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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

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IN REPLY PLEASE

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March 12, 2024

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Mark Pestrella, PE
Director of Public Works

BOARD MOTION OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2023, AGENDA ITEM 5 ESTABLISHING A NEW LOS ANGELES COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY AND EQUITABLE MOBILITY OUTCOMES

On September 12, 2023, the Board approved a motion directing (1) the Departments of Public Works and Regional Planning in consultation with County Counsel to prepare an ordinance in 120 days amending Title 15, Vehicles and Traffic of the County Code, to dissolve the existing Highway Safety Commission, and in its place establish a new Transportation Commission for the County, (2) Public Works in consultation with the Executive Office of the Board, Chief Executive Office, and the Department of Human Resources to develop a proposed budget for the newly established commission in 180 days, and (3) Public Works to work with the Chief Executive Office and Human Resources to initiate the necessary steps to create a new dedicated Transportation Planning Division within Public Works and provide the Board within 180 days recommendations on the proposed budget with potential funding sources, staffing plan, and a list of responsibilities for the Transportation Planning Division.

Public Works is committed to ensuring transportation options are equitably provided to the communities of the County.

On January 10, 2024, Public Works provided to the Board a draft ordinance in response to Directive 1. As noted in the report back, upon the Board's direction, County Counsel in collaboration with Public Works and Regional Planning will commence a full review of the draft ordinance, which is anticipated to take approximately 90 days. Once a full review has been completed, Public Works will prepare a Board letter to place on a future Board agenda.

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Attached is a draft plan that provides various requests pertaining to Directives 2 and 3, such as a list of responsibilities for a new dedicated Transportation Planning Division within Public Works.

Public Works is working with the Chief Executive Office, Human Resources, and the Executive Office to finalize staffing levels and a proposed budget. An update will be provided in 60 days to be followed by a full budget, staffing plan, and ordinance in 120 days.

If you have any questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Steve Burger, Deputy Director, at (626) 458-4018 or sburger@pw.lacounty.gov.

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Attach.

cc: Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Executive Office
Department of Human Resources
Department of Regional Planning

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIVISION
DRAFT PLAN
MARCH 12, 2024**

PUBLIC WORKS MISSION AND VISION

With a mission to plan, design, build, and maintain modern infrastructure that uplifts all County communities, Public Works has a vision of becoming the most trusted public agency in the region.

TRANSPORTATION CORE SERVICE AREA

Public Works' Transportation Core Service Area is delegated the authority to provide transportation safety and Countywide multimodal transportation opportunities, manage over 3,300 centerline miles of County, and implement transportation infrastructure, programs, and services.

The goal of the Transportation Core Service Area is to provide County residents with access to the state-of-the-art transportation infrastructure that is safe, resilient, sustainable, and equitable.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIVISION

Need

The formation of a dedicated, robust Transportation Planning Division (TPD) within Public Works is critical to ensuring adequate transportation planning that maintains a focus on providing traffic safety and multimodal transportation throughout the County.

Transportation infrastructure is widely dispersed over 2,600 square miles in over 142 unincorporated County urban, suburban, and rural areas with diverse needs for over one million unincorporated County residents. Providing 21st century modern infrastructure requires careful planning and collaboration with the unincorporated County communities, nine subregion councils of governments, surrounding cities, regional and State governmental entities, and Federal, State, and local elected officials representing these areas. Transportation planning requires a context-sensitive and tailored approach to the needs of each geographic area with a prime focus on traffic safety for all roadway users. Active engagement with the communities to better understand their concerns on how transportation infrastructure impacts their lives is critical. It takes a lot of time and effort to build trust, educate, and learn from community groups but time invested can result in more vocal community support for projects that may cause short-term inconveniences during construction.

The County aims to have zero traffic-related fatalities and the Board adopted a Vision Zero Action Plan in August 2020 to help realize this goal. The Vision Zero traffic safety initiative is an effort to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries on unincorporated County roadways. This is an ambitious effort that demands resources from most areas within Public Works. The multifaceted initiative focuses on human mistakes and vulnerability to guide infrastructure designs and other safety programs to strive toward zero traffic fatalities.

For perspective, a comparison between national and local traffic fatality trends can be made. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that 42,795 people died in motor vehicle collisions nationally in 2022¹, a nearly 18 percent increase compared to 2019 and 19,515 people were projected to have died in the first half of 2023.

The County's traffic fatality statistics are consistent with national trends. Based on the California Highway Patrol collision data provided to Public Works, 125 people died as a result of traffic collisions on County-maintained roadways throughout the unincorporated County communities in 2022. This is greater than a 58 percent increase from 2019 when 79 people lost their life in traffic collisions. In 2023, there were 84 fatal collisions on the unincorporated County roadways claiming the lives of 92 people, and as of March 5, 2024, the California Highway Patrol reports 13 people have died in traffic collisions since the new year began. Additional resources to implement traffic safety strategies can help reverse the deadly trend that has burdened the County for numerous years.

There are many priorities within the Transportation Core Service Area which consume a considerable amount of staff time. These competing priorities have made the full implementation of community-based transportation a challenge. Additional staffing organized into a full TPD will allow Public Works to properly address the traffic safety and mobility needs of all roadway users.

Responsibilities

The new TPD's responsibilities would include implementing existing (and strategizing future) planning efforts, developing transportation projects, overseeing the County's Vision Zero initiative, developing and maintaining long-term planning documents, seeking State and Federal grant funding to implement transportation projects, and supporting and advising the Transportation Commission. Specifically, the roles and responsibilities would include:

1. Implementing existing planning efforts and developing a formal, comprehensive, and proactive multimodal transportation strategy.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities For the First Half (January–June) of 2023" <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813514> (Accessed February 12, 2024)

- A. In recent years, there has been an influx of new transportation-related activities that Public Works has been focused on. These include:
 - a. High-priority safety initiatives, such as Vision Zero.
 - b. Implementation of various safety and mobility programs, including the eight Board-approved Step-by-Step Pedestrian Plans, Board-approved Bicycle Master Plan update, as well as various State and Federal awarded grant programs, such as the Active Transportation Program, Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program, and Safe Streets and Roads for All programs.
 - c. Various requests for the planning, coordination, and implementation of community-wide events on County roadways, such as open-streets events that promote active transportation and other cultural activities.
 - d. Performing long range advanced community planning for transportation efforts throughout the County and analyzing and developing project concepts based on a variety of factors, such as equity, Board or constituent request, and feasibility studies.
 - e. Conducting transportation planning community outreach and developing communications plans.
2. Developing transportation projects from the concept phase through the detailed engineering design phase and providing support to project managers throughout the entire project life cycle. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing the transportation needs of the County's unincorporated communities and providing engineered solutions to address those needs.
 - b. Coordinating with other County departments, agencies, and various unincorporated communities.
 - c. Conducting initial engineering feasibility analyses while considering equity, sustainability, overall connectivity, and Community priorities. This entails overlaying existing Public Works efforts and adjusting project scopes to develop project concepts, considering the feasibility of all project phases (project initiation, design, construction, and audit), considering potential materials used in the design and construction of multimodal projects, and ensuring the project is aligned with and consistent with County guidelines and practices.

- d. Preparing cost estimates, exploring funding opportunities, and programming funds.
 - e. Being familiar with standard and innovative transportation engineering techniques.
 - f. Gathering field data.
 - g. Performing community outreach, including organizing workshops, conducting pop-up events, and presenting projects involving technical planned and engineered designs at community meetings.
3. Leading Public Works' and the County's implementation of the Vision Zero initiative. This includes, but is not limited to:
- a. Managing a traffic collision database where on average 10,000 to 12,000 traffic collision reports are inputted annually.
 - b. Overseeing the implementation of the 63 actions outlined in the Vision Zero Action Plan.
 - c. Developing and implementing a Safe Routes to School Program.
 - d. Developing guidelines and policies that could lead to decreases in traffic fatalities.
 - e. Analyzing transportation-related legislation.
 - f. Planning and tracking progress on the Vision Zero initiative, including infrastructure implementation.
4. Develop and maintain long-term planning documents, such as the Bicycle Master Plan and Community Traffic Safety Plans for the unincorporated County communities.
5. Seek applications for Federal, State, and local grant funding opportunities to support the implementation of 21st century active transportation infrastructure in unincorporated County communities. This includes, but is not limited to:
- a. Attending workshops, gathering data, and obtaining letters of support for the project.
 - b. Conducting a transportation analysis utilizing planning documents, such as the Step-by-Step Pedestrian Plans and Vision Zero Action Plan to evaluate viable locations for potential projects, developing conceptual designs, initial feasibility studies, and alternative analyses.

- c. Developing concept design exploration which includes conducting preliminary engineering and feasibility analyses.
 - d. Evaluating and reviewing technical engineering planning analyses, plans, cost estimates, and schedules.
 - e. Ensuring proposed project concept objectives meet the overall technical feasibility, community practicality, and County desirability of Public Works' Vision and Mission statements and Public Works' Business Plan objectives.
 - f. Writing complex grant applications that require technical engineering feasibility analyses and transportation planning concepts to be utilized.
6. Supporting and advising the 11 Board members of the Transportation Commission in conducting its business:
- a. Provide administrative support, including organizing and conducting public meetings, to the Transportation Commission which acts in an advisory capacity in the review and development of transportation systems, facilities, plans, policies, and programs.
 - b. Provide recommendations to the Transportation Commission regarding the ways and means for improving traffic conditions, including Vision Zero.
 - c. Advise the Transportation Commission on upcoming policy regulations.
 - d. Advise short-term and long-term transportation regional general planning strategies.
 - e. Advise Federal, State, and local funding and grant opportunities for transportation improvements.
 - f. Coordinate with commission attendees, including the Departments of Regional Planning, Public Health, Sheriff, Aging and Disabilities, Chief Executive Office (Anti-Racism Diversity and Inclusion Initiative), and the County Sustainability Office regarding technical assistance to the Transportation Commission, as appropriate.
 - g. Coordinate with technical experts from outside the County, including the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the California Department of Transportation as appropriate.
 - h. Coordinate with related commissions, including the Regional Planning Commission.

TPD will be critical to conduct Countywide transportation planning, including development of projects, to maximize eligible funding from new sources and support the acceleration of the delivery of Vision Zero initiative and multimodal priorities.

Staffing Proposal

Appropriate staffing levels are currently being determined.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

On September 12, 2023, the Board directed Public Works dissolve the existing Highway Safety Commission and establish a Transportation Commission. The new Transportation Commission will include 11 members and TPD will serve as the primary support. In addition to the 11 Transportation Commission members, appropriate staffing levels to support the Commission are currently being determined.

While a location space has not yet been fully secured, the Transportation Commission may be able to hold their meetings at Regional Planning Hearing Room, located at 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. The location is centrally located within the County, and easily accessible via public transportation. Since it is the site for Regional Planning Commission meetings (on Wednesdays) and Hearing Officer meetings (on Tuesdays), it is a venue that has proven to successfully accommodate commission meetings with space for approximately 100 people. The Hearing Room is currently undergoing renovations to install new technology that will allow virtual options for members of the public to participate. The space cannot be secured until the renovations to the Hearing Room have been completed and Regional Planning staff has had ample time to adjust to the new technology, which is anticipated to occur by summer 2024. If the Hearing Room is ultimately available, there would not be a cost to utilize the space. However, it is likely that technology support from Regional Planning staff will be needed and there could be a fee assessed, currently estimated at \$10,000 annually, for cost recovery purposes. Transportation Commission meetings would need to take place on Mondays or Thursdays to not interfere with the existing uses. Public Works and Regional Planning will continue to discuss the availability and other logistics as renovations to the space progresses.

FUNDING

Appropriate funding amounts and sources are currently being determined since funding is directly related to staffing levels for the new TPD.

SUMMARY

TPD will lead and coordinate transportation planning efforts and serve as the innovation support of Public Works' Transportation Core Service Area. The proposed structure will require well-resourced sections and units with dedicated engineers, Geographic Information Systems Analysts, transportation planners, and community liaisons assigned to specific geographic areas to build communities, including cultural and linguistic competence to build long-term community trust and support. TPD will also be primarily responsible for coordinating administrative support for the newly established Transportation Commission.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

September 12, 2023

Establishing A New Los Angeles County Transportation Commission To Ensure Transparency and Equitable Mobility Outcomes

On August 30, 2022, the Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the motion titled, "County Response to Windsor Hills Fatalities and Fast-Tracking Solutions to Increased Traffic Fatalities Countywide." The County Chief Executive Office (CEO) issued a report back in response to the motion on June 30, 2023.

The report back details strategies to improve communication and coordination among County Departments related to transportation services. It states, "Communication among departments, the Board offices, and the public is key to being transparent. Although the County established the Highway Safety Commission (HSC), managed by Public Works, the HSC is used for the community to appeal decisions regarding requests for traffic control measures or for school crossing guards. The CEO recommends that a Transportation Committee/Task Force be created with representatives from each Board office, the State of California Department of California Highway Patrol, and other County departments, to hold public meetings at least twice a year. The purpose of a Transportation Committee/Task Force would be to review plans for major transportation projects, development or modification of policies related to transportation services, hear presentations on major projects or developments, review after-action reports on major accidents, and have meaningful discussions on legislation, policies, and developments

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MOTION

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related to transportation. This would also allow the County to follow clear strategic priorities and coordination between departments and entities, and to engage the public.”

The Board of Supervisors should adopt this recommendation, with modifications, to advance its ambitious goals around transportation services, including, but not limited to, those detailed in the County’s adopted Vision Zero Action Plan, Our County Sustainability Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, and County Pedestrian Step by Step plans.

The County is overdue for renewed attention and investments in its transportation services. As articulated in the Board approved “Our County Sustainability plan,” “Most County residents take trips in private vehicles, emitting vast quantities of harmful pollutants into the air. By developing programs that focus on reducing the number of miles people travel in private vehicles, the County will help people choose alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles. These programs will expand residents’ mobility, including those residents whose limited automobile access translates to stifled economic opportunity.”

A Board established Transportation Commission will provide the necessary accountability for all of the County’s transportation services, and will illuminate opportunities for improvement and expansion, efficiencies, best practices, and a space for discussion on how to improve transportation services for those that need them the most.

Further, the County has an existing advisory body for topics related to traffic safety, which has been historically underutilized. In October 2014, the Board voted to extend the Highway Safety Commission (HSC) sunset review date from October 2013 to 2017. Since then, there has not been a holistic evaluation of the HSC. In fact, between January 2017 and June 2023, the HSC met just 13 times, an average of about twice per year and despite continued increases in traffic violence. The majority of HSC discussions have focused on individual appeals rather than holistic plans to promote safe, walkable communities. Meanwhile, between 2013 and 2017 (the most recent period for which complete data was available), 219 people were severely injured and 86 were killed while walking in unincorporated communities. Pedestrian-involved fatal and severe injury collisions were concentrated in the southern parts of the unincorporated County, largely in communities of color and low-income communities. With such a pressing need to address traffic violence, the County needs an oversight body to ensure equitable and

effective implementation of transportation projects and programs, particularly the Vision Zero Action Plan.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Director of Regional Planning (DRP), in consultation with County Counsel, to prepare an ordinance amending Title 15 Vehicles and Traffic of the Los Angeles County (County) Code to dissolve the existing Highway Safety Commission and, in its place, establish new a Transportation Commission for the County (hereafter referred to as “the Commission”). The purpose of the Commission shall be to advise and assist the Board of Supervisors (Board) on all matters pertaining to transportation policies, State and federal legislation, goals, plans, processes (particularly those related to service requests), contracts, and mobility-related major capital projects. The ordinance shall come back to the Board for approval within 120 days and the Commission shall have its first meeting no later than within Fiscal Year 2025. The ordinance shall specify, as appropriate, the following conditions:

- a. The Commission shall consist of eleven voting members appointed by the Board, with expertise in any of the following fields:
 - i. Mobility/Transit planning
 - ii. Transportation engineering
 - iii. Public health
 - iv. Sustainability
 - v. Racial equity and justice
 - vi. Aging and Disability advocacy

Members with lived experience in the unincorporated County, transit dependence, and exposure to traffic violence are strongly preferred.

- b. Technical experts from each of the following fields shall attend Commission meetings, but shall not be members of the Commission, and shall provide technical assistance to the Commission, as appropriate:
 - i. the Director of DPW or a designee shall serve as a technical expert for transportation engineering, as well as traffic safety, goods movement,

- transit planning, and parking management. The Director of DPW or a designee shall serve as the lead technical expert for the Commission
 - ii. the Director of DRP or a designee shall serve as a technical expert for mobility planning
 - iii. the County Sheriff or a designee shall serve as a technical expert for parking management
 - iv. the Director of the Department of Aging and Disabilities or a designee shall serve as a technical expert for aging and disabilities
 - v. the Director of the Department of Public Health or a designee shall serve as a technical expert for public health
 - vi. the Chief Sustainability Officer or a designee shall serve as a technical expert for sustainability
 - vii. the Director of the Anti-Racism Diversity and Inclusion Initiative or a designee shall serve as the technical expert for racial equity and mobility justice.
- c. The Commission may also invite technical experts from outside of the County to attend Commission meetings and assist the Commission, including but not limited to:
- i. the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) or a designee to serve as a technical expert for transit planning
 - ii. the State of California Department of Transportation or a designee to serve as a technical expert for emerging technology, as well as goods movement and speed enforcement.
- d. The Commission shall not have the authority to make final decisions, but may make recommendations to the Board on items related to transportation matters within the unincorporated communities of the County.
- e. The Commission shall establish a relationship with related Commissions, including the Regional Planning Commission, the Airport Land Use Commission, and the Aviation Commission, as well as a coordination strategy with LA Metro on overlapping issues and priorities. Further, the Commission

- shall only advise on matters connected with the General Plan Mobility Element upon referral by the Board or by another County department and shall not advise on subdivisions and land use entitlements.
- f. The Commission shall consist of a Chair, Vice Chair, and Second Vice Chair. The Commission shall host an election during its first meeting for officers and vote on how future elections shall be held.
 - g. The Commission shall establish two-year terms for all voting members and a compensation policy consistent with County Commissions for voting members that are not full-time employees of the County or another government body. The Commission shall also establish a policy for removing a member of the Commission before their term ends, if necessary.
 - h. The Commission shall meet bi-monthly (with a virtual option for members of the public to participate) at the same time and in an easily accessible location central to the County and accessible via public transportation.
 - i. The Commission shall post agendas, developed by DPW and approved by the Chair of the Commission, and include standing items such as:
 - i. DPW Verbal Report
 - ii. Transportation Policy Planning Update
 - iii. Legislative Update
2. Direct the Director of DPW, in consultation with the County CEO, the Director of the Department of Human Resources (DHR), and the Executive Officer of the Board, to develop a proposed budget, with potential funding sources for training and travel, administrative support staff, equipment and location space lease and/or rentals for the newly established Commission. The proposed budget shall be presented to the Board in writing within 180 days.
 3. Direct the Director of DPW to work with the CEO and the Director of DHR to initiate the necessary steps to create a new dedicated Transportation Planning Division within DPW and provide to the Board within 180 days recommendations on the proposed budget with potential funding sources, staffing plan, and list of responsibilities for DPW Transportation Planning Division. The Transportation Planning Division shall be primarily responsible for coordinating administrative support for the Commission.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

September 12, 2023

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