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**From:** Omar Carrera <[OmarC@canalalliance.org](mailto:OmarC@canalalliance.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, October 4, 2021 1:37 PM

**To:** Mayor Kate <[Kate.Colin@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Kate.Colin@cityofsanrafael.org)>; Maika Llorens Gulati <[Maika@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Maika@cityofsanrafael.org)>; Eli Hill <[Eli.Hill@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Eli.Hill@cityofsanrafael.org)>; Maribeth Bushey <[Maribeth.Bushey@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Maribeth.Bushey@cityofsanrafael.org)>; Rachel Kertz <[Rachel.Kertz@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Rachel.Kertz@cityofsanrafael.org)>; Lindsay Lara <[Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org)>

**Cc:** marina palma [REDACTED] darlin ruiz [REDACTED] Stephanie McNally <[stephaniem@canalalliance.org](mailto:stephaniem@canalalliance.org)>

**Subject:** San Rafael Transit Center - Move Whistlestop Alternative

Dear Mayor Kate, and Councilmembers,

In the letter sent on 4/19/2021, Canal Alliance and Voces del Canal highlighted the critical priorities that the new Transit Center must include to support the Latino and low-income passengers who make up the majority of the ridership. We, Canal Alliance, and Voces del Canal, support the Move Whistlestop Alternative as the preferred alternative for the Environmental Impact Report. This alternative takes into account the recommendations and needs of Canal residents and offers an opportunity to ensure an equitable recovery.

In the letter, we also mentioned that some alternatives present significant drawbacks and dangers that will directly affect the Latino community (e.g., Under the Freeway Alternative). For Canal residents, the biggest concern is that the transit center is separated at different stations or under the freeway. These alternatives increase the danger to pedestrians, complicate transfers, and can confuse passengers. Downtown traffic is already heavy, confusing, and dangerous; adding complications to hurried passengers rushing to catch a bus will only make conditions worse. A single-site option works best for all passengers, and as noted above, crosswalk safety measures are a priority for any alternative.

Public transportation plays a unique and important role in an effective and equitable transportation system. It is important that the new San Rafael Transit Center be efficient, affordable and include in its design the new health protocols to respond to post-COVID challenges. Everyone in San Rafael will benefit from these measures, even people who don't use public transportation, as they help essential workers, mitigate climate change, and reduce traffic on already congested streets and highways.

The COVID pandemic temporarily reduced the ridership, but not the importance of an efficient and equitable public transport system.

Gracias,

**Omar Carrera**

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Mayor Kate Colin, City of San Rafael  
Members, San Rafael City Council

**Re: Community Engagement in the San Rafael Transportation Center**

April 19, 2021  
Via Electronic Mail

Dear Esteemed Leaders of the **San Rafael Transportation Center Project**:

On behalf of Canal Alliance and Voces del Canal, a Canal resident leadership group, we write to express our support for the **San Rafael Transportation Center** and for the many ways this project represents an opportunity not only for our city and our region, but especially for the low-income and Latino transit riders who make up the majority of the ridership. We also want to strongly recommend that there can be an opportunity for greater equity in the design, analysis, and implementation of the project.

We are aligned on what we believe are common goals across stakeholders and decision-makers. We also agree on the need for a transit center that not only meets current and near-future public transportation needs, but also anticipates the kind of growth we are working toward in the city and the region. In particular, to serve the long-term needs of our communities ensure that the environmentally-friendly public transportation system offers the best, easiest, most affordable, and reliable option for mobility, a transit center needs to plan for a rise in demand that will result from increased housing, both affordable and low-income housing options.

Recently, Canal Alliance had the opportunity to host a presentation of the various alternatives by the GGBHTD's staff for the leadership team of Voces del Canal. It was a great opportunity to learn more about the project and the details of the proposed alternatives. However, it also provided an overwhelming amount of information for our participants to process, let alone provide immediate feedback on.

As we look at your materials and timeline, we see that there is still some time for us to partner and develop a process that provides capacity-building for our community leaders to understand the project and to then provide more informed and helpful recommendations and a set of priorities that we believe should guide the development of the transit center. In the meantime, we wanted to share with you some initial thoughts and reflections based on many years of working with our community and our community leaders on what we know are critical priorities from prior community development and transportation issues discussions. Below is a preliminary list based on what we know about our community and from discussions we have had about the future of transit in the Canal neighborhood and surrounding areas:

- **Public Safety:** street lighting, transit center lighting, multilingual signage, way-finding.
- **Street Safety:** traffic calming, wider crosswalks, safety lights at crosswalks.
- **Wide Access:** multi-generation family groups walking together (parent, stroller, children, grandparent).

- Bicycle Infrastructure: safe, easy access, free, bike sharing for Canal-to-downtown mobility,
- Restrooms: clean and well stocked secure.
- Affordability: concerned for raising fare rates.
- Reliability: accountability and reporting on delays
- Capacity: concern for a full a bus passing-up a passenger trying to get to work or health appointments.

We welcome an opportunity to have more time for us to build capacity and implement a short process that would allow more community members provide direct input. Relative to other stakeholder groups, our communities require greater support to feel confident in offering informed feedback, considering all the project's factors, inputs, benefits, liabilities, and the short and long-term impacts on the community, the city, and the region. Many other key stakeholder groups already benefit from that knowledge and have organized advocacy infrastructure and expertise to effectively communicate their opinions.

We feel it is important for the whole process to be grounded in and guided by the reality that the majority of riders are Latinos and low-income essential workers whose contributions are necessary to holding up our economy and leading our recovery. An equitable approach would recognize that they are people who rely on transit, and that such access is an essential element to accessing employment and making a living. Such an approach would also allow for great opportunities and investment in incorporating community participation more strategically and would be responsive to the context and the barriers to engagement faced by this group.

In addition to the priorities listed above, we want to note that there are significant drawbacks and dangers to some of the alternatives, which we can share with you in more detail. However, the highest concerns are that a transit center that is separated into different stations increases danger for pedestrians, complicates transfers, and can be confusing to riders. The downtown traffic is already heavy, confusing, and dangerous; adding hurried riders racing to catch a bus will only make conditions worse. A single-site option works best for all riders, and as noted above, crosswalk safety measures are a priority for any alternative.

While we need a transit center that meets the public transportation needs of today and the near-future, we also need a transit center that strategically and inclusively anticipates, plans for, and accounts for the kind of growth we are working toward in the city and the region.

The future of mobility is sustainable, equitable, affordable public transit alongside infrastructure that invites and inspires non-car means including walkable streets and a working-people's biking network. We look forward to partnering with you to develop plans that include a vision for transit for future generations in our communities.

Sincerely,



**Omar Carrera**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canal Alliance



**Marina Palma**

Community Leaders  
Voces del Canal



**Darlin Ruiz**