

# Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee

April 9, 2021

Agenda Item 4a

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## Federal Update: Infrastructure Plan, Transportation Bill, and Priority Projects

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**Subject:** Update on the Biden Administration’s infrastructure proposal and other federal funding opportunities.

**Overview:** With the third, and likely final COVID relief bill enacted, national leaders are turning to a post-COVID agenda. Economic recovery is high on the list, and big infrastructure investment is both a Biden Administration and Congressional priority. At the same time, Congress is developing a surface transportation reauthorization proposal and getting very serious about bringing back earmarks.

**Recommendation:** Information

**Discussion:** **Biden Administration’s Infrastructure Bill**

The Biden Administration on March 31 unveiled a \$2 trillion infrastructure proposal, which is expected to be part one of a two-part comprehensive infrastructure and jobs package (rumored to have a \$3 trillion price tag) that could deliver President Biden’s campaign promise to tackle the climate crisis and narrow economic inequality while stimulating the economy. Large-scale investments in transportation and resilience (\$621 billion), housing (\$213 billion), clean energy (\$100 billion), and broadband (\$100 billion) are included in the infrastructure portion of the package, among other categories. The White House Fact Sheet on the proposal is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/>. As more details of the proposal are released, staff will analyze them and share an update at your committee meeting.

**Transportation and Infrastructure on Capitol Hill**

Congressional leaders are working closely with the Biden Administration on crafting an infrastructure bill that reflects the Administration’s agenda. In addition, Congress is facing a September deadline to pass a new federal transportation policy and funding bill before the current transportation law (the FAST Act) expires. The committees responsible for drafting the transportation bill are working on it now and we have supplied them with our top policy requests. The House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee is also requesting earmarks—coined “community based projects”—for the bill, due April 23. With regards to earmark size and scope, we expect that most Member requests will fall in the range of \$100,000 to single-digit millions. There is also a chance that Congress may reintroduce larger programmatic earmarks for transportation mega-projects, but it is more likely that Congress targets funds for mega-project priorities through revising (or creating new) discretionary grant programs in a manner that clearly makes them eligible.

Given this dynamic environment, the Congressional and Administration staff are taking an “all of the above” approach and are drafting all of the following so as to be prepared for whichever legislative vehicle gains traction:

- Stand-alone infrastructure package, which would include housing, transportation, and other broad infrastructure investment
- Stand-alone transportation reauthorization proposal, which would include transportation-related climate initiatives and earmarks

- Infrastructure package that includes a multi-year transportation bill as the main transportation portion of the infrastructure bill.

**Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations and Earmarks**

Congress is also preparing the fiscal year 2022 federal spending bill (FY 2022 appropriations) and has also opened the door again to earmarks. This is another avenue for Congress to deliver resources to address local needs, including in the transportation and housing realm. Members of Congress are capped at 10 earmark requests each in the House FY 2022 spending bill. The deadline for House members to submit their housing and transportation project requests is April 30.

**MTC's Role in Bay Area Priority Transportation Projects**

In early March, MTC shared with our partners some principles included in Attachment A to guide their transportation earmark requests. Upon request, we have also reviewed whether proposed transportation projects are included within the Transportation Investment Plan (TIP) or otherwise consistent with Plan Bay Area in order to provide a letter indicating this to accompany earmark requests.

With regard to regional priorities, staff is proposing three earmark requests to our Congressional delegation that fall into the category of both “regional” and “small” and are consistent with the attached principles and Plan Bay Area priorities. These three projects are candidates for inclusion in either the appropriations bill or House T&I’s reauthorization proposal:

- **Bay Bridge Forward:** \$5 million for I-80/Powell Street transit access and I-80 westbound bus lane extension.
- **Regional Advance Mitigation Program:** \$5 million fund the implementation of an advance environmental mitigation program for transportation projects in the San Francisco Bay Area
- **Bay Trail Connectivity:** \$1.8 million to fund the Vista Point Bay Trail

As for potential mega-projects, staff is aiming to build consensus within the region, and potentially the mega-region, around mega-project priorities that could be highlighted to help send a clear message about the types of eligible expenditures and project priorities our Congressional delegation should include in the creation of any large new discretionary funding programs.

**Attachments**

**Attachment A:** Proposed Bay Area Principles to Guide “Community-Based Project” Requests

  
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**Proposed Bay Area Principles to Guide “Community-Based Project” Requests**

**March 9, 2021**

The following principles should guide the prioritization of Bay Area community-based project funding requests.

**Deliver Mobility Benefits:** Ensure the funding amounts provided to projects can deliver actual projects within a reasonable timeframe. To the extent practicable, congressionally directed funds should be the “last dollars in” to pull a project over the goal line, with significant local and state dollars behind it. Prioritize funding requests for Regional Measure 3 projects that were promised to voters but are being delayed due to the litigation.

**Performance Matters:** Financial resources are limited and therefore must be directed to projects that provide the best bang for the buck in terms of cost/benefit analysis and toward meeting other important regional goals. To the extent practicable, utilize the rigorous Plan Bay Area 2050 project performance assessments to identify high-performing projects.

**Support Job Creation:** Capital project funding should be directed to projects that are able to begin construction or other critical phases within two years.

**Strong Equity Focus:** Prioritize projects and programs that improve outcomes for the most vulnerable populations and communities in the Bay Area. If a project presented equity challenges in the Plan Bay Area 2050 project performance analysis, commit to a mitigation strategy.

**Climate and Resilience:** Projects should reflect the Bay Area’s commitment to a cleaner, greener and healthier region. Prioritize projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and/or mitigate the impacts of climate change on our communities.

**Projects with Community Support:** To the extent practicable, projects that provide regional benefits should be prioritized. Consider projects that have submitted strong applications for state and federal competitive grant programs - those projects have already built support through the rigorous application process.