



## Board Report

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### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE JANUARY 20, 2021

**SUBJECT: FINAL 2021 LA COUNTY GOODS MOVEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN**

**ACTION: ADOPT PLAN**

**RECOMMENDATION**

ADOPT the final 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan.

**ISSUE**

Staff developed the 2021 Los Angeles County Goods Movement Strategic Plan (Plan) in partnership with a wide range of regional goods movement stakeholders at the public, private and community level. The Plan (Attachment A) reflects input, core values, priorities and strategies elicited from these stakeholders and supports Metro Board positions and planning efforts, particularly Vision 2028, the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Equity Platform.

The Plan presents the vision, priorities, Sustainable Freight Competitiveness Framework and Early Action Initiatives that were developed through ongoing stakeholder engagement over the past two years, along with an implementation strategy and equity considerations for these items. Our stakeholders agreed that the Plan should be founded on the values of equity and sustainability - values that are elevated and infused within the priorities, strategies and initiatives developed through the Plan to help create a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity for LA County.

Following the presentation of the draft Plan to the Board in June 2020, staff initiated a 60-day public comment period, conducted additional stakeholder outreach and hosted a Telephone Town Hall meeting at the request of the Board to allow for more comprehensive input to be received and incorporated within the final Plan.

Staff now returns to the Board to present the final Plan and seeks adoption of the Plan and its priorities, strategies and Early Action Initiatives for Metro's goods movement planning team to pursue and implement over the next five years.

## **BACKGROUND**

As the nation's most populous county with the country's busiest seaport complex, LA County reaps tremendous economic and employment benefits from - yet suffers impacts to local communities, mobility and public health due to - the tremendous volume of containers moved annually through the San Pedro Bay Ports, the thousands of trucks and trains that distribute goods daily throughout the region and the facilities that support the region's vibrant goods movement industry.

Existing conflicts and looming problems threaten LA County's economic competitiveness. These factors include high costs of conducting business, recurrent congestion, local to national policies and regulations that create uncertainty over benefits of operating business through the county and intensifying competition from East Coast, Gulf Coast and Canadian ports. Most recently in 2019 LA County's preeminence in attracting discretionary cargo bound for the United States was endangered as the laden container volume at the Port of Long Beach dropped from second to third place in national container port rankings behind the Port of New York and New Jersey.

As LA County fends off increasing efforts by rival ports and trade gateways to siphon away economic and employment opportunities, we also find ourselves reckoning with the legacy of long-standing sustainability and equity challenges associated with moving goods, particularly in regard to air quality. Air pollutant emissions from goods movement sources - in particular from ships, trucks, train locomotives, cranes and other equipment that moves goods - are major sources of regional air pollution that affect both public health and climate. Much of LA County (excluding the Antelope Valley) falls within the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), which exceeds federal Clean Air Act standards for ozone and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). Reduction of nitrogen oxides (NOx), a major component of ozone, will require a focus on goods movement sources which constitute approximately 52% of the total NOx emissions for the SoCAB region within the past five years - of these sources heavy-duty trucks and locomotives generated 58% and 7%, respectively, of these goods movement-related NOx emissions.

The public health impacts of goods movement-related air pollution have particularly affected disadvantaged and minority communities located adjacent to major freight corridors and facilities. Residents of disadvantaged, equity-focused communities are more susceptible to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses and higher death rates associated with exposure to diesel pollution. COVID-19 preyed on these existing preconditions and exposed these existing racial and economic inequities in goods movement-affected communities - home to many essential workers in logistics and other industries - as demonstrated by higher mortality rates linked to health impacts caused by long-term exposure to freight emissions.

These challenges to LA County's economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social equity - heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic - have only intensified since Metro last convened regional freight stakeholders and developed the Multi-County Goods Movement Action Plan (2008) with partner agencies in Southern California. Since that time three major developments of great importance to LA County have emerged in the world of goods movement:

- First, the level of funding for goods movement projects has reached its highest level ever, thanks in large part to LA County's passage of two transportation sales taxes in 2008 (Measure R) and 2016 (Measure M), the State's passage of the Road Repair and

Accountability Act (Senate Bill 1) of 2017 - and its component discretionary grant programs - and the federal passage of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015 (FAST Act) and its new freight-focused grant programs.

- Second, the state and federal governments have recently released new freight plans (the California Freight Mobility Plan 2020 and the National Strategic Freight Plan, respectively) meant to guide policy and investment decisions that will ultimately affect LA County.
- Third, the long-standing concerns raised by equity-focused communities regarding the impacts of goods movement on their vulnerable residents - coupled with the overlapping goal to improve air quality through reducing harmful emissions attributed to freight - have crystallized into aggressive action by state agencies and the Governor in the form of new regulations, mandates and executive orders affecting aspects of goods movement planning and investment priorities.

The 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan represents the results of Metro's leadership in bringing together myriad stakeholders from the community, private and public sectors to develop a forward-looking, shared vision for how the county should work together over the next five years to assert itself at the state and federal level and advance common goals. Central to the equity-focused Plan is the Sustainable Freight Competitiveness Framework developed collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve inclusive growth that supports the county's economic competitiveness, environmentally sustainability and social equity goals.

## **DISCUSSION**

The 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan is Metro's response to the many freight-related transportation planning challenges that undermine our county's efforts to be economically competitive, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable. Metro neither controls, operates nor maintains many aspects of the regional goods movement system; therefore, to develop this Plan, staff convened an unprecedented array of leaders and stakeholders involved with or impacted by the goods movement system to ensure the Plan reflects and meets the needs of the various public and private agencies, community groups and entities that plan, operate, use, depend on and live near our essential countywide goods movement system.

Developed in consultation with these stakeholders, the Plan is founded on the values of equity and sustainability and sets a direction for Metro as a leader and partner in shaping a more competitive and equitable LA County by serving as:

- **A national leader and regional partner** in implementing a modern, responsive, coordinated and effective freight transportation system through policies, programs and projects that support a competitive global economy; and
- **A steward of equitable and sustainable investments and technological innovation** that will increase regional economic competitiveness, advance environmental goals and provide access to opportunity for county residents.

From this vision emerged four guiding priorities and correlated questions identified by the Plan's stakeholders that helped create the Sustainable Freight Competitiveness framework:

**1. A Strong Labor Force:**

- Do existing policies and programs position the local labor force of today to support the goods movement industry of tomorrow?
- What education and skill gaps need to be addressed and what opportunities exist to partner across industries and regions to address these gaps?
- Does the regional transportation system provide adequate mobility options to connect existing and future workers to these jobs and industries?

**2. A Safe and Efficient Multimodal System:**

- As the population grows how can we ensure the shared-use system safely meets future demand for capacity?
- Will the multimodal system be able to respond to changes in the way people and goods move?

**3. Strong Markets and Reliable Supply Chains:**

- Do we have a strong, articulated and coherent economic strategy to develop a tactical mix of businesses and policies to foster a vibrant and inclusive economy?
- Are we aware of and protecting against external threats that can disrupt our markets and supply chain?

**4. A Culture of Investment and Innovation:**

- Is the mix of regional leadership, policy environment and available capital sufficient to support investments in infrastructure and technology?
- How do we balance our unique regulatory and policy environment with the need for private sector investment?

Metro will implement the Plan's vision and advance its four guiding priorities over the next five years by undertaking a series of Early Action Initiatives that will allow the region to preserve and enhance LA County's competitiveness in an equitable and sustainable manner. The package of recommendations (Table 1) presents an opportunity for Metro to take a leadership role in addressing goods movement issues in the county, working with local, regional, state and national partners as appropriate. Each of these focus areas (Attachment A, pages 80-99) will be supported by specific implementation steps.

Table 1

**Strategic Goods Movement Early Action Initiatives**

<b>Initiatives</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Equity for Goods Movement</b>	Initiate a recurrent goods movement-focused task force comprising equity-focused stakeholders as a forum to give and receive input to guide Metro’s planning efforts on goods movement-related issues.
<b>2. LA Metro Countywide Clean Truck Initiative</b>	Develop a Countywide Clean Truck Initiative to accelerate the deployment of near-zero and zero-emission trucks in the region to address air quality and public health concerns, particularly for our most vulnerable communities along major freight highway corridors.
<b>3. Southern California Rail Investment Partnership</b>	Craft a public-private framework for a collaborative freight rail investment partnership focused on improving the region’s shared-use freight rail corridors.
<b>4. Urban Freight Delivery</b>	Mainstream urban delivery and curbside demand issues across other planning efforts within Metro and LA County jurisdictions to achieve coordinated solutions to address these challenges.
<b>5. Logistics Workforce and Competency</b>	Ensure that LA County has a strong labor pool to support its economy and fill the jobs of tomorrow through research and initiatives to identify and address workforce skillset gaps and investment need.

Building Equity as a Foundation

As staff developed the Plan and engaged community stakeholders, the role of equity in the Plan transformed from a component to a core value around which its priorities, strategies and initiatives are centered. The timing of the Plan’s finalization allowed staff to capitalize on the treatment of equity within the LRTP, the creation of the Office of Equity and Race and the development of Metro’s Equity Platform. In August 2020 the Metro Board adopted an agency-wide definition of equity to guide Metro’s work around equity and create project-specific equitable outcomes. The Plan recognizes that disparities and challenges exist in our current goods movement system throughout LA County, and they will persist if we do not intentionally work to eliminate them.

Staff has collaborated with the Executive Officer for Equity and Race to engage various stakeholders from community advocacy, environmental justice, public health and equity fields - with the goal of better understanding equity risk factors that are strongly correlated to goods movement activities to ground the Plan’s priorities and strategies in equity considerations. These gatherings were highlighted by the dedicated townhall meeting on Equity and Goods Movement that staff hosted on May 20, 2020 to present the Plan and its context within Metro’s overall work on equity. The townhall featured a presentation by the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) and discussion with stakeholders from throughout the county. Feedback from these meetings was very informative but also emphasized the need for more frequent discussions with these groups to ground -truth future goods movement planning work and to provide more opportunities for Metro to discuss equity-related issues with a larger array of equity-focused stakeholders.

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The Plan recognizes that Metro must continue to develop stronger and more comprehensive opportunities for ongoing dialogue with communities on goods movement issues - partly to gain knowledge and partly to improve trust. The Early Action Initiative to create an equity-focused goods movement working group will help develop the institutional framework for this important discussion to broaden and enrich the dialogue between Metro and our communities on how goods movement planning can help reduce disparities, improve public health and increase opportunities for members of goods-movement impacted communities to share in an inclusive LA County economy.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Over the course of developing the Plan, staff made significant outreach to members of the goods movement industry, regulatory agencies, academic institutions, community-based organizations, technology and equipment manufacturers and workforce development programs. Staff created and hosted four Freight Working Group meetings to develop the elements of the Plan. Additionally, staff supplemented these large meetings with targeted, smaller meetings with various groups for more in-depth discussion on the Plan overall and its Early Action Initiatives. Staff also presented the Plan at multiple meetings for Councils of Governments, economic groups and Metro's Policy Advisory Committee.

The emergence of COVID-19 eliminated the use of in-person meetings starting in March 2020. Staff pivoted to hosting its meetings online and added more opportunities for discussion and stakeholder input through initiative-focused webinars that solicited over 50 participants each. In addition to these webinars and the Equity and Goods Movement townhall, staff also hosted a Telephone Town Hall meeting designed to provide an expanded opportunity for residents most affected by goods movement issues to participate and provide input into the Plan.

The use of online and telephone-focused outreach and conversation proved to be an effective supplement to and alternative for the traditional in-person meetings Metro hosts for its planning work. In particular the Telephone Town Hall meeting, requested by the Board at the June 2020 meeting, proved to be a successful new front for Metro outreach on goods movement issues. On September 22, 2020 Metro made calls to 100,000 home residences for the event - half directed to neighborhoods adjacent to key freight corridors (I-710, I-605, I-5 and SR-60) and half made to other residents throughout the county. The event attracted approximately 3,500 listeners, including 266 Spanish-language participants. Metro Board members Hahn and Dupont-Walker offered opening remarks, while staff from goods movement planning, equity and race and transit operations answered many questions over the course of the hour-long session. The format also allowed for staff to conduct polls which identified several important outcomes, primarily that reducing air pollution associated with goods movement is a strong priority for the participants. Even after the effects of the pandemic subsides, Metro should incorporate more of these types of outreach events as part of the lessons learned from COVID-19 and best practices going forward.

### Goods Movement and COVID-19

COVID-19 has brought the essential nature of the region's goods movement network and the effectiveness of its resilient supply chains to the fore. While much of the Plan discusses the importance of improving LA County's economic competitiveness by building upon and improving our

multimodal goods movement network, what the pandemic has shown us is that without a strong goods movement system our society will break down in the face of external crisis and supply chain disruptions.

As we respond to COVID-19, the pandemic crisis poses challenges to local, state and federal governments to review and adapt goods movement planning processes of the past as we discover what the “new normal” will be going forward. In particular we must understand how the disparities in the impacts of COVID-19 on the county’s minority and disadvantaged populations - especially those compromised by air quality impacts - must lead to and support the county’s renewed commitment to address equity and sustainability needs head-on.

Metro has an opportunity to guide the county’s recovery from COVID-19 across all of its work. For the goods movement industry, Metro should seek ways to support the freight infrastructure development needed to maintain and increase national market share, to strengthen the regional logistics workforce and competency and to deliver on sustainability and equity goals to lift up communities burdened with a long history of poor investment and ongoing freight industry impacts. Through the strategies and recommendations presented in the final Plan, staff aims to provide the Board with a stakeholder-guided, consensus-based roadmap to deal with these many challenges over the next five years.

### Internal Next Steps

Metro began the development of the Plan by meeting with representatives from across Countywide Planning and Development planning divisions and other Metro departments to determine (1) the goods movement impacts and opportunities that affected their work and (2) how the Plan could help them meet their respective goals.

What became clear during these discussions is that - given the shared use nature of our multimodal transportation system - goods movement issues do affect many aspects of Metro’s day-to-day work, including the safe operation of buses; development of complete streets and active transportation plans and programs; implementation of workforce development, sustainability and equity goals; and construction of Measure R and M transit and highway projects.

Metro staff remained engaged throughout the development of the Plan by participating in the Freight Working Group meetings, providing input and helping craft the Plan’s Vision, Goals and Early Action Initiatives. In concert with the implementation of the Plan’s Priorities and Early Action Initiatives, staff will take additional steps to mainstream goods movement planning within Metro through various activities such as the following:

- convening regular meetings for staff across departments to discuss current issues related to goods movement;
- working with the Office of Equity and Race to advance Metro’s Equity Platform;
- supporting multimodal planning efforts;
- identifying freight-related projects to be developed for future grant applications;
- exploring freight-related technologies and applications;

- hosting a cross-disciplinary curbside mobility working group; and
- updating existing and future planning documents with additional goods movement-related planning goals and needs.

### Equity Platform

The LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan supports three of the four Equity Platform Pillars I (Define and Measure), II (Listen and Learn) and III (Focus and Deliver).

Pillar I (Define and Measure): By focusing on Equity and Sustainability as the core element of the Plan, working with stakeholders to receive input on equity concerns and creating inclusive conversations on goods movement issues, the Plan calls for developing measurable objectives around goods movement issues to guide Metro's advancement of equity goals for LA County.

Pillar II (Listen and Learn): Staff held targeted meetings with key equity-focused communities and representatives to gain an understanding of equity needs for the region. Staff also coordinated with the Executive Officer for Equity and Race to develop opportunities for input via webinar and telephone town hall. To build on this foundational relationship, staff will establish an ongoing working group tailored specifically to goods movement equity-focused organizations and develop forums for discussion to inform Metro's goods movement planning and help achieve desirable outcomes for LA County.

Pillar III (Focus and Deliver): The Plan, through input from our stakeholders, identifies where Metro can lead and where Metro can partner in implementing equity-conscious policies and programs to improve health, sustainability and access to opportunities, promote inclusive economic growth and ameliorate the quality of life for those most impacted by freight externalities in LA County.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

This item does not have a direct safety impact for Metro, but it does address Metro's commitment to safety and supports collaboration with other goods movement stakeholders to develop a safer multimodal goods movement system and improve public health.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Adoption of the final 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan will not have any financial impact to the agency.

#### Impact to Budget

No impact to the budget is anticipated as a result of this item.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan supports implementation of the following



Strategic Plan Goals:

**1. Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling**

- The Plan includes efforts to improve the efficiency of goods movement on the county's shared multimodal transportation system, as well as calls for investment to support added capacity for regional rail transit opportunities.
- Inclusion of goods movement planning in existing Metro planning efforts, such as Complete Streets and curbside management, will help reduce congestion and impacts to mobility at the local community level.

**3. Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity**

- The Plan calls for providing more transit connectivity for logistics workforce members to jobs currently difficult to reach by transit.
- Developing equity and logistics workforce development initiatives will support local access to opportunity, especially for some of the more disadvantaged, freight-impacted communities in LA County.

**4. Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership.**

- The Plan identifies priorities and policies generated through regional collaboration and stakeholder engagement to drive funding and policymaking decisions at the state and federal level in support of LA County goals.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Metro Board can choose to delay adoption of the 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan. Delay in adopting the plan will hinder Metro's ability to mainstream the importance of goods movement planning within the agency and to implement the five Early Action Initiatives that seek to provide improvements to equity, air quality, workforce development, local curbside management and strategic investment in our multimodal freight system.

**NEXT STEPS**

Upon Board approval of the final 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan, staff will further develop and begin implementation for each of the Early Action Initiatives. Staff will subsequently report to the Board every quarter with an update on goods movement planning activities.

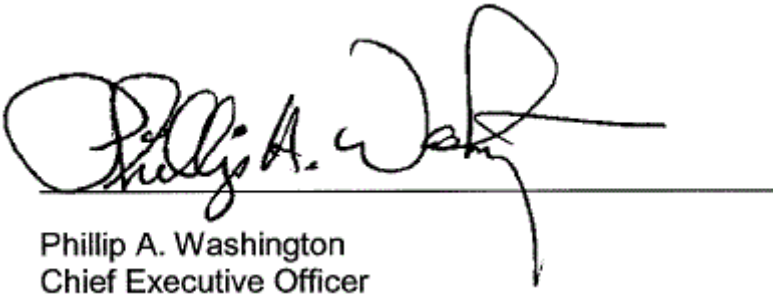
**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Final 2021 LA County Goods Movement Strategic Plan  
Attachment B - Public Comment and Support Letters  
Attachment C - Webinars

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