

From: Tim Sbranti
Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 3:18 PM
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: Public Comment regarding MTC Agenda item 14c - March 23, 2022

External Email

Dear Chair Pedroza and Honorable Commissioners:

As someone who has been involved in a variety of leadership capacities on Tri-Valley transportation issues within the public and private sector for the past 23 years, I urge the Commission to include Valley Link in MTC's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Regional Grant Strategy as a project priority for the Capital Investment Grants (CIG).

Simply put, Valley Link meets the CIG Program – New Starts eligibility and is competitive for future federal funding opportunities. With \$750 million in local matching dollars, it is comparable or ahead of other major Tier 1 priority projects who are at similar stages in the process included in the draft list prepared by MTC staff.

Valley Link is also vital to the economy of the Bay Area, connecting where people work to where they live and providing congestion relief on the region's primary goods movement corridor over the Altamont Pass to and from the Port of Oakland

It is important to note that by delivering a new system like Valley Link to get people to ditch their cars further east, it will exponentially increase transit ridership within the region. Bringing Valley Link on line will create captive riders that will use other systems such as BART, ACE, Caltrain, and other public transit systems, many which are suffering from dramatically lower ridership caused by the pandemic. These transit systems could use the boost in new riders which Valley Link will provide.

Valley Link is also completely compatible with the Biden-Harris Administration's vision for the future of transportation with a focus on three critical issues – Social Equity, Climate, and "Fix-it-First". Valley Link meets the criteria in each of these areas.

In regards to **Social Equity**, Valley Link saves time and money for displaced "super commuters" forced into long and expensive commutes to the Bay Area every day from the Central Valley. It will create healthier air for communities of concern. Many communities in the project study area suffer from decades of disinvestment, geographic inequity, and poverty, resulting in pockets of concentrated low-income communities lacking adequate access to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities. We now have an opportunity with this project to create upward mobility, as thousands of affordable housing units are planned as part of transit-oriented communities with 7 Valley Link stations serving as the epicenter. One of those projects which stands to benefit includes much-needed student housing within very close proximity to Las Positas College.

In regards to **Climate**, Valley Link reduces carbon emissions through its 74 daily round trips which will serve an estimated 33,000 daily riders in 2040 – a reduction of 141 million vehicle miles traveled per year. Additionally, Valley Link is taking bold steps toward advancing a net zero emission system – with design work now underway to determine the operational characteristics and requirements of an all-hydrogen fuel cell (HFC) hybrid fleet, including establishment of a solar /wind-powered carbon neutral maintenance and hydrogen fueling facility. The Biden-Harris Administration is also supportive of new transportation innovations which address climate issues, and Valley Link has the potential to be a signature project towards that end. It would be unfortunate if MTC stood in the way of such an innovative approach to our transportation needs.

Even when it comes to the concept of **“Fix it First”**, I believe that Valley Link achieves that aim. The project plans to make this connection by leveraging existing highway and rail rights-of-way on I-580 — repurposing an already constructed freeway lane for more beneficial mass transit uses. Valley Link also provides critical statewide rail connectivity between two important elements of the megaregion’s rail network — BART’s rapid transit system in the Bay Area and ACE commuter rail service in Northern San Joaquin County. Creating this link will connect nearly 500 miles of commuter and intercity rail and more than 130 stations in the Northern California Megaregion. There also exists the opportunity for an interim connection to High Speed rail, and Valley Link is identified in the State Rail Plan and MTC’s own Regional Rail Plan as an important link to improve our existing rail network.

In closing, it is important to note that there are ample resources to support all of the existing projects on the MTC draft list while also including Valley Link. At this point, it’s all about collaboration and inclusion if we are going to maximize our response to meeting GHG targets and enhancing mobility options. It is premature to be picking winners and losers and shutting out viable projects worthy of consideration at the federal level.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tim Sbranti
Strategic Initiatives Director, Innovation Tri-Valley Leadership Group (current)
Board President, Chabot-Las Positas Community College District (current)
Former Deputy Chief of Staff, Congressman Eric Swalwell
Former Mayor, City of Dublin
Former Aide, State Senate Transportation and Housing Chair Tom Torlakson