

June 14, 2020

Ms. Alix Bockelman
MTC Deputy Director for Policy
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

Subject: Blue Ribbon COVID Transit Recovery Task Force 2nd CARES
Act 2nd Allocation Cycle Dear Ms. Bockelman,

I am writing regarding MTC' s pending allocation of the second tranche of CARES ACT funding for public transportation in the Bay Area.

In particular I want to express very strong reservation as to the merit of the initial CARES ACT allocation of \$10.38 million to SMART and disagreement with the anticipated potential second round allocation of \$6.6 million to SMART. These sums, in comparison to the funding allocated to Marin County Transit and Sonoma County Transit are grossly out of proportion to the public transit service value, effectiveness and utility rendered by the respective agencies.

SMART has recorded extraordinarily high operating expense per passenger trip every year since its rail service inception in 2017.

SMARTs estimated operating expense per passenger is in excess of \$50 per passenger trip In FY19-20 and also as budgeted for FY 20-21. These operating costs are far higher than that of all other North Bay transit operators – who carry more passengers and do so at much lower operating cost per passenger than does SMART.

Since early April, SMART has been running 16 weekday train schedules (with over 2,500 daily seats); the rail system carries approximately 200 passengers per day. This can hardly be an “essential service since pre-COVID ridership in early 2020 was over 3,500 per weekday. The current SMART rail riders have access to bus services the full length of the SMART corridor with equal, or more, frequent service, broader destination delivery, and much lower operating cost than SMART.

We urge MTC to reduce the CARES funding allocation from SMART in favor of more funding to local North Bay and Golden Gate Transit services. These operators indeed provide essential service to captive riders and concurrently have much less costly operating expense. In these extreme economic times, it is imperative that scarce transit funding resources achieve maximum effectiveness,

Sincerely,

James W. Schmidt, P.E.

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