

Date: June 28, 2023  
W.I.: 1111  
Referred by: Commission

ABSTRACT

Resolution No. 4589

Resolution of Appreciation for Peter Beeler upon his retirement from MTC after 40 years of service.

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RE: Resolution of Appreciation for Peter Beeler

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
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WHEREAS, Peter Beeler is retiring after 40 years of mostly uninterrupted and unflinching extraordinary service to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission as a graphic artist, photographer, cartographer, calligrapher, collaborator, typographer, tinkerer and mentor; and

WHEREAS, Peter started his MTC career as an intern in the summer of 1983, making him one of just two remaining staff members to have worked in the agency's original headquarters at the historic Claremont Hotel and Spa, though not one who joined the staff in time to have been afforded privileges at the landmark East Bay resort's pool, which later would become famous for a scene in the film "Mrs. Doubtfire;" and

WHEREAS, among Peter's initial assignments was a research project undertaken with the husband-and-wife graphic design team of Reineck & Reineck to verify information for the 1983-84 edition of the Regional Transit Guide, a soft-cover booklet that later evolved into the Getting There on Transit guide; and

WHEREAS, Peter's work on the Regional Transit Guide, coming as it did during the transition from the last throes of the typesetting era to the infancy of desktop publishing, led to assignments to design a new agency logo and letterhead in preparation for the Commission's 1984 move to the Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter in Oakland as well as logistics planning for the relocation of the agency graphics shop to the new facility; and

WHEREAS, after helping to guide the graphics shop's transition to its new quarters and while still working as a temporary employee, Peter became part of a tandem temp team with

graphic artist Michael Fram, precipitating a movement for MTC to formally establish a Graphics Department and to create a full-time position for which Peter ultimately was hired; and

WHEREAS, Peter shortly thereafter taught himself to work on the then-new Apple Macintosh to re-create transit guide maps and then adapted his growing Mac command to the layout of MTC's monthly *Transactions* publication while also gaining proficiency in Photoshop and Illustrator, and spearheading MTC's entry into digital mapmaking, gravitating in the mid-1990s toward the tools of Geographic Information Systems and eventually to MapPublisher, which links GIS files to Illustrator, enabling him to steadily bring more and more data into his maps; and

WHEREAS, because the photographer's instinct to shoot *all* the photos must be tempered by the archivist's task of cataloging those photos, Peter in the 1990s also began using Portfolio software to catalogue MTC visual assets, a capability that proved invaluable in the decades to come as Peter and his fellow Graphites managed the flow of thousands of images from scores of Bay Area transportation projects, including construction of the new East Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the new Carquinez and Benicia-Martinez bridges; and

WHEREAS, playing the roles of photographer, collector and distributor with equal aplomb, Peter, when dealing with a colleague's request to find a very particular photo of a project or event within his seemingly endless catalogue, never wavered from the challenge and always found the target of his search, even when given such abjectly unhelpful descriptions as, "It's the one with a guy wearing a black suit;" and

WHEREAS, with a distinguished UC Berkeley linguistics professor as his father and a German literature scholar as his mother, Peter grew up in a rarefied academic atmosphere with exposure to many languages and cultures, including those of California's Native American tribes, and his vast mental storehouse of information, keen sense of geography and expertise in vocabulary, grammar and spelling in several languages were his secret weapons in his unparalleled map-making and publication design; and

WHEREAS, unlike another legend of computers and design, Steve Jobs, Peter successfully navigated the rigorous path to graduation at Reed College, where he also mastered the nearly lost art of calligraphy, honed a clean sense of design that imbued every project he touched, and may even have acquired his Jobs-like sartorial style of a long-sleeved black T-shirt with jeans; and

WHEREAS, Peter's phenomenal gift for calligraphy is frequently found on the envelopes for birthday cards received by his colleagues in MTC's Legislation and Public Affairs section, with these recipients treasuring Peter's exquisite penmanship and cherishing the envelopes every bit as much as they do the cards and greetings inside; and

WHEREAS, upon learning of any vexing technical obstacle encountered by a member of the Graphics staff — or any other Mac-using agency colleague — Peter, with his deep knowledge of the Mac platform, would eagerly explore the issue like a fun puzzle, inevitably solving it in short order; and

WHEREAS, Peter is that rare breed of computer geek who also is an outdoorsman par excellence with an enduring enthusiasm for bicycling, backpacking and birding, and a preference for commuting by bicycle despite the plentiful potholes on the ride from his Berkeley home to MTC's offices in Oakland and later — with a transbay assist by ferry or bus — to the Bay Area Metro Center in San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, Peter documents his pedaling and perambulations about town and across the Sierra with his trusty Nikon, which he always carries at the ready in his backpack, and which he wields with total expertise, producing extraordinary images of nature, the built environment and people; and

WHEREAS, perhaps influenced by the iconic U.S. Geological Survey maps he relied on to explore California's mountain wilderness areas on his numerous hiking and backpacking trips, Peter's graphic design talents may have found their fullest expression in the creation of grand, archival-quality maps of the Bay Area, each as visually pleasing as it is reliably accurate, which

earned him recognition throughout the agency and beyond as MTC's consummate cartographer; and

WHEREAS, in addition to unrivaled artistry, accuracy, legibility and design skill, Peter brought to his digital mapping work an unusual talent for understanding the arcane and often bewildering jargon of MTC's various sections, enabling the Commission and its partners to document and advocate for countless transportation improvements and policy initiatives; and

WHEREAS, among Peter's myriad other talents is the ability to create unique and beautiful works of art to commemorate events as commonplace as the birth of a colleague's child or as extraordinary as the opening of a new toll bridge; and

WHEREAS, Peter is extravagantly generous with his time and expertise, endlessly curious about new technologies and eternally open to new design methods he might learn from others, a combination of traits that helped him encourage each member of the MTC Graphics team to capitalize on his or her unique talents while simultaneously exploring new trails; and

WHEREAS, Peter is one of just a small handful of MTC staff members to have traveled to Rapa Nui, the remote Pacific outpost formerly known as Easter Island; and

WHEREAS, attributable perhaps to decades of practicing yoga, Peter's aura of calm, as well as his inquisitiveness and sense of humor, leave others feeling a little lighter and happier after each interaction with him; and

WHEREAS, Peter's flexibility is unrivaled, be it in his mastery of downward dog in lunchtime yoga or his willingness to shift gears and make countless rounds of edits to documents, forever catching the errors of others yet never introducing any of his own, all the while maintaining his Zen-like demeanor and benevolence toward all beings even amid the tension and chaos that sometimes engulfs the hardworking Graphics team, and working long hours with grace and good will to meet deadlines; and

WHEREAS, his many talents and accomplishments notwithstanding, Peter is one of the humblest, mellowest, gentlest, kindest and most patient, caring and forgiving persons to have ever worked at MTC or walked the face of the Earth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the staff and commissioners of MTC thank Peter for his decades of service to the agency and to the people of the Bay Area; extend to Peter, his wife Yoko, his children Adam and Ayumi, and all the members of his far-flung family the very best wishes for a healthy, happy and well-deserved retirement bursting with books to satisfy his voracious appetite for reading; dashed with detours for pleasant peregrinations to places near and far; safe, serene and satisfying bike rides in Berkeley and beyond; bountiful and beautiful hikes; fabulous photos; fresh blueberries and an endless supply of other simple pleasures.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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Alfredo Pedroza, Chair

The above resolution was entered into by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission at a regular meeting of the Commission held in San Francisco, California, and at other remote locations, on June 28, 2023.