

Interagency Equity Advisory Committee to the:
California State Transportation Agency
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Date

Mr. Toks Omishakin, Secretary
California State Transportation Agency
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Omishakin:

On behalf of the Interagency Equity Advisory Committee (EAC), thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the update to the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI).

The Interagency Equity Advisory Committee is intended to elevate diverse and historically marginalized voices to advise the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) on how to achieve meaningful outcomes in transportation equity, environmental justice, and equitable economic opportunities, especially as related to transportation planning and programming.

Our priorities in engaging with the CAPTI update are as follows:

- To set concrete goals and guidance to achieve carbon reduction and equity,
- To provide a deep and meaningful understanding of the economic impact on communities of color when discussing transportation investments,
- To integrate housing and land use actions with transportation goals for the purpose of achieving transportation equity, and
- To align and coordinate the goals of the various state agencies involved in climate planning.

To advance these priorities, we offer the following process recommendations to strengthen CAPTI, based on our expertise as equity-centered professionals and community leaders:

- **Streamline and standardize community engagement to ensure reaching populations and geographic regions who have not yet been engaged:** CalSTA should analyze which populations and geographic regions have received the most direct engagement and those who have not been engaged adequately.

CalSTA should continue to work with the EAC to develop and establish criteria for identifying these communities and conduct meaningful engagement. Considering the varying levels of transportation staffing throughout the state, many under-resourced communities are likely to not be aware of CAPTI or receive opportunities for direct engagement. Improved engagement strategies can better capture ideas directly from communities about how to advance sustainable, equitable, and healthy modes of transportation, including walking, biking, transit, and rail, and accelerate the transition to zero-emission vehicle technology.

- **Community engagement efforts should be a collaborative endeavor between state agencies and local community-based organizations (CBOs).** The state agency should take the lead, leveraging its resources and administrative capacity to manage the engagement process. This approach alleviates the burden on already under-resourced CBOs while ensuring robust support from organizations that possess crucial knowledge of the community, including the cultural competency and language skills to engage with them in a meaningful way. By combining the strengths of both state agencies and local CBOs, community engagement efforts can be more effective, equitable, and sustainable. Key strategies include:
 - Joint Efforts: State agencies should lead administrative tasks and logistical planning, while CBOs are compensated to provide local insights and training on best practices for state staff.
 - Training and Capacity Building: State staff should receive training on equitable community engagement practices.
 - Local Hiring: Implement local hiring requirements for state staff involved in community engagement to ensure representation and cultural relevance of the staff working directly in those communities.
- **Allocate funding to community groups working on displacement mitigation strategies similar to those included in the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program.** It isn't always clear to jurisdictions why state program applications include questions about housing and displacement mitigation strategies for transportation projects. Directing funding to community groups can help increase engagement specifically around the nexus of housing and displacement mitigation with transportation projects. Jurisdictions should be encouraged to partner with and compensate CBOs to co-develop the program applications and inform the ongoing displacement mitigation efforts.

We also offer the following strategic recommendations:

- **Outline goals to make our transit systems as integrated as the state highway system:** The state should consider how procurement, payment systems, and other operations can be coordinated so that transitions between transit agencies are seamless for the user.

- **Deepen goals for ensuring equity of access, especially for those living in rural, low-income, or Tribal areas:** For those who don't drive, access to destinations is substantially limited throughout the state. Many areas can't be reached due to lack of or limited public transit and active transportation infrastructure. Decisions to address these inequities should be data-driven and backed by transportation-specific and socioeconomic metrics, including screening tools such as the Caltrans Equity Index which identifies transportation-based priority populations at a granular level.
- **Establish equity of fees across the state:** Transit affordability must be considered when addressing matters of transportation equity.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. We appreciate the opportunity to inform the updates to CAPTI and we encourage CalSTA to continue engaging with the EAC's ad hoc CAPTI subcommittee once the list of draft actions has been released. An opportunity to provide feedback on that list will ensure that our recommendations remain focused. Please contact ___ directly at ___ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
