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Subject: SMCTA desire to deprioritize VMT reduction.
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I was shocked when reading the Executive Directors December 13 letter to The Honorable Toks Omishakin, that the board encourages deprioritizing VMT reduction. The Executive Director says:

The TA supports several Draft CAPTI Actions:

- *Development of a Statewide Express Mobility Plan. San Mateo County has existing express lanes and can bring its experience to a working group ...*

San Mateo County's has only added capacity in order to build its express lane. It has widened 101 and added another lane to 101 south of 380. It proposes to do so again to build additional express lane mileage north of 380. This will increase VMT, GHG, pollution, decrease safety, public health, and equity for disadvantaged communities. All in opposition to CAPTI's goals.

- *Development of a prioritization methodology for climate adaptation projects ... [that] will require tens of billions of dollars.*
We should wholeheartedly support climate adaptation, climate change is here. But we should also be saying that we should prioritize climate change prevention. We should spend even more upon that.

As a transportation agency, that means supporting the science. The only proven approach, not conjecture, not hopes and dreams, not wishful thinking, the only approach that we know works is mode shifting. We must move VMT from less efficient to more efficient modes. For personal travel that means, trains, buses, bicycles, micro mobility, walking. If we are willing to spend tens of billions on adaptation, we must be willing to spend multiple times that on avoiding the problem in the first place. Better to avoid a problem, than deal with it later.

I do not see us saying this anywhere. We should be saying that in every letter like this.

- *Improve VMT analysis and mitigation ... While reducing VMT is an important goal, it's one of many ...*

This section seems to imply that VMT reduction requirements are too stringent. We have yet in San Mateo, in California, to achieve ANY VMT reduction. Should we not wait until we have at least partly met this goal, before we relax the requirements to meet it?

But it is is concerned:

- about the TCEP Program Update: we need to be able to *fund project ... even if they result in some degree of unmitigated VMT.*

Again, we have achieved no VMT reduction. Zero. How can we possibly relax requirements that will lead to VMT reduction, when they have so far have resulted in none.

Increasing VMT and GHG will continue to accelerate climate change, continue to cause disastrous change that will impact the great grandchildren of our great grand children. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it will take far longer to stuff it back in than it took to let it out. This is not an exaggeration, it is the current opinion of nearly every climatologist.

There is little most of us can do about this. The only power most of us have is to plead with you to do the right thing. But you all have real power. You fund projects. You can sway those who hold power in other Local, State, and Federal agencies. Please use that power to fund projects that will save our world, and not consign it to a hundred years or more of suffering. And, please stop asking to increase VMT.

Seeking to spend CAPTI funds to promote programs and changes that oppose CAPTI's mission is simply wrong. Seeking to permit VMT increases is simply wrong. Both are ethically indefensible.

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VMT is growing. To stave off Climate Change we need to reduce to something like 30% below 1990 levels. We are not even close. In most reports I've looked at no 5 year period has seen a reduction. Covid threw a bit of a wrinkle in things. But even there, if you look at 2019-2024 so that the Covid effect is "hidden" in between, VMT goes up. For example:

- <https://vitalsigns.mtc.ca.gov/indicators/daily-miles-traveled>. Between 2001 and 2019 VMT went from 160 million to 180 million miles traveled PER DAY. And that is in the the Bay Area alone.
- <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/appc13.pdf>. Past and projected VMT per CA county. For San Mateo County:
 - 1990: 17,822,000
 - 2020: 22,613,000
 - 2025: 23,452,000
 - 2035: 25,135,000