



Board Report

File #: 2019-0845, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 5.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 19, 2020

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MOTION BY DIRECTORS BONIN, HAHN, GARCIA, AND NAJARIAN - ALIGNING HIGHWAY PROGRAMS WITH STATE EMISSIONS REDUCTION GOALS DATED OCTOBER 16, 2019

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE report responding to Board Motion by Directors Bonin, Hahn, Garcia and Najarian (Item 51 from Planning & Programming Committee on October 16, 2019) to assess effects of Governor's Executive Order 19-19 on Metro's highway program and steps needed to ensure eligibility for State funding.

ISSUE

Upon release of Governor's Executive Order 19-19, the Planning and Programming Committee directed staff to report back with:

- A. An assessment of how Metro's highway program will be affected by the Governor's Executive Order 19-19 (Attachment A);
- B. Steps that can be taken to align Metro's highway program with the Executive Order in order to ensure continued competitiveness for scarce State resources; and,
- C. Recommended revisions to local funding and project development rules and guidelines to ensure project eligibility, scoping, and selection criteria are consistent with State and regional planning goals.

BACKGROUND

Metro Highway Program, in collaboration with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the subregional authorities, and local jurisdictions, initiates, funds, and implements mobility/operational improvement projects on State highways and arterials in Los Angeles County. Metro provides funds through Proposition C25%, Measure R, Measure M, and State and federal grants where available. Measure R and M funds are allocated to highway improvement projects in accordance with the Expenditure Plans approved by the voters and the Metro Board of Directors. A

sample list of those projects is presented herewith as Attachment B.

Although several major freeway capacity enhancement projects had been pursued in the past, Metro Highway Programs has shifted direction to prioritize mobility/operational improvements on the existing system and minimize environmental, social, and property impacts of Metro-funded projects. This shift includes more detailed evaluation and validation of investments to ensure maximized regional mobility benefits of the completed projects.

DISCUSSION

The following is an assessment of the relationships between the items in the Executive Order 19-19 and the core functions and practices of Metro Highway department and discussion of potential opportunities to improve guidelines and rules in project identification, eligibility, determination, prioritization, and funding.

1. The Executive Order directs “...*every aspect of state government redouble its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change while building a sustainable, inclusive economy*”.

While the Executive Order 19-19 is directed specifically to three State agencies: Dept. of Finance, Transportation Agency/Dept. of Transportation, and Dept. of General Services, other transportation agencies such as LA Metro, should incorporate the intent of the Executive Order to implement reasonable, logical, and practical policies and practices that would prevent/minimize the adverse effects of climate change.

2. The order to the State Transportation Agency (Item 2) requires *leveraging \$5+ billion in its annual spending for construction, operation, and maintenance to help reverse trend of increased fuel consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the transportation sector*.

Discussions with California State Transportation Agency Secretary Kim indicate that the executive order is the beginning of a discussion regarding climate change and the role that the state’s transportation system investments can play in addressing climate change. The Executive Order does not supersede existing state law.

In Los Angeles County, traffic/congestion relief has been a major focus of the Measure R and Measure M ballot measures. Under those sales tax measures, the voters went to the extent of voting for specifically defined highway improvement projects to address traffic congestion. Metro will actively follow and participate in the development of State guidance regarding the implementation of the Executive Order to ensure State and local policies and actions are aligned.

Most of LA Metro’s projects on the State highway system improve operations and mobility and relieve congestion by correcting existing bottlenecks and design deficiencies that exacerbate congestion and result in traffic spillage onto the arterials, local streets, and neighborhoods. When implemented, these projects will help relieve highway congestion and minimize the

traffic spillage on local streets and neighborhoods.

Metro currently has a Green Streets policy that describes design features and policies to address the needs of all users of the county's roadways. This policy can be incorporated into Metro's state grant applications.

Furthermore, under Measure M, Metro assigned more funds, under the Highway Multi-Year Subregional programs, to active transportation projects and complete streets with the expectation of mode shift, reduction in automobile demand, congestion relief, and air quality improvements.

Item 2a (EO-19-19): *“Align the State’s climate goals with transportation spending on planning, programming, and mitigation to achieve the objectives of the State’s Climate Change Scoping Plan where feasible.”*

Metro Highways continues to partner with the State and local agencies to pursue development and implementation of operational improvement projects along the State highways and arterials in Los Angeles County. Operational improvement projects are identified based on validation of current deficiencies such as bottlenecks, design deficiencies, accident rates, and other factors resulting in “choke points”, traffic backups and spill overs/diversions to other roadways, compromised roadway safety, loss of lives, and economic losses, with a focus on minimizing the negative impacts of projects.

Item 2b (EO 19-19): *Reduce VMT by bringing homes to where the jobs are.*

VMT is largely escalated due to the longer distances between the origins and destinations of automobile trips. Patterns of residential and commercial development away from the major job/demand centers have been a major factor contributing to increase in VMT. It is important to note that the State plans to shift from using Level of Service to evaluate projects impacts and use VMT instead. Caltrans is expected to issue specific guidance on VMT reduction this year. Metro will incorporate the appropriate guidance in evaluating investments in transportation improvement projects.

Item 2c (EO 19-19). *Reduce congestion through innovative strategies to move people from cars to other modes of transportation.*

Metro codified its intentions to shift people from cars to other modes with the adoption of the Complete Streets policy in 2014. Since then, Metro has begun testing new concepts to encourage more ridesharing through the Microtransit and Mobility-on-Demand pilot programs. Pending successful pilots, staff will seek partnerships with the State to advance more investment to encourage the more use of these types of transportation modes. Also, through the NextGen bus study, Metro is leveraging the availability and capacity of the bus network to move more people in less space.

Item 2d (EO 19-19). *Fund transportation options that contribute to the overall health of*

Californians and reduce greenhouse gas emissions such as transit, walking, biking, and other active modes.

Metro is currently funding multiple transportation modes and will seek partnerships with the State to advance more investment to encourage the use of sustainable transportation modes.

In response to Motion 51:

A. An assessment of how Metro’s highway program will be affected by Governor’s Executive Order 19-19 (Attachment A);

Metro will continue to engage in dialogue and work with Caltrans as more specific guidance related to the EO 19-19 is developed. Metro does not anticipate any changes to the implementation of the specific projects identified in the sales tax measures currently in place, but there may be adjustments in how the projects are implemented depending on the guidance to be adopted.

B. Steps that can be taken to align Metro’s highway program with the Executive Order in order to ensure continued competitiveness for scarce State resources;

Metro Highway department, in collaboration with its State and local partner agencies, local communities, and with support and approval by the Board, will continue to identify and implement viable transportation project priorities that leverage State funding resources consistent with the goals, policies, directives and guidelines of Board policies, approved sales tax measures, and the appropriate directives set forth in the Executive Order.

C. Recommended revisions to local funding and project development rules and guidelines to ensure project eligibility, scoping, and selection criteria are consistent with State and regional planning goals.

Metro will consult with the State to develop guidance on the implementation of the Executive Order. Once guidance is developed and issued, Metro will review and incorporate the guidance into our own evaluation procedures and guidelines, as appropriate. Staff will update the Board on any changes to our own guidelines and procedures at that time.

Concurrent and related activities include the Board staff subcommittee assessing potential changes in the Metro Highway Program to align with Board policies and motions. The subcommittee will produce a report documenting any recommended changes. In addition, Metro is working with Board staff to evaluate changes as part of the 10-year Measure R transfer process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No immediate impact to the budget. Staff will evaluate guidance issued by the State to determine

future impacts to the budget.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Metro Highway Program's current and planned actions support all Metro Strategic Plan goals and are consistent with the intent of the Governor's Executive Order.

Goal 1, *"Providing high quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling"* by continuing to identify and improve the highway and arterial system deficiencies and "Hot Spots" to provide for better mobility and safer roadways for the users;

Goal 2: *"Deliver outstanding trip experience for all users of the transportation system"* by removing choke points, reducing delays and idling traffic;

Goal 3: *"Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity"* by reducing congestion, provide for more trip reliability, and easing countywide trips to major job centers and places of interest;

Goal 4: *"Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership"* by close and productive collaboration with Caltrans, regional authorities, local jurisdictions, regulatory, resource, and permitting agencies to identify the best and most effective solutions to traffic congestion while minimizing impacts to the environment and communities; and

Goal 5: *"Provide responsive, accountable, and trustworthy governance within the Metro organization"* by collaborating with other Metro functional units responsible for non-highway modes to collectively identify the most beneficial and functional mobility options that accurately address the transportation needs of the users within the environment/area of effect of each project for the best results leading to the highest levels of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

N/A

NEXT STEPS

Staff will update the Board on the future changes in policies and procedures as those become available.

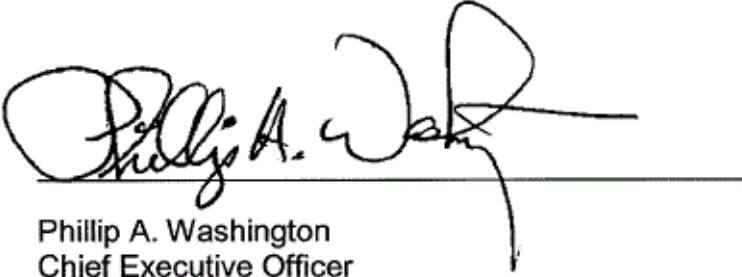
ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - Governor Executive Order 19-19

Attachment B - Highway Operational Improvement Projects Currently Pursued

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