

Report of the TA Citizens Advisory Committee

Meeting of December 3, 2024

Committee Actions

Consent Calendar - all approved unanimously, without comments

- **4a) Approval of Minutes of the CAC Meeting of November 5, 2024**
- **4b) TA Board Item 8.b Acceptance of Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the Period Ending October 31, 2024**
- **4c) TA Board Item 8.c Acceptance of Capital Projects Quarterly Status Report for 1st Quarter Fiscal Year 2025**

Other Items

- **3) Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**
 - No public comments
- **5) TA Board Item 7.a Approval of Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of October 10, 2024**
 - No discussion.
- **6) TA Board Item 3 Legislative Update**
 - Sandra Lang asked about transportation funding given the new Presidential Administration. Staff said that it is uncertain whether DC will try to rescind monies from current infrastructure programs.
- **7) TA Board Item 4 2025 Draft Legislative Program**
 - No questions or comments.
- **8) TA Board Item 13.a Adopting the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 and Amending the Fiscal year 2025 Budget from \$189,035,418 to \$191,035,418 to Fund Technical Assistance Program - *Approved with one dissenting vote***
 - Ms. Lang asked whether the Plan video will be available online. Staff said it would be on the website.
 - Mike Swire asked whether the TA coordinates with C/CAG, which just completed its strategic plan. C/CAG called out mode shift and GHG reductions in its Strategic Plan, which aren't called out in the TA Plan. Do the two groups coordinate? Staff said that they coordinate regularly with C/CAG and present to their subcommittees. The TA has expenditure rules that offer the TA less flexibility in setting its Strategic Plan. The TA plan is more an administrative plan. The TA has also funded C/CAG's countywide transportation plan development, to stay aligned.

- Nheeda Enriquez asked whether the TA was happy with the level of public engagement on the Plan. Staff said that it is difficult to get very broad engagement, but they took the time to do interviews to solicit additional feedback.
 - Giuliano Carlini asked whether the plan had been updated over the course of our many discussions. He didn't see strategic changes in the current document despite many workshops that identified VMT and GHG reduction, etc. He questioned whether the document provided strategic direction. Staff said that it has changed evaluation criteria to align with updated priorities. Mr. Carlini said that safety is not adequately represented.
 - Mr. Swire questioned whether adjusting evaluation criteria truly created change in the organization and what it funds. He said that the evaluation criteria don't often change which projects do/not get funded; many programs are undersubscribed and thus there is little opportunity for the criteria to influence which projects move forward. Furthermore, the largest projects, including the nine figure highway projects sponsored by the TA, are not influenced by the new criteria. Staff said that the cities sponsor projects. Staff said that the evaluation criteria do not factor into which projects the TA decides to sponsor, although the criteria influence the decision to award funding.
 - Ms. Lang asked who oversees the seed money for the transportation projects. Staff said that the Strategic Plan highlights technical assistance programs to assist cities with their planning and training.
 - Mr. Carlini pointed out that the TA (with C/CAG) is the sponsoring agency for the Managed Lanes project north of 380, which could have a cost of up to upwards of \$680M and the 101/92 could be \$150M.
- **9) TA Board Item 13.b** Programming and Allocating \$24,676,944 for the Cycle 7 Pedestrian and Bicycle Program Call for Projects and \$2,183,325 for the Cycle 2 Alternative Congestion Relief/Transportation Demand Management Call for Projects - *approved unanimously*
 - Peter Ohtaki asked whether it was possible to create an emergency fund; this would be useful in addressing immediate concerns, per the recent death of a person on a bike on Holly at 101. He read an article that mentioned a project that would have increased safety at this location but would not be built soon. He thought a stop gap project might prevent a future tragedy Staff said that in 2023, the City of San Carlos cancelled the project but it remains eligible for TA funding if the City wishes to reinstate it in the future.
 - Rich Hedges questioned the reasons for the Holly project's delay. Staff said that the project is fully designed but the City doesn't have enough money to build it. Staff said that the Express Lane project didn't change the footprint of the highway, despite adding a lane; it largely repurposed existing auxiliary lanes, which is why there was not major interchange structural work during project construction. The Holly bike/ped project will not require redesign due to the express lanes, but the cost of a Pedestrian Overcrossing alone could be \$20M. The City may need to come up with \$17.5 million and the TA can't fund that entire project. Staff said that less expensive designs should be considered.

- Mr. Swire said he attended the meeting at the San Carlos City Council regarding the death of the cyclist on Holly. He said that Mayor Dugan said that the 101 widening had killed the Holly Street bike and ped project and that this was the spot where the cyclist was killed. He said that the TA's processes do not provide a quick build capability. The TA's system for making streets safer is broken as it will take ten years to build something permanent on Holly, but more rapid and less expensive solutions exist to make the street safer now. People on foot and bike die on a monthly basis in SM County. The City of SM has had two pedestrians die in consecutive months, one on Hillsdale and the other on Peninsula, next to the recently cancelled 101 overpass project. He said that making the streets safer isn't simply about funding bike/ped projects. The TA needs to consider the impact that its massive highway widening projects have on bike/ped safety. He said that no elected official in the County of San Mateo, prior to Mayor Dugan, disclosed that the \$600M widening of 101 would negatively impact the long-planned Holly and Hillsdale ped/bike safety projects. He said that the system is not working and that we need to stop prioritizing highway widening projects over projects that save lives. He said we need to have these conversations.
 - Mr. Hedges said that the Hillsdale project didn't go forward as the design was too expensive. It wasn't related to the 101 widening.
 - Ms. Lang said that after the pedestrian death on Peninsula no solutions are moving forward. Others have died on this spot.
 - Staff reminded the committee of the Brown Act as the discussion was veering away from the agenda item.
- **10) TA Board Item 14.a** Acceptance of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024 - *approved unanimously*
 - Mr. Ohtaki asked whether it was a clean audit and whether there were controls in place. Do you need more resources? Regarding the increase in revenue, are we putting funds to rapid use to address concerns of residents? How can we use taxpayer funds and make sure that projects are being executed and implemented in a timely fashion. Staff said that the audit results had no comments or suggestions. It was an unmodified opinion (which is good).
 - On operations, Mr. Ohtaki said that with increases in cash and investments, we are sitting on a lot of funds that could go toward projects. He is worried that each year we aren't implementing fast enough. Staff said that inflation is a double-edged sword as it helps interest revenue but increases project costs. The new Strategic Plan made changes to ensure timely use of funds, especially on projects that sit idle.
 - Ms. Lang asked how the TA knows that invoices have been submitted. Staff said that financial reimbursements go through several gates prior to being paid.

- **11) TA Board Item 14.b** Awarding a Contract to Bortolussi & Watkin, Inc. for the Landscaping Construction of the US 101/Broadway Interchange Project for a Grand Total Bid Price of \$1,145,159 - *approved unanimously*
 - Jeff Londer asked why the bids were so low. Staff said this was surprising. The private and overhead costs are lower than expected; also, construction costs are dynamic, and our timing might have been good.
 - Mr. Swire asked whether the project footprint overlapped with that of a potential grade separation at Broadway. Staff said the landscaping was confined to the 101 area. Mr. Swire praised the Broadway bike/ped bridge, which he uses frequently.
 - Ivan Bucio asked whether native plants are prioritized. He said that natives can be lower to maintain. Construction costs are down right now. He asked why a three-year planting period; staff said that is a Caltrans standard. He works in construction and offered his assistance, if necessary.
 - Ms. Enriquez asked for confirmation that the future plan is to have TA staff manage these projects. Staff said that it depends on the sponsor. In this case, Burlingame reached out to the TA for help on implementation (instead of hiring private consultants).
 - Mr. Carlini asked about how the TA recoups the cost in these cases. Staff said that the TA charges the project budget for its services. Staff also said that landscaping is a small percentage of overall project costs.
 - Mr. Swire asked whether providing project management services was the optimal use of staff time given how valuable TA staff is in other areas - e.g., grant writing which can create leverage in attracting additional funds. Staff said that it depends on staff availability, and this can help accelerate project completion. This service might increase in the future.

- **12) Report of the Chair**
 - Barbara Arietta, CAC Chair, announced that Caltrain has sold its retired diesel fleet to the Municipality of Lima, Peru effective November 2024. The commuter rail line sold 19 diesel locomotives, and 90 retired gallery cars built between 1985 and 1987. This transfer marks a second life for the equipment, which served several millions of passengers in San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties for nearly 40 years. This international transaction will reimburse Caltrain over \$6 million USD. Upon conclusion of the sale, Caltrain reported that the agreement will help Peru embrace a more sustainable future while also bringing millions of dollars to keep Caltrain running... The former Caltrain passenger cars and locomotives will enable the start of new commuter rail service in greater Lima, cleaner air for commuters and community members, as well as access to opportunities this great public transportation will provide. Notably, this sale of the previous Caltrain fleet not only preserves the utility of retired transit assets, but also sets an example of international collaboration in promoting sustainable transportation.

- **13) Report from Staff**

- Peter Skinner, Executive Officer, Transportation Authority, said that staff will present new rules for elections at its next meeting, at which time elections will occur for the following year. There will no longer be a Nominating Committee; nominees can contact staff with their interest.
- Mr. Carlini asked if the CAC could see the new rules prior to that meeting. Staff said that the rules would be available with the January packet.

- **14) Member Comments/Requests**

- Mr. Carlini said that Caltrain has increased ridership which is good news. He said that the needless death on Holly happens time and again on our streets. We need to prioritize safety solutions instead of \$1.2 billion on widening 101. We need to find more money to make people safe when they walk and bike.
- Mr. Mattammal said happy holidays and we got a lot done this year.
- Chair Arietta said we have indeed been productive and challenging this year.
- Karen Kuklin said happy holidays to all.
- Mr. Ohtaki requested that there can be a TA fast track improvement process for immediate safety needs. This would deliver results more quickly than the current, lengthy processes.
- Ms. Enriquez said that we should be more responsive in responding to safety concerns, when necessary, without so much red tape.
- Mr. Swire thanked Mr. Ohtaki for his focus on quick builds. He said that the street safety community is asking for quick build processes and funding. He said that quick builds provide more bang for your buck. These 80/20 solutions will have a more immediate impact than the current process of approving ten or so large bike/ped projects every year or two (and then waiting some time for construction). He mentioned that the City of SM responded quickly to a near death on Franklin Parkway with a quick build after the incident was featured on CNN. We should have a pot of money and a process for making this happen. Unfortunately, nothing often happens following most serious crashes. He also said that the TA needs to make sure to reward cities that are doing the right thing for safety. He mentioned that the City of SM might rip out two-year-old bike lanes in order to install more bike lanes. He said that the TA should ensure that when it sponsors projects, they remain implemented into the future and that they take this into future funding decisions.
- Mr. Hedges talked about the great transit improvements in LA. He said that they have a lot of money due to transit sales taxes and lots of money coming from the federal government.

- Ms. Lang agreed with Mr. Carlini on the beauty of Caltrain. She also said that we are a citizens group and that we have listened to different perspectives and accomplished a lot, but we come together. Things need to move a lot faster; we can't keep saying that things can't be done.
 - Mr. Londer said that he appreciates everyone's opinions, and everyone is thoughtful. Happy New Year!
- **15) Date/Time of Next Regular Meeting: January 7, 2025, 4:30pm**