



December 12, 2019

Debbie Hale  
Executive Director  
Transportation Agency for Monterey County  
55-B Plaza Circle  
Salinas, CA 93901

**RE: Proposed Recreational Use of  
Monterey Branch Line for Handcars**

Dear Ms. Hale:

Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), in partnership with TAMC, is undertaking the first steps to improving travel time for existing and future bus passengers traveling in the heavily congested corridor of Highway 1 between Marina and Monterey. A future busway project utilizing the Monterey Branch line will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve travel time reliability, and help demonstrate the future need for passenger rail service.

This Busway Phase II - SURF! project will connect Marina with a dedicated road service for MST buses and emergency vehicles only. This busway will connect with the existing Jazz line which serves Seaside and Monterey with frequent service. This new piece of bus infrastructure will ultimately connect to the Marina-Salinas Multimodal Corridor and future bus rapid transit service in Salinas.

This SURF! busway project was part of the success of the Measure X proposal to the voters of Monterey County. As a strong partner with this project, MST is concerned that the recent hand car proposal may derail our shared vision for the corridor as a transportation use and as required by the funding source TAMC used to purchase the rail line in 2003, Proposition 116 and Measure X as passed by the voters of Monterey County.

*Advocating and delivering quality public transportation as a leader within our community and industry.*

**Transit District Members** Monterey County • Carmel-by-the-Sea • Del Rey Oaks • Gonzales • Greenfield • King City • Marina • Monterey  
Pacific Grove • Salinas • Sand City • Seaside • Soledad **Administrative Offices** 19 Upper Ragsdale Drive, Suite 200 Monterey, CA 93940

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Additionally, as MST is preparing to enter the Project Development phase of the Federal Transit Administration New Starts Program as an initial step our application for up to \$25 Million of federal funds for this project. As this program is highly competitive, MST is concerned by TAMC that allowing non-transit recreational uses within our project footprint will work against MST receiving the most favorable rating possible required to receive federal funding.

We have the following specific concerns which should be addressed before any recreational use of the branch line is considered:

1. **Infrastructure and service compatibility issues:** Generally the busway would not be in conflict with the existing track and area described in the handcar proposal, with one notable exception. Due to the existing topography of the area and elevated loop tracks on the south end, we may need to cut through the loop and remove a portion of this track for the busway lane to run through. It is our understanding that the handcar is proposed to use this loop as a turnaround. The development of long term, sustainable bus service along the branch line appears to be incompatible for this reason.
2. **Infrastructure/Track condition:** The Branch Line has not been fully used in more than 40 plus years. Very little, if any, maintenance, inspections, or up keep have occurred in at least 20 years. This is a big risk/liability for anyone utilizing the rail tracks for any type of use. There are numerous people living in the area that may have damaged the tracks and possibly removed infrastructure components. Weather deterioration over time could have also caused deterioration of the tracks. Due to lack of maintenance and inspections, there may be serious liability issues in allowing the general public to use the branch line for handcar use. It would also be appropriate for representatives from emergency response to weigh in on the challenges of responding to accidents or incidents involving handcar use.
3. **Other notable issues/observations:** There is no mention in the handcar proposal of potential permitting hurdles, environmental, Coastal Commission, State Parks, etc... Should this handcar proposal be approved and permitted for the long term, MST would need TAMC and any handcar company to indemnify MST. Considering MST would operate bus service along the branch line in the future, this will be a huge liability for the agency in general. Also, there is no mention of accessibility/ADA issues.
4. **Additionally, MST is preparing to enter the Project Development phase of the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Program as an initial step in the application process for up to \$25 million of federal Capital Investment Grant funds for this project. As this program is highly competitive, MST is concerned that if TAMC allows non-transit**

recreational uses within our project footprint, this action will work against MST receiving the most favorable rating possible which is required to be eligible for federal funding.

Thank you for considering these comments as you make your decision about whether or not to allow handcar use along the Monterey Branch line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carl Sedoryk", with a stylized, cursive script.

Carl Sedoryk  
General Manager/CEO