

May 19, 2021

Mr. David Kim, Secretary  
California State Transportation Agency  
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B  
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Comments by the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority/San Bernardino Council of Governments on the draft Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure

Dear Secretary Kim:

The San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) and the San Bernardino Council of Governments (SBCOG) appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) prepared by the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA). San Bernardino County is the largest county geographically in the continental United States (over 20,000 square miles) and is home to approximately 2.2 million residents. SBCTA/SBCOG represent 24 cities and the County of San Bernardino, with a Board of 29 local jurisdiction elected representatives.

The draft CAPTI has been very professionally prepared, and covers a number of topics that are important to the state and to San Bernardino County. We appreciate the working relationship we have had with CalSTA over many years and trust that these comments will be helpful as we seek to implement a world-class transportation system that promotes environmental and economic sustainability and equity for all of our residents.

Our comments can be classified into three general themes:

- A summary of SBCTA/SBCOG sustainability initiatives over the last several years
- Overall perspectives on CAPTI
- Comments on specific CAPTI sections and strategies

### **SBCTA/SBCOG SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES**

Before we get into specific comments on the draft CAPTI, it is important to recognize that SBCTA/SBCOG and our local partners (transit agencies and local jurisdictions) are proactively pursuing sustainability initiatives throughout San Bernardino County. These activities represent important contributions and a commitment to sustainability region-wide, and we thought it would be appropriate to highlight some of these in our comment letter.

The San Bernardino Countywide Vision is a centerpiece of our sustainability activities. The Vision is very consistent with the direction of the draft CAPTI and has given San Bernardino County an important foundation for the activities that have been undertaken since

that time. An Equity Element was added to the vision in 2020, and is in the process of being implemented.

In brief, the following are recent and ongoing sustainability initiatives of SBCTA and SBCOG:

- Transit investments – Over \$600 million is being invested in high-capacity transit infrastructure over a 10-year period, an extraordinary investment for a county generally thought to be suburban.
- Part of this investment is the Redlands Passenger Rail Project. This is a 9-mile rail line between Redlands and downtown San Bernardino, to be operational in 2022, using self-propelled trainsets. As part of this project, SBCTA has received a \$30 million grant from CalSTA to implement a zero-emission passenger rail trainset, a first in North America.
- Aside from funding local bus service, additional SBCTA transit investment includes two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines - the 16-mile E Street BRT in the cities of San Bernardino and Loma Linda that began revenue service in 2014, and the 19-mile West Valley Connector BRT (fully funded and in final design) across four cities with connections to two Metrolink lines and Ontario International Airport.
- SBCTA is part of the regional Joint Powers Authority that has been funding and operating Metrolink trains for almost 30 years.
- Two current transit initiatives include the tunnel connection between the Rancho Cucamonga Metrolink station and Ontario International Airport (ONT), as well as the privately funded Brightline West High Speed Rail that would connect Las Vegas with Southern California by 2024, terminating at Metrolink in Rancho Cucamonga.
- Countywide GHG Reduction Plan and EIR (completed in 2014 and in the process of being updated to address SB 32 goals for GHG reduction to 2030). Many of the jurisdictions prepared their own Climate Action Plans (CAPs) based on the SBCTA Programmatic EIR for the original GHG Reduction Plan, and all 25 jurisdictions are participating in the current update.
- SB 743 Countywide VMT Implementation Study (completed in June 2020 for all the jurisdictions in the county). All our local jurisdictions have now adopted a program of thresholds and analysis guidelines for VMT reduction in response to the California Environmental Quality Act guidelines relating to SB 743.
- Inland Empire Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan, completed in September 2020, consistent with Caltrans and CTC guidelines, and in partnership with the Riverside County Transportation Commission, Caltrans District 8, and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).
- Joint report with SCAG: “*Customer-Focused, Technology-Enabled Multi-Modalism Action Plan*,” completed in 2018 and containing 16 targeted initiatives for transit, transportation demand management (TDM), and active transportation in San Bernardino County.
- Active transportation – we have delivered or are in the process of delivering over \$60 million in state Active Transportation Program grant projects, together with our local partners.
- Expansion of the SBCTA rideshare/vanpool program (in progress), including a new “telework initiative.”
- Zero-Emission Vehicle Readiness and Implementation Plan (completed in 2019)

- Partnerships on Clean Freight, such as assistance with the clean-fuel retrofitting of over 200 diesel-fueled Ryder trucks several years ago. It is also noteworthy that SBCTA signed on to the petition to the Environmental Protection Agency for accelerating the move to ultra-low NOx trucks nationally, given the many out-of-state trucks that move in and through the Inland Empire.
- Climate Adaptation Plan and Partnership with Western Riverside COG (completed in Spring 2020)
- Development of the Healthy Communities Best Practices Toolkit - The toolkit, a collaboration between SBCOG and the County, contains sample policies, resolutions, processes, organizational structure, and lessons learned from agencies that have implemented health-related policies.
- Preparation of a Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS), pursuant to AB 2087 – A draft has been prepared, and is currently being refined using a Wildlife Conservation Board grant.

A Sustainability Fact Sheet and other elements of the SBCTA/SBCOG Sustainability programs can be accessed at: [SBCTA-Sustainability\\_FINAL\\_digital.pdf \(gosbcta.com\)](https://www.gosbcta.com/files/SBCTA-Sustainability_FINAL_digital.pdf).

## **OVERALL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAPTI DRAFT**

We greatly appreciate the efforts that CalSTA and its state agency partners have made to get CAPTI to this point. A lot of careful thought and research have gone into this, and we look forward to being strong partners in delivering mobility and accessibility improvements that move people and goods to, from, and within San Bernardino County. We also appreciate the funding streams that the state has established for delivering these projects. We certainly do not take them for granted, and we recognize that CalSTA wishes to deploy those funds in a way that best achieves the state's transportation and climate goals.

You are also aware that SBCTA and other “self-help” counties answer to the residents who overwhelmingly voted to tax themselves to improve mobility and safety and to reduce congestion. Our current Measure I sales tax was approved by 80 percent of the voters, and they have expectations that we will keep the promises SBCTA made in the package that they approved.

The good news for San Bernardino County is that much of the funding our voters approved is going toward improvements that also address the CAPTI guiding principles quite well, a few of which include: “fix-it-first” funding for local road maintenance and safety improvements, Metrolink capital and operations support, Redlands Passenger Rail, bus rapid transit capital and operating funds, senior and disabled transit assistance, and ridesharing programs, for example. We are also well along in the implementation of new priced High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes which will, for the first time in the County, provide travel time and cost incentives for transit, vanpools, carpools, and clean air vehicles. The I-10 and I-15 priced express lane projects are an integral part of the SCAG regional express lane system. It is a critical priority for the region to build out this multimodal system so that these alternate modes can be incentivized in a comprehensive, integrated way, with support from the state. We believe we are on the right track with CAPTI-supportive projects, but we are also looking for ways to improve on what we have already planned.

In that light, we have several general thoughts on the implementation of CAPTI. These overview comments are lettered A through D, followed by more detailed comments on specific sections of the CAPTI draft, numbered 1 through 23.

- A. **Need to broaden the discussion of VMT reduction strategies:** We are supportive of the state's emphasis on reducing VMT, and we even led a collaborative effort with our 25 local jurisdictions to implement the provisions of SB 743 by the July 1, 2020 deadline. We have a second project underway with SCAG to look at specific strategies for VMT reduction and mitigation. In other words, we have been very active in VMT reduction efforts already, and we understand the reasons for the 30 references to VMT in the CAPTI draft.

We also understand the reasons for the 50 references to transit in the CAPTI draft and have been investing heavily in transit, with more to come. That said, we believe CAPTI is overlooking some very productive methods of reducing VMT that work across urban, suburban and rural areas alike. In looking through CAPTI, there are no references to ridesharing, no references to carpooling, only one reference to vanpooling, one reference to shared mobility, one reference to telework, and no references to transportation demand management or TDM as a general class of strategies. The entire field of TDM is fertile for development of cost-effective VMT reduction strategies and yet it barely receives mention in the CAPTI draft.

To illustrate, prior to COVID, transit work trip mode split for San Bernardino residents was about 1.4 percent, while the rideshare percentage was 11 percent. And work-at-home had been steadily climbing to where it stood at 5.9 percent pre-COVID (based on the American Community Survey 2015-2019). Post-COVID, the expectation is that the work-at-home rate will be significantly higher. The point is that we need to employ all the tools in the toolbox for reducing VMT, and not limit ourselves primarily to transit/land use strategies, as important as they may be. More specific mention should be made of TDM strategies.

To be sure, we are doing all we can with transit and TOD. But this strategy takes a long period of time to realize significant impact, and other very cost-effective strategies are available that can have a more short-term impact. That said, any reductions in VMT do not come easily, and you will see from later comments our concern that the expectations the state has for VMT reduction should be realistic. Ultimately the state's population and business communities need to buy into this direction with their personal transportation choices, and our sense is that most are not there yet. Even though the large majority of Californians say that they are concerned about climate change, and might like to ride transit or a bike if they could, it is hard to make a personal decision not to drive when the automobile represents their way of navigating the complexities of daily life – getting to jobs, school, child-care, grocery store, etc. The estimate of potential 30 percent VMT reduction (relative to baseline) that was contained in the draft California Transportation Plan 2050 is not realistic, for reasons we explain later in this comment letter. We would be concerned if the analysis presented in the draft CTP 2050 were to become a basis for setting VMT reduction goals.

- B. Importance of funding for transit operations:** The funding sources identified in CAPTI that can be applied to transit projects are largely focused on capital project funding. The state also needs to understand the importance of and need for coverage of transit operating costs, and the current limitations of those funds. We do not want to be building systems that we cannot also operate. San Bernardino County is at its limit for what state and federal sources of transit operating funds enable us to provide for transit services. We even have 5% of our local sales tax funding in our Valley subarea that we can use for express bus/bus rapid transit services (capital and operating) and 8% of our Metrolink/rail program, but we are maxed out on those commitments through 2040. This is not related to the transit funding issues associated with COVID. It was true prior to COVID, and it will still be true when we hopefully get back to whatever the “new normal” represents. We have very few options for additional operating funds, and for transit expansion to be real, additional sources of operating funds must be identified. We also have potential concerns about urban transit systems having to compete for operating funds with future intercity rail. While there is a current commitment for the state high-speed rail system to be self-funding for operations, you will see in our Comment 7 why we have reason for concern.
- C. “No one-size-fits-all:”** We greatly appreciate that the draft CAPTI recognizes the principle of “no one-size-fits-all.” How that principle is operationalized is of great interest to San Bernardino County, given the size, geographic diversity, diversity of our residents, and economic diversity of our county. While the entire county is considered to be in the Southern California Region (with SCAG as the Metropolitan Planning Organization) most of the county, by land area, is rural, and substantial lands in the mountains and deserts are already preserved or designated for military use. We have had several major wildfires over the years, which have severely impacted transportation, so we understand what is at stake in terms of climate change. Our request would be that the state recognize the wide range of needs and varying degrees of ability to achieve VMT reduction and transit/land use objectives. What may be possible as a strategy in the San Bernardino Valley, may not be possible in the Victor Valley or Morongo Basin. And a highway operations/safety need in the high desert may not be the same as a need in the Valley.
- D. Consideration of air quality, freight, and economic competitiveness.** The ninth “guiding principle” in the CAPTI draft (page 16) focuses on: *“Developing a zero-emission freight transportation system that avoids and mitigates environmental justice impacts, reduces criteria and toxic air pollutants, improves freight’s economic competitiveness and efficiency, and integrates multimodal design and planning into infrastructure development on freight corridors”*. Given that San Bernardino County is one of the more impacted counties in the U.S. with regard to air quality, particularly in our numerous disadvantaged communities, we understand first-hand the importance of reducing NOx, particulates, and air toxics from the truck fleets and rail systems that operate within and pass through San Bernardino County.

As you are aware, San Bernardino County is a primary gateway for freight between Southern California and the nation, via two Class 1 railroads as well as Interstates 10 and 15, both vital routes for interstate trucking. We have multiple strategic truck bottlenecks remaining on these two facilities, and we believe a continuing partnership with state, regional, and local agencies is needed to address them. We also are taking a true

multimodal approach to these corridors, to include priced express lanes that will enable us, for the first time, to give priority to transit, vanpools, carpools, and clean-air vehicles on these routes. Coupled with a push to accelerate turnover to cleaner truck fleets, this is a win-win strategy for San Bernardino County and the state. We also have other strategic freight projects such as U.S. 395 as it approaches the I-15 junction, which represents a remaining intra-state freight bottleneck in the Victor Valley. This link is vital to freight movement and safety as U.S. 395 serves the eastern side the Sierras, and for agricultural movement via SR-58/U.S. 395 through Kern County from markets in the Central Valley. In fact, the counties of Inyo, Mono, Kern, and San Bernardino participate in the Eastern California Transportation Planning Partnership that focuses on major transportation needs, with particular attention given to U.S. 395. It deserves additional attention by the state, in the context of the varying needs across our diverse county, a good example of “no-one-size-fits-all.”

## COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC CAPTI SECTIONS AND STRATEGIES

In this section, comments are provided on specific language in the draft CAPTI. The CAPTI text being referenced is quoted first, followed by the comment. Comments are numbered from 1 through 23.

**Note: Comments 1-6 are on the CAPTI Vision and Scope section, pages 11 through 14**

Comment 1 on Page 11 –

CAPTI reference: *“The state must be strategic and thoughtful when expanding the existing system as we cannot afford to invest in projects that ultimately run up our long-term maintenance costs without bringing an outsized benefit to climate, health, and equity goals.”*

Comment: We agree. But the state also needs to understand the importance of and need for coverage of transit operating costs, and the current limitations of those funds. We suggest this be acknowledged in the text. The CAPTI draft on page 13 references seven state funding programs that are discretionary in nature, all of which are very important. However, all but the SHOPP (State Highway Operation and Protection Program) and LCTOP (Low Carbon Transit Operations Program) are focused on capital projects, and SHOPP is focused on fix-it-first for highway maintenance and operations, not transit. San Bernardino County is at its limit for what state and federal sources of transit operating funds enable us to provide for transit services. We even have 5% of our local sales tax funding that we can use for express bus/bus rapid transit services (capital and operating) and 8% of our Metrolink/rail program, but we are maxed out on those commitments. We have found vanpooling and carpooling to be very cost-efficient, and we are doing as much as possible with those programs. But if the state wants local agencies to expand transit systems on a scale that induces a significant mode shift away from single occupant auto, much more will be needed. Highway maintenance costs are expensive, but transit operating costs are much more so. On a dollars per passenger mile basis, transit operating costs are about \$1.60 per passenger mile for San Bernardino County. The cost per mile for vanpooling is about 10 percent of that cost. The LA Metro 2019 data in the national transit database offers an informative side-by-side estimate of the relative cost per passenger mile by mode:

- Heavy rail - \$0.81 per passenger mile
- Light rail - \$0.96
- Bus - \$1.14 (less than SB County due to the higher densities)
- BRT - \$0.57
- Vanpool - \$0.11
- Federal IRS auto mileage reimbursement rate - \$0.575

The cost of highway maintenance is only about \$.01 per person-mile, or less than 2% of the IRS mileage reimbursement rate. The point is that highway maintenance, as expensive as it seems, is a very minor part of auto transportation costs. The operating cost of transit is quite high, and it is easy for this to be the limiting factor in how much service a transit agency can provide. In other words, transit operating costs are currently a much larger concern than highway maintenance costs, and the need for more transit operating funds should be reflected in CAPTI.

Comment 2 on Page 11 –

CAPTI Reference: *“The CAPTI efforts will support the CTP goals in a manner that works to meet state climate change mandates, targets, and policies through the direction outlined in Executive Orders N-19-19 and N-79-20.”*

Comment: SBCTA previously provided a comment letter to Caltrans on the draft California Transportation Plan 2050 (CTP 2050). There are several comments we provided to Caltrans on CTP 2050 that are pertinent to CAPTI as well, such as:

- We wholeheartedly support the eight goals of the CTP 2050: safety, climate, equity, accessibility, quality of life and public health, economy, environment, and infrastructure. We also concur with the 14 recommendations, but the fundamental questions are “How can we get there, and how fast?”
- We believe that it is appropriate for the CTP to be visionary, cutting-edge, and contain aggressive “stretch goals.” The CTP 2050 does this. At the same time, strategies and investments must be feasible, realistic, and pursued with an understanding of how our residents and businesses will respond; and this is one of the elements that we believe is missing from the draft of the CTP 2050.
- SBCTA/SBCOG’s primary concern with the CTP 2050 is that it gives the impression that the VMT reduction of 30 percent relative to baseline is achievable when, in fact, its achievability is highly suspect. While the financially unconstrained CTP 2050 shows a 30% reduction in VMT, the financially constrained (but very aggressive) SCAG 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy shows a reduction in VMT (Plan vs. Baseline) of 5%.

And while over two-thirds of Californians are supportive of the state’s climate change goals and three in four support proposals to change land use and transportation planning and to further reduce automobile emissions (see: [PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and the Environment, July 2019](#)), only about 1.4 percent of workers in San Bernardino County ride transit to work. In Los Angeles County the percent riding transit to work is 5.8 percent. While higher than

San Bernardino, this is still only a small fraction of the regional population that is making a personal choice to commute by transit. This highlights the magnitude of the task before us: there is clear concern among the public about automobile use, but most are unable (or unwilling) to make personal choices to reduce VMT. When there is this much of a disconnect between the strategy and the willingness of the market to respond, it is a signal that some refinement in the strategy is needed. The state needs to make sure that it understands how its traveling customers make travel choices and the limitations those customers have to respond to the direction in which the state is trying to lead them. This is a fundamental principle of science-based market analysis.

Comment 3 on Page 12

CAPTI reference: *“To reduce emissions from transportation, the Scoping Plan calls for significant reductions in VMT. A recent report CARB completed, pursuant to SB 150, evaluated the state’s primary measure to reduce VMT—the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Program (also known as SB 375)—revealed that VMT is going up, not down as expected.”*

Comment: This further highlights the challenge involved in reducing VMT and the importance of understanding the travel market. Economic activity (whether it comes about because of population increases or economic prosperity), by its very nature, increases the quantity of goods and services exchanged. This generates more VMT, absent significant increases in transit, ridesharing, active transportation and virtual travel. So it is not at all surprising that VMT was increasing in recent years, given that the economy was recovering from the Great Recession. And even the best of VMT reduction strategies could not counter that trend, until the pandemic hit in 2020. The challenge for planning and transportation agencies is that it takes very large percentage increases in transit ridership to achieve relatively small percentage reductions in VMT. This is because, for example, the auto work trip mode share even in LA County is almost 84 percent, and the transit mode share is 5.8 percent. So a 50 percent increase in work trip transit mode share produces only a 3.5 percent reduction in work trip VMT. The carpool work trip mode share is 9.5 percent in LA County and 11 percent in the Inland Empire, so it is important to think about multi-occupant personal vehicles, not just transit. But even with that, work trips are only about 20 percent of total trips, so the percentage impact gets diluted further. A lesson learned from the pandemic is the remarkable power of virtual travel, enabled by technology. While many fields of work could not take advantage of this, it has been remarkable how quickly and relatively seamlessly some business sectors were able to adapt. SCAG has estimated that up to 24 percent of jobs in Southern California could be amenable to regular telework, and it is important to keep all methods of travel reduction on the table. The point is that transit and land use change are only one part of the toolkit by which to reduce VMT. But the pressures that increase VMT (growth and economic activity) are a necessary part of promoting a healthy state and region. The point is again that VMT reduction goals need to be realistic.



Comment 4 on Page 14

CAPTI reference: “... *reducing our dependence on driving will take better coordination of land use decisions in addition to the transportation decisions discussed in this document. This requires coordinated investments to further economic development and jobs in housing rich areas, support additional compact development and housing density in low VMT/high opportunity neighborhoods* ...”

Comment: SBCTA agrees with this approach, particularly the point on economic development in housing rich areas. To some extent, these changes are already taking place through virtual travel/telework, with a portion of jobs in major employment centers such as downtown Los Angeles and Orange County relocating to the Inland Empire. SCAG modeling is going to need to account for this in the next RTP/SCS. Additionally, we are in support of transit oriented development (TOD) where it is feasible, and we are enabling TOD with some of our transit investments. That said, the market ultimately determines what is feasible, and the infill or redevelopment sites tend to be more expensive to develop. Land values generally need to increase before many of these higher density sites will pencil out for the development community.

Comment 5 on Page 14

CAPTI reference: *Meeting our goals will also require existing and emerging technologies — such as connected and automated vehicles, shared mobility, micromobility, and increased digital substitution (such as telework, telemedicine, etc.) — to be strategically deployed in a way that encourages reduction in dependence on single occupant vehicles and increases access to destinations and opportunities.*

Comment: As noted in the prior comment, SBCTA is in strong support of technology-enabled approaches to reducing VMT. It should be noted that SBCTA and RCTC initiated a telework assistance program in July 2020 through our IE Commuter partnership. However, it is important to also retain emphasis on traditional lower-cost shared ride options as well, such as vanpooling and carpooling. Matching and monitoring tools are improving, so one would hope that these modes also increase in the future and that the pandemic will not have long term effects of reducing shared rides.

Comment 6 on Page 15

CAPTI reference: *Understanding that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to achieving the needs of the state’s diverse communities, realizing the outcomes outlined in the CTP 2050 requires a range of investment strategies.*

Comment: We concur with this statement. While we are diligently working on GHG reduction, VMT reduction, and other sustainability initiatives in San Bernardino County, responses and expectations need to vary based on multiple factors, such as location within the region, population and employment density, type of employment in the area, resources to support transit operations, etc. We highlighted this point in the overview section, in the context of San Bernardino being a very large and diverse county.

**Note: Comments 7-12 are on the CAPTI Investment Framework and include comments on a subset of the 10 “guiding principles” on pages 15 and 16 of the CAPTI draft. The principle is restated, followed by the comment.**

Comment 7 referencing Principle 1

CAPTI Principle: *Building toward an integrated, statewide rail and transit network centered around the existing California State Rail Plan that leverages the California Integrated Travel Project to provide seamless, affordable, multimodal travel options in all contexts, including suburban and rural settings, to all users.*

Comment: SBCTA understands the state’s interest in building a passenger rail network, and we fully appreciate the need to have an integrated, connected transit network. We are following this same path with our own transit investments, seeking system connectivity wherever we can, and pursuing fare and schedule integration wherever possible. We are also working with Caltrans to enable Brightline West to build its privately-funded and operated high-speed rail line from Las Vegas, along Interstate 15, to terminate at the Rancho Cucamonga Metrolink station. In other words, we get the importance of this first CAPTI principle.

In Comment B of the overview, we highlighted the importance of transit operating funds to support the capital investments in transit that are made available through the state’s discretionary grant programs. We made the point that additional operating funds for urban transit will be needed to fulfill the state’s expectations for VMT and GHG reduction. We also suggested a concern that there could be a conflict in priorities between funding for urban transit operations and the potential demand on operating funds for the state high-speed rail system. While there has been a long-standing commitment that high-speed rail operations would be self-funded, language in the April 2020 report on the 2020 California High-Speed Rail Business Plan by the legislatively-designated High Speed Rail Peer Review Group raises concerns that self-funding may not be possible, particularly for the earlier segments. We have included some of that language in a footnote quoted from page 158 of Appendix E – Peer Review Group Letter contained in the April 12, 2021 version of the HSR Business Plan submitted to the Legislature<sup>1</sup>. The potential prospect of transferring a high-speed rail subsidy obligation to CalSTA, as raised in the Peer Review Letter, could be in direct conflict with the urban transit operating funds required for cash-

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<sup>1</sup> Source: page 158 of Appendix E – Peer Review Group Letter from the April 12, 2021 version of the California High-Speed Rail Business Plan: “Although the Authority’s plan is based on analysis by the ETO and KPMG, the demand and operating cost forecasts for the interim service are necessarily not based on the same quality of analysis as the forecasts for the full system presented in prior Business Plans. They are also based on a number of assumptions including the assumption that reliability of the connecting services will be far better than the current 75 percent on-time performance of the San Joaquin services. As a result, the plans still have a significant range of uncertainty. The plan critically requires that the high-speed line be “leased” to another operator, potentially either a state or local agency such as Cal STA or the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority. Proposition 1A prohibits the Authority from subsidizing operations, so the terms of the lease may need to require that the lessee pay full compensation for all of the Authority’s costs of operating and maintaining the line and trainsets. The terms for this lease have not been defined and there is no clear expression of commitment from, or negotiation of terms with, any of the potential lessors. Moreover, since design and operating decisions are being made by the Authority in advance of full concurrence and commitment of the lessee/operator(s), it is possible that the costs and revenues of the interim system will be different than expected. Estimates of costs are preliminary and could turn out to be higher than lessors are able or willing to pay. For these reasons, it may be difficult to implement an interim arrangement that does not violate the terms of Proposition 1A. The approach could also lead to litigation -and project delay -over whether it is legal under the no-subsidy strictures of Proposition 1A.”

strapped urban transit agencies. This would put CalSTA in the awkward position of needing transit operating funds for high-speed rail while at the same time the Agency is asking those of us who operate urban transit systems to do more. While we appreciate that the CHSRA appears to understand its commitment to avoid the need for local, state, or federal operating subsidies, the language of the Business Plan and its risk analysis do not provide much assurance that the Authority will be able to fulfill this commitment.

Comment 8 referencing Principle 3 –

CAPTI reference: *Including investments in light, medium, and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) infrastructure as part of larger transportation projects. Support the innovation in and development of the ZEV market and help ensure ZEVs are accessible to all, particularly to those in more rural or remote communities.*

Comment: While SBCTA understands that VMT reduction is part of the overall GHG reduction strategy, advances in vehicle and fuels technology together with greatly increased penetration of clean vehicles into the light, medium, and heavy-duty fleets will be the principal means of achieving both our local air quality and climate change objectives. Equipping the electric grid and powering the grid with renewable sources is equally important. Given that San Bernardino County is one of the more impacted counties in the U.S. with regard to air quality, particularly in our numerous disadvantaged communities, we understand first-hand the importance of reducing NOx, particulates, and air toxics from the truck fleets that operate within and pass through San Bernardino County. While use of transportation-related funds on fueling infrastructure has not occurred historically, SBCTA is open to further discussions on how that might occur, while at the same time not diminishing opportunities for funding of our multimodal projects and strategic, targeted freight bottleneck improvements.

Comment 9 referencing Principle 4 –

CAPTI reference: *Strengthening our commitment to social and racial equity by reducing public health and economic harms and maximizing community benefits to disproportionately impacted disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, in urbanized and rural regions, and involve these communities early in decision-making. Investments should also avoid placing new or exacerbating existing burdens on these communities, even if unintentional.*

Comment: It was noted earlier that an Equity Element was added to the San Bernardino Countywide Vision, alongside the other 10 prior elements in Summer 2020. Cross-sectoral working groups are currently engaged in how to incorporate equity across all the elements. CalSTA is likely also aware that San Bernardino County is home to some of the most disadvantaged communities in the state, per CalEnviroScreen 3.0 and the recently released beta version of 4.0. As a transportation agency, SBCTA has historically had proactive outreach to all these communities, together with Caltrans. And we currently have a real-life example of potential impact on our disadvantaged communities. The principle that is so well articulated in the draft CAPTI is being violated in San Bernardino County by one of the agencies CalSTA oversees: the California High Speed Rail Authority. The CHSRA has indicated in its CEQA Notice of Preparation for the Los Angeles to Anaheim segment of the High Speed Rail System, that siting of a major new BNSF intermodal facility is required in Colton to make room for two high-speed rail tracks in the LA to Anaheim in

which BNSF currently operates. The facility is said to be larger than the San Bernardino intermodal facility, situated immediately north of SBCTA offices. We are working with the CHSRA and others to address this problem, but it is a clear-cut example of the type of inequitable transportation decision-making that CAPTI seeks to avoid. This potential action by the CHSRA runs directly counter to the CAPTI principle stated above and to the objectives expressed in CTP 2050 regarding proactive outreach to disadvantaged communities. While limited conversations have been held, and CHSRA states that they are limited in what they can share because of the environmental process, the project is largely shrouded in mystery, fostered by a lack of transparency. Then agencies and affected communities will have 60 days to digest and comment on the environmental analysis and draft documents. Our distinct impression is that the state itself is not adhering to the very principles it is now espousing through CAPTI.

Comment 10 referencing Principle 6 –

*CAPTI reference: Promoting projects that do not significantly increase passenger vehicle travel, particularly in congested urbanized settings where other mobility options can be provided and where projects are shown to induce significant auto travel. These projects should generally aim to reduce VMT and not induce significant VMT growth. When addressing congestion, consider alternatives to highway capacity expansion, such as providing multimodal options in the corridor, employing pricing strategies, and using technology to optimize operations.*

Comment: SBCTA is looking for ways in its planning and implementation to reduce GHGs and VMT wherever feasible. We have discussed previously some of the initiatives we have undertaken, and for a county primarily thought to be suburban, we are making major investments in transit, shared-ride, active transportation, and virtual travel alternatives. We have two primary comments on this principle: 1) the expectations for VMT reduction need to be realistic, with an understanding of how the customers we are attempting to serve will respond and be affected; and 2) there will still be a need for strategic investment in multimodal highway projects and freight bottleneck relief.

We have already discussed issues related to the feasibility and realism of VMT reductions. Our “customers” (residents, businesses, and visitors) live very busy and often complicated lives, and most of them need transportation solutions that keep their lives as simple as possible, given their circumstances. And the fact that many are willing to endure long commutes, even in corridors well-served by transit, speaks to the realities of the choices they have to make to keep life going. Our strategies need to understand our customers and their limitations, designing systems that help make life work for them in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Regarding strategic investment in highways, there are at least two areas for which continued state investment would seem to be warranted. The first involves completing the multimodal regional express lane system in San Bernardino County, as reflected in the SCAG RTP/SCS. In San Bernardino County, this includes Interstate 10 from the LA County line to Redlands and Interstate 15 from the Riverside County line to US-395. The only segment of these facilities that has HOV lanes is I-10 from the LA County line to I-15. This means that there is currently no way to offer travel time incentives for transit, shared-ride vehicles, and zero-emission vehicles. Adding high-occupancy toll lanes would allow for those incentives to occur and offer the ability to manage traffic through dynamic pricing. The second area involves the need to address truck bottlenecks. The I-10 and I-15

interchange in Ontario is the 10<sup>th</sup> most critical truck bottleneck in the U.S., as ranked by the American Transportation Research Institute, and there are other significant truck bottlenecks on both of these nationally significant freeways for freight. It is important to allow for these bottlenecks to be addressed, and when combined with the toll express lanes, these improvements can be part of transitioning both I-10 and I-15 into multimodal corridors that are truly managed to optimize movement for both people and goods.

Comment 11 referencing Principle 8 –

CAPTI reference: *Developing a zero-emission freight transportation system that avoids and mitigates environmental justice impacts, reduces criteria and toxic air pollutants, improves freight's economic competitiveness and efficiency, and integrates multimodal design and planning into infrastructure development on freight corridors.*

Comment: Comment D in the overview section provided a partial response to this principle. We appreciate the inclusion of this principle, as San Bernardino County serves as a major gateway for freight, and at the same time our residents, particularly those in disadvantaged communities, are significantly impacted by freight. Governor Brown's Executive Order B-32-15 had very similar themes, calling for development of an integrated action plan "that establishes clear targets to improve freight efficiency, transition to zero-emission technologies, and increase competitiveness of California's freight system." The California Sustainable Freight Action Plan (CSFAP) was completed in July, 2016. Among the Guiding Principles of the CSFAP is the following:

*"Invest strategically to improve travel time reliability and to achieve sustainable congestion reduction on key bottlenecks on primary trade corridors."*

We would urge CalSTA and its partner agencies not to lose sight of the Action Plan and its own set of Guiding Principles, prepared less than five years ago. As you know, San Bernardino County is a primary gateway for freight to and from Southern California via two Class 1 railroads as well as Interstates 10 and 15. We have multiple strategic truck bottlenecks remaining on these facilities, and we believe a continuing partnership with state, regional, and local agencies is needed to address them. This would include U.S. 395 at the I-15 junction, which represents a remaining intra-state freight bottleneck in the Victor Valley, a link that is vital to freight movement on the east side the Sierras, and for agricultural movement via SR-58/U.S. 395 through Kern County from markets in the Central Valley. We would suggest that language referencing strategic improvement of freight bottlenecks be added to the CAPTI draft. This reflects the "economic competitiveness and efficiency" theme of Principle 8, as well as guiding principles from the 2016 CSFAP. Direct reference to the Action Plan in CAPTI would be appropriate as well. It is still a highly relevant document.

### **Comments 12-23 focus on selected CAPTI strategies, pages 18-27**

Comment 12 on Page 18 –

CAPTI reference: Text at the end of S1.2 - *To be competitive for SCCP funds, applicant projects and their respective Corridor Plans must demonstrate synchronization with the CAPTI Framework, California Transportation Plan 2050, and other statewide modal plans in addition to Regional Transportation Plans.*

Comment: SBCTA completed the Inland Empire Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan (IE CMCP) in 2020, in partnership with the Riverside County Transportation Commission and Caltrans District 8. The CMCP was structured into 10 “Sub-corridors” that focus on the transportation, sustainability, and community needs at a finer level of detail. The CMCP addresses the CTP 2050 and other modal plans, which overlap extensively with the CAPTI framework. Within the next year it is expected that the CMCP will be updated to more directly address the CAPTI framework, once it is adopted.

Comment 13 on Page 18 –

CAPTI reference: *SI.3 Fast Track New CAPTI-Aligned Projects in Early Planning Phases by adding them to the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP) the revised Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan (ITSP), and supported by the revised Caltrans corridor planning process and Regions Rise Together effort.*

Comment: San Bernardino County is part of Governor Newsom’s Regions Rise Together initiative. We look forward to engaging with CalSTA and its partners to continue our progress. In addition, San Bernardino County is the largest county in the continental United States and has many underserved rural areas. We look forward to adding visibility to some of our projects through inclusion in the plans identified above.

Comment 14

CAPTI reference: *SI.4 - ... the CTC, through its public guidelines development process, will work towards updating the TCEP Guidelines to prioritize projects that demonstrate a significant benefit to improving the movement of freight along trade corridors, while also reducing emissions of diesel particulates, greenhouse gases, and other pollutants by creating or improving zero emissions infrastructure — either within the project itself or within the larger trade corridor.*

Comment: SBCTA and SBCOG have been actively involved in facilitating clean energy infrastructure and vehicles. For example, we managed the conversion of over 200 diesel rental trucks to CNG through a partnership with the US Department of Energy and the California Energy Commission. We have a Zero-Emission Vehicle Readiness and Implementation Plan that addresses incentives for zero-emission trucks, and the new 2021 Regional GHG Reduction Plan discusses clean truck strategies at the state and regional level as well.

Comment 15

CAPTI reference: *S 1.4 - Additionally, in order to enhance TCEP’s guidelines for reducing community impacts, especially in disadvantaged communities, the CTC will consider during TCEP guidelines development allowing projects to include zero-emission vehicle infrastructure within the project study area if they are in adjacent disadvantaged communities, low income communities, and BIPOC communities.*

Comment: As noted previously, San Bernardino County has some of the most disadvantaged communities in the state, and we have a keen interest in a technology-driven zero-emission future. We are open to further discussion on how ZEV infrastructure can be incorporated into the TCEP guidelines without significantly impacting the funding streams needed to address our freight bottlenecks. It is also worth noting that the County of San Bernardino has one of the more active and expansive solar farm permitting operations

in the U.S., and with 20,000 square miles of land in our borders, represents one of the largest opportunities for solar power generation on the planet.

Comment 16

CAPTI reference: *S2.3 Accelerate TIRCP Cycles to Support Transit Recovery with Deployment of ZEV Transit/Rail Fleets and Transit/Rail Network Improvements Support.*

Comment: We appreciate CalSTA's investment in our Zero-Emission Bus Initiative through the grant for the West Valley Connector Bus Rapid Transit project in 2020. Given the aggressive goals for bus electrification, any assistance through TIRCP and other state funding programs would be most welcome.

Comment 17

CAPTI reference: *S2.4 Increase Funding to Active Transportation Program (ATP)*  
*CalSTA is interested in collecting stakeholder input to identify the best potential funding sources and proposed amounts for a meaningful infusion of funds to the ATP.*

Comment: SBCTA is supportive of proposals for a one-time infusion of significant additional funding for active transportation projects. However, we would not be supportive of taking slivers of funding out of other existing state transportation funding programs. And given that the May revise of the state budget only partially funds the projects on the state ATP list, the funding distribution should be sensitive to geography, with consideration of a portion going to regions by formula, per prior ATP cycles.

Comment 18

CAPTI reference: *S3.1 Establish Transportation Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Committee(s)*

Comment: SBCTA believes that equity and environmental justice considerations will need to become a cross-cutting element among numerous state programs, and that is how we are working through the implementation of the San Bernardino Countywide Vision's new Equity Element, added to the Vision in 2020. It is also important to have good representation from the private sector, as well as from the public sector and community interest groups, as these discussions occur.

Comment 19

CAPTI reference: *S4. Advance State Transportation Leadership on Climate and Equity through Improved Planning & Project Partnerships*  
*In its new Strategic Plan, Caltrans has made a commitment to lead on climate action and advance social equity in the transportation sector. At its core, this strategy's actions outline the department's commitment to change the types of projects it will fund, nominate, and sponsor.*

Comment: SBCTA maintains an excellent project partnership with Caltrans. As an example of that partnership, SBCTA/SBCOG and Western Riverside COG recently completed an Inland Empire Climate Adaptation Plan, and SBCTA/RCTC completed the Inland Empire CMCP, both with direct involvement of Caltrans. As previously mentioned, we recognize the changing emphasis of the state in projects they are willing to support, and believe we have projects that are ideally suited to where the state is headed. These include transit, shared-ride, multimodal managed lanes, and freight projects specifically targeted

to addressing critical freight bottlenecks on the national Primary Freight Network (PFN). We intend to demonstrate the consistency of those projects with CAPTI principles to CalSTA, Caltrans, and its partner agencies at the appropriate time when funding requests come through.

Comment 20

CAPTI reference: *S4.5 Develop and Implement Caltrans Climate Action Plan (CCAP) Caltrans will develop and implement a departmental Climate Action Plan (CCAP) to establish baseline and reduction targets for GHG emissions and VMT from all sources, including from use of the State Highway System and internal operations. Additionally, Caltrans will set measurable and achievable mode share targets for passenger travel that will be supported by VMT reduction strategies. The CCAP will identify additional actions the department will take to meet its GHG, VMT, and mode share targets.*

Comment: SBCTA appreciates the reference to mode share targets as needing to be “measurable and achievable.” In fact, we would suggest that “measurable and achievable” be added to reference the targets for GHG emissions and VMT reduction as well. In all these cases, success is dependent on changing human behavior in several dimensions: mode choice, work and home location choice, potential for telework, etc. We would not be so concerned about achievability of VMT reduction goals, except for the fact that the Caltrans Draft CTP 2050 has already implied very aggressive VMT reduction goals (30 percent reduction versus baseline) that are, in our opinion, highly unrealistic. Perhaps Caltrans is dialing this analysis back in the final CTP, but our comment letter on the CTP explains the basis of our concerns, among which is a pricing strategy that is assumed to increase auto operating costs by 50 percent (equivalent to roughly a \$3.00 per gallon increase in the price of gasoline). Here is an excerpt from our CTP 2050 comment letter:

*“The reduction in VMT forecast in the CTP is a good example. While the financially unconstrained CTP 2050 shows a 30% reduction in VMT, the financially constrained (but very aggressive) SCAG 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy shows a reduction in VMT (Plan vs. Baseline) of 5%. This is a monumental disconnect for which Caltrans provides no additional context when those numbers are presented. This was an issue with the 2040 CTP as well, which we pointed out in our comment letter at that time.”*

Before setting a VMT reduction goal, we would want to see the technical basis and demonstration of feasibility in a transparent, defensible analysis. “Stretch goals” can be useful, but they must be technically credible. Please reference our CTP 2050 comment letter for more details.

Comment 21

CAPTI reference: *S6.1 Explore New Mechanisms to Mitigate Increases in Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) from Transportation Projects*

*CalSTA and Caltrans will work with local and regional transportation agencies to develop new mechanisms — such as mitigation banks that would allow for purchase of credits that could be applied to VMT reduction projects or actions — for viable VMT mitigation options for highway capacity projects, particularly with equity and land conservation in mind. These mechanisms are envisioned to assist transportation agencies statewide with SB 743 implementation and CEQA compliance. Additionally, Caltrans will evaluate different models for GHG/VMT mitigation, such as exploring the potential expansion of the Advanced Mitigation Program.*



Comment: We encourage more exploration of these and other tools for VMT mitigation. SBCTA is currently engaged with SCAG on a study of VMT mitigation strategies for San Bernardino County. This includes an initial look at the relative cost-effectiveness of different VMT reduction strategies, much as CARB and the South Coast AQMD have looked at the cost-effectiveness of emission reduction strategies. Our focus is particularly on telework and other TDM strategies that tend to be more cost-effective. VMT mitigation strategies and mitigation banks are much more complex than mitigation for other environmental impacts, which is why agencies are still struggling with how to navigate through these issues almost 8 years after SB 743 was signed and over 2 years after CEQA guidelines were modified.

Comment 22

CAPTI reference: *S6.2 Convene a Roadway Pricing Working Group to Provide State Support for Implementation of Local and Regional Efforts*

*CalSTA and Caltrans will convene a working group consisting of other state agencies as well as local and regional partners to identify and provide recommendations for equitable roadway pricing implementation pathways for strategies identified in regional RTP/SCSs that aim to reduce or manage VMT. The working group will create an inventory of various ongoing efforts across the state and outline state and federal statutory and administrative opportunities and barriers to equitable implementation of various roadway pricing applications currently under consideration by local and regional partners — including, but not limited to, cordon pricing, congestion pricing, and other dynamic pricing tools.*

Comment: The Southern California region has a partnership to build a world-class high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane system on multiple freeways, as described in the SCAG 2020 RTP/SCS. SBCTA is a component of that partnership, with HOT lane projects planned for extensive portions of I-10 and I-15. The first segment on I-10 is under construction and a second segment on I-15 is in design. These are also critical freight corridors, and these will all be multimodal win-win projects, with time-saving and pricing incentives for transit, vanpools, and carpools that we were never able to provide before.

Comment 23

CAPTI reference: *S7.1 Leverage Transportation Investments to Incentivize Infill Housing Production*

*Transportation funding could be used to reduce VMT by incentivizing infill residential development and densities appropriate and feasible for each given community. Competitive funding programs could adopt incentives for local policies that tend to support location-efficient and mixed-use housing production, while considering the needs of rural, suburban, and urban jurisdictions and how appropriate policies may differ among those areas. Such local policies may include by-right (nondiscretionary) approval processes for multifamily residential and mixed-use development, zoning to allow for residential and mixed-use developments in non-residential zones, reduced parking requirements for residential development, or expanded density bonuses that exceed state density bonus law, among other local policies. Transportation programs could adopt these incentives as competitive scoring criteria and enhanced guidance to facilitate interjurisdictional coordination between project proponents and local planning departments.*

Comment: In responding to this strategy, we would reiterate that we strongly support the objectives to reduce VMT and GHG wherever possible, as highlighted in our opening

section on what SBCTA/SBCOG is doing on sustainability. But we must also be realistic in our choices of strategies and assumptions and remember the principle of “no-one-size-fits-all” stated in the CAPTI Vision and Scope section on page 15. The housing-related strategies listed in S 7.1 may work in some geographic settings and not in others. Much of it will depend on development costs and the type of housing products being sought in the market. While there is a place for being visionary and aspirational, we must also be realistic in what is achievable or we run the danger of being misguided in our implementation, or even misdirecting our transportation funding programs.

Success in the transportation world (particularly with respect to encouraging changes in travel behavior) hinges on how people respond to the initiatives, incentives, and programs government enacts. People are trying to house and feed their families, get their kids educated, attend to medical needs, care for aging parents, stay safe themselves, etc. Residents and businesses have to make transportation decisions in the midst of juggling all of these responsibilities, which is why so many must gravitate toward the automobile. It is what allows them to keep their lives together.

There are many residents of California who are themselves concerned about climate change and about minimizing their carbon footprint, but they also have constraints in what they can do within the boundaries of managing their busy lives. To help people make VMT-reducing decisions in their travel choices, the state will need to do a much better job at connecting with its constituents and making these choices more practical. Having more affordable electric vehicles with lower operating costs will be a game-changer in the quest to reduce GHGs, but changing personal choices of travel modes is much more difficult.

In wrapping up these comments, we would remind CalSTA that California needs a strong economy to be able to afford the transportation improvements, technological advancements, and accelerated fleet turnover that will enable us to achieve our GHG reduction goals. There is a concern that substantially increasing transportation costs will further set back our business climate, not advance it. Good transportation policy is a delicate balancing act – keeping on the leading edge of clean transportation, while not disadvantaging California and our businesses to the point where we are unable to afford to make the investments to accelerate the necessary technological change. Governor Brown’s original Executive Order B-32-15 on sustainable freight highlights the importance of maintaining our state’s competitiveness while we also address GHGs; so we need to keep this balancing act in mind as we specify policy initiatives and investments. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important document. We look forward to continued collaboration with CalSTA and other state and regional agencies to achieve the CAPTI goals. Should you have any questions, please contact Steve Smith, Director of Planning, at [ssmith@gosbcta.com](mailto:ssmith@gosbcta.com).

Sincerely,



Raymond W. Wolfe  
Executive Director