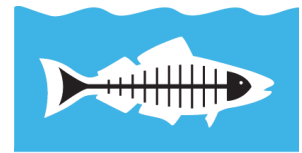




Safe, livable, and sustainable streets are welcoming to everyone and strengthen our community.



Heal the Bay



Institute for Transportation & Development Policy



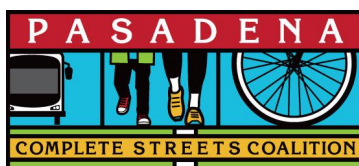
Aztlan Athletics FOUNDATION Promoting Community Health & Wellness Programs



SIERRA CLUB



Sustainable Claremont Working for Environmental Economic and Social Sustainability



February 23, 2022

Metro Board of Directors  
 One Gateway Plaza  
 Los Angeles, CA 90013  
*Via email to boardclerk@metro.net*

**RE: SUPPORT - Agenda Item 35 - Clarifying Eligible Uses for SR-710 North Mobility Improvement Projects**

Dear Metro Board Members and Staff,

As community-based organizations and stakeholders committed to improving the health and well-being of community members of Los Angeles County, reducing our worst-in-nation air pollution, and advancing climate action on a regional level, **we strongly support Metro's proposed alignment of the SR-710 North Mobility Improvement Projects to better reflect the diverse needs of corridor communities and constituents.**

The TSM/TDM alternative in the EIR/EIS for the SR 710 North Project addresses measures to make traffic more efficient and which reduce the demand for automobile-centric transportation. Recognizing the broad array of strategies within the TSM/TDM suite, and responding to Metro's 2018 reallocation call for proposals, cities submitted a wide range of project types, including local transit, pedestrian, and complete streets projects. Yet these projects were wholesale rejected by Metro staff, an outcome inconsistent with the description of the TSM/TDM alternative in the EIR/EIS. In the initial portion of the EIR/EIS the instrument states, among other things, that the purpose of the Project is as follows:

- ***"Reduce congestion on local arterials adversely affected due to accommodating regional traffic."***
- ***"Minimize environmental impacts related to mobile sources."***

The EIR/EIS also states the following as one of the needs for the Project: "Modal inter-relationship and System Linkages." On page 2-87 the EIR/EIS describes the TSM/TDM Alternative as follows: ***"The TSM/TDM Alternative would provide strategies and improvements to increase efficiency and capacity for all modes in the transportation system with lower capital cost investments and/or lower potential impacts including ....pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements..."***

These purposes and needs are clearly fulfilled by a multimodal approach to transportation management, an approach sought by almost every 710 corridor community that requested reallocation funds over the past several years. **Local communities, decision-makers, and corridor residents understand that Transportation Demand Management is not limited to increasing vehicle throughput via street widening, signal synchronization or other measures that make traffic**

**flow faster.** Especially as corridor communities plan for growth, stakeholders understand that measures to reduce dependency on automobiles is a critical strategy for a more livable future.

Notwithstanding the clear direction within the EIR/EIS regarding the eligibility of these projects, **our support for this motion, as well as the 2021 ‘Modernizing Metro Highways’ motion, is informed by our collective experience working with local communities and stakeholders on Metro-funded projects.** Specific ‘lessons learned’ that inform our support for this latest effort to align Metro spending to adopted Board policy, regional climate goals, and public safety needs include:

**1) When Metro Highway Funding is used on local streets, it impacts all roadway users, including older adults, children, and mobility-impaired residents who walk along and across streets to access local schools, community sites, and businesses.** Transportation “improvements” should not make local streets more difficult or dangerous to cross by foot. This is particularly important in Los Angeles County, where traffic crashes are the number one cause of premature death for children aged 5-14, and number two cause for children 1-4, young adults 15-24, and adults 25-44.<sup>1</sup>

**2) Vehicle trips are the main source of air pollution in southern California, one of the most polluted regions in the United States.** The outcomes of our poor air quality are devastating, especially to our inland communities. High rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses, as well as cognitive impairments, some cancers, and even obesity have all been linked to exposure to high levels of air pollution. The cost of these health disparities -- particularly long-term, chronic illnesses such as asthma -- is billions in associated healthcare and diminished productivity to LA County.

**3) LA County and the state of CA will never meet its climate action goals unless we reduce how much we drive.** Individual and commercial vehicles are responsible for over 50% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the state of California when one accounts for emissions related to the extraction, processing, and distribution of oil. While vehicle electrification is a vital step, it alone will not be sufficient to meet our goals, according to the CA Air Resources Board.<sup>2</sup> As a result it is absolutely critical that future investments help reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per capita, do our part to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, and help lead our state towards a more sustainable economy and future. Metro Highway Funding should support our commitment to cleaner air and healthier communities.

**4) Adding more lanes doesn’t reduce traffic, and can even attract more.** The potential for increased vehicle miles traveled, and resulting congestion as a result of roadway widening and expansion is well-documented and acknowledged in the academic world. In 2017 the Governor’s

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<sup>1</sup>Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Mortality in Los Angeles County. <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dca/data/documents/mortalityrpt12.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> CA Air Resources Board. “2018 Progress Report - California’s Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act.” Page 28. <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/tracking-progress>

Office of Planning and Research advised agencies that “[each percent increase in lane miles results in a 1.03 percent increase in vehicle travel](#)”.<sup>3</sup> Even Caltrans has acknowledged this fact.<sup>4</sup>

**5) LA County voters overwhelmingly support pedestrian and safety projects.** In Spring 2016, polling of voters prior to the passage of Measure M found greater support for repairing sidewalks than any other local improvement. Specifically:

- 83% favored using funds from the measure to make it easier and safer for children to walk or bike to schools.
- 81% favored using ballot measure funds to improve crosswalks so they are safer for pedestrians.
- 74% favor using ballot measure funds for fixing sidewalks, including more street trees, benches, wider sidewalks, lighting, and more separation from cars.
- 65% favored spending the sales tax funds on expanding freeway lanes.

[A countywide field survey in 2013 by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#) found similar levels of support among the public, with 89% in favor of more transit service for the elderly and disabled, 88% in favor of installing new and repairing existing sidewalks, 86% providing free transit passes to students, 85% expanding local transit service, and 83% increasing the availability of crosswalks and street lighting.<sup>5</sup> Public understanding, awareness, and support for measures to improve air quality and take local climate action have only grown since Measure R and M passed.

**6) The proposed motion clarifies that when SR-710 N funding is used on local streets, projects can incorporate multi-modal improvements -- including local pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.** We recognize, as you do, the value of improving mobility for all users, and the important leadership role that Metro plays regionally and state-wide. We urge you to continue to lead by supporting the proposed motion and efforts to align Metro spending with local and regional needs.

**The undersigned request that Metro support safer streets and healthier communities by adopting the proposed motion and once again formally committing that SR-710 N funding can be used for local pedestrian, bicycle, and transit projects.**

Thank you,

**David Diaz**  
Executive Director  
ActiveSGV

**Christy Zamani**  
Executive Director  
Day One

**Rev. Tera Klein**  
Pastor

<sup>3</sup> State of California Office of Planning and Research. Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts on CEQA. April 2018. pg. 29 - [http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20180416-743\\_Technical\\_Advisory\\_4.16.18.pdf](http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20180416-743_Technical_Advisory_4.16.18.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Streetsblog California. “Caltrans Admits Building Roads Induces More Driving, But Admitting a Problem Is Just the First Step” <https://cal.streetsblog.org/2015/11/18/caltrans-admits-building-roads-induces-congestion-but-admitting-a-problem-is-just-the-first-step/>

<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “Active Transportation and the Built Environment” <https://investinginplace.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/dph-activetranspbuiltenvironment.pdf>

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**Adele Andrade Stadler**

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