

Date: November 17, 2021
W.I.: 1111
Referred by: Commission

ABSTRACT

Resolution No. 4494

Resolution of Appreciation for Ross McKeown upon his retirement after 22 years of service to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and more than three decades of service overall to the people of California.

Date: November 17, 2021
W.I.: 1111
Referred by: Commission

RE: Resolution of Appreciation for Ross McKeown

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution No. 4494

WHEREAS, Ross McKeown is retiring after 22 years of service to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), including the past four years as Assistant Director of the section now known as Funding Policy and Programs; and

WHEREAS, Ross began his service to the people of California in the 1980s at various Caltrans offices in San Francisco before transferring in the 1990s to Caltrans headquarters, where he worked in the department's Division of Transportation Programming and the CTC Liaison's office; and

WHEREAS, during his time at Caltrans, Ross literally wrote the script for how to tap state transportation dollars, developing the spreadsheet initially known as the Fact and Funding Sheet, which subsequently evolved into the Project Programming Request Form and is now an electronic form known as the ePPR Form, filled out and submitted online for every California transportation project seeking state funds; and

WHEREAS, Ross in early 2000 joined the MTC staff, succumbing to entreaties by Randy Rentschler and other once youthful Bay Area empire builders who had identified, admired and coveted Ross' intimate knowledge of Caltrans and CTC programming policies, processes and procedures; and

WHEREAS, Bay Area residents over the ensuing decades became the beneficiary of Ross' understanding of the intricacies of state funding, as he almost single-handedly secured tens of millions of state dollars for the Golden Gate Bridge suicide prevention system, allowing the long-planned project to proceed to construction, and also played pivotal roles in assembling the funding packages for such vital improvements as the fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel and the multi-phase widening of U.S. 101 through the Marin-Sonoma Narrows; and

WHEREAS, Ross' experience navigating the waters of state funding also made him a favorite companion for excursions to CTC meetings around the state, where Ross invariably knew all the players as well as the backstories behind every item on the agenda; and

WHEREAS, Bay Area travelers also benefited from Ross' obsessive attention to detail, which ensured all funding requests submitted by MTC to any other agency were completed flawlessly and punctually, as well as from Ross' fiercely competitive nature, which made him loath to see the Bay Area 'lose' any possible state funding opportunities to other regions, and particularly to the Los Angeles area; and

WHEREAS, these same perfectionist and competitive tendencies also were exhibited in the careful checking and double-checking Ross did of every spreadsheet that came his way, very much including the OBAG tracking spreadsheet that became legendary within the halls of FPP after Ross write-protected it to prevent editing or other alterations by any other person; and

WHEREAS, Ross' enthusiasm for following rules precisely carries over to the Burning Man community to which he has been devoted for many years and for which he has long served as a Ranger under the handle 'Chameleon,' suggesting an away-from-the-office life with more color than the Excel toolbar, if not necessarily the deep detail for which the special eight-point 'Ross font' is reserved; and

WHEREAS, the framed map of Mordor hanging in his office signaled to Tolkien afficianados Ross' ability to talk nerdy to them; and

WHEREAS, so extensive is Ross' collection of Burning Man equipment and related paraphernalia that it cannot be stored in a single home, thus obliging him to divide time between residences in Lafayette and Sacramento, and to travel frequently between the two locations; and

WHEREAS, Ross routinely saved up vacation time to make possible three-week commitments to Burning Man that included a week of preliminary activities and another of post-Burn work in addition to the week-long main event; and

WHEREAS, Ross in more recent years has expanded his involvement in the Burning Man community beyond the playa of Nevada's Black Rock Desert to attend the Australia Burn and Africa Burn celebrations; and

WHEREAS, while Ross normally travels to Black Rock City in a somewhat dilapidated Ford Explorer that has reached an age where dust or dirt no longer much matter, he prefers to fly Emirates Business Class when traveling around the globe, finding the experience of being picked up at home and driven to the airport in a limousine to be quite to his liking; and

WHEREAS, Ross' taste for top-shelf travel may have been honed on a trip to a CTC meeting in exotic Riverside, where, after volunteering to chauffeur various meeting attendees from the airport to hotels scattered around town, he checked in late to the Mission Inn, where the only room left was the three-bedroom 'Keeper of the Inn' suite, featuring a private patio with an outdoor fireplace and multi-tiered water fountain, as well as a Christmas tree in every room; and

WHEREAS, Ross' affinities for Burning Man and Business Class are surpassed only by his devotion to his family, including his parents, brother, sister and niece, with all of whom he gathers frequently; and

WHEREAS, beneath his slightly gruff exterior, Ross has demonstrated over the decades a deep drive to be helpful, to build partnerships, and to support his staff and other colleagues, as well as a keen interest in continually making things better, from fund tracking to TIP processes to FPP holiday parties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the staff and commissioners of MTC thank Ross for his many contributions to the agency and to the people of California, congratulate him on his well-deserved retirement and wish him the continued enjoyment of family, rewarding new adventures, stimulating travels both spartan and splendiferous, and the warmth and brilliance of many a towering bonfire.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Alfredo Pedroza, Chair

The above resolution was approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission at a regular meeting of the Commission held in San Francisco, CA and at other remote locations, on November 17, 2021.