

SANTA MONICA

Safe Streets Alliance

*Safe, livable, and sustainable streets are welcoming to everyone
and strengthen our community.*



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Slowdown: Excessive Cuts to Transportation Department Will Threaten Safety and Economic Recovery

Our Santa Monica streets are our largest public space, over 20% of our landmass, and one of our biggest assets. Our streets move people, goods, and services and are essential infrastructure for our economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial how we manage and use this public asset, an essential public safety function at the core of economic resilience, social equity, and environmental sustainability. The critical function of managing our streets is confirmed by **Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-33-20 that classified transportation infrastructure and services as essential government functions.***

Movement of goods and services, customers or clients is critical to economic recovery. In the near-term, accommodating the movement of people and goods will need to be extremely dynamic to adapt to "the realities" of the post COVID-19 emergency. Efforts to rebound and support our local economy (businesses, employers, restaurants, retail shops, etc.) depend on maintaining and adjusting critical transportation infrastructure and services in real time, not on a delay of days or weeks due to insufficient staff.

Santa Monica's Transportation Department pays for itself in revenue generation (grants, programs, plan check and permit fees). It operates signals and roads on which we all depend. Transportation work assures public safety and economic activity-- providing essential fiber optic network infrastructure, signal timing with regular adjustments, and Opticom first-responder systems. Proactive maintenance of these systems ensures faster response to emergencies and responsive, timely data-driven decision-making.

These essential life saving functions are under threat with extreme plans to cut over half of the City Transportation and Mobility Division compared to 20-40% across other departments. While we can only imagine the stress and burden of decisions weighing on City Council, this level of cuts would severely impact basic public safety and infrastructure operation functions, wounding our city's ability to rebound fiscally from the COVID-19 crisis. It is imperative to be strategic. We must consider the holistic dynamic relationships, dependencies and functions that contribute to safety, economic stability and regrowth. While the City suffers catastrophic shortfalls, we should not use a sledgehammer where a scalpel is needed to balance new budgets. Council needs to take time to cut costs strategically, while maintaining essential staff that would facilitate a safe and secure path to economic recovery and resilience.

Transportation - Mobility - facilitates access to jobs, particularly for a local green economy, and access to education, childcare, culture, healthcare, food and services. Access is essential to all of Santa Monica's residents, businesses, schools and visitors. Access is essential to our economic recovery. Santa Monica must have sufficient transportation staff capacity in order to maintain essential cost recovery services and retain competitiveness to identify new revenue

opportunities. ***Mobility staff are crucial in the implementation of plans and permits to get the City back open for business. If we don't take care of our transportation needs as we recover, we will quickly run into roadblocks to financial recovery. Multi-modal transportation infrastructure facilitates our community's safety goals and environmentally sustainable mobility, and also creates revenue streams that ensure resources to manage this invaluable public asset necessary for a true economic recovery.***

Transportation's self-supporting, even revenue-producing function must retain capacity to be nimble to identify new and expanded revenue streams and other emerging opportunities for grant funds, as well as repackaging of projects to capture the stimulus funds that will certainly be coming for infrastructure post shelter in place orders. Budget concepts currently under consideration threaten Transportation staff's capacity in two main ways and jeopardize years of future economic and environmental progress. First, excessive budget cuts would severely impact the City's ability to maintain current essential operations that support short- and long-term economic recovery, and second, hasty cuts deteriorate the ability to capture new and emerging opportunities for revenue streams necessary to manage our roads, an important and valuable public asset. Unfortunately, ironically, the use of most of our valuable public land is given away for free! That is a mistake sabotaging our recovery. With staff capacity there are proven 21st-century solutions to get us to a speedy recovery.

- In Santa Monica we get thousands of personal and business deliveries each day. Delivery services make no fiscal contribution to defray the cost to us of their impact on roadways, curbsides, sidewalks, or other infrastructure that they use to do business. With increasing market share, e-commerce, rideshare and delivery services are receiving an ever-increasing subsidy with the free use of this public asset. Simultaneously, they divert revenue from our local brick-and-mortar businesses. Council should direct staff to pursue tools, even a tax if needed, to have the biggest users pay their fair share, and to help manage control over local impacts.
- Passenger and courier services are adding convenience at the cost of increased GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions and traffic congestion with more VMT (vehicle miles traveled) and local trips -- often with erratic driving behavior and dangerous maneuvering that adversely impact safety in our community. These services make money using our streets while diminishing our community's safety. Council should strengthen our efforts to invest in strategic regional partnerships with LA to enable local fees that provide revenue to enhance safety and our ability to manage our assets locally.

Since California's stay-at-home orders went into effect, Santa Monica's streets have become increasingly deadly. Drivers are responding to open roads with increased speeding that endangers not only our physical safety but also our community's wellbeing. With resources, Mobility staff can pull from a toolbox of approved mitigations and strategies to temper safety impacts as we rebound from shelter in place orders. As we emerge from this COVID-19 crisis, experts project increased traffic congestion, which has proven to have negative economic impacts and negative safety impacts. Such impacts are already being experienced in cities beginning their own recoveries. Reduced access to less frequent public transportation will temporarily remain due to the continuing need to maintain safe physical distance during recovery. Access to mobility options is crucial to our essential workforce and to our rebounding economically. Without mobility options, there will be increased single-car trips and traffic congestion choking off our economic recovery.

Giving up on our goals to reduce gridlock would harm our economy, our safety, and our environment. As we recover our economy, we need Council to fulfill its commitment to public safety with Vision Zero. We cannot abandon our City's adopted goals even when facing catastrophic budget pressures. We must remain vigilant and committed to the ethos of Santa

Monica, maintain staff capacity, and put into action creative solutions to curb unsafe behavior and to reinvest in programs vital in our path to economic recovery.

Santa Monica competes with other cities for regional, state and federal transportation dollars. Post crisis stimulus funds are anticipated for infrastructure. Applications will be increasingly competitive in the post crisis arena: staff must have capacity to be ready to capture funding opportunities. Cities that are prepared and well-positioned to receive these funds will, without doubt, perform better in economic recovery. Being ready means having shovel ready projects with continued investment in multi-modal street projects. Being ready means being competitive for securing these funds.

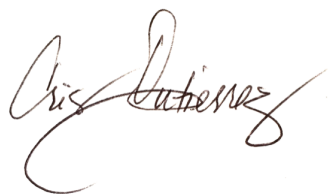
How we manage our streets - or ignore them - will move us either toward environmental justice, economic recovery and climate resiliency or away from those vital goals. A sophisticated multi-modal system of people, goods and services moving throughout the city contributes to growing a healthy economy while reducing the 64% of Santa Monica's GHG emitted by fossil-fuel travel. We are at a momentous time to shift old habits and capitalize on previous fiscal, sustainability and climate investments and the momentum of productive programs underway. Programs that contribute to our economic resilience are integral to improving safety, community wellbeing, and meeting our local and state climate commitments. A community that is vibrant, safe and supporting environmental sustainability is one with a strong economic recovery.

Commitment to supporting equitable access is essential to Santa Monica's recovery. Santa Monica's staff manages critical transportation infrastructure and services as essential government functions, which directly contribute capacity to healthy economic growth. Transportation infrastructure and planning services combined with multi-modal mobility are the very foundation of a thriving, resilient economy based on public safety, equity, and sustainability.

Let's be strategic and lean on staff expertise for thoughtful "restructuring" that reduces costs and bureaucracy while retaining essential capacity that builds confidently on the foundation and programs that our public roadways and investments afford us as they advance us to a vibrant and full recovery.

* Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-33-20 classifies transportation infrastructure and services as essential government functions; State Public Health Officer further designation clarifies Transportation Services "Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers". The Department of Homeland Security lists 16 Critical Infrastructure Sectors: one of which is the Transportation Systems Sector. Keeping our streets safe and our recovery secure, at the time when the COVID-19 emergency is converging with the climate crisis, means that tough and thoughtful decision-making must adhere to our City's and state's climate priorities and strategies. The attached California Legislature letter to the state's "Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery" sets out that urgency clearly.

Sincerely



Cynthia Rose and Cris Gutierrez
Co-Chairs, on behalf of
The Santa Monica Safe Streets Alliance