

Date: April 28, 2021
W.I.: 1111
Referred by: Commission

ABSTRACT
Resolution No. 4477

Resolution of Appreciation for Joel Markowitz upon his retirement after 49 years of service to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

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RE: Resolution of Appreciation for Joel Markowitz

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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WHEREAS, Dr. Joel Markowitz, Ph.D., is retiring after 49 years of dedicated and decidedly diverse service to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission; and

WHEREAS, during his pursuit of a Master's degree at the University of California in the early 1970s, Joel set his sights on a career in the public sector, and through a Spend-a-Day-with-a-Planner program picked then-MTC Executive Director Paul Watt as his temporary mentor, which provided Joel the opportunity to also meet with Commission Chair Joseph Bort; and

WHEREAS, both Mr. Watt and Mr. Bort encouraged Joel to consider joining the organization and at the conclusion of the 1971-72 academic year dangled further enticement in the form of a formal letter in which Joel was offered the princely salary of \$1,000 per month; and

WHEREAS, Joel began his MTC career with work on a lengthy research project to analyze the impact on the Bay Area of the soon-to-open BART system, which was to be the first debut of a new U.S. urban rail system in more than 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Joel in 1976 moved to what then was known as the Policy section, where he was introduced to state and federal legislation and to transportation funding issues, and was instrumental in shaping 1982 federal legislation to modify the FTA block grant program to account for metro areas' rail mileage and ridership — as well as to have ferry routes counted as rail mileage — thus delivering hundreds of millions of additional federal dollars over the years to the Bay Area and other regions with extensive commuter rail systems; and

WHEREAS, the legwork Joel performed for an FTA advisory committee that included among its members then-MTC Executive Director Larry Dahms proved critical to a successful

movement to reform Section 15 of the 1964 Urban Mass Transit Act to simplify and standardize transit agencies' data reporting requirements, thus dramatically reducing costs for transit operators nationwide; and

WHEREAS, leveraging the practical and political education he received under the leadership of Tom Bulger in the Policy section, as well as the formal education he received at Golden Gate University in the late 1970s to earn a Master's in Public Administration, Joel subsequently transitioned to MTC's Transit Coordination section, taking on such perennial challenges as inter-agency fare and schedule coordination while also developing and refining the Transit Capital Priorities process; and

WHEREAS, Joel in the mid-1980s leveraged his work experience to earn yet another advanced degree, a Ph.D. in Urban, Community and Regional Planning from the University of California, with a dissertation on transit fare policy, coordination and technology; and

WHEREAS, the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake thrust Joel into pioneering MTC's role in both emergency response and the development of new fare media, beginning with a fare coordination project for AC Transit, BART and Muni, and then piloting the ur-TransLink project involving magnetic-stripe tickets for use on BART and Contra Costa County bus systems; and

WHEREAS, while this initial TransLink experiment ultimately begat the successful transit-fare payment smart card now known as Clipper, its more immediate yield was a series of hard lessons about the challenges of read/write/print technology and the reliability of electronic equipment in the stop-and-start environment of the suburban bus; and

WHEREAS, combining his hard-earned wisdom about the limitations of technology with his doctorate-level knowledge and his undergraduate background in computer science, Joel in the early 1990s transitioned to MTC's Advanced Systems Applications section, where he embraced the brave new world of Intelligent Transportation Systems; and

WHEREAS, Joel's position at the vanguard of ITS exploration led to deeper involvement with the Transportation Research Board as well as with the American Public Transportation Association, ITS California, ITS America, the International Standards Organization and the Society of Automotive Engineers, where he chaired the society's ITS Committee and helped guide an SAE partnership with the federal government to develop standards for ITS architecture, including travel data standards for the Bay Area's TravInfo program before its eventual evolution into the award-winning 511 system; and

WHEREAS, Joel also served as chair of a TRB subcommittee on ITS and an Institute of Transportation Engineers committee on ITS standards; as a member of ITS California's Board of Directors and chair of the organization's Advanced ITS Committee; and as a member of an APTA committee on Y2K readiness; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his ITS work, Joel's position in the Advanced Systems Applications section enmeshed him in myriad other operations-related activities, including establishment of the Bay Area's Freeway Service Patrol, during which time Joel's study of the Los Angeles metro area's earlier launch of an FSP convinced him of the advantages of contracting with private tow companies; and

WHEREAS, Joel in the early 21st century transitioned again to a newly created Administrative and Technical Services section, which after a few years grew so large that a separate Technology Services section was established, and for which Joel not only developed a comprehensive IT strategic plan but also undertook a review of the business processes and documentation methods used by every section of the agency; and

WHEREAS, amid his many and oft-changing work responsibilities, his frequent travel to professional conferences near and far, and his relentless pursuit of education, Joel also found time to get married, to be the devoted father of twin children, to oversee construction of a home in the Oakland Hills, and to maintain an ardent allegiance to his hometown Kansas City Chiefs as well as to the similarly transplanted Oakland Athletics and to the Golden State Warriors; and

WHEREAS, in a manner somewhat less common to the Bay Area than to the Midwest from which he originally hails, Joel is widely known for the car he drives: a blue 1970 Ford Mustang with an odometer now approaching 400,000 miles and windows adorned with decals that commemorate milestones in his life and those of his children; and

WHEREAS, when not burnishing the legend of his classic piece of Motor City muscle, Joel also enjoys the slower and quieter pleasures of mobility found by hiking the trails in regional parks near his home; and

WHEREAS, though Joel did once allow his son Adam to get lost in the halls of MTC's former offices in Oakland, Adam and his sister Sarah nonetheless share fond memories of being in their dad's office on sick days from school, when Joel would fashion a bed out of chairs, allowing an ailing child to nap or read, or to rise for some drawing on the whiteboard or to play with the collection of conference-swig coffee cups Joel had amassed, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the staff and commissioners of MTC congratulate Joel on his well-deserved retirement, acknowledge with regret his reluctance to stay in one place for an even half-century, and wish Joel and his family the long enjoyment of good health, new adventures on redwood-shaded trails, more miles on the Mustang, and more championship seasons for the A's, Warriors and Chiefs; and that the staff and commissioners also encourage Joel and his family to return to the Bay Area Metro Center when the time is appropriate to enjoy a proper in-person celebration of his remarkable career and a longevity record that likely never will be broken.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION



Alfredo Pedroza, Chair

The above resolution was approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission at a regular meeting of the Commission held in San Francisco, CA and at other remote locations, on April 28, 2021.