August 27, 2009

Chairman Mike McKeever and Members
Regional Targets Advisory Committee
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

Dear Chairman McKeever and Regional Targets Advisory Committee Members:

As the primary transit operator in the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys of Los Angeles County, Foothill Transit understands the significance of regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets not just to our community, but to the nation as a whole. Foothill Transit is pleased to provide contextual considerations to policy makers who continue to keep California on the forefront of the environmental protection movement. We sincerely appreciate your tireless efforts on this front.

The Foothill Transit Joint Powers Authority is comprised of 22 member cities and Los Angeles County. We support the passage of SB 375 and the subsequent GHG reduction targets. Our primary goal related to SB 375 is to ensure that adequate transit funding becomes not only a sustainably-backed allocation of state resources, but a step which effectively positions transit organizations to be the principal means of meeting reduction targets. With sufficient resources, public transportation can create measurable, lasting reductions in GHG emissions throughout California.

The American Public Transportation Association stated that nationally, 86% of transit agencies reported a growth in ridership in 2008, with Foothill Transit contributing to that figure. Unfortunately, state funding to transit agencies does not coincide with these trends. With over five billion dollars in state transit funds cut since 2000, public transportation providers struggle to provide more service with fewer resources, consequently forcing the public to continue single-occupancy vehicle usage. This is highly counterproductive to reducing GHG emissions from passenger vehicles. State population growth continues to mount and state funding cuts limit public transportation’s long-term policies to provide services to accommodate this growth. Additionally, this funding decrease not only encourages environmentally detrimental modes of transportation in the short-term, but directly impacts agencies’ ability to invest in innovative, clean technology.

An overall reduction in GHG emissions from passenger vehicles simply must require an increase in funding for transit projects and important factors should be considered with this venture. As such, we recommend the following key factors for your consideration in the development of state-wide reduction targets:

1. **Public transit funding is forward thinking in its capacity to accommodate increased ridership levels as a result of population growth and promotes less personal vehicle usage.** According to the California Department of Finance, California’s population is expected to increase to 48 million by the year 2020. The California High Speed Rail Authority reported that congestion costs California $20 billion annually in wasted fuel and time. Current expenditures are not efficient nor are they environmentally friendly. Population growth means more cars on the road and most notably- more GHG emissions. Considering savings of time, money, and negative externalities, Californians are projected to embrace new transportation projects in a positive and heightened manner. As such, public transit funding can provide real solutions to both population growth and its consequent effect on GHG emissions by taking cars off of the road. **State funding for public transportation projects offers a plausible alternative to current, environmentally destructive modes of transportation and is a sustainable, long-term policy, capable of enduring increased ridership and meeting regional reduction targets.**
2. **Public transit funding allows transit agencies to expand current service provision by allowing for investments in research and the purchase of clean technologies.** To meet regional reduction targets, the public must get on the bus and rail lines and out of their cars. This must require sufficient funding for public transportation projects. The Foothill Transit Electric Bus Demonstration Project (scheduled to launch in 2010) will be the first of its kind in the world and provides a prime model for examination. This zero emissions prototype utilizes innovative, quick-charge battery technology and light-weight composite body construction making it both a new reality and the wave of the future. We have committed over five million ARRA dollars to develop this model – an investment that will have impact well beyond our region. The air quality challenges that we face demand that we do not hesitate to expand beyond what’s available into what is possible, and state funding makes this achievable. **With appropriate funding, transit agencies can aid in meeting regional reduction targets by providing advanced modes of public transportation.**
3. **Public transit funding must mean an initial increase in GHG emissions by transit agencies, but positions agencies to reduce overall regional GHG emissions from passenger vehicles and therefore meet reduction targets.** Assuming that transit agencies use portions of state funding to provide more services (with current technology) in correlation with increased demand, this would inevitably mean a temporary rise in transit agency emissions. However, this short-term increase would be offset by the GHG emissions reduction realized from those opting to take public transit over personal vehicle use. So, in the short-term, even though agency emissions would temporarily increase, overall regional emissions reductions would transpire. In the long-term, with appropriate funding allowing for investments in new electric and hybrid bus technologies, agencies would be able to provide even higher service levels while emitting even fewer GHGs than in the short-term. **Increased public transit funding thus provides overall GHG emissions reductions scenarios in both the short and long- term.**
4. **In order to meet regional reduction targets, local governments should be encouraged to work in a collaborative partnership with transit agencies.** The fundamental link between a region meeting reduction targets and that region’s local government support of transit agencies cannot be understated.  Transit agencies need the support of their local governments to expand service provision and to ultimately create sustainable transportation plans by reducing passenger miles. When local government becomes a barrier to service expansion, regional pollution is adversely affected. **Cross-sectoral partnerships between local government and transit entities position entire regions to meet reduction targets.**

Funding for public transportation is an integral step in regional GHG emissions reductions and in moving California toward an environmentally sustainable future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Doran Barnes

Executive Director