

From: [Vinita Goyal](#)
To: [MTC Info](#)
Subject: Public Comment from SVCF for May 27 Commission meeting-Item 10c
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External Email

Dear MTC Commissioners,

My name is Vinita Goyal, I am the Program Officer for Housing and Transportation at Silicon Valley Community Foundation and a transit rider.

My organization has five strategic programmatic areas and housing and transportation is one of them. We have pivoted in our response to COVID-19 and are engaging in both short term response efforts and mobilizing resources toward long term recovery.

In this comment letter, I'd like to remind the Commission of the significant dangers this crisis continues to portend and in the spirit of our shared priority of a resilient transportation system in the region encourage the Commission to put first things first.

We are all outraged at the lives lost during this pandemic. With disproportionately higher number of communities of color continuing at the frontlines, being infected and dying without the proper protective equipment, and revealing the racial and economic injustice that has long existed in our communities. The loss has been much greater in other parts of the country and the world but the pain experienced by individuals and families is no less than anywhere else.

The transportation system is an essential infrastructure for our cities. In its form of an "equal, accessible and resilient public space (it) can promote civic health during a pandemic" and for decades after because it connects every part of public life. "The public spaces of the internet", such as we are seeing proliferate during COVID-19, are impoverished when compared with the promises held in a simple sidewalk or in accessible transit because online platforms mostly support public life as long as they will sustain private profit. On the other hand, the transportation system offers a tremendous economic potential because it catalyzes employment and business activity. These are the dimensions missing from the general public awareness today and for these reasons we have the opportunity before us to join and argue for a transportation renaissance in the Bay Area during COVID and also beyond the pandemic.

I share the Commission's optimism and prioritization of a Blue Ribbon Task Force Committee as a next step in this direction that will provide crucial guidance towards a "comprehensive COVID-19 recovery strategy" that ensures "network connectivity, financial sustainability, and transportation system equity". But I believe that any recovery pathway should begin first with the foundation of protecting our transit workers and our systems. I am inspired by the growing activism around these ideas from our frontline transit workers themselves. Because they understand that if they are essential then why are they still driving our buses and trains without proper protective equipment, without hazard pay, without masks and hand sanitizers for every rider, and without disinfected transit vehicles?

At this time, I am encouraged by Mary Kay Henry, International President of the Service Employees International Union who says: "This life and death situation that we've now all been thrust into has opened up possibilities. Working people want real change, and that I think makes me more optimistic than ever that the change isn't going to be incremental, and that gives me incredible hope."

Thanks for considering these suggestions.

Vinita Goyal

Vinita Goyal

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