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California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

RE: 10-ALT-1 - Comments on 2011-2012 Investment Plan

This letter provides comments on the 2011-2012 Investment Plan for the Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program in advance of the March 7, 2011 meeting of the Alternative Fuels Advisory Committee.

The 2011-2012 Investment Plan makes a significant step forward by recognizing the important role public transit plays in directly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan does this by providing funding for workforce training and development specifically targeted to public transit agencies. We recommend the CEC continue focused investments in public transit agency workforce development for 2011-2012.

As Deputy Director responsible for Maintenance and Security in one of the top 50 transit agencies in the United States, I am faced with declining revenue sources, increasing operating costs, and aging infrastructure, combined with a responsibility to maintain a state-of-good-repair and adopt more efficient technology. The most significant challenge facing public transit maintenance departments is the selection, training and retention of qualified employees.

The more than 600 maintenance employees working at the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) must be capable of performing the highly technical work of diagnosing, repairing, and operating the various systems, fleets, and technologies that work together to provide more than 450 buses and light rail vehicles needed for daily revenue service. VTA provides more than 125,000 daily trips in Santa Clara County and, combined with other transit agencies in the Northern CA Bay Area, well over 1.8 million people take advantage of public transit on an average weekday.

By funding workforce development targeted at public transit, the California Energy Commission is making further available the **NUMBER ONE STEP** most Americans can take today that will **immediately** reduce their global carbon footprint by 10-50%. Just switching from driving a private, single-occupant automobile to taking public transit one day a week can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by nearly 20%. In a recent report prepared for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), it was stated that "Transit reduces U.S. travel by an estimated 102.2 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) each year."¹

¹ The Broader Connection between Public Transportation, Energy Conservation and Greenhouse Gas Reduction February 2008 report prepared as part of TCRP Project J-11/ Task 3 Transit Cooperative Research Program, Transportation Research Board.

While a significant tool available to combat environmental sustainability, public transit is at or nearing crisis levels, with many agencies forced to reduce service and raise fares to manage increasing fuel, labor, and operating costs, while retaining and keeping highly skilled workforces trained and up-to-date on emerging technologies. The mechanics, technicians, operators, linemen, engineers, and managers employed by a transit agency must be capable of operating and maintaining the numerous computerized emissions control, hybrid engines, traction power, and rail signaling systems in use today. The days of “dirty” diesel buses carrying few passengers are gone. Light rail powered by sustainably generated electricity has the potential to be truly ZERO emission. Hybrid electric propulsion technology in use today is seeing improvements in fuel efficiency as much as 25% compared to standard diesel buses. Combine that with improvements in battery technology and utilization of bio-fuels, and public transit becomes an even more attractive greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategy.

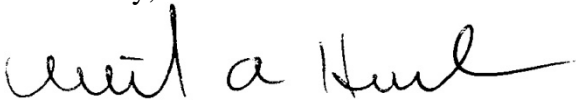
Santa Clara VTA wishes to commend the California Energy Commission staff for working with transit agencies, work force investment boards, and various labor organizations in prioritizing funding for workforce development in the most current Investment Plan. While the funding levels represent the bare minimum needed to effectively implement workforce development programs, Santa Clara VTA in partnership with our largest union the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 265, the California Labor Federation and the State of California Employee Development Department will utilize the funds to leverage previously highly successful industry-recognized joint labor management training programs.

Focusing on workforce development, the Investment Plan is concurrently accomplishing:

- further utilization of public transit (and commensurate GHG reductions);
- improved retention of employees in living-wage career jobs (and commensurate unemployment reductions); and
- assisting public agencies in identifying alternative strategies to reduce public transit fiscal crises.

Again, VTA recommends adopting the funding levels in the draft Investment Plan, and focusing additional and future investments on workforce development programs. While new technology continues to be deployed at VTA, combined with aging workforce considerations, significant workforce training requirements are projected for many years. The 2011-2012 Investment Plan establishes reasonable funding allocations that will directly assist VTA in meeting workforce development needs.

Sincerely,



Michael Hursh
Deputy Director – Maintenance and Security

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