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April 25, 2011

Ms. Elsa Ortiz, President Board of Directors
Ms. Mary King, General Manager
Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District
1600 Franklin Street, 10th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: Recommended Changes to the Transit Fare Policy to align with Health Equity Goals

Dear President Ortiz and Ms. King:

We are writing to follow-up on our February 28, 2011 letter regarding the proposed Transit Fare Policy. As we stated in that letter, the impact of this policy extends beyond transportation. Affordable transportation is a violence prevention measure. It is a long-term truancy prevention measure. It ensures people don't have to choose between getting to work and buying groceries. In short, it is an essential component of growing healthy people and healthy communities. The Transit Fare Policy proposes to set in motion a series of monthly pass increases that will decrease transit affordability for youth, seniors, and disabled populations, potentially threatening the health of the people we serve (please see our February 28, 2011 letter for a full accounting of the impacts).

While we are supportive of creating a policy that makes it easier for AC Transit and passengers to plan for changes in revenues/fares, the proposed Pricing and Schedule for Proposed District Fare Structure makes the monthly passes for youth, seniors, and disabled too expensive, and the policy does not include specific enough plans to evaluate the necessity or impact of the increases and adjust accordingly. Even though the proposed increases would be made incrementally, such dramatic increases overall will be difficult for households to absorb given persistently high unemployment rates and falling real income among the main populations AC Transit serves: low income people of color who are transit dependent, and senior and disabled populations on fixed incomes. Furthermore, as the policy is currently written, if the economy improves, the proposed fare increases stand. If AC Transit identifies new sources of revenue, the fare increases stand. Though the proposal includes commitment to review the appropriateness of the fare increase schedule at the five-year point, this is after an \$11.50 increase to the youth monthly pass and a \$6.50 increase to the senior and disabled pass. Additionally, the policy states that the fare schedule would be reviewed against changes in AC Transit District costs, leaving an opening for the future introduction of monthly fare pass increases beyond what is already proposed.

Additionally, the proposed Transit Fare Policy places an undue burden on youth, making this policy inequitable and thus not aligned with one of the policy's stated goals. The proposed youth monthly pass increase represents the greatest proposed increase overall. Additionally, people ages 13-17 disproportionately rely on AC Transit

for transportation. Your 2009 Ridership Survey states that youth ages 13-17 make up 22.7% of your riders. However, youth ages 13-17 make up only 8.2% of the general population 13 years of age and older in Alameda County, indicating that youth ages 13-17 are over represented in your ridership. Targeting the largest overall fare increases to a population that disproportionately relies on your services – people that do not have another transportation option and so have no choice but to pay fare increases – cannot be considered equitable.

We are writing to ask you to again consider no increase to the youth and senior/disabled monthly passes. As stated in our previous letter, this policy has significant health equity implications. However, if you deem that there is no way to avoid the increase, **we request that the policy set out less increases overall.** Right now, the proposal is a 200% increase to the monthly youth pass and a 125% increase to the senior and disabled pass.

Both of these need to come down. Furthermore, **we ask you to write the policy in such a way that future fare increases are not a given. We would like the policy to include a commitment not to increase youth and senior and disabled monthly passes beyond what is written into this policy for the life of this policy (2020) and to reevaluate the necessity of future increases to the monthly youth, senior and disabled bus passes before each fare increase is implemented.** As part of this commitment, we ask that you commit to **partnering with our office, Alameda County Public Health Department, and other stakeholders to find funding for an evaluation of the fare increases' impacts on riders' well-being,** including impacts to health equity, access to education and jobs, crime, and to ridership, before the fare changes take place, or at least before the second increment of changes take place. As part of this assessment, we would also look at whether low fares for youth actually create an inequitable situation for adults, as stated in the memo to the Board of Directors regarding the Transit Fare Policy, dated March 9, 2011 (http://www.actransit.org/wp-content/uploads/board_memos/GM%2011-053%20Revised.pdf).

Thank you for considering our proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Supervisor Keith Carson
Alameda County Board of Supervisors

Anita Siegel, RN, MPH
Director
Alameda County Public Health Department

cc: Alex Briscoe, Director, Health Care Service Agency
AC Transit Board of Directors

enc: February 28, 2011 letter to AC Transit Board President Ortiz and General Manager King