

The Board of Supervisors

County Administration Building
651 Pine Street, Room 106
Martinez, California 94553

John Gioia, 1st District
Candace Andersen, 2nd District
Mary N. Piepho, 3rd District
Karen Mitchoff, 4th District
Federal D. Glover, 5th District

Contra Costa County



David Twa
Clerk of the Board
and
County Administrator
(925) 335-1900

~~September 23, 2014~~ October 7, 2014

Kevin Romick, Chair
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
2999 Oak Road, Suite 100
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Subject: 2014 Countywide Transportation Plan Update

Dear Chair Romick:

On September 23, 2014, the Board of Supervisors authorized the Chair to transmit comments on the 2014 update to the Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP). We understand that the CTP is intended to guide the development of the transportation system for the next 25 years. We also understand that this update will result in a list of projects and programs intended to respond to growing population, increasing maintenance demands, and shifting priorities.

As an overall comment, the Board of Supervisors would like to thank the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (Authority) for the substantial effort put in to the draft CTP. The CTP raises numerous contemporary issues which should facilitate a productive discussion about our future.

The comment letter is comprised of three sections, broad discussion on priorities, chapter by chapter comments, and an attached, Public Review Draft Volume 3: Comprehensive Transportation Project List with comments embedded.

PRIORITIES

Increased Local Road Funding Needs: Maintenance, Complete Streets, Storm Water Requirements

Nationally, there is a well-documented, growing need to address our aging infrastructure. On the local level it is no different; we are straining to maintain adequate pavement conditions while being required to be compliant with new water quality, complete streets, and greenhouse gas reduction statutes and initiatives. **While the need for adequate maintenance funding is mentioned throughout the document, the scale of the issue warrants a much more prominent discussion in the CTP, particularly given the discussion of new revenue sources.**

Transit Service Improvements

There is increasing pressure to improve transit service due, in part, to new state statutes. As called out in the CTP, our maturing transportation network and land use patterns are at the point where we are facing diminishing returns on roadway capacity increases. In this light transit investments may be more attractive. Transit agencies in Contra Costa County are likely to need additional resources to respond to this increase in demand for service and the draft CTP acknowledges the unfunded demand. More specific comments:

- With **conventional fixed route service**, a number of potential mitigation measures proposed by the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in their efforts to implement SB 743 (2013) relate to improved transit service. As acknowledged in the CTP, SB 743 eliminated congestion based transportation impact measures (level of service/LOS) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A proposed alternative metric, likely to be Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), is intended to better reduce greenhouse gas production. However, in Contra Costa, our local policies compel us to continue using LOS **in addition to** the new impact measures imposed by the state. In order to offset any potential drag on development activity caused by multiple mitigation measures, the Board of Supervisors requests that the Authority explore the possibility of using any expansion of bus service or bus service funding to establish a transit mitigation bank or programmatic VMT mitigation for member agencies.

The Board of Supervisors continues to be committed to the policy of having development pay for any facilities required to meet the demands resulting from growth. However, subjecting applicants to the full cost of both LOS and VMT analysis and mitigation may inappropriately constrain needed economic development activities.

- **Paratransit** service for the elderly and people with disabilities, in addition to requiring additional funding, will also require fundamental administrative changes if 1) the Authority is to respond adequately to the projected demand for

service, and 2) expect that response to be cost-effective. In addition to the oft-cited demographic changes (aging population), the impact on travel demand for this portion of our constituency is likely to be further magnified by the consolidation of medical services and new health trends. The inclusion of these significant challenges would improve the “*new challenges*”, “*challenges ahead*” sections of the CTP.

- The Board of Supervisors is aware of the Authority’s efforts to implement the Mobility Management Plan (MMP) which could improve coordination and operating efficiencies of multiple transportation providers. We understand that progress is being made and applaud the efforts of Authority staff in navigating this complex issue. While we recognize that the MMP is mentioned in the Action Plan section of the CTP, given the countywide implications of the MMP a detailed discussion may be warranted in a more prominent place in the document.

Surveys conducted in the beginning of the CTP indicated that the Authority should be “more aspirational” in its undertakings. The implementation of a coordinated, countywide mobility management program would be responsive to that direction.

Safe Routes to School (SR2S) Program

The Authority’s Safe Routes to School Master Plan Task Force assisted with the development of a needs assessment to estimate the cost of SR2S projects and programs. The Board of Supervisors thanks the Authority for their leadership on this effort and we look forward to the findings and recommendations being implemented.

In order to make better use of past and future SR2S investments, we encourage the Authority to capitalize on one particular finding in the 2011 survey conducted early in the Master Plan effort. The survey established that the most consistent reason cited by parents and school administrators for K-12 students not walking and bicycling to school is related to traffic, either “*driver behavior*” or “*driving too fast*”. This finding is consistent with statewide and national survey results.

The County has developed a 2015 legislative proposal to enhance school zones through expansion and increased fines. We have met with our legislative delegation on our proposal. The members were supportive of the concept and offered assistance. The County is in the process of securing support from other agencies and we are formally requesting the Authority support in this effort. The goal of the legislation, in combination with existing projects and program, is to assist in reversing the well-known low walk and bike rates to and from K-12 school. This may be another area

where the Authority could be responsive to the “more aspirational” findings in the surveys.

Major Projects & Emerging Planning Initiatives

A comprehensive response on project priorities can be seen in the attached list. This list includes the Board of Supervisors high priority projects including, but not limited to, TriLink (SR239), North Richmond Truck Route, I-680 HOV Gap Closure, Iron Horse/Lafayette-Moraga Trail Connector, Kirker Pass Road Truck Climbing Lane, Vasco Road Safety Improvements, and Northern Waterfront Goods Movement Infrastructure Projects.

In addition to these projects, the Board of Supervisors requests continued Authority advocacy and funding for activities supportive of economic development in areas of the County where such investment is needed and desired by local communities. For instance, this support could fund activities within Priority Development Area (PDAs) and as part of the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative. We are supportive of CTP actions that include planning and implementation funding for transportation projects and programs, infrastructure improvements and other expenditures that facilitate needed economic development. Such investment will help balance jobs and housing and make more efficient use of our transportation infrastructure. The Board of Supervisors considers these efforts as integral to the continued growth of our region and economy.

CHAPTER COMMENTS

Executive Summary

Page ES-3

The telecommuting information is informative; the document would benefit from other relevant changes in commute patterns listed. Nationwide, bicycle commuting has doubled in a shorter time frame than telecommuting and the Authority has more direct responsibility to facilitate further growth in this area.

Page ES-13

Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Board of Supervisors thanks the Authority for their tireless engagement with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments on the process to implement SB375. In particular, we encourage continued advocacy for additional resources and consideration for subareas that accommodate a substantial amount of planned growth-. For the benefit of our constituents, MTC, and the State, it may be useful to point out in the CTP that our planned growth is, and has been for some time, well-managed not through state or regional mandate but through a

voter-approved Urban Limit Line and Growth Management Program. continues in the future.

Pages ES-1~~1~~-14

The information on SB 375 (2008) in the document is useful given the land use and transportation emphasis in the legislation. However, we believe that additional focus on AB 32 (2006), in particular the Cap-and-Trade Program, should be included in the CTP. This information could better position the County to receive Program revenues. At a minimum, the relationship between the “transformative” transit investments contemplated in the CTP and the “Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities” and “Transit and Intercity Rail Capital” Cap-and-Trade programs should be strengthened.

Prior to contemplating a new transportation sales tax, we believe all other funding opportunities should be examined and maximized to the extent possible in the CTP.

As indicated earlier in this letter and acknowledged later in the CTP, SB 743 (2013) is likely to substantially influence how agencies can 1) claim exemption from CEQA and 2) how we will analyze and mitigate the transportation impacts for development. While implementation policies are still being developed by the State; some mention of the issue in the Executive Summary is warranted considering the potential impact on member jurisdictions and the development community.

At this time, focus on SB 743 issues is being directed at the State. This is understandable given that implementation strategies are currently being developed. However, once the State’s work is finished, focus will shift to local jurisdictions who are ultimately responsible for analyzing and mitigating for VMT. As mentioned earlier in this letter, additional attention should be given to potential mitigation strategies. This would be valuable to both your member agencies and the development community.

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the Authority’s efforts to engage the State on this critical issue.

Page ES-20

Regarding the need to “renew the sales tax measure”, prior to establishing this need in policy we ask that the Authority conduct additional outreach ~~out~~ to all member jurisdictions, including all members of the Board Supervisors. As you are aware, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors has diverse obligations which vary

substantially throughout Supervisorial Districts. In considering whether to support such a measure the Board of Supervisors would consider factors such as possible conflicts with other public finance priorities, and the need for additional transportation funding.

Introduction

Page I-15

This section discusses auto-ownership rates and age distribution in the context of demographics. Mention of the increase in the elderly segment portion of the population, and the impact on transportation needs, would serve to make the demographics discussion more useful in the context of the CTP.

Figure 3-1: Roadway Action Plan Projects and Programs

The park/open space data used to compile this figure (and other Figures with the same data) is outdated. It is important that the most current dataset is used so that the status of preserved lands relative to planned improvements is understood. This will help avoid conflicts between transportation planning and conservation efforts. Notably, conserved land data is missing from areas around Vasco Road, the Byron Airport, and along Kirker Pass Road south of the City of Pittsburg. A current dataset can be obtained from East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy.

As I am sure you are aware, many critical transportation projects have received streamlined permitting as a result of this program including Vasco Road Widening, SR-4/S-160 Connectors, Deer Valley Road safety shoulders, eBART, State Route 4 between Lone Tree and San Jose Avenue (including Sand Creek Interchange), and State Route 4 medians and Shoulders from Discovery Bay to Byron Highway.

Vision, Goals and Strategy

Page I-28

The Board of Supervisors supports the approach described in the *"Finding the Right Balance"* section. The approach of *"Recognizing the differing needs and situations of Contra Costa's subareas..."* has worked well in this diverse County in the past. We expect it to continue to be successful well in the future.

Page I-29

Goal 1: Movement of people

With respect to the language in the first Goal, *"...all available travel modes..."*, the subsequently listed Strategies would be more representative of all modes, and more

consistent with Goal 3, if non-motorized facilities were to be addressed in a manner similar to the road system.

For example, *“Define and close gaps in the Countywide and Regional Bikeway Network, including gaps in Class I and major off-street paths”*. In addition, this change would improve internal consistency, in the *“Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities”* section the following action is highlighted, *“Close gaps in the regional trail system...”*

Goal 1: Movement of Goods

Consistent with Authority support for, and assistance with the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative, please include the following language, *“Identify new strategies to improve freight movement on freeways, waterways and rail lines to improve air quality and the safety and efficiency of goods movement”*.

Page I-32

The discussion regarding *“Maintaining the transportation system”* would be more informative and complete if new requirements, often required to be implemented concurrent with maintenance projects, were described in this section. Complete streets and water quality requirements can result in substantially increased maintenance costs.

Page I-36

“Our ability to expand the roadway system is extremely limited”: In addition to the barriers to roadway expansion listed in this section (limited right-of-way, noise, air pollution, etc.), please include *“expanding maintenance obligations”*.

Page I-41

Transit, Including Buses, Rail, Paratransit, and Ferries

As indicated in the Priorities section above, some mention of Authority leadership on the implementation of the MMP would be informative in this section.

Page I-51

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

This section may benefit from a review by the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CBPAC) who could assist in finding solutions to the numerous barriers to improving non-motorized transportation identified in the CTP.

The barriers to increased walking and cycling identified in the CTP are not unique to Contra Costa. These barriers can be addressed through a methodical planning and investment response. The 2009 Update to MTC's Regional Bicycle Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area indicates that Contra Costa County is tied with Solano County for the lowest rate of bicycle commuters. A strategic approach to address identified barriers and improve that ranking may be another "aspirational program". As indicated in the draft CTP, the County has numerous attributes that we could capitalize on, excellent climate, favorable topography, an excellent multi-use path network, and second only to Alameda County in terms of numbers of BART stations.

On a related note, the Authority may wish to consider combining the Safe Routes to School Master Plan Task Force with the CBPAC to form an "Active Transportation Working Group". The subject matter addressed by the committees is similar and combining the committees may result in a critical mass of issues to address that would ideally lead to regular consultation.

Page I-61

Facilities for Goods Movement

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the Authority's assistance with the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative. Considering the initiative addresses goods movement infrastructure including maritime, rail, and highway projects, some mention of the Northern Waterfront effort would strengthen this section.

Page I-65

The Board of Supervisors welcomes the description of the Comprehensive Transportation Project List (CTPL) as "evolving". As subregional and local priorities change and we are required to respond to changing policies it is essential that we are afforded the flexibility of "living document".

Page 1-105

Implementation

The comments in this letter suggest possible changes to activities listed in the Implementation section including, but not limited to, 1) addition of state policy advocacy, and 2) updates to other Measure J implementation documents as suggested at the Technical Coordinating Committee, (Technical Procedures Manual, Measure J Growth Management Implementation Guide, etc).

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the outreach of the Authority Board and its staff to obtain comments on the Draft CTP Update and we look forward to additional dialog on this effort.

Sincerely,

Karen Mitchoff, Chair
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, District IV

C:

Candace Andersen, Chair – SWAT
Mark Ross, Chair – TRANSPAC
Salvatore Evola, Chair, TRANSPLAN
Janet Abelson, Chair - WCCTAC

Attachments:

File: Transportation > Transportation > Committees > CCTA > CCTA Board of Directors

File: Transportation > Projects > CCTA > CTP 2014-15

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