



June 22, 2015

To: Governor Brown and Members of the Legislature

Re: Considerations for Extraordinary Session on Transportation Infrastructure Revenue

We commend you for your leadership on climate change and convening an extraordinary session to address the critical need for transportation infrastructure funding to maintain our system in a state of good repair. As noted in the proclamation, California faces significant challenges to fund much-needed maintenance and repair for its transportation infrastructure. At the same time, California has led the world in addressing climate change by capping its greenhouse gas emissions and using revenues to invest in the kinds of transportation choices that benefit all Californians and reduce pollution. In support of these efforts, and to maximize cost-effective use of limited state transportation funds, we offer the following recommendations to achieve these multiple state priorities, including climate, public health and air quality improvement, equity, and environmental goals:

All transportation projects, including maintenance projects, should reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to climate resilience and adaptation.

In order for investments in maintenance to truly contribute to the state's climate goals, all projects should include cost-effective upgrades that "fix" roadways by providing safe access for all users to reduce vehicle-miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, while also bringing the roadway back to a state of good repair. Transportation projects and systems should be planned to consider impacts such as sea level rise, drought, intensity of storms and heat, and wildfires and should incorporate climate resilience and adaptation strategies that provide multiple benefits. The state should take advantage of the opportunity provided by maintenance investments to improve the transportation system instead of reinvesting in the status-quo.

All transportation investments should prioritize the mobility and safety needs of disadvantaged communities and avoid negative impacts

Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, including rural and unincorporated communities, have faced historic patterns of neglect and disinvestment for decades which have left many places lacking safe infrastructure, transportation options, and the basic elements of a healthy environment. Consistent with statewide equity mandates in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the Active Transportation Program, all transportation funding should prioritize investments that meaningfully address the mobility and safety needs self-identified by vulnerable communities through strong public participation processes. Disadvantaged communities must also be protected from the environmental and economic burdens that past and future transportation investments have imposed on them.

Maintenance projects should improve multimodal access and create “complete streets”

Roadway maintenance and rehabilitation is often the most cost-effective opportunity to improve safety, mobility and access for non-drivers. It is imperative that the state meaningfully seize the opportunities maintenance projects present to redesign, reconfigure, and reimagine our roadways--particularly those that serve urban areas as surface arterials and those that serve rural communities as main streets--to better facilitate active transportation. Expanding active transportation--walking and bicycling--not only can reduce significant greenhouse gases emitted by the transportation sector but also improve air quality, public health, livability, and economic development of communities.

All investments should avoid impacts on, if not enhance California’s natural resources, wildlife movement and agricultural lands and incorporate Regional Advance Mitigation Planning

Consistent with the State’s planning priorities (AB 857), California’s climate policies and Caltrans’ draft CTP 2040, transportation investments should contribute to conserving and enhancing the State’s important and increasingly threatened habitat, wildlife corridors, water resources, parks and open spaces, urban forestry and agricultural lands. Transportation projects, including maintenance projects, should enhance wildlife corridors to improve safety and reduce wildlife collisions and preserve California’s unique and exceptional plant and animal diversity. Transportation planning, project design and development should integrate conservation data and priorities at project inception to avoid, minimize and offset impacts, including climate impacts, to natural resources and agricultural lands and not induce sprawl development. *Regional Advance Mitigation Planning (RAMP)* integrates conservation of natural resources, ecological functions, and working lands into infrastructure project plans and development well in advance and on a regional scale to enable agencies to reduce costs attributed to mitigation, achieve significant conservation and climate benefits, and accelerate project delivery. Caltrans has been supporting this strategy yet would benefit from a separate funding stream. Including a robust RAMP revolving fund in a transportation investment program would greatly advance this opportunity for Caltrans and regional transportation agencies, and result in mitigation that is faster, cheaper and ecologically better.

Invest in transit by leveraging GGRF funds and increasing ridership

Bringing transit networks up to a state of good repair and ensuring stable operating funds, particularly for transit such as low-cost bus service that high-propensity riders in disadvantaged and low-income communities rely on, is vital to achieving our state’s goals of reducing greenhouse gases while investing in our hardest-hit neighborhoods. Transit operating and capital investments must be a priority in a comprehensive transportation funding package. The relatively small Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund should be used as a catalyst for advancing integrated GHG strategies and re-purposing traditional, larger sources of transportation funding such as flexible federal dollars, and priority should be given to projects that can leverage funds from the Transit and Intercity Rail Program, Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, Low Carbon Transportation Program, the Affordable Housing/Sustainable Communities Program, and others. To establish a more stable customer base for transit, transit fares should be kept as low as possible, and investments in reduced-fare and transit pass programs for youth, students, low-income commuters, seniors, and people with disabilities should be prioritized.

We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations and look forward to working with you to create an efficient, safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation system.