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July 19, 2024

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Chair Robert Powers and Members of the Regional Network Management Council
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: Inclusion of Redwood City Ferry Service in *Plan Bay Area 2050+*

Dear Chair Robert Powers and Members of the Regional Network Management Council,

For seven decades, the San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA) has been a leading voice for the economic engine that is San Mateo County. SAMCEDA believes in the power of a strong economy driven by an appreciation of what that engine provides to our ecosystem on the Peninsula.

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By working with employers of all sizes and industries, engaging with our public sector and our elected leadership, recognizing that we have 21 individual jurisdictions (20 cities and one county) and collaborating and communicating with the Chambers of Commerce, non-profit organizations and our educational institutions, SAMCEDA tackles the most difficult challenges through goal-oriented solutions.

I am writing on behalf of SAMCEDA to express our concern regarding the exclusion of the Redwood City Ferry Service from the current draft of the *Regional Transportation Plan, Plan Bay Area 2050+*. As you know, MTC is developing this comprehensive, financially constrained plan, which lays out a \$1.4 trillion vision for a more equitable and resilient future for Bay Area residents. *Plan Bay Area 2050+* integrates strategies for transportation, housing, the economy, and the environment to guide the region toward an affordable, connected, diverse, healthy, and vibrant future by 2050.

It has come to our attention that the current draft, which will be presented to the Regional Network Management Council on Monday, July 22, does not include the Redwood City Ferry Service (a project that has historically been included in previous versions of *Plan Bay Area*, has secured tens of millions in funding, and is currently under environmental review). Projects can be excluded from *Plan Bay Area* if it is duplicative of other transit or is not cost effective. Neither of these are the case for the Redwood Ferry Service project. The exclusion of this project is an oversight, and we encourage this Council to ensure that the Redwood Ferry Service project is included in the next draft of this document.

The Redwood City Ferry service is not a duplicative proposed transit service. Both the Redwood Ferry Service Business and Feasibility Plans evaluated two versions of the Redwood City Ferry service, including one from Oakland to Redwood City which provides a new transit link between the East Bay and Redwood City. No other transit agency currently operates or has plans to develop a direct transit link between these two locations.

From a cost-efficiency standpoint, SF Bay Ferry operates at a cost per passenger mile similar to other transit modes carrying passengers along important long-distance trips, many of which would otherwise be completed in cars adding to congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, it has the sixth lowest cost per passenger mile among the region's 20-plus transit operators.



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We understand that *Plan Bay Area 2050+* is fiscally constrained, however, the Redwood City Ferry Service will be funded with sources that can only be used for ferry transit projects and will not take away funding from other projects in the region. These specific funding sources include \$15 million from San Mateo County Measure A specifically for the Redwood Ferry Service project, an allocation of SF Bay Ferry's *Regional Measure 3* capital funds and potential funding from federal ferry programs including the *Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Passenger Ferry Grant Program*, the *FTA Electric/Low Emission Ferry Program*, and the *Federal Highway Administration Ferry Boat Program*. All of these federal ferry programs, which can only be used on eligible public ferry projects, require that proposed projects are included in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's *Regional Transportation Plan*.

Excluding the Redwood City Ferry service from *Plan Bay Area 2050+* reduces the amount of funding coming to the region and reduces mode shift to transit. SF Bay Ferry will not be able to apply for "ferry only" funding to support the Redwood City ferry service if it is not included in the region's transportation plan. This includes federal funds that can be leveraged for the region. In terms of mode shift, SF Bay Ferry was the fastest-growing transit system in the region prior to the pandemic and has been the fastest to recover. As of July 2024, SF Bay Ferry is carrying nearly 90% of its pre-pandemic riders. People are choosing to ride the ferry for a variety of reasons. SF Bay Ferry has aligned its fares with other transit modes, becoming a travel mode of choice for riders from all income categories. It also has the highest customer satisfaction rating of any transit system in the country and was the first transit operator in the region to fully restore service following the pandemic, making equity-focused, ridership-incentivizing changes that many other operators have since adopted.

Finally, there is currently no passenger ferry service anywhere in the South Bay. Establishing a ferry service in this area is critical to ensure the equitable distribution of emergency services. The Redwood City Ferry service enhances emergency preparedness by enabling the movement of first responders and supplies by water after a catastrophic event.

The Redwood City Ferry Service will be a vital component of our regional transportation infrastructure, providing essential transit links, enhancing emergency response capabilities, and leveraging dedicated funding sources that benefit the entire Bay Area. We encourage this Council to include the Redwood City Ferry Service in the next draft of *Plan Bay Area 2050+*.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rosanne Foust
President & CEO, SAMCEDA