



April 28, 2017

Melissa Reggiardo
Principal Planner
San Mateo County Transit District

RE: Multi-use Trail in Dumbarton Transportation Corridor Study

Dear Ms. Reggiardo,

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned groups and their thousands of Silicon Valley members who would benefit greatly from public use of the Dumbarton Corridor. We appreciate the effort of Samtrans and the study partners, SMCTA, AC Transit, ACTC, and Facebook to improve transportation options on this corridor. The Dumbarton Rail corridor is a valuable right of way cutting through multiple communities and linking to regional transit and the East Bay via Dumbarton Bridge and would be well-served by a multi-use trail for short trips. These comments provide information for the analysis of alternatives for the approach to Dumbarton Bridge and strongly support the inclusion of a multi-use trail for people biking and walking on the Dumbarton rail spur from Redwood City to the Dumbarton Bridge adjacent to transit.

According to Samtrans, the project has four main goals. Not only would a multi-use trail on this corridor meet all of those goals, but the goals themselves make the case for a multiuse trail. This letter sets out data to support these claims.

1. Enhance mobility
2. Create cost effective improvements
3. Minimize environmental impacts, financial risk, and maximize safety
4. Ensure local communities are protected from adverse impacts

Why a multi-use trail?

For people traveling from the East Bay, a transit option across the Dumbarton Bridge to downtown Redwood City and destinations in between would be very effective to reduce congestion. However, for shorter trips, it is important to provide the option to bike and walk on this corridor as well. We feel confident that these two needs can be served by a transit option parallel to a multi-use trail on the Dumbarton right of way.

Currently there are several disconnected bike routes in the vicinity of this corridor. The Bay Trail has gaps; Middlefield Road and Bay Road have inconsistent bike lanes; and it is intimidating

and unsafe to cross Highway 101 at Willow Road, Marsh Road, and Woodside Road. Creating a multi-use trail on the Dumbarton Corridor would provide a much-needed shortcut bypassing these barriers. In addition, the trail would provide a new transportation option for people living in historically disadvantaged communities.

Note, the *Silicon Valley Bike Vision* report,¹ released in early 2017, provides a good summary of research on the health, safety, environmental, economic, and social equity benefits of bicycling (pg. 5-15).

Enhance Mobility

High quality bike facilities, like multi-use trails and separated bike lanes, have been shown to increase ridership. In the Bay Area, destinations that promote bicycling and provide safe routes to reach them experience a higher rate of people biking compared to other places. A multi-use trail on the Dumbarton right of way would connect key residential and employment areas as well as transportation hubs. In addition, this trail would provide a new, more direct, and safer route in place of the current disconnected bikeways.

It is well documented that “if you build it (bike facilities), they (people biking) will come,” especially facilities separated from car traffic. In the two U.S. cities that first started building modern protected bike lanes, New York and Washington D.C., bike commuting doubled from 2008 to 2013.² The average protected bike lane sees bike counts increase 75 percent in its first year alone.³

Multi-use trails in Palo Alto, Mountain View, and San Jose also see very high bike and pedestrian counts. For example, average daily counts of bicyclists conducted by Google on the Stevens Creek Trail are as high as 1,700. The City of San Jose conducts annual counts of trail users in September. The Guadalupe River Trail at Coleman Avenue had 1,269 users in 2016, a 30% increase from the prior year and a continual increase since the first year of counts (less than 300 people counted in 2007). Similarly, Los Gatos Creek Trail at Hamilton Avenue had 1,380 users in 2016, a 21% increase from the previous year.

In addition, places like Stanford and Google, which promote bicycling and invest in high quality bike infrastructure to and on their campuses, have very high bike mode share. About 17.5% of Stanford University commuters use a bike.⁴ Almost 9% of all Google employees working at the Mountain View offices bike to work and that number jumps to 21% when considering employees

¹ Joint Venture Silicon Valley and Silicon Valley bicycle Coalition, *Silicon Valley Bike Vision*, <http://jointventure.org/images/stories/pdf/2017-02-bike-vision.pdf>.

² Michael Andersen, “NYC and DC, protected lane pioneers, just doubled biking rates in 4 years,” *People for Bikes*, <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/nyc-and-dc-protected-lane-pioneers-just-doubled-biking-rates-in-4-years>.

³ Michael Andersen, “The Protected Bike Lane Ridership Bump (City by City),” *People for Bikes*, <http://www.peopleforbikes.org/blog/entry/everywhere-they-appear-protected-bike-lanes-seem-to-attract-riders>.

⁴ Stanford University, “Review—2015 Stanford Bike Safety Program,” *Stanford Parking & Transportation Services*, https://transportation-forms.stanford.edu/pdf/BFU_Program_Presentation.pdf (Accessed April 27, 2017).

who live within nine miles of work.⁵

Cost Effectiveness

All the modes being considered for this corridor (rail, bus rapid transit, and active transportation) are cost effective when compared to the enormous cost of building and expanding urban roadways. Combining one of the proposed transit modes with a multi-use trail is the most cost effective way of accommodating large numbers of travelers and diverse types of trips.

A paved multi-use trail costs an average of \$500,000 per mile (depending on project details).⁶ Transit, both buses and commuter rails, have an average cost in the \$10s of million per mile.^{7, 8}

In contrast, urban highways are \$100 million per mile or more.⁹

Minimize environmental impacts, financial risk and maximize safety

A multi-use trail on this corridor would have a minimal environmental impact. Reference the Silicon Valley Bike Vision to see how increased biking benefits the environment (page 9). In addition, this trail could help the region meet statewide carbon reduction goals mandated by AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 and SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which set regional targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A Dumbarton multi-use trail would reduce vehicle miles traveled and single-occupancy vehicle trips while increasing active transportation through bicycling and walking, helping local cities and companies to meet their mode share goals.

In addition, trails adjacent to rail or other transit are becoming more common and are overall very safe. In 2014, there were nearly 1,400 miles of multiuse trails next to active rail lines. Of these, nearly 60 percent of existing trails are within 30 feet of the tracks, at least 70 percent of them have physical barriers separating them from the tracks.¹⁰ A study of rails-with-trails found only one fatality in twenty years (1992-2012) on such a facility.¹¹

Local Communities Protected From Adverse Impacts

A multi-use trail would provide opportunities for recreation and transportation for the residents in

⁵ Google, "Google Bike Vision Plan," *Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition*,

https://bikesiliconvalley.org/wp-content/uploads/Google-Bike-Vision-Plan_high_res.pdf.

⁶ Max A. Bushell et al., "Costs for Pedestrian and Bicyclist Infrastructure Improvements," *UNC Highway Safety Research Center*,

http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/Countermeasure%20Costs_Report_Nov2013.pdf.

⁷ Government Accountability Office, "Bus Rapid Transit Shows Promise", GAO,

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d01984.pdf>.

⁸ Reconnecting America, "Transit Technologies Worksheet," *Reconnecting American*,

<http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/bestpractice175.pdf>.

⁹ Joe Cortright, "The True Cost of Driving," *The Atlantic*,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/10/driving-true-costs/412237/>

¹⁰ Tanya Snyder, "Why It Makes Sense to Add Biking and Walking Routes Along Active Rail Lines," *Streetsblog USA*,

<http://usa.streetsblog.org/2014/08/18/why-it-makes-sense-to-add-biking-and-walking-routes-along-active-rail-lines/>.

¹¹ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, "America's Rails-with-Trails,"

<https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=2982>

the area, improving health and connectivity. The Dumbarton rail spur runs through several of Metropolitan Transportation Commission's defined *Communities of Concern* in San Mateo County: North Fair Oaks, Belle Haven, and communities in East Palo Alto. It is critical that the improvements made to this corridor positively impact the people living there and that it is not simply a corridor for commuters passing through. Households earning less than \$20,000 per year are roughly twice as likely to bike for transportation as all other income groups¹² and those with low incomes in the area would benefit from this trail.

Research shows that people living near multiuse trails experience health benefits. People living within a half-mile of a bike path are at least 20% more likely to bicycle at least once a week, compared to people living slightly farther away from the path.¹³ People who live near multi-use trails are 50% more likely to meet physical activity guidelines and 73-80% more likely to bicycle.¹⁴ Multi-use trails have also been shown to be particularly beneficial in promoting physical activity among women and people in lower-income areas.¹⁵

We note that there is potential for fossil fuel powered transit along this corridor, which could create very serious health and equity impacts. We hope and expect to see any transit developed along this corridor to utilize quiet electric, or zero carbon drive trains.

Summary

A multi-use trail on the Dumbarton corridor would have myriad benefits for mobility, the environment, safety, and health and would be relatively inexpensive to implement. We are confident that the near-term development of a multi-use trail would provide critically needed transportation alternatives along this extremely congested corridor, while allowing for the future addition of parallel transit within the same corridor. We urge you to ensure that a bicycle and pedestrian trail is included in the plan for the Dumbarton corridor, benefitting generations to come.

Sincerely,

¹² PeopleForBikes, "US Bicycling Participation Benchmarking Report,"

<http://www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/u.s.-bicycling-participation-benchmarking-report>.

¹³ J Pucher et al., "Infrastructure, Programs and Policies to Increase Bicycling," *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19765610>.

¹⁴ Huston et al., Pierce et al., and Moudon et al., "Active Transportation: Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity," *Active Living Research research brief*, http://activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR_Brief_ActiveTransportation_0.pdf.

¹⁵ R. Brownson et al., "Promoting physical activity in rural communities: Walking trails access, use, and effects," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10722990>.

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