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October 11, 2022

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Therese McMillan
Executive Director
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale Street
San Francisco CA 94105-2066

RE: Prioritization of Valley Link in Major Project Advancement Policy (MAP)

Dear Ms. McMillan:

On behalf of the Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority (Authority) I am writing to support the prioritization of the Valley Link project as a Level 2 project priority in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Major Project Advancement Policy (MAP). To achieve our megaregion's goals for the economy, the environment, housing, transportation, and equity – we need a robust, reliable, and sustainable transportation system that will equitably serve our residents and work force with a better quality of life and access to jobs, affordable housing, educational opportunities, and health care facilities. We believe that Valley Link is a vital element of this system and essential to the future of our megaregion. We also believe that Valley Link rail project supports sound regional transportation investment policy that prioritizes projects on readiness, cost-effectiveness, competitiveness for state/federal funding, and reinforcement of regional policy focused on equity, transit-oriented land use and connected mobility.

Valley Link is Ready

Valley Link is an adopted priority in the MTC's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Regional Grant Strategy and has been approved by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) into Project Development under the federal Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program. Project development continues to advance with urgency – state CEQA environmental clearance is complete, federal NEPA environmental clearance is underway and a targeted construction date is set for 2025 supporting a Full Funding Grant Agreement under New Starts within the BIL's five-year timeframe.



Valley Link is Cost-Effective

Valley Link builds 26 miles of new passenger rail track for \$1.8 billion, extending high frequency and high-capacity rail service from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station in Alameda County to the Mountain House station in San Joaquin County including two stations in Livermore. With 33,000 daily riders projected by 2040, Valley Link would remove tens of thousands of cars off the Altamont Corridor, remove up to 42,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, create 22,000 jobs, and support goods movement by reducing heavy truck conflicts with cars on the I-580. Valley Link is also leading innovation with a vision to be a model of environmental and economic sustainability connecting the Northern California megaregion with the first passenger rail system in California running on self-produced green hydrogen with the goal of reducing the cost of the overall transit operations for the public and offsetting state and federal transit subsidies.

Valley Link Meets MTC's Level 2 MAP Eligibility and Is Competitive for State and Federal Funds

Valley Link has widespread support from all sectors of the Northern California Megaregion, is identified in Plan Bay Area 2050 in the 2021-2035 period and has over one third of its funding already identified as available through local sources - a total of over \$700 million. The Authority completed an assessment of the eligibility and competitiveness of the Valley Link project according to federal New Starts criteria in November 2021 which concluded that the initial operating segment between the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station and the Mountain House station, including the Isabel and South Front Road stations in Livermore, could achieve a medium rating for New Starts eligibility. As part of the current federal environmental process the Authority is now working to reduce the initial operating segment project cost by nearly one third of the cost estimate used in the New Starts assessment and refine the corridor alignment to locate the Mountain House station adjacent to the Mountain House community.

Valley Link Supports Regional, State and Federal Policy on Equity, Transit-Oriented Land Use, and Connected Mobility

Consistent with MTC's Equity Priority Communities Framework and the Biden Administration's new Justice40 Initiative, Valley Link will also achieve near-term mobility, accessibility, environmental, and health benefit for the more than 100,500 Bay Area workers now commuting daily from their homes in the Northern San Joaquin Valley – a region recognized as one of the State's largest areas of California Climate Investments Priority Populations for both State designated disadvantage communities and low-income communities. Valley Link will have immeasurable benefit to the megaregion and will increase the megaregional housing supply through the advancement of transit-oriented development at stations along the corridor including at the Isabel and Southfront Valley Link stations in Livermore as well as the Mountain House station in San Joaquin County. The Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan, within an adopted MTC Priority Development Area (PDA), is complete and Southfront has recently been approved as a PDA by MTC. All three station areas will support MTC's recently adopted Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Policy.



Valley Link also provides critical passenger rail connectivity closing the gap between BART and the state rail system — linking nearly 500 miles of commuter and intercity rail with more than 130 stations throughout the Northern California Megaregion. Conversely, Valley Link will also bring tens of thousands of riders on a daily basis to other transit systems in the Bay Area significantly increasing transit ridership within the region.

Valley Link improvements are critical for the equitable and sustainable future of the Bay Area and the megaregion it is intrinsically a part of. Valley Link is ready, cost-effective, competitive, and meets the MAP principles for regional policy on equity, transit-oriented land use, and connected mobility. We support your staff's recommendation to include this transformational project as a Level 2 priority in the MAP as well as your establishment and maintenance of consistent criteria for project prioritization to ensure the integrity of the region and its credibility to state and federal funding partners.

Sincerely,



Kevin L. Sheridan -
Executive Director/CEO

CC: Public Comment - info@bayareametro.gov
Kenneth Folan - kfolan@bayareametro.gov



Tri-Valley & San Joaquin Valley
REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY

