



June 13, 2016

SANDAG
Gary Gallegos
401 B St. Ste. 800
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: Commitments to advancing transit in SANDAG's 2016 ballot measure

Dear Garry Gallegos:

On behalf of Circulate San Diego, whose mission is to create excellent mobility choices and vibrant, healthy neighborhoods, I am writing to make recommendations for how to provide certainty for advancing transit in SANDAG's proposed 2016 ballot measure.

Circulate San Diego sincerely appreciates the many efforts by the SANDAG board and staff to improve the text of November's proposed ballot measure. The most recent draft language discussed at the June 10, 2016 board meeting provides clarity and certainty for when SANDAG's measure would distribute active transportation funding and finance trolley service enhancements.¹ These are important improvements that we strongly support.

We believe that the measure can be further improved by providing a reasonable timeframe to complete the remaining transit projects listed in the measure's Priority Corridors program.

1. The ballot measure should be amended to provide a 15 year time frame to complete all of the transit projects in the Priority Corridors program.

The ballot measure should include text committing transit projects listed in the Priority Corridors program to be placed into service within 15 years of the ballot measure's passage. We recommend that a subsection (I) be added to Section 10, as described below:

Section 10(I): The transit projects listed in the Priority Corridors program in Section 14 shall be completed within 15 years of the adoption of this measure.²

¹ San Diego Association of Governments, Board Meeting Agenda (June 10, 2016), available at http://www.sandag.org/uploads/meetingid/meetingid_4269_20771.pdf.

² We recognize that different phrasing could achieve the results intended by this suggested text, and we are open to other formulations.

Language such as we are suggesting would not commit SANDAG to specific dates for individual projects. If some projects face larger barriers, they can be phased to the later end of the 15 year period. Projects with easier paths can be entered into service during earlier years.

A commitment for when transit projects will be advanced, even a commitment over a 15 year range, will provide certainty and confidence to voters and transit advocates alike. Not only would a commitment improve the transportation network in San Diego, but it would also improve the likelihood that San Diego voters adopt the proposed ballot measure.

2. SANDAG already committed enough funding to finance construction of its Priority Corridors transit projects within 15 years.

SANDAG staff presented on June 10 a schedule of expected timeframes for its Priority Corridors projects.³ That schedule showed that all of the transit projects SANDAG plans for its Priority Corridors can be completed within 15 years of the measure's passage. This is consistent with the financial analysis performed earlier by Circulate San Diego.⁴

Committing to a 15 year time frame for transit advancement will not require a change to SANDAG's current plans, or to reallocate funding from habitat, highways, local infrastructure, or other priorities for the agency.

3. SANDAG should commit to a time frame, and should not merely articulate a "goal."

At the June 10 board meeting, SANDAG staff responded to suggestions from board members for a commitment to advance transit by recommending the ballot measure only provide a goal for transit completion. While a goal would signal SANDAG's intent, and would be an improvement from the current ordinance draft, it would not be a binding target which SANDAG would be obligated to meet. Instead of a mere goal, SANDAG should commit to a time frame for advancing transit.

4. The ballot measure should include a safety valve to allow an extension of the 15 year time period if unforeseen circumstances come to pass.

While Circulate San Diego believes a commitment for transit phasing is an important component for SANDAG's ballot measure, that commitment should come with a safety valve. SANDAG staff has expressed concern about locking in the time frames for transit projects, fearing unforeseen circumstances like litigation or changes to federal funding. We sympathize with those concerns.

The time frame commitments we are suggesting would allow SANDAG to amend its commitments with a two-thirds vote of the SANDAG board, in accordance with Section 24 of the ballot measure. The

³ SANDAG, Handout at Board Meeting for Proposed Phasing Enhancements (June 10, 2016), available at <http://ow.ly/d/4Tcl>.

⁴ Circulate San Diego, Anatomy of a Ballot Measure, (May 11, 2016), page 13 and the final tab on the electronic appendix associated with this report, available at <http://www.circulatesd.org/anatomyofaballotmeasure>.

measure should provide a limited, but appropriate safety valve to amend time frames if unforeseen circumstances arise and a political consensus is found to adjust project phasing.

5. The 15 year time period should not be located within Section 14 of the measure, which would require a vote of the people to amend.

At the June 10 SANDAG board meeting, SANDAG legal counsel recommended against placing phasing commitments in Section 14, because Section 24 of the ballot measure prohibits the SANDAG board from amending Section 14 with a two-thirds vote. We agree with SANDAG's counsel and believe that any time frame commitments SANDAG makes for transit should be subject to an amendment by the SANDAG board if a supermajority agrees to do so.

Thank you for your continuing work to fund improvements to transportation choices in San Diego. We appreciate the efforts to address the concerns we have raised during this process, and we are hopeful that we can see SANDAG craft a ballot measure to enhance transit and active transportation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colin Parent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Colin Parent
Policy Counsel, Circulate San Diego