



**COUNCILMEMBER SEAN ELO-RIVERA
NINTH COUNCIL DISTRICT**

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: January 15, 2021

TO: Councilmember Marni von Wilpert, Chair, Active Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

FROM: Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera 

SUBJECT: 2021 Active Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Priorities

Transportation and infrastructure are racial justice issues. Generations of structural racism has robbed San Diego's historically Black, Indigenous, Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities from investments that are a given in other parts of our City. Undoing this will require us to make smart investments now to create sustainable solutions for our City's future.

Throughout our community, sidewalks are in poor condition, streetlights are lacking, and potholes are causing extensive damage to bikes and cars. These issues impact quality of life and cost the City millions in legal costs. To respond to San Diego's shifting challenges we must have the ability to be nimble and adaptable in our approach to community needs.

Our priorities today will create a future where all students can safely walk to school, families can get to and from the neighborhood grocery store, youth can ride their bike to extracurricular activities, workers can depend on getting to work by using public transportation, and those who need to drive spend less time in traffic.

We will fight for a world-class mobility system that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, while providing all San Diegans with the freedom to safely and efficiently move throughout their communities. Building infrastructure that is inclusive and accessible will provide pathways for all San Diegans to job prospects, healthy foods, affordable housing, and more.

It is not enough to focus narrowly on improving our City's infrastructure and mobility systems. We need to be willing to have honest and difficult conversations about race and how we are serving (or not serving) those living on our margins.

Accordingly, I request this Committee utilize a racial equity tool in determining our priorities and making decisions. I earnestly offer our office's support to assist in that effort. Equitably prioritizing transit options and investments in our city infrastructure are ways we can begin addressing generations of structural racism today.

Equitable and Green Infrastructure Investments

- **Temporary Street Lights and Streetlight Equity** – The City of San Diego is currently managing a significant repair backlog for street lights, and an even more significant backlog for installation of new street lights. The Committee should discuss opportunities for battery-powered LEDs and solar street lights as a temporary solution that is less cost-prohibitive than a permanent street light installation. Additionally, the Committee should discuss the prioritization of lower-income, underlit, and high-crime neighborhoods for street light repairs and installations.
- **Street Moves Pilot Program** - Several cities have developed community-based initiatives known as “Street Moves” or “One Minute City”. These programs empower communities to develop hyper-localized designs of their own street’s layout on a block-by-block basis. Through workshops and consultations, residents can control how much street space is used for parking or for other public uses. The Committee should discuss establishing a pilot Street Moves Pilot Program to democratize public space, reduce GHGs, and boost livability.
- **Sidewalk Repair Permit and Policy Changes** – Permits for typical sidewalk repairs can cost several thousands of dollars, despite being routine infrastructure maintenance. In order to address the backlog of sidewalk repairs throughout the City of San Diego, the Committee should discuss operational changes to the permitting process in order to reduce time and costs for applicants, including pre-approved designs. A sidewalk fee holiday should be also be considered.
- **Stormwater Infrastructure Backlog and Financing** – San Diego’s storm drain system is deteriorating quickly, threatening the City with toxic runoff, flood damage, and penalties from violating the state’s Clean Water Act. Our stormwater infrastructure backlog is now more than \$2 billion, growing annually. The Committee should open a discussion with the IBA’s office and the public to discuss revenue opportunities, including increasing our City’s storm drain fee.
- **Green Infrastructure** – Green infrastructure is an investment in our communities’ wellbeing and our City’s climate goals. It is also a smart investment during tough financial times for the City. We must investigate and pursue creative solutions that address the multiple issues facing our City such as our infrastructure backlog, remedying the historic lack of investment in low-income communities of color, and addressing stormwater, flooding and air quality concerns. The Committee should discuss how our City can invest in green infrastructure such as bioswales, flow-through planters, and pervious pavement in all transportation and public works projects.
- **Chollas Creek Watershed** – The development of the Chollas Creek Watershed Master Plan was a years-long effort from multiple communities to rehabilitate one of San Diego’s most significant ecological assets. The Committee should discuss updates on implementation of the plan, such as with the Barrio Logan Community Plan Update and Wightman Street Park development. The Committee should also consider the proposal from Groundworks and others to designate the Chollas Creek Regional Park. This would bring regional identity to underserved communities and preserve a precious environmental and community resource.

Transportation Equity and Environmental Justice

- **Infrastructure Equity Investment Report** – The Committee should request for Public Works staff to document and present an infrastructure spending report, outlined by Council District and if possible, by community planning area. The Committee should also request for Public Works to identify the total deferred capital maintenance costs by community.

- **Transportation Equity** – Equitable transportation investments must be prioritized by this Committee and the City. The Committee should facilitate a holistic discussion about how transportation equity can be prioritized in planning and investments.
- **Dignified Bus Stops** – Across San Diego, bus stops and shelters are strewn with litter and the sidewalks do not receive regular pressure washed cleanings. This Committee should pursue policies for ensuring that bus stops are clean and dignified for transit riders and pedestrians alike, and collaborate with MTS to ensure street lights are at every bus stop in the City.
- **El Cajon Boulevard Improvements** – El Cajon Boulevard is a historic highway in the center of many of San Diego’s urban core communities. While much growth has occurred along the Boulevard, and it is home to some of San Diego’s favorite local businesses, the City has not invested in the needed infrastructure improvements for the surrounding communities. In consultation with the Complete Boulevard Plan, the Committee should discuss and envision the future of the Boulevard with stakeholders, including but not limited to pedestrian and bicyclist safety, transit-supporting infrastructure, freeway bridge-deck activation, and placemaking.
- **Electrical Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations** – The Committee should work to expand the existing network of EV charging stations throughout the City. Focus should be placed on underserved communities – there are exactly two EV stations to serve every single community South of the SR-94. As the cost of EVs decreases steadily each year, EV stations should be installed in underserved communities so that EVs can become a feasible and clean transportation option for residents. The Committee should include discussion with the City’s Sustainability Department, SDG&E, Tesla, and other potential corporate partners.

Mobility Options

- **Bus and Transit-Only Lane Pilot Projects** – The pilot transit-only lane project established on El Cajon Boulevard has been successful in decreasing commute times for MTS riders, slowing vehicles on a historically deadly corridor, and has not significantly impacted traffic flow. This project should be made permanent with red paint and extended to San Diego State University. The Committee should work with MTS and city staff to expand the network of transit-only lanes and priority signalization throughout the City.
- **Support SANDAG’s 5 Big Moves** - The Committee should docket a discussion with SANDAG staff to solicit feedback and provide recommendations on the 5 Big Moves initiative. The Committee should also explore partnerships that could advance the goals of the 5 Big Moves.
- **Quick Build Infrastructure** – Quick-build projects are cost-effective infrastructure improvements that can be built within 1-2 years and can be either permanent or temporary. The Committee should consider strategies to move forward with several quick-build pilot projects to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on high injury network corridors.
- **Vision Zero Strategy** – San Diego is just over halfway through the ten-year timeframe to end all traffic fatalities and serious injuries, yet little progress has been made so far. Poor visibility and high traffic speeds remain common in underserved neighborhoods, and around schools & parks. The City should discuss equitable implementation of the recently drafted Vision Zero Strategy to address the growing public threat of traffic violence, including the role of and potential alternatives to traffic enforcement.
- **Complete Streets Policy** – Complete Streets is an approach to roadway improvements that prioritizes safety, comfort, and access to destinations for all people who use the street. The

Committee should develop a Council Policy that requires consideration for Complete Street elements for all road re-surfacing improvements, particularly in conjunction with improvements funded annually with SB-1 funds. Prioritization should be made for underinvested communities and Vision Zero corridors.

- **Free Youth Bicycle Program** – It is critical to habituate the use of bicycles as a primary transportation option for our City’s youth. However, for many low-income families, the cost of purchasing a bicycle can be prohibitive. The Committee should discuss opportunities to provide affordable or free bicycles to young residents through interagency collaboration, corporate partnerships, or grant-funded programs.

Improve City Operations and Processes

- **Contracting and Bidding Reform** – Contracts that solicit the lowest bid often return to Council after approval to authorize costly change orders, and lead to poor customer service and construction timeline overruns. The Committee should discuss the adoption of a “best value” framework for contracts. The Committee should also consider expanding Public Works so that city staff perform routine infrastructure maintenance, rather than for-profit contractors.
- **Bike and Pedestrian Standards** – The City invests enormous amounts of time on individual bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects. Establishing bicycle and pedestrian standards pursuant to a national standard such as NACTO would significantly decrease the time staff spends designing such projects. Adopting such standards would also ensure that bicycle lane projects are safe through implementation of dividers and preventing vehicular parking in lanes.
- **Public Outreach and Customer Service for Infrastructure Projects** – The City maintains several communication resources to inform the public about infrastructure projects in their neighborhood. However, despite these resources, it is very difficult for residents to find the appropriate contact if they have an issue with a project, leading to confusion and frustration. The Committee should discuss these existing barriers and standardizing customer service standards and accountability measures in infrastructure contracts.
- **Equitable CIP Planning** – Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects are large, long-term investments in improving the safety and quality of life of San Diegans, yet the process for developing, prioritizing, and funding CIPs is complicated and difficult to understand. The Committee should receive information regarding the CIP, examine amending Council Policy 800-14, and any affiliated processes such as the CIP Review and Advisory Committee.