

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Policy Advisory Council**

March 11, 2020

Agenda Item 9

MTC Internship Program Update

- Subject:** Update on MTCs Internship Programs.
- Background:** Dating back to 2000, MTC has run a high school internship program where hundreds of applicants competed for dozens of placements each summer year in our partner agencies across the region. Most interns came from underserved communities of color, and gained first-hand knowledge of transportation issues, working in a professional office environment, and exposure to conducting public policy across diverse communities. The program was administered by Pathways, with significant MTC involvement.
- Due to budget shortfalls and a key vacancy in MTC's Human Resources department that previously administered the internship program, staff is recommending a 1-year hiatus in order to revamp and relaunch the program.
- Issues:** None identified.
- Next Steps:** Staff is proposing a working group be tasked with convening key stakeholders including internal staff, members of the Policy Advisory Council, and potential partner agencies including the Air District to determine the best course for resetting the program on an equitable and sustainable path.
- Recommendation:** Information
- Attachments:** Attachment A: Memorandum



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: Policy Advisory Council

DATE: March 6, 2020

FR: Executive Director

RE: Suspending MTC's High School Internship Program

Background

MTC's summer internship program for high school students has been in existence since 2000. In those 20 years the program has exposed nearly 700 students to the vast array of career offerings in the transportation industry. The program was conceived of by MTC's former Minority Citizens Advisory Committee to encourage young people of color as well as students from communities that shoulder many of the negative impacts of transportation projects to consider a career in transportation.

MTC pays the interns' salaries and interns are deployed to MTC's transportation partners around the region, where they are supervised by welcoming mentors. Job placements include city and county offices, local transit authorities, county transportation agencies, and regional agencies like the Air District. Some local agencies are so enthusiastic about the program that they hire extra interns with their own funds.

The program offers high school students — many of whom have never before had professional experience — the opportunity to learn how transportation plays an overall part in the community, county and region. Students tackle such projects as public health campaigns, street shoulder inventories, bus station inspections, light-rail safety programs, and student transit ticket programs. Whether in the office or in the field, the interns gain experience in engineering, software modeling, GIS, community outreach, construction, safety instruction, website management, advocacy, marketing, communications, social media and more.

Most interns came from underserved communities of color, and gained first-hand knowledge of transportation issues, working in a professional office environment, and exposure to conducting public policy across diverse communities.

Current Situation

While not an excuse, the pressures facing the agency with the ever increasing agenda (AB 1487, new RHNA process, Plan Bay Area 2050, governance questions, on-going staffing challenges), combined with the generational changeover taking place within the ranks is taking its toll — the situation we are facing with this program is evidence of broader resource stresses requiring a likewise broader reset. The individual who managed the high school internship program for over a decade retired last summer and the agency is finding the process to rehire for her position, and many others, is straining internal management capacity. Additionally, due to decisions made in prior years to expand the program without commensurate budget increases, we find ourselves with a budget shortfall. Since we face both a budgetary and staffing shortfall, staff is proposing that MTC suspend both the high school and the

college internship program for the 2020 season, using the interim time to develop a revamped and sustainable program aligned with the original intent to bring in students from underserved communities.

Proposed Path Forward and Timeline:

We propose creating a **working group** to study the best way to revamp a robust high school and college internship program. The working group would convene detailed discussions with key stakeholders including internal staff, members of the Policy Advisory Council, and potential partner agencies including the Air District,¹ on how we can best expand and improve the program. The goals of this working group include:

1. **Identifying successful internship programs** at similar agencies to determine what it takes to create and run a successful internship program;
2. **Developing goals and objectives** for the MTC/ABAG internship program, including age range, target demographics and intended outcomes;
3. **Determining resources necessary** to run the program, including staffing and budget. This will include developing a budget for summer 2021 (same in FY 2020-21 and same in FY 2021-22) to be included in the FY 2021-22 budget and work program; and
4. **Creating a program outline** for implementation, including a pilot program to be rolled-out in summer 2021, aligned with the emergent Equity Platform.

The working group will meet until the above goals are complete.

Staff's recommendation to suspend the program for one year will allow us the time we need to take the steps needed to realign our priorities. Given that the high school internship program is effective in meeting the core objectives of the Commissioners, has a tangible impact on young people of the Bay Area, and is in alignment with the Equity Platform initiative, the question is *how*, not *if*, the program will be stood back up.

With an affirmative approach that identifies with specificity the pathway back for the high school (and college internship programs), accompanied by budget commitments and staff implementation, there is a clear path out of the current circumstances.

In the Appendix below are some additional data on the cost structure, program activity, and narratives from intern program highlights. Please let me know if you have any questions.


Therese W. McMillan

¹ Staff has been in preliminary discussions with the Air District on partnering on a future shared internship program. The Air District is committed to implementing an internship program, and reportedly is dedicating around \$50,000 to sponsor between 6-8 high school interns this summer.

APPENDIX

Past Cost Structure

The program caps the number of hours an intern can work at 250 hours, between the months of June and August. The approximate cost per student for a 250-hour internship is approximately \$5,437.50 (in 2019) or \$21.75/hour. This breaks down as follows:

- Intern salary: \$15.00/hr.
- Payroll expenses: \$4.50/hr. (includes general liability & workers' compensation insurance)
- Administrative costs: \$2.25/hr.

Program Activity by Year *(partial data only, to be updated)*

Year	# of Interns	# of Participating Agencies
2019	31	28 agencies
2018	35	28 agencies
2017	31	24 agencies
2016	35	uncertain
2015	44	uncertain
2014	42	39 agencies
2013	47	uncertain
2012	47	43 agencies
2011	39	36 agencies
2010	54	41 agencies
2009	36	32 agencies
2008	28	28 agencies
2007	27	22 agencies
2006	27	24 agencies
2005	35	28 agencies
2004	~30	uncertain
2003	47	33 agencies
2002	44	29 agencies
2001	35	26 agencies
2000	~30	uncertain

Intern Highlights

Hannah Cohen-Sandler, who in 2018 was going into her junior year at Maria Carrillo High School in Santa Rosa, worked in the engineering department at the city of Cloverdale. She helped to research and revise building codes and standards, in addition to learning AutoCAD and helping with inspections. "It was really interesting to see a normal day in the field," she said of her internship, which was her first workplace experience.

In the summer of 2015, Joel Duarte, then a rising senior at New Tech High in Napa, worked at the Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency, assisting with marketing of the transit system, data collection for local bus routes and some clerical duties. "I want to get into business and marketing, and my internship will expose me to that," he said.

“The internship let me explore a new area of a new field,” said Charlotte Favre, in 2013 a rising junior at John O’Connell High School in San Francisco. She worked for the Presidio Trust Transportation Department and conducted a commuter survey for the shuttle system in the Presidio.

Josef Starc, who in 2013 was a rising Oakland Technical High School senior, spent his summer at the East Bay Bicycle Coalition campaigning for better bike paths, but said he had not previously given much thought to “the advocacy aspect of transportation.”

In the summer of 2011, Simon Huang was a recent graduate of Santa Clara High School, was part of a team that inspected roads to determine those most in need of maintenance. “It’s a lot of fun — we’re always outdoors, driving around different parts of the Bay,” he said.