



November 10, 2008

EPW Hearing on the Highway, Transit and Highway Safety Bill held at SANDAG on November 14, 2008

Honorable Senator Barbara Boxer
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Dear Senator Boxer and Committee:

My name is Reed Vickerman, Chair of Move San Diego. Move San Diego was formed four years ago in a unique alliance between the business and environmental communities to improve regional quality of life through the advocacy of smart, sustainable development, transit and transportation infrastructure in our region.

We are at a critical point in the history of transportation the United States. Our carbon-based economy is in decline. Goals for mitigating climate change, such as California's AB 32, dwindling oil supplies, a global recession, the desire to invest in infrastructure for economic stimulus, the need to repair neglected capital investments, and a likely shift to new energy sources all point to the end of the single-passenger, internal combustion automobile-filled freeway, that has characterized Southern California for nearly 100 years. It is not a question of if, but when, transit usage will increase.

In California, long in love with cars, the increase in transit use is complicated by the lack of transit network access and connectivity, a poor customer experience and uncompetitive commute times. Dramatic funding cuts to the local transit agencies in the past two years (over \$100M) have severely curtailed services, increased fares and further deferred capital investment. At the very time we need transit most, with record gas prices and transit demand, availability and funding are in decline.

Local transit ridership this past summer, during the peak gas prices, rose by double digits while fares have also increased by the double digits. This inelastic demand is an indication of the enthusiasm for solutions. The recent passage of Prop 1A (California High Speed Rail) proves, the public is ready for transit alternatives and willing to fund them. Market research has shown that two-thirds of San Diego drivers would shift to transit if the network met their needs. Even those who cannot, or will not, use transit, will benefit from the greater use of transit as traffic on busy roads is relieved and goods movement is enabled.

The economic cost of inaction in this area is huge. We can not build our way out of current and projected highway congestion. More lanes on the highways encourage more cars. "Managed lanes" are not a substitute for a robust transit system. Interstate 5 is only 40 years old and already we have over a dozen lanes in many areas. How wide can a highway grow before there is no longer an adjacent community left to serve?

Move San Diego recently completed a study which calculated a \$3.5B "green dividend" for the region by reducing automobile commute times just to the national average. Additional savings, both economic and environmental, would be achieved if shorter commutes could be accomplished by a substantial increase in transit use.

Transit spending has an additional economic benefit that a higher percentage of transportation costs stay locally rather than being sent overseas for imported oil and automobiles. Transit jobs are the ultimate "green collar" jobs as they are imbedded in the local economy. Transit construction jobs are roughly equivalent to highway construction jobs as a one-time stimulus.

As a business person, I am amazed at how many people, when considering the cost of transit fares or transit infrastructure; compare these costs to driving on the highway "for free." Not only do they neglect to fully calculate the cost of driving their vehicles, they ignore the public expenditure to build and maintain the roads, and underestimate the climate impact costs. We need to take into account the fully-loaded cost of transportation alternatives and recognize that head-to-head, over the long-term, transit comes out ahead for individuals and for society.

Now is the time to act. Now is the time to break from past patterns and misperceptions. Now is the time to invest our diminishing resources to the highest and best use. Now is the time to commit to transit as the only solution economically, environmentally, socially and sustainably for the future.

Respectively submitted,



Reed Vickerman
Chair, Move San Diego