



# MIKE BONIN

City of Los Angeles  
Councilmember, Eleventh District

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Paul Krekorian, Chair  
Budget & Finance Committee  
Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

## **RE: Proposed FY23 Department of Transportation Budget**

Dear Chair Krekorian and Honorable Committee Members,

As chair of the Transportation Committee, I am writing to draw your attention to serious shortcomings in the proposed budget for Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT). The proposed budget for the Department is surprisingly regressive, falling short on this Council's years-long effort to protect core services and implement a strong climate, equity and technology agenda.

In the area of transportation and mobility, this budget short-changes and even reverses key investments. The City Council has embraced and built on Mayoral directives on Vision Zero (ED #10), the Green New Deal (ED #25), and Racial Equity (ED #27), and yet this budget does not fund key LADOT positions necessary to implement these initiatives. At a pivotal moment for the safety, sustainability, and equity of our streets, this budget perpetuates the status quo.

Additionally, this proposed budget is a throwback to the time when the city failed to coordinate street resurfacing efforts between StreetsLA and LADOT. Just a few years ago, it was common practice for streets to be resurfaced and then left dark, without lane markings, crosswalks, or stop lines, for weeks and even months at a time. This budget would restore that dynamic. It funds StreetsLA at historic levels, but proposes a net decrease in LADOT's budget.

I urge your committee to fund the following key priorities necessary to implement the City Council's priorities with respect to LADOT's budget:

### **1. Vision Zero and Core Services: Restore SIP Positions**

This budget would reduce Vision Zero investments from last year's high of \$65.6 million to just \$38.5 million while traffic fatalities are reaching all-time highs. Now is not the time to reduce our

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investments in basic infrastructure like traffic signals and crosswalks, district engineering, and project delivery. Like other departments, LADOT was heavily impacted by the Separation Incentive Program (SIP), which prompted the departure of knowledgeable senior staff and did not allow those positions to be backfilled with new leaders. Many of these SIP positions are in the Department's core neighborhood services, such as signals, field crews, and district engineering. Your committee should look closely at the 34 SIP positions that have not been restored and prioritize which of them have the biggest impact on safety and constituent services.

## **2. Green New Deal: Fund Active Transportation and Complete Streets**

Shortly after the Mayor issued his Green New Deal directive, the City Council instructed LADOT to report back with the resources needed to meet our climate commitments (CF#20-0187). LADOT reported that chronic understaffing in active transportation is jeopardizing our ability to deliver Green New Deal projects. The 18 staff positions outlined in this LADOT report are necessary to meet existing project delivery commitments as well as develop new projects that can attract state and federal grant funding, such as from the new bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Additionally, the Bureau of Engineering submitted a request for funding to complete design of three phase II corridors in the Complete Streets Program. As you know, the Complete Streets Program is the City's primary arterial reconstruction program and is distinct from the Failed Streets Program that focuses on local residential streets. Complete Streets projects require significant advance planning and coordination because they implement safety, mobility, tree canopy, and water conservation goals along with street reconstruction. Further delay on development of this next phase of projects will leave the program with a gap in its work program and lose the hard-won momentum that has produced signature projects like Reseda and Avalon Blvds.

## **3. Technology: Hire a Chief Technology Officer**

Over the past decade, Los Angeles has been a participant in a number of new private sector mobility ventures—willingly or not. LADOT has developed a comprehensive action plan for addressing emerging transportation technology, but lacks the in-house expertise and resources to institutionalize their technology strategy. As the prospect of autonomous vehicles, drones, and other new technologies becomes more real, it is absolutely critical that the City be prepared to step in on behalf of the public interest with proactive strategies and regulation. LADOT's request for one executive-level technology position is a small but critical investment in preparedness for future technology.

## **4. Racial Equity: Invest in Universal Basic Mobility**

In response to the protests in the summer of 2020, Mayor Garcetti issued a directive to all departments to develop Racial Equity Action Plans as a small but meaningful step toward addressing the significant disparities that exist in our city government and our society. LADOT's

plan is responsive to a long documented history of discriminatory planning in the transportation sector, in which low-income communities of color suffer the burdens of transportation infrastructure while often not being able to access the opportunities that infrastructure is supposed to provide. The Department's Universal Basic Mobility (UBM) work provides access to opportunity for neighborhoods that lack access to existing transportation services. LADOT submitted a request for \$1 million to expand UBM to an additional disadvantaged neighborhood and one staff position to coordinate racial and gender equity programs across the department.

While there are many competing priorities for budget resources, underinvesting in climate, equity, and technology would leave the City woefully unprepared to tackle our future challenges and unable to meet our aggressive sustainability goals. These are critical priorities for the City Council and it may be appropriate to identify savings that can be directed toward them. I recommend that you ask LADOT to report back with programs where there may not be the capacity to spend all the funds currently allocated to them due to hiring or other constraints. These savings may be able to partially offset the above priorities.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. I look forward to working with you to achieve a just, balanced, and forward-thinking budget for the City of Los Angeles.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Bonin".

**MIKE BONIN**

*Councilmember, 11<sup>th</sup> District*