

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GATEWAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Gateway Cities Council of Governments  
16401 Paramount Blvd.  
Paramount, California  
October 7, 2020**

**Zoom Conference**

GCCOG President Maria Davila called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

PRESENT:           President Maria Davila, City of South Gate (E)  
                      1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Cinde MacGugan Cassidy, City of Avalon (E)  
                      2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Ali Saleh, City of Bell  
                      Member Raymond Dunton, City of Bellflower (E)  
                      Member Pedro Aceituno, City of Bell Gardens  
                      Member Naresh Solanki, City of Cerritos (E)  
                      Member Emma Sharif, City of Compton  
                      Member Elizabeth Alcantar, City of Cudahy  
                      Member Alex Saab, City of Downey (E)  
                      Member Jesse Alvarado, City of Hawaiian Gardens  
                      Member John Lewis, City of La Mirada (E)  
                      Member, Ariel Pe, City of Lakewood  
                      Member Robert Garcia, City of Long Beach  
                      Member Marisela Santana, City of Lynwood  
                      Member Heber Marquez, City of Maywood  
                      Member David Torres, City of Montebello  
                      Member Margarita Rios, City of Norwalk  
                      Member Vilma Cuellar Stallings, City of Paramount  
                      Member Brent Tercero, City of Pico Rivera  
                      Member Joe Angel Zamora, City of Santa Fe Springs (E)  
                      Member William Davis, City of Vernon  
                      Member Fernando Dutra, City of Whittier (E)  
                      Member Herlinda Chico, Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn (E)  
                      Member Kimberly Ortega, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis  
                      Member Sharon Weissman, Port of Long Beach

ABSENT:           Member Tony Lima, City of Artesia  
                      Member Oralia Rebollo, City of Commerce (E)  
                      Member Marilyn Sanabria, City of Huntington Park (E)  
                      Member Cory Moss, City of Industry  
                      Member Rex Richardson, City of Long Beach  
                      Member Edward H. J. Wilson, City of Signal Hill (E)  
                      Member Lacey Johnson, Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

(E) Executive Committee

ALSO PRESENT: Thaddeus McCormack, City Manager – City of Lakewood; Nancy Pfeffer, Melani Smith, Gilbert Saldate, Karen Heit, Stephanie Cadena, Joel Arevalos, Genny Cisneros, Sandra Mora, Erica Copeland, Mahogany Smith-Christopher, Ivy Tsai – COG Staff; Gregory Farr – Caltrans District 7; Nina Turner, Local/Regional Liaison – Port of Long Beach; Norman Emerson – Emerson Associates; Mark Watts; Henry Fung – Calwatch; John Bulinski – Caltrans District 7; Tyler Bonanno-Curley, Manager of Government Affairs – City of Long Beach; Sarah Patterson, Regional Affairs Officer – SCAG; Karen Lee, Administrative Analyst – City of Artesia; Gloria Roberts, Hammer Sui – CalTrans District 7; Andres Molina – WSP; Dianne Guevara, Maria del Pilar Avalos– City of South Gate; Danielle Soto – South Coast AQMD; Joe Gonzalez – RMC.

Roll call was taken by GCCOG Office Assistant Joel Arevalos.

President Davila welcomed new Board member Ariel Pe from the City of Lakewood.

There were no amendments to the agenda.

There was one public comment. Joe Gonzalez from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy announced the Prop 68 Call for Projects, open until December 16, 2020. There is \$28 million in funding available for implementation projects, with 10% available for planning and 10% set aside for application assistance. Application workshops will be taking place later in the month to assist interested applicants.

Under Matters from Staff, Executive Director Nancy Pfeffer reported that the cities of Bell Gardens, South Gate and Bellflower were featured at recent Urban Land Institute Urban Marketplace virtual events. Bell Gardens and South Gate staff made participants aware of development sites and opportunities within their jurisdictions. Bellflower staff introduced the city's newly opened 50-bed shelter project.

Director Pfeffer reported that the COG is now a client for a capstone project for a team of University of Southern California policy students. The team will be studying housing and overcrowding in our region and findings will be completed in the next semester.

Director Pfeffer reported on an upcoming League of California Cities Conference panel that will look at 10 Years After the Bell Scandal: Are We More Ethical. The panel will include the COG's 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President Ali Saleh, City of Bell, Thaddeus McCormack from the City of Lakewood, and Mike Flad from the City of South Gate.

The COG's audit for FY 18-19 is on the Consent Calendar for the Board tonight. Director Pfeffer said the audit process was delayed due to the pandemic for providing records to the auditor and with a new audit firm this year. Director Pfeffer acknowledged Genny Cisneros, COG Administrative Director, for her efforts towards completing the audit and providing everything that was requested.

Lastly, Director Pfeffer reported that the COG Board was provided with a notice requesting a volunteer to represent the COG on the Joint Powers Insurance Authority (JPIA). This is the body

that provides the COG and other public agency members with insurance and risk management. Councilmember Angie Jimenez, City of Montebello has volunteered. Unfortunately, COG staff was not able to get this item on the agenda. As this appointment requires a vote of the governing body, staff recommends holding a special meeting of the full Board, or a special meeting of the Executive Committee, to approve this appointment before the annual JPIA meeting taking place at the end of the month.

President Davila clarified that the Board cannot take action on this item today as it does not meet the criteria for an emergency item under the Brown Act. President Davila recommended that the Executive Board meet for this item and this was the direction of the Board.

President Davila moved on to the Consent Calendar. Member Cinde Cassidy motioned to approve and it was seconded by Member Margarita Rios. Tsai clarified that the motion is to approve items A-Z, some of which are receive-and-file and others that are contract approvals. COG Staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the item was approved unanimously.

President Davila moved on to Reports from Committees, starting with Report C, Report from the Transportation Committee from Mayor Robert Garcia, since he has to leave early. Mayor Garcia reported that Metro passed their budget despite challenges with impacted revenues and decreased ridership due to COVID-19. Most COG region projects are still on track with no major issues, though day-to-day routes and ridership continue to be affected. Metro is doubling down on safety and cleanliness for both buses and rail.

Mayor Garcia reported that the NextGen Study is nearing completion and will be going to the Metro Board for approval. The COG will receive an update in the coming months.

He also reported that the Transportation Committee expressed disappointment in the breakdown of negotiations related to the federal stimulus bill. While conversations with Congress and the White House were moving positively, the bill was ultimately shelved. If passed it would have directly benefited cities with millions of dollars in funding. Mayor Garcia said they are still pushing for a relief bill for early 2021, regardless of the outcome of the election.

Mayor Garcia reported that the I-605 project EIR got pushed back for another year due to concerns from cities about the different proposals, including one that would take hundreds of homes in the City of Downey. The COG is pushing for a locally preferred alternative that will improve the 605 and invest in cities. He emphasized that all cities impacted should receive funding for infrastructure support and street repairs, and that the current set of proposals by Metro are not acceptable in this regard. Mayor Garcia said they will be reaching out to the corridor cities to meet and further discuss the project.

There were no questions from the Board. President Davila said they will approve and receive-and-file at the end of all reports on the agenda.

President Davila moved back to Report A, Caltrans Ambassador Program on the agenda. John Bulinski, District 7 Director, reported that the new Gerald Desmond bridge at the Port of Long Beach opened to traffic last Monday. This is a huge accomplishment for the Port and for the LA region.

Bulinski then introduced the Caltrans Ambassador program, a new program with the purpose of identifying a single point of contact for each city in the district. The program would develop a relationship between the department and local city to discuss issues of mutual concern. Caltrans deputies will organize meetings with each city at least twice a year, with a preliminary introductory meeting to gain an understanding of local transportation issues and priorities, and connections to the state highway system. Bulinski referenced the I-605 project and noted this a great example of how Caltrans can work towards modifying how they plan, design and construct projects.

Bulinski further reported that Caltrans is focusing on a new equity goal that will ensure that equity is addressed to the maximum extent feasible when it comes to transportation projects, improvements and how the state's system is operated and maintained.

Bulinski also shared that the most frequent, reported issues of concern for cities within the region include homeless encampments, brush, trash and graffiti removal. He noted that these issues are prioritized when the department is notified and do not have to be taken to the Ambassador Program meetings to be addressed.

Bulinski reported that the Adopt-A-Highway program has been put on hold due to COVID-19. Littering has increased due to the hold, as well as the hold on other resources that were previously involved. Caltrans has been participating in coastal clean ups, and sweep-and-litter pick up days to help with this issue. Caltrans is trying to assign enough staff to take care of complaints in the district.

Bulinski reported that homeless encampments within the state right-of-way are also often brought up as a concern. With COVID-19, there is an Executive Order that restricts the ability to remove homeless individuals from state right-of-way. Until the Order is lifted, Caltrans is managing these concerns by determining the level of danger or threat posed to the traveling public, local communities, or the homeless individuals themselves. Caltrans collaborates with cities and counties first to determine if there are any opportunities within shelters, whether temporary, transitional or permanent, before considering removals. This issue will be further discussed in the Ambassador Program.

Lastly, Bulinski presented on the Small Business Outreach program, which has existed for several years but has been ramping up due to significant impacts to small businesses from COVID-19. The program provides technical and educational opportunities to assist with certifications for doing business with state departments.

Gloria Roberts, Caltrans Deputy Director, reiterated that the Ambassador Program is a complement to the existing relationships that the department has with jurisdictions. The program will increase service and add more channels of communication with the department.

Member Rios commented that the City of Norwalk has gone through an extensive I-5 freeway widening project with severe land impacts, including homes lost and fences taken down in order to accomplish the project. One of the specific locations where they've had trouble is off the I-105 freeway and riverbed. Many complaints have been filed by residents about a chain link fence that

is cut by individuals experiencing homelessness to access the riverbeds. The city has fixed the fence numerous times but hopes to do something more with Caltrans to permanently eliminate the issues. Bulinski responded with a suggestion to follow up offline for a discussion on measures that could provide improvements.

Member Emma Sharif, Compton, commented that offramps and overgrowths are a frequent issue of concern in past meetings with Caltrans and the Assembly Member, especially on Santa Fe, Central and Long Beach. Many of these communities have not yet received the type of assistance needed to solve the problems. Sharif asked how these issues could be addressed and if the Ambassador Program would be the right venue for discussion. Bulinski responded that they've been able to do some follow-up on a number of the issues raised, including holding offsite meetings at the locations that were within Caltrans right-of-way. Bulinski suggested this could be a priority for the Ambassador for the City of Compton, and they could meet to identify boundaries and right-of-way limits, and discuss resources to address the issue.

President Davila thanked Bulinski and asked staff to provide Board members with the name of each city's Caltrans deputy through the Ambassador Program.

President Davila moved on to Report B, Report from Mark Watts, Gateway Cities COG Sacramento Lobbyist. Watts first introduced activities revolving around the West Santa Ana Branch line. For most of the last year, Senators Archuleta, Gonzalez and Speaker Rendon convened weekly meetings to track the project and ensure that Metro continued to move ahead on schedule. These meetings are now reconvening and started with a first phone call in the last week. Watts will keep COG staff up to date.

Watts then reminded the Board of the Governor's September 2019 Executive Order (EO) that targeted greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions and required the Transportation Secretary to align climate goals with transportation goals. The state is now finalizing their Climate Action Plan, pursuant to the EO. The plan also aligns with the most recent EO requirement that no more vehicles can be sold after 2035 if they are not zero-emission. This EO also includes a requirement for the Secretary to develop a near-term action plan by July 2021 to ensure that transportation under his authority is as clean as can be.

Watts also announced that the state's draft Transportation Plan for 2050 is now available for review and public comment until October 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Plan includes strategies and recommendations to describe the vision of the administration for the future.

Watts reported on legislative bills of interest for the Southern California region. Senator Wiener's SB 288 was recently approved, and it enacted new CEQA statutory exemptions targeted at transit, bike and pedestrian projects with a two-year sunset date. There is a good chance it will be brought into utilization.

Another bill of interest, initially promulgated by Metro, is SB 757 by Senator Ben Allen. The bill was vetoed as it was connected to another measure that didn't pass. In the veto message, the Governor encouraged the author to try again. The bill would have allowed transportation projects

to have broader access to CEQA streamlining. There is a lot of emphasis in the legislature to get this bill back in the rotation for approval.

Senator Archuleta's SB 1179, developed by COG staff, introduced the residential infill pilot program for our region. The bill was not included in any final housing package. There is discussion amongst the co-authors to reintroduce it, and they are also looking at another bill, Senator Caballero's bill SB 1385 that would allow office and retail parcels to have speedy approvals and to allow housing. There is a lot of overlap and conversations taking place between the respective staffs behind these bills.

For communities with transit entities, Watts reported that the Budget Act contains several features that would allow SB 1 augmented transit revenue programs to have proportional shared unaffected by COVID-19 impacts. There was another that suspended penalties if transit entities failed to meet fare ratios. Typically, there is a penalty, though the feature would waive this. Finally, Watts reported on an action that would allow more flexibility for the use of repair funds for transit operations during the pandemic.

Watts concluded his report. There were no questions from the Board.

President Davila moved on to Report D, COG Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Work Program. COG Director of Regional Development, Melani Smith introduced the COG's REAP work program, which would be funded by SCAG through the state's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). SCAG is receiving approximately \$41.7 million from HCD, with half of this allocated to cities to help increase the supply of housing and to assist local governments in meeting their regional housing needs allocation (RHNA). The COG is eligible for \$1.316 million of this funding over a period of three years. SCAG has asked the COG to prioritize funding activities around housing element support, given that 6<sup>th</sup> cycle Housing Elements are due in October 2021.

Smith clarified that there will be a SCAG REAP Program and a COG REAP program to assist cities with completing housing elements. In developing the COG work program, staff identified three categories that housing production planning activities would fall under: planning, preservation and production. Staff also surveyed all cities on their housing element activities, status, progress, interest and priorities for planning and production of housing. All of these activities informed the development of the work program, which comprises six different program activities. These are: funding augmentation for COG staff; supporting cities for the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle RHNA; developing regional strategies

for encouraging accessory dwelling units; investigating the formation of a subregional housing trust fund; conducting a study of inclusionary housing policy feasibility; and strategizing on overcoming barriers to financing housing development.

Staff recommends the Board approve the proposed work program and \$1.316 funding request, and approves staff to submit the application for funding. Smith noted that if the COG does not apply for this funding, the dollars will revert to SCAG for their REAP program and would not be fully focused on our region.

Smith reported that the program activities were presented to our City Managers, COG Officers and Planning Directors for feedback.

President Davila asked for a motion to approve staff's recommendation, and to receive and file all reports. Member Cassidy made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by Member John Lewis. COG staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the motion passed.

There were no Matters from the Board of Directors. There were no Matters from the President.

**Adjournment:** President Davila adjourned the meeting at 7:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Pfeffer, Executive Director