



March 15, 2022

Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90013
Via email to boardclerk@metro.net

RE: Highways Director Vacancy

Dear CEO Wiggins and Directors,

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 urge you to select a new, forward-thinking leader for the Metro Highways Department.**

It is critical that the leadership of this department understands the nexus between highway spending and equity, public health, and climate. Over the past few years Caltrans and CalSTA made this shift in hiring Toks Omishakin and David Kim as their leaders, respectively. Omishakin showed strong leadership in underlining that Caltrans would no longer support highway widening projects in the state, including along one of the most polluted corridors in the nation, the 710-S. Before being appointed to lead CalSTA in 2021 Omishakin also [issued a complete streets directive](#) that calls for every Caltrans project to incorporate the needs of all road users, and was outspoken in his support of greater investment in sustainable and active transportation modes as one method to help reduce VMT. Kim's accomplishments included leading the effort to [create state level guidance on aligning transportation funding with state climate goals](#) in the [Climate Action Plan for Transportation Investments](#) (CAPTI). For Metro to realize its vision of an equitable transportation future it is critical that the agency select department leadership with a commitment to transportation equity and expertise in the best available science on vehicle demand management.

We are in the midst of a new opportunity to reconnect communities and address ongoing harms. Congress authorized the largest-ever surface transportation funding package in 2021, with historic investments in both transit and highways. Metro should work with agency partners to maximize opportunities to flex those highway funds to fund bike, pedestrian, transit and complete streets upgrades, as the legislation allows. New state and federal funding for "Reconnecting Communities" provides Metro with an opportunity to leverage local, state, and federal dollars to advance community-supported projects. Forward-thinking leadership who not only understands but embraces this shift will place Metro in a strong position to secure additional funding and work in tandem with - not opposition to - other public agencies.

We also encourage you and Metro to consider updating the department's name. Language is important. Branding makes a difference. Metro's street and highway spending should work in tandem with and support the agency's broader vision of a more accessible, multi-modal Los Angeles County,

not at odds with it. To address the multiple crises facing our region and state we must shift the status quo. Another small step Metro can take in this regard is ensuring its organizational structure reflects these realities. The Highways Program would do well to update its name to reflect the need to advance clean mobility, congestion management, and VMT reduction strategies.

Providing improved mobility, health, and equity to County residents will require a rapid shift toward smarter transportation programs, policies, and investments. We urge Metro to take a leadership role nationally by selecting new leadership who understands these needs.

Thank you for your consideration and service to Los Angeles County,

David Levitus

Executive Director
LA Forward

Joanne Nuckols

Organizer
No 710 Action Committee

Brandon Fox

Organizer
Families on Fremont

Michael Schneider

Founder
Streets For All

Eli Akira Kaufman

Executive Director
Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition

Carter Rubin

Interim Director of Transportation
Natural Resources Defense Council

Caro Jauregui

Co-Executive Director
California Walks

Cynthia Rose

Director, Santa Monica Spoke
Co-Founder, Santa Monica Safe Street Alliance

Martha Zavala

President
League of Women Voters Pasadena Area

Curtis McPherson

Coordinator
La Verne Bicycle Coalition

Bryn Lindblad

Deputy Directory
Climate Resolve

Jonathan Matz

California Senior Policy Manager
Safe Routes Partnership

Fatima Malik

President
League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County

Kyle Tsukahira

Co-Director
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement

Nicole Cheng

Policy Assistant
ClimatePlan

Alfonso Directo Jr.

Senior Advocacy Manager
Alliance for Community Transit - Los Angeles (ACT-LA)

Topher Mathers

Steering Committee Member
Pasadena Complete Streets Coalition

Jose Zavala

President
Aztlán Athletics Foundation

Christy Zamani

Executive Director
Day One

Wes Reutimann

Co-organizer
Pasadena Environmental Advocates

Tim Ivison

Organizer
United Caltrans Tenants

Rev. Tera Landers

Pastor
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John Yi

Executive Director
Los Angeles Walks

Tori Kjer

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Eli Lipmen

Director of Programming and Development
Move LA

Michelle Matthews

Executive Director
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Carolynn Johnson

West Coast Program Manager
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Christopher Chavez

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Damian Kevitt

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Streets Are For Everyone

Mark Gallatin

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Dr. Deborah Hsiung, D.O.

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