June 18, 2021
Attn: Jennifer Soliz and Meg Prince
Fresno COG
2035 Tulare Street, Ste. 201
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Jennifer Soliz and Meg Prince,

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability works alongside residents in unincorporated communities of Cantua Creek, El Porvenir, Tombstone Territory, Lanare, and several neighborhoods in South Fresno to further community priorities including land use and transportation planning, increased access to transit services, active transportation, pedestrian safety measures, protection from truck traffic often increased from goods movement expansion, and protection from polluting and toxic uses. Below we offer initial comments and suggestions to the draft to improve each action's consistency with community priorities, especially those who have historically borne the burden yet enjoyed little of the benefit from transportation investments and programs.

Per California Government Code Section 65080(b)3, the Action Element must describe programs and actions necessary to implement the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), include short and long-term timelines to implement those actions, and identify the entity responsible for implementation. The Action Element must provide clear direction for how the RTP goals will be achieved. Moreover, as stated in the Caltrans Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (Guidelines), "the Action Element should also identify investment strategies, alternatives and project priorities". The draft Action Element falls short of complying with the requirements described above. The activities currently drafted by the Fresno Council of Governments (COG) have no short-term or mid-term actions, annual progress reports, or general reviews for the next 22 years. We look forward to seeing meaningful timelines and benchmarks in future drafts along with annual reporting on progress.

Moreover, the actions listed for each goal fail to address the disparate impacts black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have experienced through transportation (and lack of investment), and ensuring no further disparate impacts are created, through direct displacement and lack of investment. Federal Transportation Administration Circular 4703.1 (Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for FTA Recipients) (49 C.F.R. Sec. 21.5 (prohibiting discrimination in federally assisted programs, including programs funded by the Department of Transportation, on the grounds of race, color or national origin.); U.S. Dept. of Transportation, Order on Environmental Justice (Order 5610.2(a) (calling on transportation planning agencies to integrate environmental justice goals into transportation planning, including the prevention of disproportionate health and

environmental impacts on minority and low-income populations and prevention of denial or reduction in benefits to those populations))[1] Furthermore, cities and counties who participate in implementation of the Action Element are subject to a duty to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, which includes taking meaningful actions to address patterns of segregation and unequal living conditions to create truly integrated and balanced living patterns and transform areas of racially ethnically concentrated poverty into areas of opportunity, and must take no action inconsistent with this duty. Gov. Code Sec. 8899.50. We have provided "redlined" edits with specific language recommendations below to support these general comments and facilitate compliance by FCOG, Fresno County, and cities within Fresno with these mandates.

It is necessary for the draft Action Element to be ambitious in the actions they set forth and unequivocal in how they will be achieved. Thank you for your time and consideration of our recommendations. We look forward to working alongside the Fresno COG to ensure the Action Element along with the rest of the RTP is compliant with statute and reflective of community priorities. If any questions arise, please contact Karla Martinez at kmartinez@leadershipcounsel.org.

Sincerely,

Karla Martinez
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

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[1] See p. 2, available at https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_EJ_Circular_7.14-12_FINAL.pdf

GOAL #1) Improved mobility and accessibility for all.

Policy #1: Encourage and prioritize full, fair, and equitable participation by all affected communities in the transportation decision-making and planning processes.

Policy #2: Actively work to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of transportation projects.

Policy #3: Promote the improvement and expansion of accessible transportation options to serve the needs of all residents, especially those who have historically faced disproportionate transportation burdens.

~~Action~~Strategy
#1 Apply for and direct discretionary funding to community identified priorities that ~~Seek funding to~~ address multimodal transportation needs in ~~the region and incentivize transportation investments that benefit~~ disadvantaged communities. Applicants will partner with residents and community-based organizations (CBOs) for competitive applications. This includes competitive and formulaeic programs including but not limited to ATP, CMAQ, STBG, TOD, SB 1 programs, REAP, and Measure C.
~~Pursue~~ #2 Secure funding to improve and expand wheelchair accessible, paratransit, and non-emergency transportation services for elderly and individuals with disabilities
#3 ~~Annually~~ coordinate with regional transit providers to seek operational and administrative efficiencies.
~~Annually conduct outreach through the unmet transit needs process, to identify transit needs that are reasonable to meet throughout the region with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities.~~ #4 In partnership with communities and CBOs, develop a best practices community outreach and engagement model to regularly engage residents and build relationships. This will help identify transit needs throughout the region especially in disadvantaged communities.
#5 During public processes, such as updates of federal, state, and local plans and reports (ex. RTP/SCS, Title VI, Unmet Transit Needs, Measure C), partner with community-based organizations serving low-income and minority communities for targeted outreach to limited English proficiencies and hard to reach populations . Examples include mini grant program, social media posts and advertisement targeted to disadvantaged communities, and translated documents and web content.
#6 Ensure all competitive and formulaic transportation dollars support resident-identified priorities and are invested in a manner that addresses and reverses historic and existing inequitable investment strategies, decisions, and policies. Projects may include bike and pedestrian safety infrastructure, road maintenance, complete streets, transit access, ride share programs, etc.

#7 Support development of Implementation Committees in County and Cities districts to recommend final transportation projects to decision-making bodies. Committees will be made up of residents reflective of the area's demographics. Responsibilities will include reviewing and providing recommendations on transportation related projects to their Supervisor or City Councilmember. Meetings will take place as needed to identify projects for upcoming grants and funding sources, but will happen no less than twice per year.

GOAL #2) Vibrant communities that are accessible by sustainable transportation options.

Policy #4: Encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicles that reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy #5: Support investment in and promotion of active transportation and transit to improve public health and mobility, especially in historically underinvested areas.

Policy #6: Encourage sustainable development that focuses growth near activity centers and mobility options that achieve greater location efficiency.

Policy #7: Support local jurisdictions' efforts to minimize the loss of farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, and natural resources.

Policy #8: Support local jurisdictions' efforts to facilitate the development of diverse housing choices for all income groups.

Policy #9: Facilitate and promote interagency coordination and consistency across planning efforts.

Policy #10: Incentivize and support efforts to improve air quality and minimize pollutants from transportation.

~~Action~~Strategy
#1 Provide technical assistance, resources, and incentives to support SCS implementation, infill & mixed use development, equitable revitalization of local communities, and conserve natural resources. Examples include SB 743 Guidelines and VMT modeling, TOD Program, Circuit Planner Program, AHSC Technical Assistance, Blueprint, Greenprint, and GIS support.
#2 Incentivize and encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicles to reduce vehicle miles travelled, such as through continued administration and advertisement of the Measure C Carpool Program, funding to support vanpool programs, telework, expansion of shared TNC rides, ~~informational promotion materials for transit, biking, and walking in the region~~ expansion of transit and expansion of bike and pedestrian facilities. Assist and partner with employers and community groups seeking to establish programs mentioned above.

#3 Support member agencies, especially those with less staff capacity and resources, in applying and planning for active transportation, and investing in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to encourage healthy and convenient active transportation travel to ensure access to jobs, services, and recreation for populations with fewer transportation choices. Such support should include assisting member agencies without dedicated planning and fundraising staff to apply for relevant funding, plan for and implement active transportation projects. Other examples include seeking ~~explore~~ funding to update regional and citywide ATP plans and bicycle and pedestrian count data and hiring an ATP director/coordinator to facilitate implementation of projects.

#4: Develop a Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan and continue to support efforts to increase housing choices. Examples include the REAP program, policies and programs to comply with duties to affirmatively further fair housing, technical assistance with grant applications, serving as a regional forum for discussing housing issues.

#5: Support coordinated transportation planning efforts and interregional projects between and among the eight San Joaquin Valley Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

#6: ~~Pursue~~Secure funding to implement projects that are consistent with the Sustainable Communities Strategy and further state climate, equity, and environmental justice goals. Prioritize community-identified projects that benefit communities who have seen the least amounts of historic investment. ~~Example: Prioritize projects through the RTP project evaluation criteria that support these goals and policies.~~

#7: Promote compatible airport and land use planning throughout the region. Examples include the Airport Land Use Commission, participating in regional events, and coordination among local agencies and stakeholders.

#8 Coordinate with CARB, SJVAPCD, and local government agencies to reduce pollutants from transportation and implement community-identified projects designed to reduce emissions. Example: Implement projects identified in AB 617 implementation plan. ~~Support California Air Resources Board and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's efforts to reduce pollutants from transportation.~~

GOAL #3) A safe, well-maintained, efficient, and climate-resilient multimodal transportation network.

Policy #11: Prioritize investment in and promote multimodal safety measures to reduce traffic fatalities and incidents in the region.

Policy #12: Promote enhanced Transportation Systems Management (TSM) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to reduce congestion and vehicle miles travelled.

Policy #13: Encourage improvements in travel connections across all modes to create an integrated, accessible, and seamless transportation network.

Policy #14: Maximize the cost-effectiveness of transportation improvements.

Policy #15: Encourage investments that increase the system's resilience to extreme weather events, natural disasters, and pandemics.

Policy #16: Preserve and maintain existing multimodal transportation assets in a state of good repair.

~~Action~~Strategy
Support local jurisdictions' capacity to implement projects and measures that improve the resiliency of the transportation network regarding potential impacts of climate change. Examples include studies, incentives, and resources to support grid reliability for clean energy transportation options in rural areas, greening to reduce urban heat island effect, and increased funding/incentives for clean energy transportation including walking and biking.
~~Pursue~~ Secure funding to address safety issues in the region and implement transportation projects consistent with the identified issues prioritized by disadvantaged communities. Examples include implementing strategies from the Regional Safety Plan, developing a successful safety education program to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities caused by human behavior, grade separation and railroad crossing projects, and investing in pedestrian safety measures such as traffic lights, suitable crosswalks, and sidewalks.
Incentivize and ~~seek~~ secure funding for projects that reduce VMT. Additionally, provide support to agencies and groups with limited capacity / personnel to apply for competitive funding opportunities. Examples of projects include: ~~ITS, signal synchronization~~, shared mobility options, carpool/vanpool programs, active transportation, and improved transit access.
Encourage employers to utilize Transportation Demand Management strategies to reduce VMT. Examples include encouraging alternatives to single occupancy vehicles, ride sharing, alternative work schedules,subsidizing transit passes, providing safe bicycle parking,and telework.
Work with federal and state agencies to set annual safety targets and implement programs to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

Collaborate with the state agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and other organizations on efforts to study and advocate for a sustainable and more equitable replacement to fuel taxes.
In coordination with local and state governing agencies, complete a grid analysis study to support electrification and zero-emission transportation systems.
Maintain the Congestion Management Process (CMP) and implement CMP measures that do not induce demand or create negative local traffic or air impacts.
Seek Ensure funding revenues for state-of-good repair improvements including road maintenance preservation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. State of good repair improvements should be prioritized in existing communities that have had a long history of divestment and deferred maintenance.

GOAL #4) A transportation network that supports a sustainable and vibrant economy.

Policy #17: Support local and regional economic development by leveraging planning and transportation funds that foster public and private investment.

Policy #18: Facilitate efficient, reliable, resilient, and sustainable goods movement.

~~Action~~Strategy
Work cooperatively with the private sector and impacted neighborhoods to ensure that the mobility needs of the business community within Fresno County are addressed, that safety, mobility, and public health needs of Fresno County residents are addressed, and that climate and environmental goals. are furthered.
~~Support efforts to improve efficiency and sustainability and preserve and expand options for goods movement through the region. Examples include the California Inland Port, I-5 Zero Emission Freight Pilot Study, farm to market activities.~~
Support efforts to implement High Speed Rail and station area planning in the region. For example, ensure community priorities are included in these planning and implementation efforts, and ensure the public is engaged in these processes.
Support education and job training programs that address transportation needs and create job and career opportunities for BIPOC residents and residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods. Examples include: targeted training and hiring for individuals from protected classes and lower income neighborhoods, New Vision Aviation program, Sustainable Aviation Project.

GOAL #5) A region embracing clean transportation, technology, and innovation.

Policy #19: Support innovative mobility solutions that are accessible, affordable, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve air quality.

Policy #20: Support efforts to expand broadband access throughout the region.

~~Action~~Strategy
Encourage and support employers who implement telecommute strategies.
Support equitable electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure deployment and EV general education throughout the region and seek funding to implement projects that support Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan targeting disadvantaged communities. Examples include supporting pursuit of funding for EV replacement vehicles, electrification of school bus fleets, ~~compressed natural gas buses~~ , solar, and EV planes. Pursue power purchase agreements for microgrid projects in rural Fresno County. Construction of a new technology maintenance and operations facility maintenance with charging infrastructure, solar and battery storage to enhance rural transit operations and increase resiliency.
Support efforts to research, plan, and implement pilot projects for microtransit and micromobility (such as bike and scooter share) and deployment of other new and innovative technologies to support research, development, demonstration projects, and deployment of new and innovative technologies. Prioritize pilot projects that support and/or derive from community-driven processes.
Follow the development of autonomous vehicles and connected vehicles and plan for the readiness of our region for AV/CV. This includes ensuring equitable access and distribution to this technology so disadvantaged communities are not left behind as the technology mainstreams.
Explore potential to conduct regional broadband planning to support future mobility options and transportation networks prioritizing communities who currently do not have access to this infrastructure.
Support funding for travel surveys and procurement of Big Data to help better understand the origin and destination travel patterns in the region. [While capturing data is important and useful, there should be clearer direction on the use of Big Data. What will travel patterns be used for? Will it help determine public transportation systems by using travel patterns? Big Data has frequently been used for freight movements and routing and good movements. How will collection of Big Data fall in line with the goal and policies?]
Create inclusive, accessible opportunities to develop a regional vision of transit accessibility that integrates existing service options with new mobility options.