August 17, 2022

Ms. Jennifer Cress, Division Chief
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Cress:

Subject: SANDAG 2021 Regional Plan

SANDAG recognizes that climate change is upon us and we must change how we develop our communities and plans for how we get around. We know that this includes how we pay for transportation and the transportation options we invest in to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. In the eight months since the SANDAG Board of Directors approved the 2021 Regional Plan, we have moved quickly to implement the Plan as it was adopted. In fact, SANDAG and our partners have already made tremendous progress to realize key components of the Plan that serve as a model both state and nationwide.

The Board of Directors adopted the FY 2023 Program Budget in May 2022, which provides the assurances that all necessary resources are available to continue to implement the Plan as adopted. In particular, the budget includes funding to work with an advisory working group to study how all proposed pricing strategies included in the Plan could be deployed. Pricing strategies include a broad range of opportunities including usage charges, roadway tolling, transportation network company fees, and other mechanisms. (Please see attached approved work plan and budget for the study).

SANDAG also is partnering with the Sacramento Area Council of Governments and Southern California Association of Governments through a Caltrans planning grant to develop a design framework for a pilot study to understand how road pricing and incentives can be combined to promote behavioral shifts towards achieving the State’s climate goals. Data collected from the pilot will inform how both both fees and incentives can be used throughout the state to maximize greenhouse gas emissions reductions while reducing congestion and improving equity.

Some other examples of how SANDAG is already implementing the 2021 Regional Plan include:

The Youth Opportunity Pass pilot program, which launched on May 1, 2022, provides all riders 18 and under fare-free rides throughout across the San Diego region’s public transportation systems. Since the rollout of the program, SANDAG has distributed more than 10,000 PRONTO cards to community organizations, schools, and other nonprofits to enable all of our region’s young people to take advantage of the program. In the month of May, overall youth ridership on our region’s transit services increased by 38% due to the implementation of the Youth Opportunity Pass pilot program.
SANDAG also is finalizing a Flexible Fleets Implementation Strategic Plan that provides a roadmap for Flexible Fleet pilot opportunities across the region. The Strategic Plan builds upon research and data analysis conducted as part of the 2021 Regional Plan to identify areas suitable for Flexible Fleets based on land uses, population and employment densities, travel data, and social equity. SANDAG is currently in negotiations with a pool of Flexible Fleet service providers in preparation of launching the pilots identified in the Strategic Plan.

On November 1, 2021, SANDAG issued a Request for Innovative Concepts (RFIC), inviting innovators, entrepreneurs, service providers, and mobility experts to submit innovative concepts for transportation "connector" services that implement the transformative vision for transportation shaped by the Regional Plan's 5 Big Moves. Ultimately three submissions were chosen to advance to the second phase of the RFIC process. SANDAG recently entered into Memorandum of Understandings with each of these three project teams to work collaboratively to further develop their conceptual designs and costs, define service areas, explore innovative project delivery and financing options, and identify potential risks and barriers to delivering these projects.

In July 2022, the SANDAG Board adopted a Vision Zero resolution recognizing the urgency of addressing traffic fatalities and severe injuries on our local roads and calling for stepping up effective and equitable actions to prevent them from occurring in the years to come. In the last 5 months, we have opened more than 25 miles of new separated bikeways with another 25 miles in the works which provide safe walking and biking paths in our most urban areas and close to transit. And last month we secured $300 million to complete environmental and design work on our coastal commuter rail line to move tracks off the failing coastal bluffs and dramatically reduce travel time by rail between San Diego and Los Angeles.

We are proud to continue to be an example to the state and nation with the transformative Regional Plan and look forward to collaborating with you and all of our stakeholders as we implement the regional vision.

Sincerely,

Hasan Ikhrata
Chief Executive Officer

CCL/TFA/DKO/RWA

Enclosure(s): Final FY 2023 SANDAG Program Budget