February 8, 2012

President John McPartland and Members of the Board of Directors
BART Board of Directors
P.O. Box 12688
Oakland CA 94604-2688

Re: Agenda item 5.A., Advancement of Proposed BART to Livermore Project, Phase 1

Dear President McPartland and Members of the Board of Directors,

We are writing to make some suggestions on the next steps for the potential Livermore project. First off, we want to make clear our overall goal: we want to make sure BART remains fast, reliable and affordable and also help connect the Livermore Valley to the BART system. The following presents our concerns about the linkage between these two issues and closes with some suggested changes to the proposed motion for Agenda item 5.A., Advancement of Proposed BART to Livermore Project, Phase 1.

BART has tremendous needs to maintain the existing system. Recent progress on the car replacement program is important and must be followed by progress on many other fronts. The November 4 presentations to you and the tours about State of Good Repair (SGR) demonstrate the urgency and importance of the SGR needs. The $7-plus billion maintenance shortfall means BART faces the danger of losing half its peak period passenger capacity because BART will slow down, lack core capacity and have frequent breakdowns if those shortfalls are not filled (see http://goo.gl/GkPk8 for the presentation of the impacts of BART’s SGR). We appreciate comments from many BART directors on the importance of the car replacement program and investing in BART’s capital and maintenance needs. We also appreciate a recent letter to us from General Manager Grace Crunican (enclosed), which informs some of our suggestions.

BART needs to conduct an investment analysis, an assessment of the relative value of investing in the core system’s needs and extensions. BART is already working on three extensions, is being asked to commit to a fourth, and faces multi-billion dollar needs for the existing system. The district, and the region, need to prioritize which funds go for which projects. The Board needs to know the impacts of funding different purposes in order to make informed decisions about what commitments to make about further extensions. This analysis should consider not just BART’s own resources, but also potential funding from local, regional, state, and federal sources.

For the Livermore project in particular, we agree that an appropriate next step is a multi-modal alternatives analysis as part of a project-level environmental analysis. Within that approach, however, we have a few concerns.

Our most fundamental concern is the intended purpose of a Livermore project. The purpose of the Alternative Analysis should be to determine the most cost-effective and efficient improvements to serve the Livermore Valley from BART’s current Dublin/Pleasanton terminus. In that analysis, certainly one option will be the “Phase I” option described in the memo for this item: BART technology to a new station 5 miles down I-580, plus express buses from there.
This new proposed terminus along I-580, however, conflicts with the preferred alternative the BART Board has already adopted for the project. The proposed terminus would likely place another station into the freeway median, an approach referred to as a “low quality” station in BART’s System Expansion Policy.

We understand that financial realities and political opposition from the city of Livermore to a downtown station pose a challenge to BART Board’s preferred alternative, going to downtown Livermore. That challenge means that the BART Board needs to carefully consider whether to change its preferred alternative, and if so, what the new preferred alternative should be in light of BART’s needs. As the district did in considering how to serve Eastern Contra Costa County, BART needs to put all options on the table.

One alternative should be a robust express bus alternative running from the existing Dublin/Pleasanton station. This should be much more than a TDM alternative. It should include at least a drop ramp from the corridor’s new HOV/HOT lanes into the Dublin/Pleasanton station, direct service to key destinations in the valley (such as Las Positas, Livermore labs, and downtown Livermore), consideration of additional park and ride/express bus facilities, optimized coordination with LAVTA and shuttle systems, and other ways to maximize ridership. This is a significant enough variation from the concepts presented in the memo attached to today’s agenda item that it deserves special mention in the motion to move forward with the Livermore project.

Conclusion:

We recommend that the motion for this item be amended to include the following two concepts:

1. **BART will conduct an investment analysis on the comparative value of investing in the core system and in extensions, to inform the district’s decisions on financial priorities for extensions.**

2. **The Livermore project’s alternatives assessment will have a purpose of determining BART’s most cost-effective and efficient improvements to better serve the Livermore Valley. The alternatives will consider a robust express bus alternative based at the existing Dublin-Pleasanton station, in addition to others mentioned in the memo.**

By clarifying the Board’s intent to conduct an investment analysis and making clear the purpose of an alternatives assessment for proposed improvements to serve the Livermore Valley, BART can embark on the much-needed planning and analysis to support informed decisions about the district’s priorities.

We will attend your February 9th meeting to make these comments in person, and we look forward to working with you to keep the BART system fast, reliable, and affordable.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hobson

Enc: January 10, 2012 letter from General Manager Grace Crunican to Stuart Cohen, TransForm
January 10, 2012

Stuart Cohen  
Executive Director  
Transform  
436 14th Street, Suite 600  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Mr. Cohen:

It was a pleasure meeting with you, Jeff Hobson and Manolo Gonzalez-Estay. I appreciate your time and thank you for providing your input on BART to Livermore and BART’s state of good repair. I have reviewed your draft proposal on connecting the City of Livermore to the BART system and will share it with the BART Board of Directors.

Your draft proposal outlines an Alternative Analysis to be conducted by the Alameda County Transportation Commission. As we discussed, the next steps for a project of this size are as follows:

1) The BART Board will need to consider the new terminus adopted by the City of Livermore.
2) The BART Board needs to approve a multi-modal Alternative Analysis as part of a project-level environmental analysis. Stakeholder planning and funding agencies need to participate in this process. The project-level environmental analysis will provide a more detailed analysis of several alternative modes; including BART, diesel multiple units (DMU’s) and bus.
3) The project needs to be included in MTC’s RTP and funding identified.

Your inquiry about an investment analysis on funding extensions versus other system needs is something the BART Board will be considering over the next few months. I am following up with my staff to discuss the financial priorities of the District and to better understand how capital project costs are developed. As we move forward with BART to Livermore, I will continue to engage MTC, ACTC and the City of Livermore with BART staff to cooperatively determine the funding plan for the project.

Thank you again for your time and I look forward to working with TransForm on these initiatives and our common goals of creating a world class public transportation in the Bay Area serving walkable communities with transit-oriented development.

Sincerely,

Grace Crunican  
General Manager

cc: Board of Directors