

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

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March 17, 2016
By E-Mail to
Rlwasaki@ccta.net

Dave Hudson, Chair
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
2999 Oak Road, Suite 100
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Re: Performance and Equity Evaluation of the Draft Transportation Expenditure Plan

Dear Chair Hudson and Board Members:

The Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund ("TRANSDEF") is a non-profit environmental group advocating for the regional perspective in the planning of transportation, land use and air quality. In the past few years, we have focused on reducing the impacts of transportation on climate change. We have participated in the EPAC because we recognize that Contra Costa County's transportation planning process is an important test case of whether a suburban county can transform itself in response to the dual challenges of catastrophic climate change and impending gridlock.

We wanted you to be aware of several inescapable conclusions from the Performance and Equity Evaluation of the Draft Transportation Expenditure Plan ("Evaluation"), before expending further time and effort on a sales tax plan.

First, your Board previously declared that it wanted a "transformative" tax plan. Table 3 on page 11 of the Evaluation offers conclusive proof that the Draft TEP is not a transformative plan. Neither of the alternatives produces any meaningful change from the conditions projected for 2040 without a sales tax.

Second, your two alternatives are similar enough in effect as to be indistinguishable. The differences fall within the travel demand model's margin of error. The purpose of alternatives is to give policymakers an understanding of the available range of options. These alternatives do not do that.

Third, your alternatives result in a substantial **increase** in GHG emissions, due to an increasing population and a stable VMT per capita. See the upper curve in Figure 1 on page 18 of the Evaluation. The legislative intent of SB 375 recognized that statewide measures alone were insufficient to achieve the 2050 target. It required local changes in transportation and land use patterns in order to **reduce** future local GHG emissions.

As can clearly be seen in Figure 1, the local increase prevents the combined statewide and local efforts from being on track to reach the 2050 target. It misses significantly. Staff calculated that closing that gap would require a last-minute 15% reduction in VMT/capita plus a 58% conversion of the fleet to electric vehicles. Given that information, it would be irresponsible to continue working on the draft TEP.

We note a striking disconnect between the 28% increase in population projected in Table 1 and the following statement:

At present, we do not know what specific strategies MTC will consider to meet the Governor's targets, but we do know that achieving the 80 percent [reduction] goal will require substantial increases in the share of zero emission vehicles as well as **additional reductions in VMT**. (pages 4-5.)

Table 7 shows Contra Costa producing a 28% increase in GHGs, resulting from a population growth-driven **increase in VMT**. Is CCTA actually expecting the other counties of the region to provide all the VMT reductions? That would be grossly unfair to the other counties of the region and state, exposing CCTA to legal challenge.

TRANSDEF cannot support a sales tax that would lock in an expenditure plan for decades that ignores the County's responsibilities to reduce climate emissions from its vehicular travel. It would be far less disruptive to implement a small VMT per capita reduction over several decades--to prevent population growth from increasing the total emissions--than to suddenly jam on the brakes in 2040.

Our message to your Board is that it is simply not possible to transplant the priorities and wish lists of the past into the present environment. It requires entirely new thinking. While we believe your staff understands this, they are operating under direction from your Board to proceed with, essentially, a rework of past plans. This approach is bound to fail, either at the polls or in the courts.

We urge you to shut down the TEP process and start intensive work on a Countywide Transportation Plan and DEIR. (Please note that we intentionally did not say DSEIR.) A great deal of thought, analysis, education and discussion will be needed before a truly transformative plan can achieve public support. We stand ready to assist in the transition to a more sustainable transportation system.

Sincerely,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn,
President