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TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION**

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March 27, 2018

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Honorable Dianne Feinstein
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331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-0009

Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
Congressmember, District 11
U.S. House of Representatives
115 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0001

Dear Senator Feinstein and Congressmember DeSaulnier:

Thank you for your letter dated December 6, 2017 concerning the serious congestion our residents face each day and their limited options to cross the Bay. Additionally, we appreciate the recent opportunity to meet with you and your staff in Washington to discuss these issues further, prior to providing this formal response to your request.

Like you, we are keenly aware that these congestion and capacity issues— including long queues at the Bay Bridge approaches, congested conditions on US-101, I-880, and I-80, and a transit system bursting at the seams— require coordinated action. In response, we would like to provide you with more detail on current and forecasted conditions, describe near-term solutions for relieving capacity pressures, and embark on a new in-depth study to re-evaluate options for an additional Bay crossing.

Current and Forecasted Conditions

As your letter points out, the Transbay and US-101 corridors serving the San Francisco business district have consistently emerged as the most congested segments in the Bay Area. Indeed, the Bay Area's traffic congestion is significantly worse compared to previous economic booms. Since the peak of the dot-com boom in 2000, per-commuter congested delay has skyrocketed by 64 percent, with nearly all of this growth occurring in the last four years. Commuters are experiencing significant queues on the Bay Bridge approaches and delays on our arterials and local roads.

This problem extends to our transit system. Today, people traveling to and from San Francisco on transit typically experience overcrowded, uncomfortable conditions, particularly during peak commute hours. The BART system, which carries nearly two-thirds of all people traveling westbound across the Transbay corridor in the AM peak hour, has been operating upwards of 110 percent capacity. Our recent analysis shows the Transbay Corridor as a whole (inclusive of the Bay Bridge and our transit systems) operating at 105 percent capacity in the AM peak hour. At these levels, even minor incidents and disruptions can trigger major ripple effects throughout the entire region and for many hours of the day.

The driving force behind these conditions continues to be the robust job market in downtown San Francisco, the single largest employment center in the region. Our most recently adopted long range plan, Plan Bay Area 2040, forecasts that the City will add roughly 125,000 jobs between 2015 and 2040, nearly 20 percent of the region's new jobs. Moreover, we anticipate the preponderance of these jobs to locate in the Financial District, SoMa, Civic Center/Mid-Market, and Mission Bay/Showplace Square, further accelerating travel demand to downtown San Francisco. Together with the region's growing housing supply and affordability crisis— which makes it increasingly difficult for people to find a place to live proximate to where they work— we foresee persistent capacity problems in this corridor unless we can deliver transportation improvements to provide relief.

Delivering Near-Term Relief

MTC and our partners are working to plan and deliver significant enhancements for the Transbay corridor. The recently completed Core Capacity Transit Study, a collaborative multi-agency effort led by MTC and funded by a federal TIGER grant, recommends a \$6 billion package of near and mid-term improvements to the Transbay and SF Metro Corridors, including major expansions of transit fleets and service. When complete, these investments will provide significant relief by increasing capacity to enable the corridor to operate near 90 percent peak-hour capacity by 2025, a significant improvement from today's level of 105 percent. Principal among these investments is a new train control system and 300 new expansion cars for BART, which will enable that system to run more railcars closer together through the existing transbay tube.

Regional Measure 3, if approved by voters in June, would make a significant down payment in delivering this package of improvements for the Transbay Corridor. Roughly \$1.6 billion of RM3's \$4.5 billion capital expenditure plan is devoted to delivering improvements serving downtown San Francisco— these include investments to speed delivery of an expanded BART fleet, extension of Caltrain to the Transbay Terminal, and significant expansions of the Muni and AC Transit fleets.

New Crossing Options

Even with the implementation of these planned investments, our projections show future demand— driven by our dynamic, growing economy— threatening to outpace capacity in this

corridor once again, perhaps as early as 2030. Based on these projections, MTC and our partners agree with the necessity to plan for a second Bay crossing. While the future is uncertain— for instance, technological advancements in telecommunications and autonomous vehicles may significantly alter the ways many of us work and get around— these changes will not transcend the inherent challenges of our geography, including only a fixed set of alternatives to cross the Bay.

This year, MTC is embarking on a new planning process — called *Horizon*— that will develop a range of alternative scenarios based on differing external forces. These include the challenges and opportunities posed by autonomous and connected vehicles and technological innovations in telecommunications affecting the nature of the workplace. This process will culminate with the evaluation of multiple “transformational” transportation capital projects that enable the region to improve mobility and build resilience regardless of what the future portends. Projects will be evaluated in concert with a range of alternative development patterns and include a status-quo analysis examining the deleterious impacts of “doing nothing.”

Our specific proposal to answer the questions raised in your December letter is to develop a new study specifically focused on a series of Bay Crossing options that can best relieve the frustrations people experience when they travel across the Bay with a range of new project alternatives. This should include a continuing investigation of the benefits of a second transbay tube for BART and conventional rail, an additional crossing accommodating all users and modes, and capacity expansions to our existing transbay bridges and their approaches. Consistent with the larger *Horizon* project, this Bay Crossing analysis will account for multiple population and development scenarios and examine the ramifications of differing levels of autonomous and electric vehicle penetration. Our timeline would be to release the results of this study by the close of 2018.

We are eager to hear your feedback on this concept, and will contact your staff promptly to follow-up. Thank you again for your commitment to identifying, funding and delivering Bay Area transportation solutions.

Sincerely,



Steve Heminger
Executive Director

cc: MTC Commissioners

SH: MM

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