

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
EQUITY ADVISORY ROUNDTABLE  
MEETING #5 February 3, 2022 9AM -12PM  
MEETING MINUTES

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**Tab 1: Roll Call**

Connie Stewart- *Absent*

Ivette Torres

Jasmine Leek

Jerard Wright- *Absent*

Keith Bergthold

Kiana Valentine

Leslie Sanders- *Absent*

Lena Morán Acereto- *Absent*

Nailah Pope-Harden

Randy Torres-Van Vleck

Rio Oxas

Rodney Fong- *Absent*

Russell Rawlings- *Absent*

Stephanie Ramirez

Tamika Butler

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**Tab 2: Welcome and Reflections from Previous Meetings**

C. Sequoia Erasmus (Commission Staff): Led the meeting with a “Good morning” and introduction. Sequoia shared gratitude for all those Roundtable members and members of the public who continue to show up and support the work of the group.

Jeanie Ward-Waller (Caltrans Staff): Informed the group of the Federal Infrastructure bill and Caltrans’ active role in forming and executing planning grant applications to capture some of that funding for California. CalSTA has kicked off, and is leading, a transportation working group, of which Caltrans has taken leadership of 12-13 sub-working group. Equity and

Environmental Justice is at the forefront of every conversation and Caltrans' Office of Equity is working to ensure all voices are heard.

The group was also was informed of the success from the two previous training sessions for leadership at Caltrans, CalSTA, and the California Transportation Commission which helped position those in attendance to be effective listeners when the Community Listening Sessions take place.

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**Tab 3: Meeting Minutes from October 28, , 2021**

Brigitte Driller (Commission Staff): Presented the meeting minutes from the October 28, 2021 Roundtable meeting. These minutes were posted online on January 2022 and sent out to Roundtable members and stakeholders. The minutes summarize the October 28, 2021 meeting.

No suggested edits or comments were received.

Meeting minutes will be posted on the Commission's website at the following link.

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**Tab 4: Update and Discussion on Statewide Equity Listening Sessions**

Carolyn Abrams (Caltrans Staff)- Updated the group on the Statewide Listening Sessions progress. Carolyn states that Community-based Organizations are communicating to Caltrans staff that they (the community-based organizations) have limited staff capacity to be able to effectively partner for this effort. Additionally, there is some skepticism and hesitancy with partnering with Caltrans. As a result, the timelines have shifted from January and February is now, tentatively, late-March to April.

Caltrans has had success with community-based organization outreach in Lake County and Kern County and so Caltrans staff is moving forward with getting contracts in place so these organizations can be compensated for their help and participation. Staff is also pivoting to enlist Metropolitan Planning organizations for their help in places where community-based organization assistance and participation is limited.

The originally contracted six Listening Sessions are an initial starting point, staff wants to continue to build relationships in other areas of the State and continue with these efforts into the future. The six geographic locations are:

- East Bay (Richmond)
- Kern County (Arvin/Lamont)
- Imperial Valley (Calexico/El Centro)
- Inland Empire (San Bernardino)
- Los Angeles Portside (Wilmington)
- Lake County (Lakeport/Kelseyville/Clearlake)

These sessions are all virtual, and so geographically speaking there is no limitation for participation. In Lake County, for example, folks beyond the borders of those identified cities are invited to attend.

The internal preparation being conducted ahead of these Listening Sessions are the Facilitation Training Sessions, which were held January 18<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, which covered the purpose of facilitation, effective facilitation strategies in a virtual environment, incorporating a trauma-informed approach to navigate sensitive experiences and topics, and importance of self-awareness, reducing secondary trauma, and how to combat compassion fatigue. These sessions were conducted for the benefit of Commissioners, to be as prepared as possible to fully engage and absorb

Randy Torres-Van Vleck (Roundtable member): How do communities apply for Reconnecting Communities?

Jeanie Ward-Waller: Eligible applicants for the Reconnecting Communities grant are state agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, local governments, Tribal governments, and non-profit organizations. Because these facilities are owned by Caltrans, Caltrans wants to be at the table and championing the effort. Caltrans would love to be at least co-applicants for this grant but encourages anyone apply who is eligible to. The limitations for the grant are \$2 million or less for planning work, and \$5 million or more for construction.

Ivette Torres (Roundtable member): There have been concerns in the Inland Empire with more organized, well financed agencies capturing the funding from federal and state grants or programs and leaving those smaller, less organized or funded agencies little to no chance of being competitive.

Jeanie Ward-Waller: Caltrans Leadership has stressed the importance to its District staff about building relationships with community-based organizations early and keeping those relationships strong to ensure that when those applications come in, they are competitive. The purpose of the grants is to be community driven but many communities that are not well resourced and historically overburdened and underserved do have a much more difficult time taking on the large task of applying for opportunities and being competitive. Having those strong relationships with Caltrans can help shift the capacity and work to District staff. Non-profits can certainly be the lead for the applications, but the strong partnership and championship from the owning agency, which is Caltrans, certainly helps make the application competitive.

Amar Cid (Caltrans Staff): The aspect of making sure those community-based organizations are well resourced and supported is a priority for Caltrans teams.

Randy Torres-Van Vleck: So, are Community-based organizations encouraged to initiate conversations with Caltrans staff?

Jeanie Ward-Waller: Yes, and if you are not getting a response, please contact Amar Cid and we will get you the answers you need.

C. Sequoia Erasmus: We had a question from Jasmine Leek who is running late to today's meeting but wanted to share this comment , "Stockton is ready to partner for the listening sessions but has concerns that there are not many Central Valley locations." Sequoia reiterated that many more locations are being considered for the next phase of the Listening Sessions work and will contact Jasmine for feedback about the next locations to best engage with.

Carolyn Abrams: We recognize that only have six sessions in the beginning is not ideal, because California is a huge state and these locations are not representative of the entire state. As we continue further along in this work, please begin thinking and having conversations with us about where we could partner with those active and engaged communities that want to be a part of this effort.

Connie Stewart (Roundtable member): We focused on geographic locations, but there are issues coming to the Roundtable that are not geographically constrained, such as the State's

efforts to program and create middle-mile broadband projects. A meeting around those projects and ensuring they have an equity lens is important to ensure that the areas that have historically been redlined in the State are not left out. This would be a good topic for a virtual meeting, like the Listening Sessions, so those communities can voice their concerns about the program. In short, having statewide conversations about programs, rather than geographic-specific issues, would be beneficial.

Amar Cid: I agree, Connie. In the beginning of this effort, we were wondering about how we could maximize the conversations with only six listening sessions. In the future, we want to have a statewide conversation for topics that have a statewide impact, so no one location is representative of the entire state.

Randy Torres-Van Vleck: Asks about the update for Phase 2 of the Listening Session.

Carolyn Abrams: The idea would be to expand the geographic locations beyond what was originally identified so we can include more areas.

Commissioner Joe Lyou (Commissioner): Asks for clarification as to the status of the community-based organization outreach and efforts.

Carolyn Abrams: We are happy to share the list of the two dozen organizations we have contacted. If you have any recommendations for agencies we can contact, especially if you have a relationship or connections with those organizations, we would love to collaborate. We've had most success with organizations where we already have an established relationship, such as if a staff member had previously worked with or alongside that organization.

Mitch Weiss (Executive Director, Commission staff): I think we can ask Commissioners for their help for contacts of community-based organizations in their areas. I'm glad we are putting calendar holds for the Listening Sessions. Please send those calendar holds to Commissioners and Commission staff, so we have them on our radar. For the Highways to Boulevards program, which is a part of the development process of the 2022 State Transportation Improvement Program, we have asked each county in the State for their list of potential candidates for a Highways to Boulevards pilot project. We have compiled all those recommendations. It is currently not working on the website, so that will be fixed, but by the end of the day that list will be accessible. We did not put requirements on the recommendations, and so there are varying degrees of thoroughness and thought, but I wanted to let the Roundtable know in case anyone was interested in viewing it.

Randy Torres-Van Vleck: How does Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission notify communities of these types of opportunities?

Jeanie Ward-Waller: It is being promoted by Federal Highways Authority (FHWA), but since this is being proposed for the state's budget but not yet approved, we are challenged because we don't have resources to dedicate staff to this program. We've been relying in the Districts to reach out to the communities, but it is difficult since we are knitting it into funded, on-going planning activities. The call for projects coming up in the Spring 2022 caught Caltrans off-guard, because it was assumed the federal government would take a longer time putting together guidelines and information before they call for projects.

Mitch Weiss: We will continue to talk about it at the March Commission meeting and bringing in speakers from other states who have successfully participated in a program like this.

Nailah Pope-Harden (Roundtable member): What are the performance measures and goals of the program?

Jeanie Ward-Waller: Since this program is not yet funded at the state level and the federal level has not put out much guidance yet aside from the high-level objective of reconnecting

communities that have been divided by past transportation investments, those performance measures are yet to be determined. We welcome any thoughts you might have about those considerations and priorities and we can share them with our FHWA partners.

No public comment or feedback received for this topic.

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**Tab 5: Update on SB1 Transportation Funding Programs Guidelines Development**

C. Sequoia Erasmus: I'll be joined by Matthew Yosgott, Deputy Director of SB1 Programming at the CA Transportation Commission. We will provide all members of the Roundtable and public with updates to the SB1 Program guidelines as well as facilitate a discussion for Roundtable members to weigh in on potential changes to better address transportation equity.

Additionally, we have had a few Roundtable members who have joined us to participate in the Draft Guidelines Focus Group exercise. I will ask them to join us after the presentation to share their thoughts on incorporating equity into the Commission's programming guidelines.

Matthew Yosgott, the Deputy Director of Programming at the CA Transportation Commission gave a presentation on the following SB1 funding programs that are undergoing updates to their guidelines for the inclusion of equity considerations, as well as an examples of in-progress or completed projects that have utilized the funding from the three programs:

1. Local Partnership Program
  - a. Montague Expressway Pedestrian Overcrossing at the Milpitas BART Station in Santa Clara County
2. Solutions for Congested Corridors Program
  - a. Airport Metro Connector, which connects the Metro Crenshaw/Los Angeles Airport (LAX) Line and includes an extension of the Metro Green Line to the Automated People Mover
3. Trade Corridors Enhancement Program
  - a. Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Crossing Project

All three programs require applicants to include information outlining community impacts, how the projects address community-identified needs, negative impacts and displacement, and benefits to disadvantaged communities. Equity components for each program are:

1. Local Partnership Program
  - a. Evaluation criteria dedicated to regional/community support and public outreach
2. Solutions for Congested Corridors
  - a. Projects are screened out of eligibility unless they avoid or mitigate negative environmental/community impacts
3. Trade Corridor Enhancement Program
  - a. Evaluation criteria section dedicated to Community Impact Factors

C. Sequoia Erasmus: Gave an update pertaining to Commission timeline for feedback, inclusion, and presentation of equity implementation for SB 1 Programs from December 2021 until adoption of updated guidelines by Commissioners in August 2022.

SLIDO, an anonymous text-based polling function, was engaged during this part of the presentation, where anyone could text answers to questions and displayed, in real time, for all to see. C. Sequoia Erasmus asked:

- “What are some examples of equity metrics or indicators that you or your organization have identified or found useful?”
- What are the most important equity criteria to include in the guidelines update?

The key takeaways from the December 16, 2021 Equity-Focused SB 1 Guidelines Workshop, which also utilized SLIDO for crowd-sourced ideas, were shared.

C. Sequoia Erasmus invited Connie Stewart and Jerard Wright, Equity Advisory Roundtable members, to speak about their experience being a part of the focus group session.

Jerard Wright (Roundtable member): One of the biggest takeaways was that equity becomes a part of the guidelines, not just a small portion for applicants to “check the box”.

Connie Stewart: There are other statewide programs that spend so much time and effort spent in defining equity to fit broad categories that in turn, programs get flooded with applications that don’t necessarily advance equity. Connie also acknowledged the hard work staff has done in incorporating all the suggestions that were given at that workshop.

Nailah Pope-Harden: The equity metrics are a “one-size-fits-all”, where they are bringing all communities to a common baseline, rather than being responsive to the communities’ needs. Nailah gave an example of a creek restoration project where the community-based organization has a seat at the table from the very beginning of the project, and that the project budget has community-based organization compensation built in.

Matthew Yosgott: CTC Staff have drafted potential changes to the guidelines and will be shared with Connie and Jerard shortly after this Roundtable meeting. It was informed from the December 16<sup>th</sup> workshop and any other communications from other workshops or conversations.

Commissioner Clarissa Reyes-Falcon (Commissioner): This is a substantive activity and appreciates Connie’s comments about not having the metrics be a “one-size-fits-all”. Rural needs differ from those in urban areas, and the guidelines need to be cognizant of these different needs.

Connie Stewart: Another topic of conversation from the December 16<sup>th</sup> workshop was that these projects need to be transformational, not transactional. The guidelines should show a connection between economic development and environmental or social changes, or how all

three interplay because of the project. Thank you for the opportunity to make a difference here.

Jerard Wright: Applauded the work the CTC staff have completed so far.

C. Sequoia Erasmus: Extended thanks to everyone for participating and supporting this work.

No public comment was received for this item.

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**Tab 6: Discussion: Equity Advisory Committee Structure**

C. Sequoia Erasmus: Gave background information for the formation of the Equity Advisory Committee. A list was presented of several state agencies' and regional transportation agencies' internal or external equity advisory committees that were looked at to help inform the structure of the Equity Advisory Committee.

The following discussion topics were presented to the group:

- What is your capacity for supporting an Interagency Equity Advisory Committee (or Committees)?
- Are there any structural or procedural elements from these presentations that you think we should propose for the EAC?

Rio Oxas (Roundtable member): It is nice to know the Equity Advisory Committee is explicitly named as an inter-agency effort. Rio expressed concerns about the "Advisory" label because advisory bodies tend to not hold any decision-making power. Rio shared a personal experience with being on an advisory committee where the committee would have 100% agreement on an issue, but the decision-makers would completely disregard the recommendations from the advisory body. Additionally, Rio stated that participation would be influenced by the time commitment, and asked what the time requirement would be for participation?

Mitch Weiss: Legally, the Commission cannot delegate decision making unless there's a specific statute that allows it. Our ability to create a decision-making body separate from the Commission is very limited.

Amar Cid: For this group, we will try to make sure that any recommendations from the group will have full transparency from our agencies, so that those request for decisions can be made with the full knowledge of where and how decisions can be influenced. We are looking at 2-4 meetings per year, as a large group between all three agencies, and having working groups placed between those. We are still working with what this will look like, in terms of scheduling and capacity for each of the agencies and participating members. The team also envisioned the

committee would support the Equity Index Tool effort being championed by Caltrans, and so wanted to let everyone know a reminder event will be scheduled, coming from Amar's team.

Laura Pennebaker (Commission Staff): From Commission staff's perspective, wanted to underscore Rio's comment that this Advisory Committee will not be a token group that will not be able to influence the decisions of the agencies imbued with decision-making power. Our commitment is that this committee will effectuate change.

Ivette Torres: Wanted to echo Rio's concerns and shared the desire that the advisory body will be taken seriously. Ivette wanted to acknowledge that some on the advisory body may not be equipped with the knowledge or experience to effectively offer advice.

C. Sequoia Erasmus: Agenda setting and sharing is a way to ensure that staff does not have the full power to decide what will be discussed, but that the advisory body would also shoulder the responsibility to decide what their time and energy is spent on.

Randy Torres-Van Vleck: The way I personally decide where to devote my time to a committee comes down to resources and power. What kind of resources do participants have? Is it compensated? What power and level of influence does the group have in terms of outcomes across the state?

C. Sequoia Erasmus: The comments of compensation and power have been raised a lot lately, so it is on our radar.

Rio Ogas: It is refreshing to hear that the issues of accountability and transparency are being addressed at the forefront.

C. Sequoia Erasmus: Invited Commissioners to add their comments or ask questions.

Commissioner Rocco Davis (Commissioner): Voiced support for Amar's playbook idea where the process, procedure, rules, and funding mechanisms with SB 1's passage, would help ensure Advisory members feel informed and empowered and will lessen the potential for disappointment.

Stephanie Ramirez (Roundtable member): Agreed with all the comments voiced. Honestly presenting the limitations and challenges of implementing equity work will alleviate frustrations. Valuing the input of the advisory committee and experiences is important, as well as constant check-ins to ensure words and actions from agencies are in step with the intent of the Advisory committee. Important to ensure terms are staggered no one person stays on the committee for too long to make sure new voices, opinions, and experiences are shared.

Randy Torres-Van Vleck: Extended an invitation to the Saturday, February 12<sup>th</sup> event called "Creek to Bay Community Bike Ride" from City Heights, New Roots garden to the Bay, through Southeast San Diego and Chicano Park. The ride is to celebrate those communities and talk about equitable access to the coast. Funded by the CA Coastal Conservancy.



No public comment received for this item.

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**Tab 7: Public Comments**

None.

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**Tab 8: Meeting Recap and Next Steps**

C. Sequoia Erasmus: Extended gratitude for the honest discussions and feedback that were shared today. Thanks to everyone for joining us for this early morning meeting and we are so glad you made it.

Major takeaways and action items:

- There was interest from roundtable members in Reconnecting Communities- Highways to Boulevards funding opportunities that are forthcoming. If anyone has thoughts on potential projects, we highly encourage you to connect with your Caltrans District staff, and if you need help facilitating the connections, anyone on the Caltrans or Commission staff would be happy to help.
- Heard updates on the Community Listening Sessions, SB1 guidelines, and Equity advisory committee formation. We appreciate the committee feedback that helped to shape these efforts and want to extend the opportunity to anyone else who wants to be a part of the SB 1 guidelines workshops.
- Thank you to Roundtable members for sharing their experiences of serving on advisory bodies and for encouraging us, as agency partners, to be thoughtful, transparent, and accountable in advancing equity.
- Carolyn Abrams from Caltrans will send out the list of Community-Based Organizations that have been contacted as a part of the Listening Sessions effort.

Next Steps:

- CTC staff will create the meeting minutes, and the recordings, materials, and minutes will be posted to the Commission's website.
- The next Roundtable will be proposed to be held March 29<sup>th</sup>. CTC staff will reach out with a concrete date within the next week or two.