



Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Secretary David Kim
California State Transportation Agency
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for the Draft Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure

Dear Secretary Kim,

WALKSacramento is writing in support of the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI). This plan is critical for the State to meet climate, health, and equity goals, with added benefits to safety, workforce development, local air quality, and overall quality of life through improved access to jobs and other opportunities.

CAPTI paves the way for livability through a vision that prioritizes multimodal transportation investments where they are most needed. Lack of action will only lead to greater harm to low-income residents and people of color, particularly Black, Brown, and Indigenous residents. In the Sacramento region, lack of safe transportation options is cited as one of the top three reasons why students are chronically absent at school¹, drawing a direct connection between transportation, educational attainment, and future access to job opportunities. Our institutionally underserved communities, consisting of incredibly racially and ethnically diverse residents, often lack safe sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks, to the point where residents have been struck or killed while trying to cross a street to get to a school or grocery store. We need CAPTI in order to create equitable mobility options for people of all ages and abilities, and to address the pressing health and safety concerns that disproportionately impact communities of color.

In particular, we strongly support the following strategies:

- **S1.1 Prioritize Solutions for Congested Corridors Program Projects that Enable Travelers to Opt out of Congestion**
Providing transportation options is critical for reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and ensuring that those who cannot drive or may not have the means to afford to are still able to get where they need to and want to go. While highway solutions such as High Occupancy Vehicle lanes and toll lanes can help reduce congestion and generate revenue for other multimodal projects, we recommend that transit, rail, and active transportation solutions are prioritized through this strategy.
- **S2.4 Increase Funding to Active Transportation Program**
The Active Transportation Program (ATP) is one of the primary funding sources for active transportation infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects throughout the state. For local agencies that have limited budgets to implement active transportation projects, such as the City

¹ UC Davis Center for Regional Change, "Chronic Absenteeism in the Sacramento City Unified School District."
<https://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/report/chronic-absence-sacramento-city-unified-school-district>

of Sacramento, the ATP provides necessary, but inadequate, funding to plan for and implement projects that improve mobility options, accessibility, and safety. Residents should not have to gamble their lives while walking or biking on unsafe facilities, particularly when they may have no other choice but to walk or bike. We strongly feel that this strategy should be highly prioritized to address high need and demand for safer, healthier, more walkable communities across the state.

- **S3.3 Lift Up and Mainstream Community Engagement Best Practices**

Meaningful community engagement is necessary to ensure that planning processes respond to community needs and goals, especially for communities that have been institutionally underserved. As a CBO conducting community engagement in the Sacramento Region, we hope that Caltrans' playbook can not only define and formalize what meaningful engagement looks like, but also remove barriers that currently exist in community engagement funding sources. In particular, engagement budgets for planning projects must have flexibility to offer stipends to residents, other incentives such as gift cards and food, and provide childcare to remove common barriers to participation.

- **S7.1 Leverage Transportation Investments to Incentivize Infill Housing Production**

We appreciate that this strategy connects transportation investments to infill housing, as the greatest reductions in VMT will come from a combination of smart growth development land use strategies and multimodal transportation investments. In particular, we commend the inclusion of infill as a potential scoring criterion for transportation projects in order to maximize VMT reduction benefits.

- **S7.2 Create Working Group to Explore Potential Actions to Address Direct and Indirect Displacement in Transportation Programs**

Two of the common problems we hear from residents in the Sacramento region are concerns about gentrification and displacement. Transportation investments, while much needed and desired, often come alongside rising rents and housing costs that force residents out of their homes. We hope that this working group can further study the relationship between transportation investments and displacement and identify strategies (including workforce development programs and housing policies) that would ensure current residents can remain in their communities.

While we commend the vision and guiding principles set forth in CAPTI, we also would like to offer the following recommendations to strengthen CAPTI as an actionable policy document.

- **Identify specific implementation actions with clearly defined timelines.** The strategies listed in CAPTI are bold, visionary, and a necessary first step towards meeting state climate and equity goals. Further identifying clear, actionable next steps will be instrumental for ensuring that implementation occurs in a timely manner. We recommend that CalSTA identify which actions will be implemented within the first year after adoption, with additional actions outlined for following years.
- **Create a process for reporting and accountability.** A report card that outlines progress towards each of the strategies will be important for evaluation of successes and shortcomings, and to identify where actions may need to shift to better align with CAPTI's stated goals. We

recommend developing a process and timeline for annual reporting to ensure accountability on behalf of all implementing agencies.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving quality of life and health equity through land use, transportation, and community development, we are excited by the vision set forth by CAPTI towards a more equitable and sustainable future. We look forward to further supporting CAPTI's implementation to create healthy, safe, and affordable transportation options for residents across the state and in our local communities in the Sacramento region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alicia Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Alicia Brown
Project Manager, WALKSacramento