September 1, 2015

Mr. Phillip A. Washington, CEO
Metro
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, California 90012

Potential 2016 Ballot Measure Framework

Dear Mr. Washington,

The Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) is the largest membership-based active transportation advocacy organization in Southern California, representing members from throughout Los Angeles County and including chapters in each of the county’s five supervisorial districts. LACBC works to make all communities in Los Angeles County into healthy, safe, and fun places to walk and bike, with a focus on ensuring that low-income communities of color share in these opportunities equitably. We also recognize the role that active transportation plays in the overall transportation system, and support a balanced framework of multimodal investments to provide safe and reliable transportation for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes. LACBC is particularly inspired by the City of Los Angeles’ recent Mobility Plan 2035, which lays the groundwork for a layered network of complete streets that meets the needs of people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving. We would be thrilled to see a similar approach for the entire county.

A Balanced Framework Must Adequately Fund Active Transportation

We are enthusiastic about the potential for a new transportation sales tax measure to transform Los Angeles County into a more walkable, bikeable, and equitable place to live, however we are also cautious, as active transportation has been overlooked by each of the county’s three previous transportation sales tax measures (Propositions A & C and Measure R). As a result, walking and biking, which account for 19 percent of all trips and 39 percent of all roadway deaths in the county, currently receive less than one percent of transportation funding. Earlier this year, LACBC, along with the Safe Routes to School National Partnership\(^1\), published findings from our research into how other California counties fund active transportation with local sales tax measures.\(^2\) We identified a $20 billion need for walking, biking, first/last-mile, complete streets, and safe routes to

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\(^1\) The National Partnership’s former Southern California Policy Director, Jessica Meaney, has since founded Investing in Place, a new nonprofit organization dedicated to this work.

\(^2\) Best Practices for Funding Active Transportation with County Transportation Sales Taxes. Safe Routes to School National Partnership. January 2015.
school projects across Los Angeles County. Based on this funding need and best practices from peer agencies around the state, LACBC joins our partners in recommending that Metro dedicate at least 10 percent of any future revenue from a potential ballot measure to active transportation.

Walking and biking are both regional and local needs, and the ballot measure framework should reflect this reality. The most appropriate model is Alameda County’s Measure BB, which was approved by voters in 2014. It funded regionally significant active transportation projects, including regional commuter trails, first/last-mile projects, and countywide education and encouragement programs, as well as stipulating a set-aside for active transportation within each jurisdiction’s local return allocation. Local jurisdictions must report on their spending to ensure transparency and accountability. All projects funded by the measure are governed by Alameda County’s complete streets policy. This three-pronged approach of regional funding, local funding, and countywide policy would be a good fit for Los Angeles County. Within Metro’s discussion framework, in which half of new revenue would go toward regional capital projects and half toward operations and local return, a 10 percent allocation of regional funding plus a 20 percent set-aside within local return would achieve our overall recommendation of 10 percent for active transportation.

With our partners, LACBC has engaged stakeholders throughout the county to discuss the need, urgency, and best practices for funding active transportation. As a result, the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Gateway Cities, and Westside Cities Councils of Governments have all supported a regional solution for active transportation funding.

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3 The City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035 calls for 20 percent of local return to be dedicated to active transportation.
Include Education, Encouragement, and Safe Routes to Schools

As the Los Angeles region builds more multimodal infrastructure, it must be matched by a commitment to education and encouragement to ensure residents learn how to walk, bike, take transit, and drive safely. Many of Metro’s peer agencies around the state offer bike safety education through safe routes to school programs and adult classes because they understand that education is part of “operating” a robust active transportation system. Metro’s current safety classes are reliant on grant funding instead of sustained local funding, making them less accessible to the public. Safe Routes to School programs around the county are likewise grant-dependent with little or no sustained support for ongoing staffing. Often times, a school will receive a multi-year grant, build tremendous momentum, and then lose that institutional knowledge once the program coordinator loses funding. Metro’s Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan should identify the level of funding needed for ongoing mobility education in every public school in Los Angeles County. The Active Transportation Strategic Plan should identify the funding needed to continue regular adult bicycle safety classes in perpetuity. The funding need for encouragement programs, such as CicLAvia, should also be included. All of these should be evaluated for sustained, local funding in any potential ballot measure.

Guarantee Benefits for Low-Income Communities of Color

Los Angeles County is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the world, providing untold cultural richness and creative inspiration for the county’s 10 million residents. However, our region also suffers from vast economic and environmental inequality. Historically, the benefits and burdens of transportation have not been distributed equitably. As a result, certain communities disproportionately suffer from worse health and economic outcomes, which ultimately hinders the whole region’s growth and prosperity.

Transportation plays a significant role in creating and maintaining inequality in our region. Our freeways and goods movement infrastructure place disproportionate air quality burdens on low-income communities of color, while often failing to meet the mobility needs of those same communities. These communities are more likely to rely on walking, biking, and transit as primary forms of transportation, yet the lack of investment in safe and accessible networks for walking and biking generally is particularly acute in low-income communities of color, which have the highest rates of traffic injuries and fatalities.

Any future transportation measure must seek to rectify these environmental injustices with intentional policy to advance social equity. Sales taxes hit low-income families the hardest, creating a moral imperative to ensure that the needs of these residents are prioritized. LACBC endorses Investing in Place’s call for prioritizing investment in communities of concern, as identified by income and race/ethnicity. We also support increased funding for transit and bike share operations to ensure that multimodal trips are accessible, reliable, and affordable for low-income residents.
Provide Safe Transportation for All

Just last week, Los Angeles became the latest major city in the United States to set a goal of eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries within 10 years. “Vision Zero” is an international movement to put safety first in all street design, and ensure that the most vulnerable roadway users—people walking and biking—are able to move about their communities safely and free of fear. Over 500 people are killed on Los Angeles County streets and highways each year, about 40 percent of whom while walking and biking. In recent years, Metro has redoubled its efforts to ensure that its transit system is safe and in a state of good repair. As the county’s transportation planning agency, we contend that this responsibility extends to the entire transportation network and that funding priorities should provide for the safety and security of all people who travel in Los Angeles County.

Metro’s Long Range Transportation Plan should include Vision Zero and set interim performance benchmarks to evaluate progress. Funding priorities, policies, and oversight of local jurisdictions should work toward this goal proactively and collaboratively by identifying collision hot spots, investing in complete streets, and providing technical assistance and best practices to local agencies. Metro’s Active Transportation Strategic Plan should include a needs assessment that incorporates Vision Zero and sets annual funding targets needed to reach this goal.

Balanced, Equitable, and Safe is a Winning Formula

We are excited by the possibility of a balanced, equitable, and safe transportation system for Los Angeles County and look forward to working with you to create a framework that achieves these objectives. Polling data from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health shows overwhelming support among voters for walking, biking, and investments, above other transportation expenditures.\(^4\) We are convinced that, given the opportunity, Los Angeles County voters will support a comprehensive vision for transportation that includes walking and biking as essential elements of the transportation system.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Should you have any questions, please contact Planning & Policy Director Eric Bruins at (213) 629-2142 ext. 127 or eric@la-bike.org.

Sincerely,

Tamika Butler
Executive Director

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\(^4\) *Active Transportation and the Built Environment.* Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. October 2014.