



December 29, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Prioritize Public Transportation Workers in Vaccine Distribution Plan

Governor Gavin Newsom:

On behalf of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), I write to request that public transit workers be included in Phase 1B of the state's vaccine distribution plan. This is consistent with the interim recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

Throughout the pandemic, California's public transportation agencies have played a critical role in transporting essential workers to their jobs in health care, education, food service and hospitality. While seeing a major decline in ridership, VTA continues to provide vital transit service to an average of thirty-three thousand trips per day. Our ridership surveys find our passengers are overwhelmingly low income and people of color. Most are essential workers and rely on public transit to perform the essential tasks of keeping our economy running. Additionally, public transportation operators continue to provide critical services to elderly and disabled people throughout California, often serving as a lifeline. Public transit workers have supported these Californians directly by operating the bus and rail systems that get them to their destinations and by frequently sanitizing transit facilities and vehicles to limit the spread of the virus, consistent with federal, state and local guidance.

Given the clear societal, economic and equity benefits of the services public transit workers provide, we believe it would be a significant mistake for the state to fail to include public transit workers in Phase 1B of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Much like health care professionals, emergency service workers and food and agricultural workers, public transit workers provide an essential service, cannot work from home, and must interact with the public in the course of their duties. In doing so, these dedicated employees come in close contact with large numbers of the traveling public on a daily basis. They do this willingly and with a clear understanding of the critical nature of public transit.

As the pandemic subsides, public transit service will be vital to a balanced recovery and the continued health of our public transit workers must be a top priority for the state.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me at (408) 321-5559.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Nuria I. Fernandez'.

Nuria I. Fernandez
General Manager and CEO

cc:

Bob Wieckowski, Senator, District 10

Josh Becker, Senator, District 13

Dave Cortese, Senator, District 15

John Laird, Senator, District 17

Marc Berman, Assemblymember, District 24

Alex Lee, Assemblymember, District 25

Ash Kalra, Assemblymember, District 27

Evan Low, Assemblymember, District 28

Mark Stone, Assemblymember, District 29

Robert Rivas, Assemblymember, District 30

Nadine Burke, MD, MPH, Surgeon General, State of California

Erica S. Pan, MD, MPH, Acting State Public Health Officer, Department of Public Health

Members, Vaccine Drafting Guidelines Workgroup, California Department of Public Health

Members, Community Advisory Vaccine Committee, California Department of Public Health