



March 22, 2022

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

RE: East Bay EDA Support for Valley Link in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Regional Grant Strategy as a Project Priority for the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program

Dear Chair Pedroza,

The East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA) is pleased to provide this letter to strongly support the inclusion of the Valley Link rail transit project in the MTC's BIL Regional Grant Strategy as a project priority for the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program. To achieve our region's goals for the economy, the environment, housing and transportation – we need a robust and sustainable passenger rail system that will equitably serve our residents and work force with a better quality of life and access to jobs, educational opportunities and health care facilities. We believe that Valley Link is a vital element of this rail system and essential to the future of our region.

Valley Link meets the CIG Program – New Starts eligibility, is competitive and is ready. 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) and at project inception has an unprecedented 1/3 of its funding already identified as available through local sources - a total of over \$700 million. Project development continues to advance with urgency – CEQA environmental clearance is complete, NEPA environmental 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 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 is vital to the economy of the Bay Area and megaregion. The Valley Link initial operating segment (IOS) between the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station and the Mountain House station, including the Isabel and South Front Street stations in Livermore, will connect tens of thousands of workers to the Tri-Valley at the center of the Northern California Megaregion - one of the fastest growing and economically robust areas in the state of California. As a thriving job center, the Tri-Valley is home to two national labs in Livermore and the headquarter location 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 work force. Valley Link will have immeasurable benefit to the region and will increase the regional 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. 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.

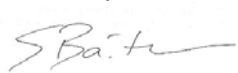
Valley Link is leading innovation with a vision to be a model of sustainability connecting the Northern California megaregion with the first passenger rail system in California running on self-produced green hydrogen and a hydrogen fuel production facility able to support other transit and heavy truck operators. 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 statewide 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 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 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. We urge you to include this transformational project in the BIL Regional Grant Strategy as a project priority for the CIG Program. MTC support for this project has significant impact on the Bay Area economy and the transportation investment equity of the tens of thousands of Bay Area workers now commuting daily from their homes in recognized disadvantaged and low-income communities in the Northern San Joaquin Valley. This support is also critical at a time of unprecedented funding opportunity at both the federal and state level when maximizing national competitiveness is best supported by ensuring that all eligible regional projects can compete. With \$18 billion in federal CIG Program funding available under the BIL and over \$30 billion in anticipated surplus funds under discussion as part of the FY 2022/23 State Budget, this is the time for collaboration within the region to meet our regional transportation goals.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at (510) 272-3874 or stephen@eastbayeda.org.

Sincerely,



Stephen Baiter
Executive Director