

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: August 17-18, 2022

From: MITCH WEISS, Executive Director

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Subject: Update on Statewide Equity Listening Sessions

UPDATE:

- Corrected names and acronyms
- Corrected interpretation information and attendee numbers for Los Angeles and East Bay sessions
- Added dates for the Inland Empire sessions

Summary:

Jeanie Ward-Waller, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Deputy Director of Planning and Modal Programs, will provide an update on the Statewide Equity Listening Sessions.

The third Statewide Equity Listening Session was a two-part session that took place virtually on June 8 and June 15, 2022, for the residents of the Los Angeles portside communities, with a focus on Wilmington and San Pedro. The community requested that their session be split into two, 1.5-hour sessions to best accommodate the needs of community members. The sessions were conducted in partnership with Los Angeles Walks and Safe Street Promotora Educators. Approximately 23 community members attended the first virtual session and approximately 28 community members attended the second virtual session. Both sessions were facilitated in Spanish with simultaneous interpretation provided in English.

The fourth Statewide Equity Listening Session was held virtually on June 8, 2022, for the residents of Imperial Valley, with a focus on Calexico, Heber, and El Centro. The session was conducted in partnership with Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV) as part of the Assembly Bill (AB) 617 Community Steering Committee monthly meeting. AB 617 Community Steering Committees were established throughout the state of California in response to Assembly Bill (AB) 617 (C. Garcia, Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017) as part of the California Air Resources Board Community Air Protection Program (CAPP or Program). The Program's focus is to reduce exposure in communities most impacted by air pollution. Communities around the State are working together to develop and implement new strategies to measure air pollution and

reduce health impacts. Approximately 27 community members attended the 1.5-hour session, which was facilitated in English with closed captioning and simultaneous interpretation provided in Spanish and American Sign Language.

The fifth Statewide Equity Listening Session was held in person on July 13, 2022, for residents of the greater East Bay region with a focus on Richmond. The session was conducted in partnership with Groundwork Richmond and hosted in the gathering space at Richmond's Main Street Initiative located within a local transit center. Approximately 15 community members attended the 2-hour session, which was facilitated in English. A virtual participation option was provided for executive leadership and commissioners who were unable to attend in person due to distance. Closed captioning and simultaneous Spanish and American Sign Language interpretation were offered online for any attendees who needed it.

Additional information featuring a summary of community engagement and feedback from the Equity Listening Sessions is available in Attachment A.

Background:

Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission (Commission), the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), and ICF International, Inc. (ICF) are co-hosting the 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions. The initiative officially launched in Fall 2021 and sessions began in Spring 2022. The listening sessions are designed to center California residents with a geographic focus on priority populations that have been historically marginalized in the planning, funding, and delivery of transportation infrastructure. The vision for these sessions is to allow people to share their personal stories about the impacts of the transportation system on them as individuals and the communities in which they live.

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions are designed to be accessible and inclusive, and to create a safe and welcoming environment for community members. The sessions will result in an actionable, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant report that will guide executive staff to further enhance organizational structures around equity, as well as inform how state transportation agencies engage with communities statewide. To enhance verbal feedback received and broaden access to different perspectives, written comments are also being collected. Written comments can be submitted to Listening@catc.ca.gov.

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions are intended to accomplish the following:

- 1) Establish communication and build trust with regional and local partners, communities, and stakeholders.
- 2) Understand how transportation and transportation policies have impacted individuals and communities, and identify current opportunities, needs, and challenges related to California's transportation system.
- 3) Document the findings to support and guide the partner agencies in developing actionable steps to transform policies and procedures.

The 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions will be held in six geographic locations. The selected areas include:

- Kern County (Arvin and Lamont)
 - Virtual session held on March 24, 2022
- Lake County (Lakeport, Kelseyville, and Clearlake)
 - Virtual session held on April 19, 2022
- Imperial Valley (Calexico, Heber, and El Centro)
 - Virtual session held on June 8, 2022
- Los Angeles Portside (Wilmington and San Pedro)
 - Virtual sessions held on June 8 and June 15, 2022
- East Bay (Richmond)
 - Hybrid session held on July 13, 2022
- Inland Empire (City of San Bernardino)
 - Virtual sessions scheduled for August 24 and August 31, 2022

This effort will result in an actionable report that will guide Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA toward implementing equity-oriented change, including internal and external procedures to strengthen equitable outcomes in communities that have been historically harmed by our transportation system. The agencies, in partnership with ICF, are developing mechanisms to ensure agency follow-up and accountability.

After the completion of the initial six sessions, staff will build upon these efforts to reach additional communities and respond to their equity concerns. Potential opportunities include additional listening sessions, site visits, and other virtual or in-person convenings to build relationships with residents and community leaders. Additional information regarding the Statewide Equity Listening Sessions, including a summary of engagement and community feedback, is available in Attachment A.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: 2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions: Summary of Engagement and Feedback to Date

2022 Statewide Equity Listening Sessions: Summary of Engagement and Feedback to Date

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Transportation Commission (Commission), and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) are hosting equity listening sessions in six geographic regions that center California residents. The listening sessions initiative officially launched in Fall 2021. The vision for these sessions is to allow people to share their personal stories about the impacts of the transportation system on them as individuals and the communities in which they live. The sessions are designed to be accessible while creating a safe and welcoming environment for community members. Written comments can be submitted to Listening@catc.ca.gov.

The goals of the equity listening sessions are intended to accomplish the following:

- Establish communication and build trust with partners, communities, and stakeholders.
- Understand how transportation and transportation policies have impacted individuals and communities and identify current opportunities, needs, and challenges related to California's transportation system.
- Document the findings to support and guide our agencies in developing actionable steps to transform policies and procedures.

Statewide Equity Listening Sessions are being held to inform policy development and decision making for Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA. Testimony gathered throughout the sessions will be used in future policy and programming updates. This summary reflects a compilation of staff notes taken during the Listening Sessions. A formal summary of each listening session will be provided by the ICF International, Inc. (ICF) consulting team. These themes represent direct feedback raised by participants and do not reflect official determinations from our agencies regarding the safety of transportation facilities.

Los Angeles Portside Listening Sessions Summary

The Los Angeles Portside Statewide Equity Listening Session was held as a two-part series on June 8 and 15, 2022. A total of 23 community members participated in the first session, accompanied by 10 individuals from the partner organizations and 17 representatives from Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA. A total of 28 community members attended the second session, accompanied by 10 individuals from the partner organizations and 18 representatives from Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA. The community requested two shorter listening sessions to best accommodate the needs of community members and cultivate a deeper level of comfort across the two sessions.

Both listening sessions were held virtually in partnership with Los Angeles Walks and the Safe Street Community Promotora Educators. The sessions were co-created and facilitated by the Safe Street Community Promotora Educators. Outreach was conducted by their larger network of Safe Street Community Promotora Educators.

The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- For many residents, including students, buses are their only form of transportation.
- Community members expressed safety and sanitation concerns while taking public transportation.
- Difficult interactions are common between bus drivers and passengers. Community members expressed a need for more driver training to better serve specific populations, especially passengers with disabilities, older adults, and non-English speaking riders.
- Public transit riders experience long waits and limited transit connections, particularly on weekends.
- Many residents have long walks to bus stops in their neighborhoods and a lack of bus stops near schools, making it difficult to reach critical destinations.
- Community members want safe and dignified public transportation.

Imperial Valley Listening Session Summary

The Imperial Valley Statewide Equity Listening Session was held virtually on June 8, 2022, as part of the AB 617 Community Steering Committee monthly meeting in partnership with Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV). CCV is working with the Imperial County Air Pollution District and Harder+Company Community Research to coordinate the AB 617 efforts. A total of 27 community members participated, accompanied by six individuals from the partner organizations, and 20 representatives from Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA.

The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- Landscape improvements would help reduce the effects of extreme heat conditions and mitigate dust pollution in neighborhoods adjacent to the highways.
- Greater transportation infrastructure and public transit options are needed at the port of entry. Transportation for the local population does not account for the larger population passing through the border.
- Current lack of cross-border transportation infrastructure between Calexico and Mexicali results in congestion.
- Transit connectivity is a challenge throughout the region and there are few alternative modes of transportation due to limited bus, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure. Car dependency is apparent.

- Construction delays and failures to complete or repair roads and bridges often isolates communities, limits mobility, and diverts traffic through neighborhoods.

East Bay Listening Session Summary

The East Bay Statewide Equity Listening Session was held in person on July 13, 2022. A total of 15 community members participated, accompanied by four individuals from the partner organization and 21 representatives from Caltrans, the Commission, and CalSTA.

The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- Public transit fares and schedules need to be streamlined for efficiency, safety, and cost.
- Policing and surveillance on transit and within transportation networks hold different meanings for community members, and strategies to improve safety must be carefully crafted in collaboration with the community as part of a meaningful public engagement plan.
- Providing incentives for taking public transit would benefit community members that rely on these transportation modes, support a shift in behavior toward more sustainable transportation modes, and mitigate the harms associated with reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.
- People experiencing homelessness often find refuge on or near public transit which presents an opportunity for transit operators to collaborate with other service providers to connect these individuals with necessary resources.
- Surveying the community or using other mechanisms to solicit input from community members would provide valuable insight about what they need and want.