March 8, 2013

Ms. Mary Nichols

Chair, California Air Resources Board

1001 I Street

Sacramento CA 95814

RE:  Investment plan for cap-and-trade auction revenues

Dear Chair Nichols:

As a City Council member in Emeryville, transportation policy analyst and mother of two, I would like to express my strong support for the Sustainable Communities for All Proposal. I believe the vision of SB 375 can be achieved equitably and efficiently by providing transportation and housing choices that allow Californians to drive less and reduce household costs, especially for low-income households.

I can see how critical public transportation is to the people of Emeryville. We are unusual in that our businesses and the city provide a free shuttle service to BART called Emery-Go-Round with 1.3 million riders per year. But it is not enough. People need better public infrastructure to make public transit the easy and convenient choice. We can do better.

I believe it is critical to build both homes and transit that are affordable and accessible to lower-income households, while supporting active transportation to improve health. Just this week, the Census Bureau named the San Francisco area the nation’s “megacommuter” capitol – people who travel at least 50 miles and 90 minutes to work – with San Jose close behind. When people are priced out of homes near job centers and high-quality transit hubs, they must drive long distances to work.

According to a recent report by the California Housing Partnership Corporation, preserving and building affordable homes near transit will allow California to achieve the maximum VMT and GHG-reduction benefits of investment in transit infrastructure and transit-oriented development.

Sprawl and congestion are also bad for health - each additional hour spent in a car per day is associated with a 6 percent increase in the likelihood of obesity. Investing in safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and programs like Safe Routes to School improves health in both urban and rural areas, and especially in minority communities where pedestrians are significantly more likely to be killed by vehicles.

Investments like these will have the greatest impact on the communities most affected by climate change while also increasing access to opportunities.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Sincerely,

Jennifer West

Emeryville City Council member

cc: Ryan Wiggins, TransForm rwiggins@transformca.org