



March 5, 2021

Commissioner Nick Josefowitz, Chair
Programming & Allocations Committee
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

RE: Agenda Item 4a, Programming and Allocations Committee, March 10, 2021

Dear Chair Josefowitz,

As the three transit agencies reporting service data to the Santa Rosa Urbanized Area, we support the proposed distribution of transit emergency relief funds from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) prepared by MTC Staff, and encourage you to refer the proposal to the Commission for adoption at your meeting on March 10, 2021. However, future rounds of emergency funding should be used to begin transitioning our transit services to the new post-pandemic normal and not be shifted away from our service area.

These CRRSAA funds are urgently needed to continue providing transit service to our region's frontline workers and people making essential trips and we agree taking a regional approach is critical to ensuring the recovery of the transit network overall. We understand that the proposal before you will result in \$10.3 million of these CRRSAA funds, or 67% of the Santa Rosa Urbanized Area appropriation, being allocated to Golden Gate Transit to provide relief for their Fiscal Year 2021 budget. We believe Golden Gate Transit is an important provider in Sonoma County's transit network, as evidenced by Sonoma County supporting Golden Gate Transit by allocating 25% of its Transportation Development Act funds off-the-top for the past 25 years, per MTC Resolution 2858. We look forward to working with Golden Gate Transit going forward to ensure that these funds will be used to maintain or restore service to the Santa Rosa Urbanized Area, which encompasses Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Sebastopol, Windsor, Healdsburg and other communities in Sonoma County.

While we support the distribution of 75% of the remaining CRRSAA funds on the basis of expected revenue losses from January to June 2021, we believe that beginning with Fiscal Year 2022, all transit operators will need to begin adapting to the 'new normal' the pandemic conditions have created, even if all the outcomes are not fully known yet.

For us that has meant tackling budget concerns, reducing staff and service through the most critical phases of the pandemic and preparing for service expansion that may look dramatically different going forward. Unfortunately, these strategies are familiar to us as we have navigated them through many community-altering fire disasters over the past three years.

In the coming year, Santa Rosa Urbanized Area transit providers will be asked to

- provide additional service hours to cover our higher demand corridors and times of day, including a return of our school-related service demands, all while maintaining COVID-related capacity constraints,
- expand services in support of our riders, of which our systems' pre-pandemic ridership composed of between 26% and 86% low income,
- hire new operators to compensate for pandemic-related attrition, and
- serve the Sonoma County and the North Bay's transit needs to restart the economy and provide all people in our communities with equitable access to economic opportunity.

Like all transit operators in the region, we eagerly anticipate Congress approving the proposed American Rescue Plan Act, which would provide yet more critically needed transit relief funding to the region. We look forward to these new funds providing us the resources we desperately need to begin pivoting our systems and services into a 'new normal', post-pandemic transportation network for Sonoma County and the greater North Bay. For Sonoma County, this includes continuing the work of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority's Future of Transit Ad Hoc Committee, which has set forth the goal of increasing transit ridership in Sonoma County by integrating our local transit systems to enhance the customer experience and improve service quality.

We agree with our fellow transit operators in the Bay Area that the CRRSSA proposal before you is an important component of solving current budget year challenges for all the region's transit operators. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the viability of transit in the region, and in particular on behalf of our communities and riders in the North Bay.

Sincerely,



Sean McGlynn
City Manager
City of Santa Rosa



Bryan Albee
Transit Systems Manager
Sonoma County Transit



Farhad Mansourian
General Manager
Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit
District (SMART)