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July 11, 2019

Chair Steve Vaus
SANDAG Board of Directors
401 B Street, 7th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: San Diego Forward: The 2021 Regional Plan's Five Big Moves

Chair Vaus,

On behalf of Circulate San Diego, whose mission is to create excellent mobility choices and vibrant, healthy neighborhoods, I am writing to reiterate our support for a Regional Plan that ensures that transit is prioritized and advanced.

The San Diego region deserves a bold long term vision for transit. Nonetheless, the most important component of the Regional Plan is what will happen in the immediate term between adoption of the 2021 Regional Plan and the subsequent Regional Plan. The SANDAG Board should ensure that the immediate impact of the Regional Plan is a tangible improvement to transit.

1. The SANDAG Board should support bringing forward scenarios with fiscally constrained project lists and phasing that implements the Five Big Moves concept.

Circulate supports SANDAG's Five Big Moves concept. It proposes to address the need to make transit competitive and a viable option for more San Diegans. Leadership that takes climate change and the need to increase transportation choices seriously should be applauded. Not only is it the right thing to do, it is legally necessary to ensure that the Regional Plan meets state greenhouse gas reduction requirements by 2050.

The Five Big Moves concept is also needed for SANDAG jurisdictions with Climate Action Plans to meet their adopted targets. In fact, it is impossible for the City of San Diego to meet its legally-binding mode share goals with a Regional Plan that does not make substantial shifts in its investment in transit from previous Regional Plans.¹ The Five Big Moves is a shift from previous Regional Plans and its success will demonstrate the SANDAG Board's commitment to addressing the most pressing challenges of the 21st century.

¹ Circulate San Diego, "New Climate for Transportation," September 23, 2015, available at <http://www.circulatesd.org/newclimatefortransportation>.

2. The 2021 Regional Plan must include bus and Trolley enhancements in the immediate term.

San Diego needs improved transit today and there is political support for that investment. The large investment for new transit and future technologies proposed in the Five Big Moves will be for naught, if transit does not receive increased investments in the immediate term. Showing near term improvements will also help San Diegans believe that a greater transit vision can be in their future.

The 2021 Regional Plan should prioritize increased frequency and enhanced bus and Trolley service in the first phase of the plan including adding these projects to the SANDAG Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). As outlined in Circulate's 2018 letter,² we urge the Board to prioritize advancing high-performing transit projects, including increasing frequency for all three Trolley lines and upgrading successful bus lines into high quality Rapid lines with dedicated right of way. SANDAG should work as a collaborative partner with MTS as it prepares its ballot measure project list and ensure that the Regional Plan supports a potential new revenue source with complimentary and enhancing projects.

As discussions continue about planning for the remaining TransNet dollars, we urge the Board to consider maximizing its immediate impact by enhancing the Trolley and increasing frequency of successful bus lines. SANDAG should consider all of its options for TransNet, including by amending the ordinance. However, prioritization of transit can be accomplished without an amendment of TransNet, by making choices about phasing and prioritizing transit for grant applications and use of formula funds.³

Near-term SANDAG spending should support immediate service enhancements and planning for near-term capital improvements, and not dedicate substantial funding to planning for far off technologies and speculative projects. Future technologies promise more efficient and faster transit, but do not address today's needs. San Diego must plan for the rapidly evolving transportation future while also addressing immediate needs of its residents and legal requirements to reduce emissions, which is why we support advancing and prioritizing transit improvements in the first phase of the 2021 Regional Plan.

With Board direction, SANDAG has the ability to improve transportation regionally in ways that San Diegans will benefit from in the near future, and the long term.

Sincerely,



Maya Rosas
Director of Policy

Cc: SANDAG Board of Directors
Hasan Ikhata, Executive Director

² Circulate San Diego, Development of Efficient People-Moving Transportation Scenarios for the 2019 Regional Plan, April 12, 2018, available at http://www.circulatesd.org/letter_development_of_efficient_people_moving_transportation_scenarios_for_the_2019_regional_plan.

³ Circulate San Diego, TransNet Today, July 15, 2015, available at <http://www.circulatesd.org/transnettoday>.