Board of Directors  
San Mateo County Transportation Authority (SMCTA)  
Via email: board@smcta.com

September 29, 2015  

Re: Measure A Highway Program Funds  

Dear Members of the SMCTA Board of Directors:

I am writing as the Executive Director of Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition (SVBC), a membership-based non-profit with the mission to create a healthy community, environment, and economy through bicycling for people who live, work, or play in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Thank you for considering our comments regarding the exclusion of the US 101/Holly Street interchange pedestrian/bicycle overcrossing from the eligible funding requests for Measure A Highway Program Funds.

It is not clear what the justification is for classifying the pedestrian/bicycle bridge as ineligible. The bridge is part of the US 101/Holly St. comprehensive project. Measure A previously funded $1.5 million in environmental funds to City of San Carlos for this project, which included the bike/ped overcrossing. Originally, City of San Carlos wanted to have a more inclusive design on the actual interchange but was stymied. However, to comply with various Complete Streets policies and offer a true transportation choice to people in San Mateo County, the city was motivated to create a separated bike/ped bridge and is now being penalized for this workaround by not receiving funds. The Highway Program’s stated purpose is to “Reduce congestion and improve safety on highways.” The bike/ped overcrossing would contribute to this stated purpose as well as all of the Measure A expenditure plan goals: Reduce commute corridor congestion, make regional connections, enhance safety, and meet local mobility needs.

Research shows that the better the bike facilities, the more safe people feel, and the more they will choose to bike. For example, in New York and Washington D.C., bike commuting doubled from 2008 to 2013 after protected bike lanes were built.¹ The separated bike/ped bridge has the potential to reduce car traffic on this interchange as well as ensure a safe option for people who wish to cross.

There is currently no safe crossing of Highway 101 for people who bike in San Carlos, a situation that can be remedied by this separated bike and pedestrian bridge. The proposed improvements to the US 101/Holly Street interchange

provide only limited pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across Route 101. While the new interchange design features Class II bike lanes and wider sidewalks, this will not encourage many to walk or ride their bike over the freeway. There are many people who will still be intimidated by the fast-moving vehicle traffic, high-speed turn lanes, crosswalks across on- and off-ramps, and discontinuous bike lanes. At SVBC, we encourage cities and jurisdictions to design for all ages and abilities, creating facilities that promote bicycling whether the user is a parent with their kids, an active adult, or a senior citizen. The separate bike and pedestrian overcrossing provides such a facility.

Last year, SMCTA addressed updated its 2014-2019 Measure A Strategic Plan to include Complete Streets into strategic planning processes and project selection for highway and grade separation categories. Additionally, Caltrans' Deputy Directive 64-R2 says that, “the Department provides for the needs of travelers of all ages and abilities in all planning, programming, design, construction, operations, and maintenance activities and products on the State Highway System.” US 101/Holly is a state-run highway interchange and should be planned to be inclusive. If a true Complete Streets design cannot be achieved on the interchange itself, then funding should be provided to alternatives, in this case the separated bike and pedestrian overcrossing.

We urge you to reconsider the decision to make this portion of the project ineligible for Measure A Highway Funds. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Shiloh Ballard
President and Executive Director

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2 California Department of Transportation  http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/complete_streets.html