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TAB 18

John F. Barna, Jr., Executive Director
California Transportation Commission
1120 N Street, MS-52
PO Box 942873
Sacramento, CA 94273-0001

VIA FACSIMILE to (916) 653-2134

RE: Urgent Request for Reconsideration of Recommendations for the March 11-12, 2009, Presentation of the Draft FY 2008-09 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program

Dear Mr. Barna:

We reviewed your memorandum to the California Transportation Commission (CTC), dated February 23, 2009, regarding the 2008-09 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) Program. As you can imagine, we are disappointed to find our proposed *Heat Re-Leaf for L.A.* project omitted from the funding list and also from the substitution list. We hope you will consider the explanation in this letter and reconsider recommending the project for funding.

Based on the comments included on the Excel spreadsheet we received ("*No specific RTF identified [various highways]. No specific EEM project defined [neighborhoods]. RTF CEQA docs missing; lack info on required mitigation. Reapply w/specific projects*"), it appears that there may have been some misunderstanding about our project. The individual scores (Armand: 60 and John: 65), also included in the spreadsheet, appear to indicate the reviewers felt the project had merit and would have been above the funding line had the project relationship to the Regional Transportation Facilities (RTF) been better understood.

Multiple Regional Transportation Facilities (RTFs) and Project Areas

Los Angeles is at the center of multiple highway construction projects funded by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the CTC. These RTFs are spread widely across the City of Los Angeles (City) and work in concert to increase the traffic volume. Caltrans District 7 noted in its December 19, 2008 letter to the EEM Program Coordinator that most of the projects mitigate for construction but are not able to mitigate for the permanent increase in traffic volume. The impacts to the adjacent neighborhoods are huge in terms of pollutant loads, increased heat from the traffic congestion, and the loss of pervious surfaces – all of which contribute to the urban heat island effect in Los Angeles.

This project will plant 1,200 additional trees throughout nine RTF areas. Each tree requires a resident or organization to agree to water and provide short-term care during the establishment period. So although the application does not provide exact addresses within a project area, our



application's Exhibit G identifies specific targeted neighborhoods that we will approach after funding is secured. One of the greatest frustrations to the community, beyond the original construction project, is the long wait time between when we ask for their commitment to care for a tree and the time when the tree is planted. We have learned that we must have the funding secured before we ask them to commit themselves to the tree adoption.

Possible Missing Link in Communication Regarding RTFs

The EEM application process requires applicants to rely on the lead agency for the RTFs to prepare a letter to the EEMP Coordinator describing the RTFs and provide supporting CEQA documentation. We were copied on a letter dated December 19, 2008, from District 7 to the EEMP Coordinator and we were under the impression that District 7 staff met their obligation to forward all necessary information, including descriptions of CEQA documentation. However, based on the comments in the spreadsheet from the application review committee, we are concerned that there may have been a gap in communication. We welcome any opportunity to help clarify this possible gap.

The draft recommendations do not propose any funding for projects within the City and only three projects within the surrounding County of Los Angeles. We are concerned that the Los Angeles area may have been negatively impacted by a local staffing shortage or other difficulties at Caltrans.

Duty to Equitably Distribute Projects

The draft recommendations to the CTC do not yet achieve the 60% allocation of EEM funds to southern counties.

Moreover, as California's most populous city it follows that groups in Los Angeles would receive a corresponding proportion of EEM funds to mitigate conditions caused by extensive transportation facility construction. With more than 10 million people living in Los Angeles County, the City is not only the region's transportation hub, but we are also the most congested and suffer among the worst vehicular emission-related air pollution in the State of California.

We respectfully disagree that our project should be grouped with those labeled "Ineligible or Insufficient". The City has successfully used the approach of addressing multiple RTFs for several EEM funded projects in previous cycles and our projects have always been completed on time and within budget. Although we continue to seek grant funds to offset transportation impacts, Los Angeles residents continue to endure the pressures from highway projects in their communities.

For the reasons stated above, please reconsider recommending the *Heat Re-Leaf for L.A.* project for funding during the 2008-09 EEM Program at the CTC meeting scheduled for March 11-12, 2009. Please contact me at 213.978.0858 or Melinda.Bartlett@lacity.org if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Melinda Bartlett, Director
Adaptation and Vulnerability Assessment Programs

CC: John Haynes, Caltrans
Brenda Herron, Caltrans