

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GATEWAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
16401 Paramount Blvd.
Paramount, California
September 2, 2020**

Zoom Conference

GCCOG President Maria Davila called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

PRESENT: President Maria Davila, City of South Gate (E)
 1st Vice President Cinde MacGugan Cassidy, City of Avalon (E)
 2nd Vice President Ali Saleh, City of Bell
 Member Tony Lima, City of Artesia
 Member Raymond Dunton, City of Bellflower (E)
 Member Pedro Aceituno, City of Bell Gardens
 Member Naresh Solanki, City of Cerritos (E)
 Member Oralia Rebollo, City of Commerce (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 Marilyn Sanabria, City of Huntington Park (E)
 Member John Lewis, City of La Mirada (E)
 Member Robert Garcia, City of Long Beach
 Member Roberto Uranga, 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 Edward H. J. Wilson, City of Signal Hill (E)
 Member William Davis, City of Vernon
 Member Fernando Dutra, City of Whittier (E)
 Member Steven Neal, Port of Long Beach
 Member Antonio Chapa, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis
 Member Martin Reyes, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis
 Member Herlinda Chico, Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn (E)
 Member Kimberly Ortega, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis

ABSENT: Member Cory Moss, City of Industry
 Member Rex Richardson, City of Long Beach
 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, Nancy Michali, Ivy Tsai – COG Staff; Nina Turner, Local/Regional Liaison – Port of Long Beach; Norman Emerson – Emerson Associates; Tyler Bonanno-Curley, Manager of Government Affairs – City of Long Beach; Sarah Patterson, Regional Affairs Officer – SCAG; Karen Lee, Administrative Analyst – City of Artesia; Justin Ramirez, Metro Board Deputy to Mayor Robert Garcia – City of Long Beach; Andres Molina – WSP; Mark Dierking – LA Metro; Dianne Guevara – City of South Gate; Danielle Soto – South Coast AQMD; Marybeth Vergara, Joe Gonzalez – RMC; Tensho Takemori – Gehry Partners; Kristine Guerrero, Legislative Director & Regional Public Affairs Manager – League of California Cities; Charlene Palmer – NCENET.

Roll call was taken by GCCOG Office Assistant Joel Arevalos. There were no amendments to the agenda. There were no public comments.

Under Matters from Staff, Executive Director Nancy Pfeffer provided an update on a letter sent to the state after approval in a previous Board meeting. The COG approved signing onto a letter from SCAG requesting for an extension of cities' housing element deadline, citing the pandemic and delays in the adoption of the RHNA. Director Pfeffer reported that the Governor has denied this request. Despite the challenges, cities will still need to submit their housing elements by the October 2021 deadline. COG staff will continue working with cities to provide assistance and help meet the state's goals.

Director Pfeffer reported on two grants that the COG recently applied for. The first is the Federal Economic Development Administration grant through CARES Act Recovery Funding available at the local level. The COG collaborated with USC to add an economic development and recovery element to the COG's Complete Streets Corridor Plans. The total grant request is for \$650,000. Of this amount, \$50,000 would come to the COG to support our Economic Development Manager position.

The other grant application submitted is for the Sustainable Transportation Equity Project, a competitive program funded by Cap-and-Trade. The application proposes to gather additional information from cities on implementing an innovative mobility strategy. Director Pfeffer recalled the Innovative Mobility concept paper previously presented to the Board that describes the process for better understanding our communities' transportation needs and the benefits of innovative mobility. The grant request is for approximately \$360,000 in partnership with the County of Los Angeles' Internal Services Department and the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Collaborative, a nonprofit organization. The

project scope will cover the whole COG region, not just SELA. Of the total grant request, about \$50,000 would come to the COG if the project is awarded.

Director Pfeffer mentioned that the Board will later hear a report from Nancy Michali, COG consultant staffing the West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) City Managers Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The group has been meeting since February of this year, with Nancy coming onboard in March. Pfeffer acknowledged her great work with the TAC and also recognized the leadership of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, John Moreno from the City of Paramount and Gil Livas from the City of Downey.

Lastly, Pfeffer introduced the COG's two new CivicSpark Fellows. Erica Copeland is the COG's Housing Fellow, helping with housing planning and pandemic recovery plans.

Mahogany Smith-Christopher is a Climate Fellow who will be working on our climate and energy programs including the SoCalREN program and Urban Tree Canopy project.

President Davila moved on to the Consent Calendar. Member Fernando Dutra motioned to approve and it was seconded by Member Tony Lima. COG Staff Arealos performed a roll call and the item was approved unanimously.

President Davila moved on to Reports from Committees. For Report A from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, Marybeth Vergara introduced an overview of the Southeast LA (SELA) Cultural Center project, a planned multidisciplinary arts and culture facility designed to support and showcase the arts, culture and local talent of the southeast Los Angeles community. The project was originally introduced during the development of the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan, adopted in 2018, and then rolled into the LA River Master Plan update.

Vergara introduced project consultant Tensho Takemori with Gehry Partners to provide an overview of the design. Takemori described the various planning efforts being coordinated near the project area, including the future WSAB alignment currently under EIR evaluation and the feasibility study of the Rio Hondo station that would provide mass transit access in the confluence area. There are also housing studies in progress to identify potential affordable housing sites, and philanthropic organization efforts to support arts education in the region. The SELA Cultural Center project nested in the center of these other efforts is likely to be the first project to come out of the plan, and the team hopes it will give momentum to other improvements for the benefit of local residents. The project design phase will continue for the rest of the year, followed by the EIR phase.

Takemori summarized a survey of 500 people from within a 5-mile radius. Some of the key findings are that 66% of the community believed they did not have adequate cultural resources, and just 5% said they would visit rarely or never. One of the key concerns was the cost of admission, with strong support for ensuring that most events would be free or at low cost. Takemori reported that the project team will return to the community at the end of year to show project progress and get feedback.

Member Elizabeth Alcantar acknowledged Speaker Rendon's and local organizations' dedication to this project, and highlighted the importance of the project considering anti-displacement for the benefit of residents.

Member Edward Wilson asked what the timeline of the project is. Takemori responded that it is unknown how long the CEQA EIR process will last. The best-case scenario is that construction would be complete in 5 years.

Member David Torres asked if this project's philosophy or template can be applied in other cities for the benefit of other residents in our region. Takemori responded that Speaker Rendon is at the heart of driving this project and hopes it will provide a template for other locations in the region to dedicate a space to support youth and the larger community so that residents don't have to travel far to access this.

Member Emma Sharif, commented that the LA River runs into the Compton Creek, and asked if the project could tie into the work that is already happening at the creek. Takemori responded that with the LA River Master Plan Update, there is an idea of a cadence of

facilities that are unique to their localities and supporting the need in that area, with the idea for Compton Creek being a good example of this. The project team hopes that the SELA Center can inspire other locations that could support similar projects, and it doesn't have to be just on the LA river, but could expand farther.

Member Heber Marquez asked for the project team to consider indigenous populations as the process continues, especially as it is a cultural center and should therefore tie into cultural roots.

Takemori responded that the team is engaging a variety of stakeholders, including native tribes to discuss project alignment and common goals in the area.

President Davila commented on the great opportunity this project brings for the community and thanked the vision of the Speaker for bringing this project to our region. President Davila asked to receive and file the presentation. There were no objections.

President Davila moved on to Report B, Report from the Transportation Committee. Mayor Robert Garcia reported that, as with many other agencies, there are budget challenges due to COVID-19, including revenue loss and a decline in ridership on all systems. At the same time there is a pilot program being explored at Metro to look at free fares, starting with students. This program will be available for review in December. Mayor Garcia provided an update on the racial justice Initiative that has been launched, especially because of the BLM movement, and also gave updates of current projects with Metro. He noted there's a need for future discussions planned for the I-605 project, with COG staff working hard to ensure that project is still what cities want as it relates to the expansion.

President Davila asked to receive and file the presentation. There were no objections.

For Report C, Nancy Michali presented the Update on the West Santa Ana Branch City Managers Technical Advisory Committee. Michali reported that staff is preparing draft environmental documents and the project will be eligible for state and federal funding. The Metro Board will be making a decision on a locally preferred alternative, expected in mid-2021. It's anticipated that the first phase of the project will be through the Gateway Cities area. Metro staff is looking at certifying the environmental document and the federal document in late 2021. They are also seeking a public/private partnership to build the project, with groundbreaking in 2023. Michali said it is optimistic to say that the system will be open in 2028 but that 2030 would be more doable. She noted that one of the key issues, which was also touched on by Mayor Garcia, is the financial impact that Metro is facing. Economic experts have estimated that it may take 3-5 years for Metro revenue to return to pre-COVID-19 levels. The Metro Board has deferred adopting an annual budget to September 2020 to get a better feel of the impacts and potential trends due to the pandemic. Michali said that while there have been challenges, the WSAB project is still ahead of the pack in completing the environmental process. Even so, the Metro Board will have a lot of difficult discussions this month, ending with the Board meeting on September 24. Michali encouraged Board members to write to the Metro Board, Supervisors and Mayor's Garcia and Garcetti about the project.

Michali noted that there are 12 members on the TAC, with city managers from 11 cities and active participation from LA County, staff from Supervisors Hahn, Solis and Metro Director Garcia, and attendance by the cities of Bellflower, Cerritos and Vernon. The effort is being

successfully led by Chair John Moreno, City of Paramount and Gil Livas, City of Downey. The TAC is currently focused on completing the Master Cooperative Agreements (MCA) between cities and Metro before the end of the year, and planning discussions on Metro's local 3% contribution requirement, which requires each city to contribute 3% of the project cost for the portion that runs through their city.

Michali reported that the TAC recently organized a joint meeting with Eco-Rapid Transit to sort out roles and responsibilities, discuss how they can work together and how to move forward on funding an economic development effort. This was an ad-hoc meeting with five members from Eco-Rapid and five from the TAC. The group also discussed that with the locally preferred alternative decision by Metro, that's when 30% level of design will begin and the cities are going to be heavily involved in this decision-making. She noted that the TAC and Eco-Rapid have the political strength and

technical skills to advocate for and deliver the WSAB project and be able to provide community-specific economic opportunities. They also discussed the two levels of effort needed, with some decisions that will need to be made at the corridor level especially as it relates to funding and policy, and others that will need to be city-specific, such as with first/last mile and station design.

Michali concluded with comments that the TAC is looking to build on the success of Eco-Rapid to advocate for the project moving forward and ensuring that the project is included in the next federal reauthorization act.

President Davila commented that she took part in the joint meeting as a member of the Eco-Rapid Board, and emphasized the importance of cities completing the MCAs before the end of the year in order to keep the project moving forward.

Member Dutra asked at what point would the team discuss impacts to local businesses on how to deal with any disturbances. Michali said they will be looking at economic development and impacts almost immediately, as well as every step of the way.

President Davila asked to receive and file the presentation. There were no objections.

President Davila moved on to Report D, Request to Metro to delay the release of the environmental document for I-605 Corridor Improvement Project. Director Pfeffer reported that the COG Staff has been engaged with Metro in the environmental process for the corridor improvement project for several years. Staff recently came to understand the project alternatives that will be included in the environmental document to be released later in the month. The COG met with Metro staff to ensure that the two committees, I-605 and Corridor Cities Committee (CCC), were made aware of the potential scope and impacts of the build alternatives. Director Pfeffer noted the Board members have in their agenda a brief staff report, including a page of right-of-way impacts from the alternative being proposed. The 91/605/405 CCC voted unanimously to request that Metro delay release of the I-605 EIR until a more locally accepted alternative could be included in the analysis. COG staff also recommended asking the COG Board if they would like to underscore the vote by the CCC and have a letter come from the entire COG Board. A draft letter is included in the agenda.

Member Dutra commented that releasing the document may create a situation that's problematic for communities, and provides a challenge to politicians to be able to address

their concerns on the impacts and insufficient funding. He emphasized the importance of going back to identify local alternatives that are more pleasing.

Member Joe Angel Zamora made a motion to approve staff's recommendation. Member Dutra seconded. COG staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the motion passed.

President Davila moved onto Report E. Closed Session. COG Counsel Tsai read a required statement regarding labor negotiations and Director Pfeffer provided logistical information for entering the Zoom breakout room. Member Oralia Rebollo asked the reason for the item needing to be discussed in closed session. Tsai responded that while the approval of the health care program is an open session item, there is a labor negotiations component that will go into closed session. This is being done in response to the concerns raised by members at the previous Board meeting.

Member Sharif asked if the Board members will be discussing the entire item in Closed Session. Tsai responded that only one component will be discussed in closed session followed by an open session discussion. President Davila began the Closed Session.

The Board resumed open session at 7:50. Tsai reported for the record that there was no reportable action taken.

President Davila moved on to Report F, Approval of Documents for COG's Health Care Program for Full-Time Employees. Director Pfeffer reported that the staff has endeavored to make this program as cost-effective as possible in recognition of the COG's resources.

Mayor Robert Garcia expressed gratitude to COG staff for their hard work, and is proud that the COG is hopefully able to move forward with providing a fair healthcare program.

Member Dutra made a motion to approve, and it was seconded by 2nd Vice President Ali Saleh. COG staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the motion passed.

Under Matters from the Board of Directors, Member Dutra announced that the City of Whitter opened its temporary homeless shelter at a senior center with great success. He shared one client's comments of thanks, and praise for the city staff's care. Member Dutra said it is a testament to the COG's work in the homelessness program area.

Under Matters from the President, President Davila appointed Member Dutra, 2nd Vice President Saleh, and Member Sharif to the GCCOG Transportation Committee.

Adjournment: President Davila adjourned the meeting at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Pfeffer, Executive Director