

**STATEMENT OF**  
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**METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**UNITED STATES HOUSE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**COMMITTEE**  
**MARCH 13, 2019**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Good morning. My name is Therese McMillan. I am the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the federally-designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. In that role, we not only conduct long-range planning and project prioritization for the Bay Area's 7 million residents, we also are the recipient of Federal Transit Administration formula and Federal Highway Administration funds.

- Put simply, a strong federal role in our nation's multimodal transportation system has been essential for the entirety of our nation's history. It is a core federal responsibility. But transportation is not just about moving people and goods around. It is about access to opportunity and quality of life and we believe it is time for the federal government to do more, much more.
- We at MTC and the nation's other MPOs look forward to working with you to reauthorize the FAST Act — to strengthen our economy, to create new opportunities for well-paying jobs that can rebuild our nation's ailing transportation infrastructure, while continually striving to make travel both safer and more reliable within and across all of the nation's diverse communities.

#### BAY AREA PERSPECTIVE

- With hundreds of miles of interstate freeway and rail lines, thousands of buses and rail cars, three international airports, a major West Coast seaport and a freight railhead that serves both urban and rural America, the Bay Area serves as a complex, multimodal hub, as well as a destination.

The local/state/federal partnership model enshrined in the FAST Act is a model that works. In the Bay Area, our local commitment to this model includes over \$1.5 billion annually of sales tax and toll dollars dedicated to our multi-modal transportation system — all voter-approved. Even still, our residents recognize that

more needs to be done, as they continue to experience daily our congested roadways, and increasingly aging and crowded transit systems.

- In 2017 our state legislature committed to holding up its end of the partnership bargain, voting by a two-thirds majority a historic transportation funding package comprised of a wide array of user fees that generates over \$5 billion annually. These funds are solely dedicated to rebuilding and improving California's streets, highways and bridges, and public transit systems. The cornerstone of the bill was restoring the gas tax to its purchasing power in 1994 and indexing it into the future.

## CASE FOR A BIGGER FEDERAL PROGRAM/

### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANTS

- Providing for continued growth in the U.S. economy demands a much larger federal commitment to the local-state-federal partnership. As a member of the family of MPO's, we especially call upon Congress to expand the share of funds that are invested in the nation's metropolitan areas, the engines of our nation's economy. Two programs in particular have been vital to MTC's ability to create solutions to challenges we face at the local level. Specifically, the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, which we continue to call STP, and the

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality – or CMAQ program, enable the flexibility that creative solutions demand across very different communities. As an example, in the Bay Area we are now using this flexibility to direct STP and CMAQ dollars to cities and counties as an incentive to build more housing at or near existing transit stops and other transportation services. This strategy leverages federal funds by enhancing significantly a project’s mobility and access benefits, encouraging those who can now live closer to transit to *use* it--which in turn help curbs congestion and reduces longer auto trips and carbon emissions.

- Importantly, the STP and CMAQ programs deliver funds to an array of projects that improve people’s lives at a very local level— giving taxpayers more confidence and certainty about how federal money is being spent and invested in their communities. This combination of flexibility and accountability is the right way to meet the challenges before us now, and to adapt to the uncertain and rapid change we anticipate ahead.
- Therefore, we urge you to invest more funds in STP — and to directly allocate these block grants to MPOs nationwide so that residents living outside of California –where suballocation is provided for in state law – can benefit from projects selected at the regional level, consistent with the priorities developed in the regional transportation plans. In addition, we would ask you to restore the local distributed share of STP to its historic level of 62.5 percent, if not higher. Directing

more dollars to metropolitan areas serves all our interests. The Bay Area and other metro areas continue to drive national economic output, and it is in these areas where new innovations are most often made, and where new technologies are being developed and deployed.

## CHANGE IS COMING

- As we look to the future, the field of transportation may be poised to undergo as much change in the next decade as it has at any time since the dawn of the automotive age. For those of us who have been in the transportation field our entire career, the pace of change is astounding. Overnight, cities find their streets and sidewalks teeming with new e-bikes or e-scooters deployed by the latest shared mobility start-up. In my home in the San Francisco Bay Area we are seeing these changes up close, with the likes of Tesla, Uber, Lyft, Google's Waymo, Apple Car, Cruise Automation and dozens more. And as with all technological breakthroughs, there are risks as well as benefits. Building the highway and communications platform necessary for a connected and autonomous future is a fundamental federal responsibility we would urge this committee to embrace.
- In addition to technological change, we are preparing ourselves in the region to be more resilient in the face of a changing climate, and in particular, sea level rise. One visible local example is State Highway 37, which travels through Marin,

Solano, Napa, and Sonoma counties. This 20-mile corridor is regularly backed up with traffic and too often shut down due to flooding during the winter season, including twice in the last few weeks. What's more, it is also highly vulnerable to complete inundation due to sea level rise 30 years from now. Improvements for the projects are designed to provide ecological enhancements up front in tandem with reducing the roadway flooding vulnerability.

As this committee considers the future of the federal transportation program, I would encourage you to prioritize projects like this that will help communities across the nation adapt to a changing climate.

- In conclusion, Madame Chair and Committee members, America's diverse metropolitan areas are primed to tackle the myriad mobility and related access challenges of the future- be they technical, financial, environmental or societal in nature. We ask for a strong federal partnership to help support the solutions required to address them— and in doing so, to seize the opportunities in this country that should extend to all of its people.

Thank you