



May 7, 2021

Commissioner David Rabbitt, Chair
Programming & Allocations Committee
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

RE: Agenda Item 4b, Programming and Allocations Committee, May 12, 2021 – Proposed Principles for Distribution of Transit Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021

Dear Chair Rabbitt,

As the three transit agencies reporting service data to the Santa Rosa Urbanized Area, we support Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) efforts to organize distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. We agree with the proposed principles that it is now time to shift our focus toward the future and invest in restoration and reimagination of transit services for the new post-pandemic normal. We request MTC honor the Federal Urbanized Area apportionments and provide the Santa Rosa Urbanized Area funds to the systems that report their transit services into that area through the Federal Transit Administration's process.

The Santa Rosa Urbanized Area encompasses Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Sebastopol, Windsor, Healdsburg and other communities in Sonoma County. For our area's transit operators, providing service in this new post-pandemic normal includes an urgent need to hire new train and bus operators, something that requires assurances of multiple years of funding to successfully advance.

Through the COVID period, our agencies have reduced services and eliminated vacant positions resulting in the leanest workforce possible and only a limited ability to re-launch services without additional hiring. All of our services are essential and pre-pandemic our agencies' ridership was comprised of between 26% and 86% low income. During the pandemic we never ceased operations and continued to provide service to essential workers. Today, we are providing free rides to vaccination sites.

As we re-emerge from COVID, our communities have already begun requesting more frequent service on all of our systems – to support student travel and workers as they return to the work place, all while maintaining safe COVID protocols.

These ARPA funds are urgently needed in the coming three years to help prepare our systems and to provide these expanded services. Receiving our Santa Rosa Urbanized Area ARPA funds would allow us to hire sufficient numbers of operators, restore our financial ability to invest in our system's needs and provide proactive and creative transit services to support our communities as they re-establish themselves post-COVID. For Sonoma County, the work has already begun through the Sonoma County

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Transportation Authority's Future of Transit Ad Hoc Committee, which has set forth the goal of increasing transit ridership in Sonoma County by integrating local transit systems to enhance the customer experience and improve service quality, all while having a beneficial climate impact. These ARPA funds will help make this vision a reality.

Like all transit operators in the region, we are grateful for these Federal ARPA resources that will help us to begin pivoting our systems and services into a 'new normal,' post-pandemic transportation network for Sonoma County and the greater North Bay. We request MTC honor the Santa Rosa Urbanized Area apportionment to our three agencies and we look forward to continuing to work together to ensure our communities receive the robust, frequent and reliable transit services they need for a healthier future.

Sincerely,



Sean McGlynn
City Manager
City of Santa Rosa



Bryan Albee
Transit Systems Manager
Sonoma County Transit



Farhad Mansourian
General Manager
Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit
District (SMART)