



Date: January 27, 2020  
 Current Meeting: February 6, 2020  
 Board Meeting: February 6, 2020

## BOARD MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority  
 Board of Directors

**THROUGH:** General Manager/CEO, Nuria I. Fernandez

**FROM:** Chief Engineering & Prog Delivery Officer, Casey Emoto

**SUBJECT:** Resolution to Declare a Climate Emergency

Policy-Related Action: Yes

Government Code Section 84308 Applies: No

## Resolution

### ACTION ITEM

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution declaring a climate emergency.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Human activities, particularly the use of fossil fuels, have accelerated the generation of greenhouse gases (GHG) beyond natural levels. The 2018 California GHG Emission Inventory estimated that a total of 429.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e) were emitted in California in 2016. The transportation sector was the largest contributor of GHG, accounting for 41% of total emissions.

Catastrophic effects of climate change have been seen in California and around the world, from record-breaking temperatures to devastating fires in the Amazon and Australia. Recognizing the urgency to act now, over 1,300 local governments in 25 countries have declared a climate emergency, including the County of Santa Clara and the cities of Cupertino and San Jose, in which the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) serves.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

By formally declaring a climate emergency, VTA joins with local governments to demand immediate action to halt, reverse, restore mitigate, and prepare for the consequences of climate change. This resolution builds on VTA's existing commitment and progress to reduce GHG emissions which contribute to climate change. It also directs VTA to take the following actions:

- Evaluate administrative procedures to incorporate the consideration of climate change impacts for all relevant proposed policies, programs, or actions approved by the Board of Directors.
- Identify specific metrics, including objectives and targets, to prioritize opportunities to reduce GHG emissions and develop a Climate Action Plan to guide its climate emergency response.
- Support legislative efforts to avert climate change by federal, state, regional, and local entities, and join with stakeholders to reduce GHG emissions in the transportation sector.

The resolution is included as Attachment A.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The Board of Directors could choose not to adopt the resolution.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There are no fiscal implications associated with adopting this resolution.

Prepared by: Lani Lee Ho, Environmental Planner III  
Memo No. 7266

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

**WHEREAS**, according to the World Meteorological Association, the last 5 years were the hottest years on record and the 20 warmest years on record have occurred within the past 22 years;

**WHEREAS**, global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, the primary heat-trapping or “greenhouse” gas, (1) have increased by 40 percent since preindustrial times, from 280 parts per million to 415 parts per million, primarily due to human activities, including burning fossil fuels and deforestation; (2) are rising at a rate of 2 to 3 parts per million annually; and (3) must be reduced to not more than 350 parts per million, and likely lower, “if humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted,” according to former National Aeronautics and Space Administration climatologist, Dr. James Hansen;

**WHEREAS**, global atmospheric concentrations of other greenhouse gases, including methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons, have also increased substantially since preindustrial times, primarily due to human activities, including burning fossil fuels;

**WHEREAS**, current climate science and real-world observations of climate change impacts, including ocean warming, ocean acidification, floods, droughts, wildfires, and extreme weather, demonstrate that a global rise in temperatures of 1 degree Celsius above preindustrial levels is already having dangerous impacts on human populations and the environment;

**WHEREAS**, the 2018 National Climate Assessment found that climate change due to global warming has caused, and is expected to cause additional, substantial interference with and growing losses to infrastructure, property, industry, recreation, natural resources, agricultural systems, human health and safety, and quality of life in the United States;

**WHEREAS**, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has determined that climate change is already increasing the frequency of extreme weather and other climate-related disasters, including drought, wildfire, and storms that include precipitation;

**WHEREAS**, climate-related natural disasters have increased exponentially over the past decade, costing the United States more than double the long-term average during the period of 2014 through 2018, with total costs of natural disasters during that period of approximately \$100 billion per year;

**WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found wide-ranging, acute, and fatal public health consequences from climate change that impact communities across the United States;

**WHEREAS**, the National Climate and Health Assessment of the United States Global Change Research Program identified climate change as a significant threat to the health of the people of the United States, leading to increased (1) temperature-related deaths and illnesses; (2) air quality impacts; (3) extreme weather events; (4) numbers of vector-borne diseases; (5) waterborne illnesses; (6) food safety, nutrition, and distribution complications; and (7) mental health and well-being concerns;

**WHEREAS**, the consequences of climate change already disproportionately impact frontline communities and endanger populations made especially vulnerable by existing exposure to extreme weather events, such as children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing disabilities and health conditions;

**WHEREAS**, individuals and families on the frontlines of climate change across the United States, including territories, living with income inequality and poverty, institutional racism, inequity on the basis of gender and sexual orientation, poor infrastructure, and lack of access to health care, housing, clean water, and food security are often in close proximity to environmental stressors or sources of pollution, particularly communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income communities, which— (1) experience outsized risk because of the close proximity of the community to environmental hazards and stressors, in addition to collocation with waste and other sources of pollution; (2) are often the first exposed to the impacts of climate change; and (3) have the fewest resources to mitigate those impacts or to relocate, which will exacerbate preexisting challenges;

**WHEREAS**, in 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projected that the Earth could warm 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels as early as 2030;

**WHEREAS**, the climatic changes resulting from global warming above 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, including changes resulting from global warming of more than 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, are projected to result in irreversible, catastrophic changes to public health, livelihoods, quality of life, food security, water supplies, human security, and economic growth;

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services found that human-induced climate change is pushing the planet toward the sixth mass species extinction, which threatens the food security, water supply, and well-being of billions of people;

**WHEREAS**, according to climate scientists, limiting global warming to not more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, and likely lower, is most likely to avoid irreversible and catastrophic climate change;

**WHEREAS**, even with global warming up to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, the planet is projected to experience a significant rise in sea levels, extraordinary loss of biodiversity, intensifying droughts, prodigious floods, devastating wildfires, and other extreme weather events;

**WHEREAS**, according to climate scientists, addressing the climate emergency will require an economically just and managed phase-out of the use of oil, gas, and coal to keep fossil fuels in the ground;

**WHEREAS**, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has determined that limiting warming through emissions reduction and carbon sequestration will require rapid, and immediate, acceleration and proliferation of “far-reaching, multilevel, and cross-sectoral climate mitigation” and “transitions in energy, land, urban and rural infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems;”

**WHEREAS**, massive, comprehensive, and urgent governmental action is required immediately to achieve the transitions of those systems in response to the severe existing and projected economic, social, public health, and national security threats posed by the climate crisis;

**WHEREAS**, the massive scope and scale of action necessary to stabilize the climate will require unprecedented levels of public awareness, engagement, and deliberation to develop and implement effective, just, and equitable policies to address the climate crisis;

**WHEREAS**, on September 20, 2019, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-19-19, which called on the entire state government of California to “redouble its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change while building a stable, inclusive economy;”

**WHEREAS**, a number of local jurisdictions and governments in the United States, and across the world, have already declared a climate emergency, and a number of State and local governments are considering declaring a climate emergency in response to the massive challenges posed by the climate crisis;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority Board of Directors that:

1. Global climate change caused by human activities has resulted in a climate emergency which demands mobilization at a massive scale to halt, reverse, mitigate, and prepare for the consequences of the climate emergency and to restore the climate for future generations.
2. VTA staff will evaluate administrative procedures to incorporate the consideration of climate change impacts for all relevant proposed policies, programs, or actions approved by the Board of Directors.
3. VTA will identify specific metrics, including objectives and targets, to prioritize opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop a Climate Action Plan to guide its climate emergency response.
4. VTA will support legislative efforts to avert climate change by federal, state, regional, and local entities, and join with stakeholders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority Board of

Directors on \_\_\_\_\_ by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cindy Chavez, Chairperson  
Board of Directors

I HEREBY CERTIFY AND ATTEST that the foregoing resolution was duly and regularly introduced, passed and adopted by the Board of Directors of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, California, at a meeting of said Board of Directors on the date indicated, as set forth above.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elaine F. Baltao, Board Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Evelynn Tran, General Counsel