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December 17, 2009

Mr. Steve Heminger  
Executive Director  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, California, 94607

Dear Mr. Heminger,

The San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) has reviewed and discussed the Bay Area Toll Authority's proposed bridge toll increase and is writing to share the following comments.

*We are supportive of the goal of increasing bridge tolls and are particularly in support of the toll increase Option 3.* This is our preferred alternative because it attempts to deal with the problem of congestion during peak hours by offering a financial incentive to avoid the most heavily trafficked periods. It also recognizes the unique importance of the Bay Bridge Corridor and provides an opening to address long-term capacity limitations on this corridor.

As MTC and BATA consider this new toll increase, we suggest that the projects financed by bridge tolls not only include seismic retrofits, but also studies of and improvements to deficiencies in the Bay Bridge Corridor. In particular, *we encourage you to use the surcharges to fund a multimodal study of long-term capacity constraints and solutions on the Bay Bridge Corridor.* As the most heavily traveled corridor in the region and the largest current generator of tolls, this corridor will produce even more revenue in the future if MTC/BATA adopts a charge for carpools.

We believe it is essential to evaluate the transportation system as a whole (vehicle, bus, BART, ferry) to avoid facing devastating capacity issues in the future. Vehicular travel on the Bay Bridge has its limits and is essentially at capacity during peak hours. BART also faces capacity issues at the Embarcadero and Montgomery stations (particularly the platforms) and is in need of new train control systems and reconfigured cars in order to improve the efficiency of the system.

In this context, *studying capacity constraints on Bay Bridge Corridor* is not only important to maintain the commute flows into downtown San Francisco and strong linkages with Oakland, but also *as a key part of a regional climate change strategy.* Downtown San Francisco is the region's only job center where more than 50 percent of workers arrive on climate friendly commutes such as transit, biking and walking. Given how other job centers are significantly more car-dependent, the future of a sustainable region relies on increasing access to employment opportunities in downtown San Francisco.

Further, to meet regional growth projections the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) has estimated that San Francisco needs to accommodate nearly 300,000 new jobs in the next 25 years in order to maintain its current share of regional employment. Today nearly 40 percent of workers in downtown San Francisco originate from the East Bay. That reality will not change even with significant new housing development in San Francisco or job growth in the inner East Bay. The Bay Bridge corridor must be equipped to handle the increased transportation needs of the next several decades.

In SPUR's 2009 policy paper on the Future of Downtown San Francisco (see: [http://spur.org/publications/library/report/future\\_downtown](http://spur.org/publications/library/report/future_downtown)), we began to study the capacity needs in this corridor to continue to meet regional growth projections. In particular, we believe that our transportation infrastructure must support an increasing share of trips on public transit, particularly in the East Bay / San Francisco corridor.

But SPUR's work was just an initial step. We hope MTC and BATA build on our work with additional studies and solutions to the growing capacity constraints.

In conclusion, we encourage MTC and BATA to consider financing a plan for the Bay Bridge corridor that is multimodal, incremental and addresses long-term capacity constraints. This approach is an important step in reducing job sprawl, decreasing auto-dependency and moving the region away towards greater resiliency in an era of climate change.

We look forward to continuing to work as partners with MTC and BATA on this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Metcalf', with a long, sweeping underline.

Gabriel Metcalf  
Executive Director  
San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR)