additional traffic to enter the region, in addition to facilitating more low-density sprawl development. Putting more Central Valley truck cargo onto freight trains would result in lower VMT and emissions.

*Alternative Investment:* Funds should be reprogrammed to projects that increase Bay Area freight rail capacity.

#### HOT Candidates

MTC has proposed developing a network of HOT lanes that would generate about \$6 billion over the next 25 years. As this program is rolled out, we urge the Commission to address a policy inconsistency. The Committed Projects list includes a series of new HOV lanes that are likely to be converted to HOT lanes in the future. Many of these HOV projects are in the design phase.

We propose that instead of investing discretionary funding in building these HOV lanes now, MTC anticipate using HOT lane revenue (or the bonding capacity associated with this anticipated revenue) to pay for the HOV/HOT lanes. We would like to see the Commission save its discretionary funds for projects that do not have the capacity to pay for themselves. Examples of such projects follow.

#### Route 4 Widening

Contra Costa has proposed to widen Route 4 from Loveridge Rd. to Somersville Rd. to Route 161 (RTPIDs 98142 and 98999). These projects are in the design phase, with \$141.3 million in MTC discretionary funds.

*Alternative Investment:* Instead, this funding could be redirected to e-BART.

#### Sonoma HOV Lanes

Sonoma has proposed to widen Highway 101 between Old Redwood Highway and Rohnert Park Expressway for HOV lanes in both directions (RTPIDs 21902 and 230413). These projects are in the design and right-of-way phases and are requesting \$107 million in MTC discretionary funds. These HOV lane projects should be included in the regional HOT lane program, and funded out of future revenues, rather than discretionary funds.

*Alternative Investment:* These funds could be redirected to SMART and bus service on Highway 101.