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Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District

Michael Hursh, General Manager

April 1, 2020

Therese McMillan  
Executive Director  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
375 Beale St.  
San Francisco, CA 94105

**Re: Blueprint Project Evaluations**

Dear Ms. McMillan:

AC Transit has been pleased to participate in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Horizon and Blueprint processes for Plan Bay Area 2050. We have participated both directly with MTC and through the Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) review process. We have submitted a number of project proposals that will improve public transit for the East Bay and the region. We hope MTC's regional planning efforts will result in a strong and equitable plan for transit and transportation improvements.

MTC has recently released project performance evaluations for project sponsors and stakeholder agencies to comment on. MTC rated a number of AC Transit projects as worthy of going forward in the Plan Bay Area process. These include local service improvements and a San Pablo Avenue Rapid/BRT project. MTC also proposes to move forward ACTC transit-based projects such as the Alameda Point Transit Network Improvements.

Unfortunately, two AC Transit projects were flagged for inadequate scores under MTC's evaluation. AC Transit's Local Rapid Network received a less-than-sufficient cost-benefit ratio. In addition, our Transbay Network proposal received a "Challenges" rating with regard to equity. If not modified, these two important projects would not advance as part of the Blueprint for Plan Bay Area 2050. AC Transit would see this as a significant gap in our 2050 proposals and our strategic vision for improved AC Transit service.

However, AC Transit believes these concerns can be addressed, and the Local Rapid Network and Transbay Network improvements can be revised and should be restored to the Blueprint.

**Local Rapid Network** — This project would upgrade several AC Transit trunk lines to Rapid or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. It is drawn from AC Transit's **Major Corridors Study**. While AC Transit believes that the Local Rapid Network improvements are important, we do see opportunities to improve the cost-benefit performance of the project. First, we would eliminate the two lowest performing lines—Line F and Line 10—from the project.

Second, AC Transit would like to undertake a conceptual level “value engineering” approach to the remaining lines proposed for improvement. The lines in the project were generously scoped, including some amenities that focus on passenger comfort rather than transit performance. We believe it would be possible to down-scope these lines—and therefore reduce their cost—while still creating necessary capital facilities and providing high-performing, useful service. We would like to meet with MTC staff to pursue this approach at your earliest convenience.

**Transbay Network Improvements**—This project is designed to provide capital improvements and service increases for Transbay express bus service, primarily into Downtown San Francisco.

The equity score of Transbay improvements indicates that the service skews toward higher income passengers. However, AC Transit believes that this is an inappropriate metric for this key service and should not be a primary consideration for evaluation. Transbay bus service carries workers to Downtown San Francisco, which has higher wage jobs and more full-time, full-year jobs than most other parts of the region. Carrying Downtown San Francisco’s workers inevitably means carrying higher income workers. We do not believe that AC Transit should be penalized for providing this important function. In addition, not all of our Transbay riders fall into this demographic. In the off peak and shoulders of the peak, AC Transit carries lower-income workers, some in the service sector, with less traditional and less flexible work schedules than typical office employees.

As MTC has often stressed, providing transit to Downtown San Francisco is important for the region as a whole. The Bay Bridge corridor which connects the East Bay to San Francisco is one of the most congested in the region. Downtown San Francisco has seen major job growth with capacity for more. BART is expected to remain at or above capacity through the Transbay Tube for many years to come. Thus, growth of all types of jobs in San Francisco and the Peninsula cannot be handled unless there is additional high-performing bus service through the Bay Bridge corridor to relieve congestion in the years to come. Until BART can increase capacity, AC Transit’s Transbay service provides necessary redundancy for the corridor. This was highlighted in MTC’s Core Capacity Transit Study.

For AC Transit as an agency, Transbay passengers actually broaden our equity profile. We have the highest proportion of low-income riders—approximately 74%—of any major transit agency in the region. We believe a broad measurement of income and race should not apply to both AC Transit and other systems which are dominated by high-income riders.

Nonetheless, AC Transit seeks to improve transportation and access to transit for low-income passengers from low-income areas to San Francisco. We have been working with MTC to initiate routes from East Oakland to San Francisco. In addition, AC Transit will continue to work with Contra Costa County agencies to develop additional express bus service from West Contra Costa County to Downtown San Francisco.

For these reasons, AC Transit believes that Transbay bus improvements should go forward as part of the Plan Bay Area 2050 Blueprint.

Thank you for giving AC Transit an opportunity to comment on Plan Bay Area 2050 Performance Findings. We formally request that MTC consider our comments when finalizing the Blueprint and we look forward to working with you to refine and improve our two projects identified above. If you have any questions or comments, please contact AC Transit's Director of Service Development & Planning, Robert del Rosario, at [rdelrosa@actransit.org](mailto:rdelrosa@actransit.org) or via phone at 510.891.4734.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Hursh  
General Manager

CC: Tess Lengyel – ACTC  
Alix Bockleman – MTC