Phillip A. Washington  
CEO, Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
cc. Metro Board of Directors  

Re: Proposed framework for potential 2016 Metro sales tax ballot measure

With a fourth countywide transportation-revenue sales tax potentially available on a November 2016 ballot for Los Angeles voters, Community Health Councils (CHC) welcomes the opportunity to submit our vision for a Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (“Metro”) ballot measure framework. As a non-profit community-based health education and policy organization serving South Los Angeles and other disadvantaged communities since 1992, CHC has witnessed the laudable initiatives from Metro in the past 20+ years. We are excited to contribute to the potential future of transportation in the region and particularly optimistic about a smarter, more sustainable and equitable system for Los Angeles’ future. As an engaged community partner with other public health and social justice-minded stakeholders, we strongly support the proposed equity framework spearheaded by Investing in Place. This letter provides more specific recommendations that support that high-level vision of a Metro system that recognizes the important impact transportation systems have on vulnerable populations.

Below we outline several recommended projects for a future investment framework that we believe are beneficial to improving transit ridership, creating quality transit-oriented communities, and introducing innovative strategies for transportation demand management.

1) Prioritize extension of the Crenshaw Line with a Phase 2 northern route connecting to the Purple and Red Lines

The revolutionary transformation of Crenshaw Boulevard into a multi-modal corridor for light rail should not terminate in South Los Angeles at the intersection of the Expo Line. While the project promises unprecedented rail transit access to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), it fails to deliver on its full potential of providing a mid-city north/south rail connection that would link multiple rail lines and some of the densest, most job- and destination-rich neighborhoods in the region. A second phase of route planning and construction should be prioritized that would continue the line north from Exposition through Mid-City, connecting to the Purple Line on Wilshire, and then through the Fairfax
District and West Hollywood, terminating at the Hollywood and Highland Red Line station.

South Los Angeles currently yields one of the highest commute rates by transit in Los Angeles with a 19% mode share as well as a high rate of zero-vehicle households (11% compared to 5% for LA County). While bus service is heavily utilized in the neighborhood, it makes sense to provide a citywide connection for future Crenshaw Line riders without requiring one to two transfers.

2) **Implement system-wide adaptive ramp metering ("Smart Freeways") connected with expanding the ExpressLanes program to HOV on-ramps.**

Los Angeles County has over 1,000 freeway ramp meters and the vast majority of are monitored and controlled remotely in real time. However according to Caltrans staff, we do not yet use this system to combat congestion. Implementation of Smart Freeways would mean that ramp metering lights would adjust their timing to slow the flow of traffic onto the freeway in order to reduce congestion "downstream", and conversely, speed the flow of traffic onto the freeway when traffic is flowing smoothly – all in real time response to real time data regarding traffic conditions.

Aggressive implementation of Smart Freeways would enhance efforts to promote alternative modes. Immediately, the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) on-ramp lanes (the typical on-ramp has one metered lane and one HOV lane) would now be more valuable and thus more effectively promote transit, carpooling and all-electric vehicles. But more importantly, having established a relatively congestion-free condition on the freeways, Metro could expand its highly successful ExpressLanes demonstration project to include HOV ramp lanes, and thus provide drivers with better options to avoid congestion as well as generate a revenue stream for alternative modes.

By diverting small fraction of the projected freeway improvement funds, we could eliminate freeway congestion, leverage that investment into a revenue stream for alternative modes, and highlight Los Angeles as a world leader in the smart, innovative use of data to solve problems.

3) **Include a comprehensive Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Network Plan and prioritize transit on all Grand Boulevards.**

As Metro looks to expand transit ridership it should diversify strategies by improving the quality of service for bus as well as increase the miles of rail. A regional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network plan with bus line standard features such as quality stop amenities, signal prioritization, and all-door boarding could cost-effectively bring rail-like transit service within walking
distance of nearly everyone in Los Angeles County. While a BRT network would require sharing the road with cars and potentially transforming vehicle lanes to bus-only lanes, a quality BRT experience would provide more travelers with convenient and effective options for trips that don’t require a private automobile.

A Grand Boulevards component in the sales tax funding framework should make sure that the proposed boulevards become a unified network of connected BRT corridors as opposed to a disconnected array of beautiful and walkable streetscapes accessible regionally only by car. Although local officials must of course determine the details of how a Grand Boulevard will be implemented in their respective locales, Metro needs to ensure that the corridors become a multi-modal connected regional network.

Efficient, connected BRT lines can serve as the backbone of community-centered corridors. Transit riders don’t require parking amenities at their destination and become pedestrians once they alight, supporting a land use composition that is more pleasant and community-oriented. Further, transit riders can add to a bustling and thriving sidewalk culture, stimulating the local economy and activating public space. While Grand Boulevards should also consider infrastructure and facilities to support safe, accessible travel by bike, scooter, foot and other active modes, prioritizing transit also supports active transportation users by providing connections to further destinations.

As Metro moves forward with gathering community input for a future framework of the region’s potential fourth sales tax revenue generator, CHC is appreciative of the opportunity to support the agency in defining priorities and projects that can mutually meet agency sustainability goals and needs of Metro’s core ridership and disadvantaged communities. We look forward to continuing conversations in how Metro and the riders it serves can partner in shaping an equitable, effective transportation system for a healthy, prosperous Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

D. Malcolm Carson
General Counsel and Policy Director of Environmental Health

1 Plan for Healthy Los Angeles, Los Angeles Department of City Planning – 2013. Figure 34, p. 111.