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July 19, 2017

**AUG - 1 2017**

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court  
By: C. Brennan  
Deputy

The Honorable Boessenecker  
Superior Court of California  
County of Napa  
825 Brown Street  
Napa, CA 94559

**RE: Response to the Grand Jury 2016-17 Final Report titled Napa Valley Transportation Agency Vision 2040 Plan – County Traffic Problems Need Comprehensive Plan with Measurable Results**

Dear Judge Boessenecker:

The Grand Jury report referenced above requests three separate responses. This response is specific to the Napa Valley Transportation Authority's (NVTA) Executive Director. The NVTA Board's Response and County Board of Supervisor's response will be sent separately.

The Grand Jury is to be commended for its work on behalf of the citizens of Napa County. We acknowledge the arduous undertaking of the Grand Jury and its commitment to produce an earnest and comprehensive report requiring the review hundreds of documents and an immense amount of data.

This letter is intended to clarify some of the information included in the Background section of the report and to respond to the Findings and Recommendations.

**Clarifications:**

- 1) The report misstates the name of the agency as Napa Valley Transportation *Agency*. The correct name is Napa Valley Transportation Authority.
- 2) On page 3 of the report, it states that "NVTA is responsible for providing a realistic and executable traffic management plan for the county". NVTA is responsible for providing a countywide transportation plan (CTP) which is intended to serve as a *vision* document for all jurisdictions in Napa County. Specifically stated by MTC's guidelines:  
*CTPs are intended to establish a county's long-range transportation vision, goals and priorities. This long-range transportation planning*

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*context is increasingly important given the complexity of the transportation system in the Bay Area. CTPs serve as significant input to Plan Bay Area, which explicitly addresses regional priorities and funding constraints.*

*CTPs can be particularly effective if they: Establish a transportation policy context;*

- Provide a focal point for integrating city, county, and regional level transportation plans;*
- Prioritize transportation investments for consideration in the RTP/SCS development process; and,*
- Respond to local needs and provide a basis for creativity and innovation for the county and region.*

- 3) On page 4 of the report, it states that NVTA is “the County’s designated Congestion Management Agency (CMA)” [emphasis added]. NVTA is a Joint Powers Authority and was formed to serve its 6 jurisdiction members – not just the County. While its role is to complete certain tasks that are assigned to CMAs, NVTA has *not been designated* as a “Congestion Management Agency” pursuant to statute. The statute requires that CMA’s produce a Congestion Management Plan – a task that NVTA is not responsible for completing. A Congestion Management Plan is a biennial exercise to refine near term project expenditures and to understand the implications of those expenditures. The plan includes but is not limited to traffic impacts, system performance, travel demand element, evaluation of land use impacts, and 7-year capital improvement program. The Grand Jury report does not seem to distinguish between the statutory requirements of a CMA and the responsibilities of NVTA in its role in Napa. NVTA is responsible for preparing a countywide transportation plan and a prioritized expenditure plan, to be incorporated in the regional transportation plan prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).
- 4) On page 4, the report refers to the “VINE bus service.” NVTA dispensed with the acronym created by the City of Napa when it was operating the system. The name of the bus service is now “the Vine.”
- 5) On page 5, the report references the anticipated funding shortfall in the Vision 2040 plan and notes that Measure T is “mostly for street maintenance” implying that it can be used for other transportation purposes. With exception of 1% set aside for administration, Measure T revenues must be used only for streets and road rehabilitation and maintenance.
- 6) On page 7, the report refers to “three other studies”. Of the documents listed, only one is a study – the Travel Behavior Study. The other two documents include the Community Based Transportation Plan which is a

*plan* required by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to ensure infrastructure and transportation services for low income populations are adequately addressed. The Priority Development Area (PDA) Investment and Growth Strategy, also a requirement of MTC to receive One Bay Area Grant funds, outlines strategies that the jurisdictions overseeing the PDAs will use to encourage successful growth and development in these designated areas. The latter two documents are combined in the letter misrepresenting that they are the same document rather than two separate documents addressing significantly distinct subject matters.

- 7) On page 8, the report states “What the Grand Jury observed were studies upon studies, yet no specific, actionable, measurable plans to reduce traffic congestion.” All the committed projects in the plan were screened on criteria that are linked back to the Board-established goals and objectives. This exhaustive list is included on page 151 of the Countywide Transportation Plan and includes over 5 pages of screening criteria. Congestion relief is not the sole purpose of the document. Some of the goals prioritize system safety, while others ensure mobility for all members of our communities or promote project efficiencies to stretch transportation dollars further. A list of (*actionable and measurable*) remedies are included at the end of every chapter in Vision 2040 – projects recommendation that could be pursued to improve transportation in Napa, including measures that would reduce congestion.
- 8) On page 8, the report goes on to state, “One example of this [*studies upon studies with no actionable items*] is the costly Fehr & Peers Travel Behavior Study which details where traffic emanates from and why, and yet, the V2040 report doesn’t appear to utilize this data in planning”. NVTa used this information to define the traffic congestion problem in a number of places in the document and continues to use this data to lay the foundation for other plans (e.g. 2017 Express Bus Study and Comprehensive Operational Analysis). Some examples of how it was used in Vision 2040 include;
  - Page 32 and Page 44 – capturing commute trips and linking the figures back to the disparity between the amount of available housing and costs of housing and the average income of the jobs created in Napa.
  - Page 52 – includes a prescriptive list of actions that will help reverse these challenges.
  - Page 71 – Informs Transportation Demand Management concepts in the plan.
- 9) On page 9, the report states “The public needs a local county task force that will address all essential issues and develop a plan that will address all essential issues and develop a plan that will address traffic congestion,

economic development, high-value job creation, and affordable housing with a comprehensive approach and a simple scorecard for review.” NVTA has a number of committees that serve in the capacity to advise the board on the functions that NVTA is tasked to carry out including in the area of planning. These committees and their responsibilities are included in Table 1 below. Furthermore, NVTA does not have jurisdiction over economic development, high-value job creation, or affordable housing creation within the County.

Table 1: NVTA Committees, Membership and Responsibilities

Committee Name	Membership	Responsibilities
Citizen Advisory Committee	19 members representing business, education, environmental, municipal, county, hospitality, agriculture, wine, senior, and health interests	The CAC serves to provide the Napa Valley Transportation Authority with advice, comments and suggestions pertaining to multi-modal plans, programs, and projects administered by NVTA of interest to the citizens of Napa County.
Technical Advisory Committee	Public Works Director and Planning Directors from each jurisdiction or their staff designee	The Committee shall advise the NVTA Board of Directors on transit and roadway issues, including planning, project, and policy aspects which are referred to the Committee either by the Board or the Executive Director. It shall be the members' responsibility to keep their respective appointing agencies informed of key issues, facilitate communication between those agencies and NVTA, and to help build the consensus necessary to advise the NVTA regarding policy decisions.
Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)	Eleven representatives from six jurisdictions. Four members from the City of Napa, two members from the County of Napa, two members from the City of American Canyon and 1 member each for the Town of Yountville, City of St. Helena, and City of Calistoga.	The ATAC shall act to advise the NVTA on the development of Active Transportation facilities, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities as alternative modes of transportation. The ATAC shall review and/or prioritize Transportation Develop Act (TDA) Article 3, Active Transportation projects and participate in the development and review of comprehensive bicycle, pedestrian, and active transportation plans.

Table 1: NVTA Committees, Membership and Responsibilities - continued

Committee Name	Membership	Responsibilities
Paratransit Coordinating Council	1 member transit user over 60 years old, 1 transit user with disabilities, 1 social services provider for seniors, 1 social services provider for persons with disabilities, 1 social services provider for persons of limited means, 2 members of the public residing within an urbanized area, 1 member of the public residing within a nonurbanized area	Pursuant to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) policies related to Paratransit Coordinating Councils, the PCC shall advise the NVTA Board of Directors and the MTC regarding setting priorities for transportation services, review and make recommendations regarding the submission of claims for certain TDA and UMTA (FTA) funds and allocations consistent with its priorities, and address coordination of paratransit services within Napa County

**Findings:**

**Finding 1** A majority of interviewees view the Vision 2040 Report's proposed highway improvement lists, bike lanes, and new buses as insufficient to solve Napa County's traffic congestion problem.

RESPONSE: The NVTA Executive Director neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. The finding is stated as an opinion. That said, as previously stated in the clarifications above, the purpose of Vision 2040 is to create a "road map" for solving many transportation-related challenges in Napa which are not limited to congestion alone.

**Finding 2** No quantifiable measurements are in place for the Board or the public to assess Napa County congestion management goals, determine results on a timeline, or evaluate the efficacy of NVTA budgets and spending.

RESPONSE: The NVTA Executive Director agrees with this finding in part. The NVTA Executive Director agrees with the assertion that there are "no quantifiable measurements" in place to assess NVTA's countywide transportation goals. While there are a number of goals and objectives included in Vision 2040, the Executive Director concurs with the Grand Jury's assessment that no measurable performance targets were established.

**Finding 3** The NVTA does an inadequate public relations job of educating the community of all their responsibilities, activities and progress toward achieving goals.

**RESPONSE:** The NVTA Executive Director agrees with this finding in part. NVTA staff members work diligently to engage members of the public on its many plans, programs, and responsibilities. In the past two years, the agency has undergone a major rebranding exercise for both the agency and the Vine transit system. NVTA has also created a full time Public Information Officer position whose primary responsibility it is to update the website, communicate through social media, develop information materials, and organize public outreach events. The notion the public is still confused about what NVTA is responsible for is not unlike the challenges that many transportation agencies experience. We agree that more work needs to be done to educate the public and to engage them on NVTA activities and actions being considered by the NVTA board. NVTA staff will continue to evaluate innovative solutions to improve its communications with members of the public.

**Finding 4** The NVTA needs to better utilize data and travel demand software to (a) project future transportation conditions, (b) forecast the need for and the potential effectiveness of transportation projects and infrastructure improvements, and (c) identify the impact of land use development.

**RESPONSE:** The NVTA Executive Director respectfully disagrees with this finding. NVTA partners with the Solano Transportation Authority (STA) to fund a consultant to design and run the traffic demand modeling software. Traffic demand models are inherently complicated and the computers that run the models are very expensive. It should be noted that land use is a critical component included in a traffic model to determine the efficacy of project alternatives, and NVTA relies on its jurisdictions to update the traffic analysis zones which includes jobs, housing, and developments used by the model to predict traffic demand. These updates are time intensive and arduous, and consequently are sometimes delayed, or not completed frequently enough to generate accurate results. Over the last year, NVTA and STA have contracted with a consultant to build a new traffic model – an activity-based model – that should greatly improve NVTA’s ability to analyze specific projects. The model is currently in the validation phase. The limitation associated with the model is that it is a regional model adapted for use in Napa and Solano counties and therefore does not achieve the granularity that a project specific simulation might achieve. This type of model is not appropriate for understanding how a long range plan – if fully implemented - would succeed in improving countywide transportation operations. To accomplish that level of analysis, each project would need to include a microsimulation model which could cost upwards of \$50,000 per project and therefore it is not a feasible as part of the long range transportation planning process.

**Finding 5** The most salient suggested actions in V2040 were made by the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Napa County Farm Bureau.

**RESPONSE:** The NVTA Executive Director neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding. The finding is stated as an opinion. That said, NVTA takes public and committee comments very seriously and has incorporated a number of the suggestions into the plan that were included in the referenced letters.

**Finding 6** The NVTA is missing opportunities to promote Napa County as a test market for transportation technology companies investing in new research and development.

RESPONSE: The NVTA Executive Director neither agrees nor disagrees. There are a number of demonstration projects underway in the Bay Area. The technology companies that NVTA has reached out to did not currently have sufficient resources to implement demonstration projects in Napa. These include a number of transportation network companies who are implementing strategies elsewhere in more densely populated communities like San Francisco and San Jose. Low density environments like Napa do not offer the same opportunity for collecting the level of data that higher density counties can provide.

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** By November 30, 2017, the Napa County Board of Supervisors form a multidisciplinary task force that includes traffic, economic, employment, and housing experts to make recommendations for the comprehensive planning, innovative solutions to traffic congestion and funding sources.

RESPONSE: The Grand Jury requested that the Napa Board of Supervisors respond to this recommendation, therefore, the NVTA Executive Director has no comment.

**Recommendation 2.** The NVTA Board set clear expectations, determinate goals, and timelines to establish quantifiable traffic congestion performance targets with measurable results and annual progress reports to the public, starting in January 2018.

RESPONSE: This recommendation will be implemented. However, this type of goal setting is appropriate during the development of a long range plan. Therefore, this recommendation will be considered during the next countywide transportation plan. Development of the plan will begin in 2018-2019, including public outreach meetings, and it is anticipated that a new countywide transportation plan will be adopted by the NVTA Board in 2020.

**Recommendation 3.** The NVTA seek new, dependable sources of funding ideas specifically for traffic congestion improvement actions by July 2018.

RESPONSE: This recommendation has been implemented. NVTA is aggressive at seeking new funding opportunities. It works closely with its funding agencies and is quick to submit grants on competitive funding programs. Senate Bill 1, which was passed by the legislature and signed in to law by the Governor this past June, will provide almost \$1 billion annually in new competitive grant programs, and NVTA anticipates receiving significant new funding to improve its transportation infrastructure.

**Recommendation 4.** The NVTA prioritize and approve future expenditures based on quantifiable and achievable short and long range goals, starting in July, 2018.

RESPONSE: This recommendation is already implemented. NVTA generally only approves *expenditures* on projects that NVTA undertakes directly. In recent years, these projects include transit-related operations and capital improvements and the Vine Trail. These projects are included in long and short range plans. While measurable results may be applicable to certain projects or programs, other projects do not lend themselves to “quantifiable and achievable short and long range goals”. NVTA also funds or *programs* projects that are implemented by Napa Valley jurisdictions or Caltrans, which are funded through many different programs. All funding programs have separate and specific criteria that also must be considered. All transportation projects approved by the NVTA Board are included as part of the constrained project or program list identified in the Vision 2040 plan which has established short and long range goals.

**Recommendation 5.** The NVTA test new technologies and traffic management software starting in 2017.

RESPONSE: The Executive Director disagrees with and respectfully declines to implement this recommendation, as it is neither warranted nor reasonable. NVTA has introduced a number of new technologies in the transit system including fareboxes, automatic passenger counters, computer aided dispatch and automated vehicle location system, and is in the process of implementing an automated dispatch system. However, NVTA does not manage traffic and therefore testing “traffic management software” is not an appropriate use of NVTA resources.

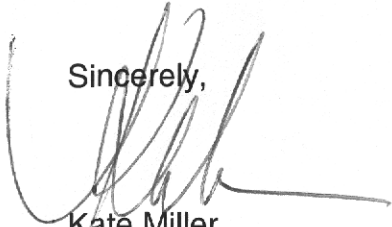
**Recommendation 6.** By January 2018, the NVTA have a plan to promote Napa County as an *ideal test market for companies* investing in transportation technology and market research and development.

RESPONSE: The Executive Director disagrees with and respectfully declines to implement this recommendation, as it is neither warranted nor reasonable. For the reasons mentioned in Finding 6 above, Napa County may not be an ideal test market for companies investing in transportation technology, market research and development. Moreover, NVTA does not have resources to fund commercial technology projects, which is generally a requirement to encourage participation by the private sector to partner with government. That said, NVTA will continue to monitor closely the activities of our local partner agencies and agencies around the country to understand best practices as new technologies are introduced. We will further continue to reach out to technology companies and partner with them as grant-funded resources for such technologies becomes available. We also hope to partner with transit network companies on first and last mile transit connectivity.

Once again, NVTA appreciates the efforts undertaken by the Grand Jury, and invites any further questions that you may have.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Miller', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kate Miller  
NVTA Executive Director

cc: NVTA Board of Directors  
County of Napa Board of Supervisors