

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 14, 2022

The Honorable Alfredo Pedroza, Chair
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
375 Beale Street
San Francisco CA 94105-2066

RE: Support for Valley Link as a Project Priority in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Major Project Advancement Policy (MAP)

Dear Chair Pedroza,

We write in strong support of the inclusion of the Valley Link rail transit project as a Level 2 priority in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Major Project Advancement Policy (MAP).

Our megaregion, representing California's Bay Area to the Central Valley, needs 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.

Valley Link supports sound 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 has widespread support from all sectors of the Northern California Megaregion, is identified in MTC's Plan Bay Area 2050 (2021-2035 delivery period), is an adopted priority in the MTC's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Regional Grant Strategy, has been approved by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) into Project Development under the federal Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program and has over one-third of its funding already identified as available through local sources – a total of over \$700 million.

Project development continues to advance with urgency. The California Environmental Quality Act clearance is complete, National Environmental Policy Act clearance is underway and a targeted construction date is set for 2025 supporting a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) under the CIG Program within the BIL's five-year timeframe.

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 benefits 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. In addition, the Tri-Valley is home to two national labs in Livermore and the headquarters of more than 450 technology

companies - with a regional gross domestic product of over \$42 billion. Improvement of transportation systems between the Tri-Valley and broader region are essential to the Tri-Valley economy, environment and the quality of life of its residents and workforce.

Furthermore, Valley Link 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 will also be the first passenger rail system in California running on self-produced green hydrogen and a hydrogen fuel production facility able to support other transit and heavy truck operators. This model of sustainability and self-sufficiency is important as it inherently connects the hydrogen fuel producer and user with the goal of reducing the cost of the overall transit operations for the public and offsetting state and federal transit subsidies. In addition to the use of zero emissions vehicle and green energy production technologies, the Valley Link Board-adopted Sustainability Policy identifies implementing strategies to achieve a zero emissions system through innovation station access. This includes electric autonomous shuttles, shared mobility, and support for local transit operator alternative vehicle technology.

Valley Link 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. Consistent with the State Rail Plan and the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Business Plan, it will expand equitable access and mobility by providing the Bay Area with integrated connectivity to the Merced – Bakersfield High-Speed Rail Interim Operating Segment and Sacramento through the existing Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) and future Valley Rail passenger rail services. 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 megaregion.

Valley Link improvements are critical for the equitable and sustainable future of the Bay Area, the Central Valley, and the broader megaregion. This support is also critical at a time of unprecedented funding opportunity at both the federal and state level when maximizing megaregional outcomes is best supported by ensuring that the most competitive megaregional projects are prioritized to compete. We urge you to prioritize this transformational project in MTC's Major Project Advancement Policy (MAP).

Sincerely,



Josh Harder
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

CC:

Therese W. McMillan, MTC Executive Director