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February 5, 2015

Mary Salas, Mayor  
Chula Vista City Council  
276 Fourth Avenue  
Chula Vista, CA 91910

RE: Regional Transportation and the I-5 Freeway Expansion

Dear Honorable Mayor Salas:

Environmental Health Coalition is a non-profit organization in the San Diego-Tijuana region that educates, organizes, and advocates for a healthy and equitable region. EHC's campaign focus is to improve the health and environment of low-income communities of color adversely affected by pollution and discriminatory land use policies. We think that there is an opportunity to further strengthen the Regional Transportation Plan in a manner that will lead to Transportation Justice by ensuring that overburdened communities have increased access to transportation, improvements to public health and safety, and equity in transportation planning, policies and investment.

The expansion of the I-5 for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) is an example of Transportation Justice denied through the poor regional transportation planning that is endemic throughout the Regional Transportation Plan currently moving forward, because it does not prioritize the health and mobility of overburdened communities or take the true economic costs of such a project.

Firstly, communities such as Chula Vista, Barrio Logan, and the Westside of National City are currently overburdened with poor air quality and health impacts due to the vehicle emissions from the nearby I-5 freeway. Further expanding the freeway (even for BRT and HOV), will increase capacity, increase Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and will in turn increase air pollution from the transportation sector in this corridor. This additional burden will be a disparate impact upon the communities adjacent to the proposed I-5 Freeway expansion.

Secondly, the "Blue Line Express" (Route 540) project proposal, which would greatly reduce an hour-long travel time for Southbay users to about 20-30 minutes due to limited stops, was removed from consideration in the regional transportation plan moving forward despite great community support from San Ysidro to Barrio Logan for it during SANDAG's vision workshops last year. The stated partial reason for removing this project from the current regional transportation plan moving forward was the price tag, which is estimated at \$391 million. The SANDAG Board decided that having a BRT project from San Ysidro to Downtown San Diego is more flexible and less expensive. However, if the true costs of this BRT project were accounted for, by including the cost of both the BRT (estimated cost \$93 million) and freeway expansion of the I-5 (\$651 million), it is nearly twice the cost of the "Blue Line Express" Trolley at \$744 million.

An example of the environmentally and economic sound transportation planning that we would like to see throughout the Southbay is the "Purple Line" Trolley (Route 562), which is a new trolley line that runs through San Ysidro to Kearny Mesa along the Highland Ave/4th Ave corridor through National City and Chula Vista and up into City Heights. The evaluation of "Purple Line" showed it to be one of the best


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performing lines when it comes to anticipated ridership. Like the Purple Line, the "Blue Line" Trolley has consistently proven its success by having one of the highest farebox cost recovery rates in the nation.

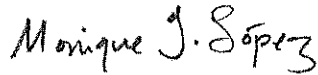
Therefore, we urge the City of Chula Vista to request SANDAG to build upon the success of the "Blue Line", instead of making risky investments in freeway expansion projects that put in jeopardy overburdened communities' health and choosing projects that do not make economic sense.

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions, please contact Monique López at 619-602-3903 or at [moniquel@environmentalhealth.org](mailto:moniquel@environmentalhealth.org).

Sincerely,



Diane Takvorian  
Executive Director  
Environmental Health Coalition



Monique G. López, M.A., M.C.R.P.  
Policy Advocate, Transportation Justice  
Environmental Health Coalition

CC: John McCann, Councilmember  
Patricia Aguilar, Councilmember  
Pamela Bensoussan, Councilmember  
Steve Miesen, Councilmember