



PLANNING AND CONSERVATION LEAGUE



PCL INSIDER: NEWS FROM THE CAPITAL

Tackling the Affordable Housing Crisis with our Transportation Dollars

There are multiple proposals in the Capitol this year that posit varying approaches to the concept of conditioning a jurisdiction's allotment of state transportation funding to their housing production performance. These proposals include [AB 847](#) (Grayson), [AB 1568](#) (McCarty, Wiener) as well as a draft budget proposal from Governor Newsom.

PCL applauds the Governor and legislature for this commitment to address our State's housing crisis and strongly supports the concept of better aligning our transportation investments with our housing goals. **However, we believe that our housing goals should not be defined by production numbers alone and that it is imperative that the State's housing goals are aligned with California's goals for climate, health, and equity as well.**

Achieving all of these goals holistically in addressing our housing shortage demands consideration of where our housing is and who it will serve, not solely the sheer number of units a jurisdiction can produce.

PCL is actively working with cross-interest partners around the State with an aim to inform these proposals moving forward, but here are some basic principles that have emerged from these discussions thus far:

Affordability and preservation: California's housing crisis is most acute for low and very-low income households, and priority should be given to accommodating the needs of these families first. The production of more housing of any type will not alone ensure affordability for most of California's residents. The metrics for receiving conditioned transportation dollars should be for the planning and production of inclusionary housing as well as the *preservation* of existing affordable housing and the protection of tenants from displacement from these existing communities.

Infill: We are in a housing affordability crisis *and* a climate crisis. In both the [2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update](#) and the [2018 Progress Report](#) on Sustainable Communities Strategies, the California Air Resources Board has found that to meet our 2030 and 2050 climate goals we need to significantly reduce Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) through more efficient land use and increased transportation options. More efficient land use reduces GHG emissions, and also preserves natural resources, improves public health, and can offer more equitable access to transportation options, essential services, jobs, and opportunity.

Displacement: Targeted investment towards the infill that is needed to meet our climate goals inevitably brings gentrification and displacement pressures on low-income residents in these existing communities. Thus, this needed infill investment *must* be coupled with inclusionary and anti-displacement protections to guard against the perpetuation of historical patterns of segregation and to ensure the vulnerable residents of these communities equitably reap the benefits of these investments. Metrics focused solely on market rate production or that fail to include anti-displacement components undermine our climate and equity goals by forcing low-wage workers into long commutes.

Rural communities: The needs and solutions to housing, densification and low-VMT land use development differ widely across California's varying geographies, and across urban, suburban, and rural community types. Special attention must be given to these differences to ensure chosen metrics for the conditioning of transportation funding are not unintentionally furthering the disadvantages of rural low-income unincorporated communities.

Another bill, [SB 526](#) (Allen), also originally proposed the conditioning of State transportation dollars to a jurisdiction's demonstrated progress towards regional GHG reduction targets. This approach would indeed address California's climate and housing challenges more holistically, yet this concept met early opposition from local agencies and the funding condition has now been removed from the bill. Local governments have expressed concern with all of these proposals, stating that they do not have control of the actual building of housing in their jurisdictions. But local agencies do have control over where and what kind of housing they zone for and approve, and how their existing housing is protected. That is precisely the point.

These are some of our most complex challenges, and PCL is committed to working with our state and local agencies to identify the appropriate accountability measures to better direct our transportation and land use investments in a way that meets all of California's goals, and that benefits all Californians.

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