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May 9, 2012

San Francisco County Transportation Authority  
100 Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco, CA, 94102

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency  
1 South Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94103

SPUR support for VanNess BRT proposal and staff recommendations

Dear SFCTA Chair Campos and SFMTA Board Chair Nolan:

SPUR has been a longtime supporter of bus-rapid transit (BRT) in San Francisco. In 2006, we helped mobilize supporters of Geary BRT as part of a “GoGeary campaign”. We are pleased now that San Francisco is moving forward with true BRT on Van Ness Avenue.

We understand that under the guidance of the Mayor’s Office, the staff of Municipal Transportation Agency and the San Francisco County Transportation Authority collaboratively developed an optimal solution for BRT on Van Ness. The new hybrid proposal combines elements of the already environmentally cleared alternatives.

SPUR endorses the new proposal and the staff recommendation. We believe median transit operation with dedicated lanes is essential for successful BRT. By drawing the best features from the EIR’s Alternatives 3 and 4, the updated BRT proposal actually delivers superior transit service at a lower cost. The following are a few of the specific benefits and features of this proposal:

- Demonstrates the biggest travel time reduction, reliability improvements, and ridership increases.
- Uses existing vehicles with right door boarding.
- Maintains as much of the existing median as possible.
- Creates a new urban design amenity on Van Ness by breaking up the street into a more inviting design.

Given that this new hybrid proposal draws from existing alternatives, we believe that all the elements have been vetted in the draft environmental process and it is appropriate for the final EIS/EIR to propose the hybrid approach without further delay.

We recognize that the BRT project is but one investment along a complex corridor with many needs. For example, the SFPUC maintains sewers under the current median. Some of these sewers may need replacement. To the extent that the sewers would be replaced within the lifetime of the BRT project, we think that the SFPUC should pay

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their fair share of these replacement costs and not put the cost burden onto this transit project. We also recognize that the project faces a funding gap of \$20 million. This is a relatively small amount but does mean that currently programmed funds should stay committed to the project and local, regional, state, and federal agencies should prioritize funding for this important project. These include Caltrans State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP), Prop AA Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF), and MTC's One Bay Area Grant (OBAG).

While we support the direction of the BRT project we do think staff should carefully consider issues such as whether or not stations should be near or far side and whether the stations should be aligned or staggered. Each decision involves tradeoffs and we encourage staff to balance speed, safety, cost and an urban and passenger-friendly design.

SPUR believes this is the first project in California where a State right-of-way has been repurposed to reduce the number of mixed-flow travel lanes and establish dedicated transit lanes. This is a major accomplishment and creates a precedent statewide on innovative uses of the state rights-of-way for other San Francisco priority projects along Caltrans owned arterials. In addition to Van Ness, 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue could have improved pedestrian treatments and larger sidewalks, while the freeway system could benefit from a broad rethinking of its purpose and use in San Francisco. The changes on the Van Ness corridor bode well for such innovative thinking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'ET' or 'Egon Terplan', written in a cursive style.

Egon Terplan  
SPUR Regional Planning Director  
(on behalf of the SPUR Transportation Policy Board)