



March 16, 2023

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President *Pro Tempore*

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Senate Budget Committee Chair

The Honorable Phil Ting
Assembly Budget Committee Chair

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 5

The Honorable Steve Bennett
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3

Submitted via Email

Re: Proposed 2023-24 Budget Request for the Active Transportation Program and Complete Streets Infrastructure

Dear *Pro Tempore* Atkins, Speaker Rendon, Chair Skinner, Chair Ting, Chair Durazo, and Chair Bennett:

As you begin budget negotiations this year, we request your support for a clear commitment to setting funding levels for the Active Transportation Program (ATP) and Complete Streets¹ infrastructure sufficient to achieve California's climate, equity, safety, and mobility goals. The Governor's proposed budget for FY 2023-24 submits \$200 million in disproportionate reductions to the ATP² that the legislature approved last year; we look forward to engaging with your budget subcommittees to ensure that this year's final budget bill restores this planned funding. Moreover, if California is serious about aligning our climate goals with our transportation funding, our state needs to increase its investment in chronically underfunded active transportation and micromobility infrastructure on our State Transportation Network (STN) and divert existing highway capacity expansion funding to ensure our infrastructure spending encompasses and encourages all modes of clean transportation. Therefore, we also request the legislature allocate significant additional appropriations dedicated specifically to Complete Streets infrastructure improvements.

Active Transportation is Consistently Underfunded Despite Being a Significant State Priority as a Clean Mobility Option

Only three percent of our state's transportation dollars are going to the ATP, which does not align with the significant role active transportation plays in the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) as a clean mobility option. California's transportation agencies and our state's decision makers have developed specific strategies to solve our climate and mobility problems, but administrative policies³ are ineffective if they do not align with budget priorities. Despite increasing administrative focus on the need to incorporate active transportation, including an updated Caltrans Complete Streets policy⁴, it is not supported by consistent or significant funding to make the stated priorities a reality. Active transportation needs a more permanent, stable, and proportionate appropriation, and not only from a General Fund surplus which is susceptible to economic vagaries, as we are experiencing with this year's budget.

Existing Freeway Expansion Funding is Available for our Active Transportation Needs

We understand that the state budget is expected to be in a deficit, perhaps for years to come. However, adequately funding active transportation and other forms of micromobility does not require new revenue sources.⁵ Instead, we request that the legislature reallocate existing funds from freeway capacity

¹ Caltrans defines Complete Streets as "a transportation facility that is planned, designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to provide comfortable and convenient mobility, and improve accessibility and connectivity to essential community destinations for all users, regardless of whether they are traveling as pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, or drivers. Complete streets are especially attuned to the needs of people walking, using assistive mobility devices, rolling, biking, and riding transit."

² The ATP is overburdened with proposed disproportionate reductions compared to other transportation cuts being suggested. Some clean transportation investments are seeing relatively small reductions, for example the state's well-funded \$9 billion Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) programs, which the LAO describes as an "unusually large state-level investment". Disproportionate active transportation cuts clearly signal deprioritization and places an even heavier burden (adding to its \$1.5 billion backlog of the ATP) on a very limited appropriation of funds.

³ In addition to CAPTI, the 2022 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update is notable in centering increased active transportation as a key climate strategy.

⁴ Caltrans developed DP-37 which states that "all transportation projects funded or overseen by Caltrans will provide comfortable, convenient, and connected complete streets facilities for people walking, biking, and taking transit or passenger rail unless an exception is documented and approved."

⁵ Despite the overall deficit, the Governor has proposed to increase the state transportation budget in the coming fiscal year, including a more than \$5 billion increase for Caltrans with an infusion of over \$500 million in new General Fund dollars. Arguably, this new infusion of funds can be leveraged for active transportation as well.

expansion projects⁶ that actively work against our climate and safety goals. Research summarized by California's Strategic Growth Council is clear⁷: adding new freeway capacity *increases* traffic and congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, toxic air pollutants, community displacement and marginalization, traffic fatalities, vehicle miles traveled, maintenance costs, etc. That works against long-standing legislative priorities and brings us further from, not closer to, meeting our climate, equity and safety goals. Shifting transportation funds away from state programs that have historically funded highway capacity projects to active transportation and micromobility projects serves California's priorities. We need the legislature to prioritize funding for projects that cut greenhouse gas emissions, connect communities, and support healthy places and deprioritize projects that bake in higher emissions for decades to come.

The State Highway Account (SHA) is a Flexible Funding Source that Needs to Align with Our Climate and Mobility Goals

We request funds be reallocated from the State Highway Account (SHA)⁸ to meet our active transportation needs and goals.⁹ The Legislative Analyst's Office recently made it clear that the legislature has flexibility to shift funds from the SHA to support other transportation purposes, specifically clean transportation options.¹⁰ The SHA has already been the major sustainable source of funding for the ATP since its inception in 2013. The SHA should fully restore the planned \$200 million reduction, and furthermore provide additional ongoing and consistent funds to the ATP. In the last decade the state's transportation priorities have clearly shifted but without being fully supported by the necessary budget appropriations from our transportation funds. With the infusion of recent federal funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the SHA is larger than it has ever been, creating an even greater opportunity to align it with the state's priorities by fully funding the ATP with enough money to award all high-scoring projects.

Invest in Complete Streets Infrastructure and Divest from Harmful Freeway Expansions

But we must do more than just a single funding program for active transportation.¹¹ We request a new multi-year funding commitment from the SHA and other transportation funding sources to specifically fund Complete Streets infrastructure on our State Transportation Network (STN). Complete Streets have become a key policy directive for our state's transportation leaders meeting climate and mobility goals¹²,

⁶ We recommend the legislature pay particular attention to projects in the longstanding funding pipeline ("legacy projects") that undermine some of the state's current goals and commitments.

⁷ The AB 285 Assessment Report published in 2022 stated unequivocally: "There is a gap between the vision for a more climate friendly and equitable transportation system and actions and infrastructure spending decisions."

⁸ Note: We support using diverted SHA funds for public transit and other zero-emission infrastructure as well, which were also proposed for reductions in the 2023-24 Budget by the Governor.

⁹ Fortunately, the new Caltrans Active Transportation (CAT) Plans have already identified our most significant needs that require funding. See: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/division-of-transportation-planning/active-transportation-and-complete-streets/caltrans-active-transportation-plans/>

¹⁰ In its analysis, "Proposed Budget Solutions in Transportation Programs" for the 2023-24 budget, the LAO described the 'trade-off' of shifting funds out of the SHA as reducing funds for maintenance and rehabilitation. It is notable, however, that the analysis does not address highway capacity expansion from the SHA as being an important value or priority being impacted if funds are shifted.

¹¹ We cannot rely solely on the ATP to meet all of our active transportation needs and goals. The program has proved indispensable but its competition-based structure is inherently biased and insufficient in meeting needs. The state should do more to prioritize need-based state funds on its own network rather than having local agencies (many with a plethora of funds from local sources) unfairly compete for a small amount of state funds.

¹² Complete Streets have been emphasized as a particular investment strategy in CAPTI, California Transportation Plan 2050, Executive Orders N-19-19 and N-79-20, and Caltrans' DP-37 stated above.

but there is no dedicated funding to support such infrastructure improvements.¹³ We understand that California’s SHA has historically overfunded our freeway system — now leaving us saddled with significant “fix-it-first” costs — however the legislature has made it clear it is now time to move away from the broken, outdated paradigm of highway expansion. This budget cycle presents an opportunity for state leaders to be future-oriented and send a clear signal that we need to invest more to encourage mode shift by prioritizing funding for Complete Streets infrastructure.

Californians demand meaningful action on climate change. A shift from old highway expansions to new Complete Streets is long overdue as part of that action. Adequate funding will ensure active transportation and micromobility is not just a viable option, but an attractive one for Californians to get to work, school, health care, shopping, dining, entertainment, and more. We need to deliver our promise to reduce climate pollution from our transportation sector by prioritizing and encouraging all clean modes of transportation.

We know that you share these goals and look forward to working with you to ensure that the budget includes sufficient funding to build the community-enhancing, climate-friendly, active transportation and Complete Streets corridors California desperately needs and that our future transportation system requires. Please contact Jared Sanchez, CalBike Policy Director, at jared@calbike.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jared Sanchez, Policy Director
CalBike

Miha Babalai, Executive Director
California Walks

Jonathan Matz, CA Senior Policy Manager
Safe Routes Partnership

Axel Santana, Associate
PolicyLink

Zack Deutsch-Gross, Policy Director
TransForm

David Diaz, Executive Director
Active San Gabriel Valley

Colin Bogart, Steering Committee
Pasadena Complete Streets Coalition

Olivia Seideman, Climate Policy Coordinator
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability

Tarrell Kullaway, Executive Director
Marin County Bicycle Coalition

Christy Zamani, Executive Director
Day One

Michael Schneider, Founder
Streets For All

Anne Wallach Thomas, Executive Director
Shasta Living Streets

Will Rhatigan, Advocacy Director
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition

Sofia Rafikova, Policy Advocate
Coalition for Clean Air

¹³ Whereas Zero-Emission Vehicle infrastructure has received historic amounts of dedicated state funding, aligning with administrative and legislative directives. We recommend the legislature strongly consider balancing all of our clean mobility investments with our directives appropriately.

Robert Prinz, Advocacy Director Bike East Bay	Kevin Hamilton, Co-Executive Director Central California Asthma Collaborative
Eris Weaver, Executive Director Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition	Marven Norman, Policy Coordinator Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice
Kara Vernor, Executive Director Napa County Bicycle Coalition	Paul F. Steinberg, Professor Claremont Streets for People
Heather Deutsch MOVE, Santa Barbara County	Steve Birdlebough, Chair Sonoma County Transportation & Land Use Coalition
Eli Lipmen, Executive Director Move LA	Colin K. Hughes, Senior Policy Manager Lyft
Dave Weiskopf, Senior Policy Analyst NextGen California	Corinna Contreras, Transportation Policy Advocate Climate Action Campaign
Adina Levin, Advocacy Director Seamless Bay Area	Nailah Pope-Harden, Executive Director ClimatePlan
Laura Tolkoff, Trans. Policy Director SPUR	Laura R. Cohen, Director, Western Region Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Linda Rudolph, Director Center for Climate Change and Health	Zak Accuardi, Senior Transportation Advocate NRDC

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
 The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, Senate Transportation Committee Chair
 The Honorable Laura Friedman, Assembly Transportation Committee Chair
 Toks Omishakin, Secretary, California State Transportation Agency
 Tony Tavares, Director, California Department of Transportation
 Members, Senate Subcommittee No. 5
 Members, Assembly Subcommittee No. 3