



May 20, 2020

Council President Georgette Gómez
San Diego City Council
202 "C" Street, 10th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

Subject: Recommendations for FY 2021 Budget

Dear Council President Gómez and Councilmembers,

On behalf of Circulate San Diego, whose mission is to create excellent mobility choices and vibrant, healthy neighborhoods, I am writing with recommendations for the FY 2021 budget. Circulate continues to support the Mobility Board's budget recommendations (attached) made prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, however we now have specific recommendations for how to address transportation needs given the drastic change to the budget landscape that has occurred.

1. Prioritize Safe Streets within Existing Revenue Streams

The large budget reductions proposed for FY 2021 are necessary for the City to adopt a balanced budget, and the general fund must ensure public health and safety during this crisis. However, transportation revenues such as SB 1 will continue to be received, and they must prioritize San Diego's Vision Zero and Climate Action Plan priorities.

The proposed budget reduces the Transportation Department General Fund expenditures, however the Gas Tax fund only slightly decreases with \$34.1 million in projected revenue compared to \$37.4 in FY 2020. Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation funds from SB 1 are proposed at \$26.8 million in FY 2021 compared to \$23.5 in FY 2020. SB 1 funds, which increased, are still a new revenue stream for the City of San Diego and the Transportation Department must take advantage of this funding source to prioritize complete streets and safe streets over maximizing road repaving.

As San Diego approaches the halfway point of its 10-year Vision Zero commitment, the need to prioritize public safety on our streets within existing transportation funding is clear. In 2019, 22 pedestrians and 5 bicyclists lost their lives in the City of San Diego, the highest number of fatalities for bicyclists since 2014.

Circulate recommends that the City prioritize increased funding for:

- **Bicycle Facilities (AIA00001)**—No funding is proposed for Capital Improvement Program bicycle facilities. The City must prioritize funding and building already planned bicycle facilities within its own revenues and not solely rely on grant funding.
- **Median Installation (AIA00001)**—The City proposed funding median installation, which includes roundabouts and other traffic calming devices, at \$500,000 using TransNet funds. The City

should increase this allocation to \$1,000,000, which is the projected allocated amount for future fiscal years and should not be reduced this year.

- Traffic Calming (AIL00001)—Traffic calming is funded at \$500,000 through TransNet. More funds must be dedicated to traffic calming.

In the May Revision, \$24.4 million is dedicated towards Street Resurfacing and Reconstruction, the majority of which comes from SB 1 and TransNet funds. This allocation does fund projects that benefit bicyclists and pedestrians, however without a strong complete streets policy in place, there is no guarantee that this funding will be used strategically to meet the City’s priorities.

We recommend that the City add funding to Bicycle Facilities, Median Installation, and Traffic Calming from existing revenue sources like SB 1 and TransNet, which are flexible funding streams. We also recommend that the City pursue drafting and adopting a strong complete streets policy to ensure that transportation fund expenditures benefit all road users.

2. Fund Education and Outreach for Safe Streets with CARES Act Funding

We recommend that the City of San Diego fund education and outreach relating to transportation safety to address public health during the COVID-19 crisis. CARES Act funding can be used for new expenses related to COVID, including the following education, technical assistance, and outreach:

- Expenses to facilitate distance learning, including technological improvements, in connection with school closings to enable compliance with COVID-19 precautions.
- Expenses for technical assistance to local authorities or other entities on mitigation of COVID-19-related threats to public health and safety.
- Expenses for public safety measures undertaken in response to COVID-19
- Expenses for communication and enforcement by State, territorial, local, and Tribal governments of public health orders related to COVID-19.¹

As a direct result of COVID-19, pedestrians and bicyclists require more physical space in the City’s right of way, and more people are walking and bicycling than before the crisis began. Based on the Treasury Department’s guidance and the direct need to address transportation safety, we recommend budgeting for the following expenses through the Communications Department:

- Creative bicycle and pedestrian safety messaging targeted towards new pedestrians and bicyclists regarding safe social distancing behaviors and laws in place.
- Creative traffic safety messaging targeted towards drivers to promote looking out for pedestrians and bicyclists and reduce speeding.

¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance for State, Territorial, Local, and Tribal Governments,” April 22, 2020, available at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Coronavirus-Relief-Fund-Guidance-for-State-Territorial-Local-and-Tribal-Governments.pdf>.

- Messaging and engagement specific to any interim type of action the City takes, including slow streets, outdoor dining, and efforts to reopen parks.
- Development of an easy-to-use design manual for restaurants, retail, and other establishments that are granted special permission to operate outside and on public rights of way during the emergency.
- Education and encouragement decals for sidewalks and signs to promote walking while adhering to public health guidance.

We request \$200,000 of CARES Act funding be allocated towards these types of education and outreach activities.

3. Support the Formation of a Mobility Department

We strongly recommend that the City Council support the formation of the cost-neutral Mobility Department.

A Mobility Department that makes interdepartmental coordination smoother and prioritizes implementation of the Climate Action Plan and Vision Zero is badly needed. The Mobility Department is a vital opportunity to have a lasting impact with no impact to the general fund.

Thank you for your work keeping San Diego safe during this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Maya Rosas
Director of Policy

CC:

Mayor Kevin Faulconer
Council President Pro Tem Barbara Bry
Councilmember Jennifer Campbell
Councilmember Chris Ward
Councilmember Monica Montgomery
Councilmember Mark Kersey
Councilmember Chris Cate
Councilmember Scott Sherman
Councilmember Vivian Moreno
Andrea Tevlin, Independent Budget Analyst