



Honorable Mayor Libby Schaaf
1 Frank Ogawa Plaza #3
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: FY 2015-17 Oakland City Budget

June 3, 2015

Dear Mayor Schaaf:

This letter contains Transport Oakland's comments on your Fiscal Year 2015-2017 budget. As you know, our group is comprised of transportation professionals who live or work in Oakland, and we advocate for forward-looking leadership from existing and aspiring elected officials on transportation issues that are critical to the livability and economic vitality of our city. Since our primary concern is with respect to the City's transportation and infrastructure, our comments address Public Works' section of the budget. While we of course acknowledge the many other important issues and departments, we choose to focus on this as an area of expertise and interest.

New Department of Transportation

Transport Oakland wholly supports the creation of a Department of Transportation (DOT). From its inception, our group has felt that a DOT could help attract the leadership, talent, and experience needed to guide the City's transportation decisions. Furthermore, current and future funding sources demand that Oakland generate a pipeline of projects in order to have successful grant applications and deliver projects. By creating a department that focuses on developing a strategic plan and this critical pipeline, we know that this decision will pay for itself quickly. We applaud you for recognizing this and having the courage to include it in your first budget as mayor.

We are eager to see the City's transition plan and timeline for implementation of the new DOT. We think a new director needs to be hired within 6 months of the passage of the budget. In the meantime, we would like to see how project development and grant writing will continue such that Oakland is able to take advantage of the big wave of funding sources. An interim director should be prepared to lead the process in coordination with the Mayor's Office starting now. All options should be considered for how to expedite the creation of the department, including hiring of temporary staff, consultants using a sole-source procurement, and alternative hiring processes. Time is ticking, and Oakland cannot wait.

We also have some ideas of the types of positions and qualities that should be included in the DOT:

1. The DOT will need a dynamic, talented, and thoughtful director. This will require a national search that should be undertaken with care, as the strategic direction of the agency and many of its important subsequent hires will be led by the person who takes this position.
2. A transit coordinator to support and initiate work with AC Transit and BART is essential to ensure that public transportation continues to improve in Oakland. Currently, our transit agencies do not have a staff level contact, so calls go unanswered

- for needs as simple as bus stop re-location and projects like East Bay BRT do not have a collaborative structure to resolve issues. This position should also coordinate with the planning department to support development and implementation of land use policy tools like inclusionary zoning around transit stations and protections against displacement when public transportation improvements are implemented so that current residents, employees, and businesses can enjoy the benefits of these critical projects. This effort will be critical to bring a lens of equity to the work of the new DOT.
3. Transport Oakland has attended numerous budget meetings. At almost all of them we have heard a request for an accessibility coordinator to oversee compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and ensure that improvements provide universal accessibility for all users. We agree this position is essential to include to allow proper vetting of new and innovative street designs for universal access needs.
 4. An additional bicycle and pedestrian coordinator will help enhance safety and improve the experience for vulnerable road users. This position can help create essential projects for

Measure BB Funds

The passage of Measure BB in the fall adds to the timeliness of this budget for transportation in Oakland. The formula funds directly provided to Oakland allow the City a chance to hire new positions, develop projects, and put itself in a position to be awarded a significant share of the competitive grant programs in Measure BB. We are glad to see that a good amount of these funds will be used for desperately needed repaving as well as increase the amounts in other important programs such as bridge maintenance, school safety, and sidewalk repair.

We are concerned that 7.6 Full Time Employees (FTEs), at the cost of ~\$1.7M, are being covered by Measure BB that were previously funded by the Multipurpose Reserve Fund (1750). We understand that the City had a significant deficit when creating this budget and that other important City departments have pressing needs, but the budget does not provide a clear explanation or rationale as to why that dollar amount or number of FTEs were chosen to take from the Capital Improvement Program operating fund or what else the amount was used to fund. We note that on page 37 of Measure BB Expenditure Plan, Item 5 of "Administration of Plan" section states that "Pursuant to California Public Utilities Code 180001 (e), it is the intent of this Plan that funds generated by the transportation sales tax be used to supplement and not replace existing local revenues used for transportation purposes". We are unclear how this budget, and the repurposing of 1750 funds, is compliant with this clause.

Repaving

While we are pleased to see the \$6.2M increase in repaving funds over the 2 year budget cycle, it appears that all of it is concentrated in FY 15/16, as the FY 16/17 amount dedicated to funding (\$2.7M) is less than the amount budgeted in FY 13/14. Assuming OPW or the new DOT is able to deliver the full amount of repaving budgeted for FY 15/16, then we imagine Oakland voters who supported Measure BB would like to see a higher amount continue in FY 16/17, since repaving was a key consideration in supporting the measure. We recommend that staff find a way to fund repaving at a significantly higher amount than the historic levels included in budgets before the passage of Measure BB.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your office.

Sincerely,

Michael Schwartz
Transport Oakland Board Member
Chair, Transport Oakland City Budget Review Committee

cc: Oakland City Council: President Lynette Gibson McElhaney, Dan Kalb, Abel Guillén, Annie Campbell Washington, Noel Gallo,
Desley Brooks, Larry Reid, Rebecca Kaplan
Matt Nichols – Mayor's Office