

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: October 12-13, 2022

From: MITCH WEISS, Executive Director

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Subject: Update on Statewide Equity Listening Sessions

Summary:

Amar Cid, Program Manager of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Office on Racial Equity, will provide an update on the Statewide Equity Listening Sessions.

The sixth Statewide Equity Listening Session occurred as a two-part series that took place virtually on August 24 and 31, 2022, for residents of the Inland Empire. The community requested the session be divided into two, 1.5-hour sessions to best accommodate the needs of community members. The sessions were conducted in partnership with the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice. Approximately 41 community members attended the first virtual session and approximately 51 community members attended the second virtual session. Both sessions were facilitated in English with closed captioning and simultaneous interpretation provided in Spanish and American Sign Language.

Additional information featuring a summary of community engagement and feedback from the Equity Listening Sessions is available in Attachment A.

Background:

Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission (Commission), the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), and ICF International, Inc. (ICF) are co-hosting the 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions. The initiative officially launched in Fall 2021 and sessions began in Spring 2022. The listening sessions were designed to center California residents with a geographic focus on priority populations that have been historically marginalized in the planning, funding, and delivery of transportation infrastructure. The vision for these sessions is to allow people to share their personal stories about individual and community impacts created by the transportation system.

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions are intended to accomplish the following:

- 1) Establish communication and build trust with regional and local partners, communities, and stakeholders.
- 2) Understand how transportation and transportation policies have impacted individuals and communities, and identify current opportunities, needs, and challenges related to California's transportation system.
- 3) Document the findings to support and guide the partner agencies in developing actionable steps to transform policies and procedures.

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions will result in an actionable, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant report. The report will guide executive staff in efforts to further enhance organizational structures around equity, as well as build relationships that will inform how state transportation agencies can improve engagement with communities statewide.

To enhance the verbal feedback received during the sessions and broaden access to different perspectives, written comments are also being collected. Written comments can be submitted to Listening@catc.ca.gov.

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions were held in six geographic locations. The selected areas included:

- Kern County (Arvin and Lamont)
 - Virtual session held on March 24, 2022
- Lake County (Lakeport, Kelseyville, and Clearlake)
 - Virtual session held on April 19, 2022
- Imperial Valley (Calexico, Heber, and El Centro)
 - Virtual session held on June 8, 2022
- Los Angeles Portside (Wilmington and San Pedro)
 - Virtual sessions held on June 8 and June 15, 2022
- East Bay (Richmond)
 - Hybrid session held on July 13, 2022
- Inland Empire (City of San Bernardino)
 - Virtual sessions held on August 24 and August 31, 2022

This effort is intended to guide Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA toward implementing equity-oriented change, including shifting internal and external procedures to strengthen equitable outcomes in communities that have been historically harmed by our transportation system. The agencies, in partnership with ICF, are providing draft meeting summaries to Community-Based Organizations that helped hold the sessions for review. A final report is anticipated to be complete later this year and will be presented at a future Commission meeting. Additionally, the team intends to share the final report with applicable local governments, transit operators, regional transportation agencies, and Caltrans District offices. Caltrans District staff will also host regionally focused debriefs to further discuss community concerns.

Although the initial six sessions have been completed, staff continues to build upon these efforts to reach additional communities and respond to their equity concerns. Potential future opportunities for additional engagement include additional listening sessions, site visits, and other virtual or in-person convenings to build relationships with residents and community leaders. Additional information regarding the Statewide Equity Listening Sessions, including a summary of engagement and community feedback, is available in Attachment A.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions: Summary of Engagement and Feedback to Date

2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions: Summary of Engagement and Feedback to Date

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions are being held to inform policy development and decision making for California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Transportation Commission (Commission), and California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA). Testimony gathered throughout the sessions will be used in future policy and programming updates. This summary reflects a compilation of staff notes taken during the listening sessions. A formal summary of each listening session will be provided by the ICF International, Inc. (ICF) consulting team. These themes represent direct feedback raised by participants and do not reflect official determinations from our agencies regarding the safety of transportation facilities.

Inland Empire Listening Sessions Summary

The Inland Empire Statewide Equity Listening Session was held as a two-part series on August 24 and 31, 2022. These sessions were conducted virtually in partnership with the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice. A total of 41 community members participated in the first session, accompanied by four individuals from the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice and 15 representatives from Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA. A total of 51 community members attended the second session, accompanied by five individuals from the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice and 19 representatives from Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA. The community requested two shorter listening sessions in lieu of a single, longer meeting session to best accommodate the needs of community members and cultivate a deeper level of comfort across the two sessions.

The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- Traffic congestion remains a major issue for residents of the Inland Empire.
 - The region is overly reliant on vehicles and should prioritize the expansion of public transit (e.g., rail, bus) and active transportation infrastructure (e.g., bike lanes, sidewalks).
 - Truck traffic is a big contributor to congestion and needs to be addressed as a separate issue from car dependency.
 - Improvements need to be made to truck signalization that allows trucks to get on/off highways without creating congestion.
 - Diverging opinions exist regarding the need to create multimodal transportation corridors versus expanding roads and freeways.
 - Roads are poorly maintained, and major improvements are needed for highway corridors such as: State Routes 60, 79, 86, 91, and 215.

- Public transit access is lacking and routes are often inefficient.
 - Residents would benefit from more bus stops and increased frequency of routes.
 - The interconnectivity of public transit systems across San Bernardino and Riverside County lines is substantially lacking.
 - More transportation options are needed to travel to larger, surrounding cities (e.g., Los Angeles area)
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety is a major issue that results in car dependency and limits mobility for residents who do not have access to a vehicle.
 - Sidewalk infrastructure is lacking.
 - Vehicles often ignore crosswalks.
 - Vehicle/bicycle collisions are common, resulting in high numbers of injuries and fatalities.
 - Transportation agencies and local jurisdictions have not prioritized active transportation infrastructure, including protected bike lanes (e.g., class IV bike lanes).
 - Residents are frustrated that bicycle lanes are added to high capacity and high-speed boulevards, resulting in a 'crisis of road design'.
 - Too often new road designs seemingly lack awareness of previous bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts, undermining community derived and adopted design standards.
- Although there have been recent efforts to create plans focused on improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, according to residents, the Bicycle Master Plan has yet to be implemented fully and is 'sitting on the shelf'.
 - Residents hope that funding agencies will include funding beyond initial planning phases
- The proliferation of warehouses and heavy-duty trucks (particularly in Bloomington) disparately impacts the community.
 - Residents are burdened by inequitable land use.
 - Warehouses are often built near residential areas.
 - Heavy truck traffic is frequent through neighborhoods, resulting in air pollution and littering of human waste from drivers who themselves may experience poor working conditions.

Additional findings from the Statewide Equity Listening Sessions will be captured in the final report developed by ICF. The report will be made publicly available by the agencies and presented at a future Commission meeting.