



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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June 22, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 90590

**Support for Humboldt Transit Authority's
Equitable and Sustainable Public Transit Planning for Rural America Project**

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The County of Humboldt Board of Supervisors supports the Humboldt Transit Authority's (HTA) RAISE Planning Grant Application for the Equitable and Sustainable Public Transit Planning for Rural America Project. Achieving efficient, effective, and equitable transit service is challenging, especially in rural and Tribal communities. Our future requires significant expansion of transit services to achieve both existing unmet needs and to meet aggressive targets for fostering sustainable communities and mitigating climate change. Zero emission fleet mandates add additional complexity to transit planning and operations.

This project will provide valuable and replicable benefits for rural and Tribal transit providers, both in the California North Coast region and throughout the nation. Three critical planning efforts will be pursued:

- 1) improving industry understanding and awareness of the performance barriers of commercially available battery electric and fuel cell electric buses on demanding intra- and inter-regional rural routes,
- 2) completing planning and infrastructure design tasks needed to address existing unmet mobility needs, and
- 3) advancing planning efforts to develop and expand multi-modal mobility services to achieve target reductions in vehicle miles traveled.

We strongly encourage all project phases to be funded. Phase 1 will enable the local region to advance a variety of unmet service and infrastructure tasks to shovel ready. Phase 2 will tackle equity and sustainability challenges during service expansion planning, and advance strategies for replicating these efforts in rural and Tribal communities nationally. Phase 3 will engage with transit agencies and bus manufacturers nation-wide to motivate private sector investments in zero-emission fleet vehicles suitable for rural areas. Funding all phases will maximize the value of this project for rural and Tribal communities throughout the United States.

The North Coast of California is a rural, remote, and isolated region with many Tribal communities and many areas meeting the RAISE Grant definition of persistent poverty. Humboldt County is also home to world-class innovation in energy, transit, and hydrogen fuel cell technology. HTA has put together an excellent team that is fully competent to deliver on this feasibility study. It includes the Schatz Energy Research Center, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, Humboldt County Association of Governments and the Center for Transportation and the Environment.

The County of Humboldt General Plan includes goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To this end the County has committed to developing and implementing a multi-jurisdiction Climate Action Plan and reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the California Global Warming Solutions Act and subsequent legislation. The county also has policies to reduce vehicle miles travelled. This project supports these goals and policies and has the support of the County.

We strongly encourage the Department of Transportation to support this application.

Sincerely,

Virginia Bass, Chair
County of Humboldt