



7 April 2015

President Thomas Blalock and Members of the Board of Directors
San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District
Kaiser Center
Oakland CA

via email to boardofdirectors@bart.gov

Dear President Blalock and Directors:

One of the objectives of the Bay Area's long range Regional Transportation Plan, Plan Bay Area, is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. Effective and sustainable mass transit service is an important element in achieving this objective.

In November 2011, Professor Elizabeth Deakin of the University of California presented *BART State of Good Repair: Regional Impacts* to BART's Board of Directors. It was noted that not achieving and maintaining a state of good repair (SGR) has impacts for the Bay Area. Among them are "more frequent breakdowns," "loss of riders," "big hit on the regional economy" and "negative environmental impacts."

The report provided reactions from the Business Community if BART does not achieve a SGR: "hit on economy is not acceptable; but BART needs to show that it's a prudent steward of public funds, and must develop and advocate for a clear and sustainable plan for re-investment." Reactions from Environmentalists also were provided: "hit on environment is not acceptable; declining transit service would undermine state efforts to reduce pollution, greenhouse gas emissions."

More than three years have passed since the SGR presentation was made, and yet there is still no plan on how to pay for what is needed for BART to

achieve a SGR so that it does not “undermine state efforts to reduce pollution (and) greenhouse gas emissions.” The Federal Transit Administration is also very much interested in transit operators achieving a SGR. The current capital rehabilitation shortfall is about \$4 billion or more, we understand.

Earlier this year, the local press reported that several elected officials are pushing for a second transbay tube (see, for example, “Mayor Lee gets on board with proposal for 2nd BART tube,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 17). “Having a second BART tube isn’t optional,” said San Francisco Supervisor Scott Wiener in the same article.

Also noted in the press recently are service disruptions due to breakdowns (eg, “Major BART delays eastbound through Transbay Tube,” San Francisco Chronicle, February 5. “BART commuters trying to get to the East Bay from San Francisco were suffering through major delays as the system recovered from an equipment problem....”

Two months ago, at a meeting in Hayward, Director John McPartland made a presentation on BART’s future. System rehabilitation needs were not emphasized in the presentation materials, to our disappointment.

This week, the San Francisco Chronicle ran a lengthy article about system deterioration, “BART’s track trouble can’t be ignored.” This paragraph catches the eye: “One member of BART’s Board of Directors, who asked not to be named for fear of upsetting management, said the agency faces an ‘awful dilemma’ about how much information to disclose about the extent of its safety issues.”

Matier & Ross go on to note, “In BART’s case, the emphasis on expanding the system...has come at the expense of maintenance to its core lines.” Further, a news broadcast on radio station KCBS this weekend noted the average lifespan for track infrastructure now being rehabilitated on the Fremont line is 25 years—which BART has not addressed for more than the past 15 years.

The Sierra Club encourages BART’s Board of Directors to come together and agree on a reasonable plan to achieve a SGR—one which does not harm other transit operators—and not be distracted by considering yet more costly expansions, including a second transbay tube.

We also note that Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are a key to whether or not Plan Bay Area itself will be successful in leading to a reduction in driving and greenhouse gas emissions. Several BART stations are located in

PDA's, and the transit service must be made more effective, reliable and sustainable than it is at present.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Matt Williams of the Sierra Club at mwillia@mac.com.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Evans
Executive Committee Chair
San Francisco Bay Chapter



Michael J. Ferreira
Conservation Committee Chair
Loma Prieta Chapter

cc: Mayor Edwin Lee
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Association of Bay Area Governments
Federal Transit Administration Region IX