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Michael Cano, Deputy Executive Officer  
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Countywide Planning & Development  
Los Angeles Metro  
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Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Via email: [canom@metro.net](mailto:canom@metro.net)

**Re: I-710 Task Force- Zero-Emissions Truck Program Priorities- Working Group Meeting # 8**

Dear Mr. Cano:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and members of the Coalition for Environmental Health & Justice (“CEHAJ”), this letter provides comments in response to the framework and principles as well as the draft Program Strategies and Scope of Work presented at the Zero-Emissions Truck Program (ZETP) working group meeting #8. We appreciate the opportunity to provide further feedback on the various items discussed. While the Pre-Investment Plan Opportunity (PIPO) was also discussed at this meeting, because the PIPO was raised at multiple working groups and is slated for further discussion at the Task Force, we will focus on those proposals in a separate letter.

**The ZETP Working Group Decision-Making Process should adhere to the Task Force Charter and Metro’s Equity Principles**

As a preliminary matter, we were surprised to hear that the ZETP Working Group’s recommendations would not come up for a vote because it was set up as a “separate process.” This is inconsistent with our understanding of the origin and purpose of working groups that were established as part of the Task Force process. The ZETP is one of four working groups that, along with the Community Leadership Committee (CLC), has become a part of vetting and consensus building for recommendations that will eventually go to the Metro Board as part of the re-envisioning of the I-710 South Corridor.

If Metro is truly committed to the community engagement and equity principles touted as fundamental to the Task Force process, it is essential to have those principles honored throughout each phase of the project. In this instance, the Charter requires that the ZETP Working Group submit the draft Scope of Work to the CLC and the Task Force for consideration. The Charter states that working groups **must** submit any proposal for consideration to the CLC, and that the CLC has the right to send the proposal back to the working group for refinement or changes if it does not meet community goals and objectives.

Specifically, Step 4 of the Charter states that after Working Groups have prepared a proposal for consideration by the Task Force and Community Leadership Committee (CLC), the CLC will meet to

review, discuss, and advise on the proposal for the Task Force. (See I-710 South Corridor Task Force Charter, Pg. 10). In Step 5 of the Charter, the CLC is tasked with evaluating the recommendations from working groups. “If the CLC agrees with the recommendations, the CLC will share recommendations with the Task Force. If there are pending concerns, the issue will go back to the Working Group to re-evaluate the recommendation and address concerns.” (Charter, Pg. 11).

Therefore, asking the ZETP Working Group to generate ideas without the opportunity to vote on a final set of proposals and instead sending them directly to the Metro Board, as suggested at the Working Group Meeting #8, is inconsistent with the Charter and the principles that have informed Task Force participation thus far. In fact, the stated purpose of Working Groups is to “Research, analyze, and discuss specific issues and develop proposals and recommendations for consideration by the CLC and 710 Task Force.” (Charter, pg.6). Therefore, under the Charter, all working groups serve the function of developing proposals and recommendations for the CLC and the Task Force to consider and vote on.

To maintain trust in this process, Metro must recommit to procedural equity. The framework outlined in the Charter requires that Metro give community representatives meaningful opportunities to weigh in on proposals that will have significant impacts on their communities, build consensus across diverse stakeholders, and take a vote before committing to a proposal. It is vitally important that the ZETP be developed with community input from the beginning. This is a project that has the potential to lock in investments and foster development that will transform the urban landscape and impact the lives of residents.

Metro already has a methodology to explore whether it’s meeting its own equity commitments: its Equity Planning & Evaluation Tool. However, there has been no indication to date that the Equity Tool has been applied to the ZETP specifically. We call on Metro to take the time to apply the Tool to the ZETP and, in particular, explore whether it is adequately engaging the community<sup>1</sup>, how it is planning for equitable outcomes<sup>2</sup> and how it will hold itself accountable to corridor residents in the implementation of the ZETP<sup>3</sup>. Any application of this Tool should be carried out collaboratively with the CLC and the Equity Working Group.

We hope that Metro does not repeat the mistakes of past iterations of I-710 South planning when community members and interested groups, including CEHAJ, were asked to weigh in on proposals as part of the Technical Advisory and Project Committees, only to be ignored in the end. This caused real harm that Metro must still address and heal. Nothing will erode community trust faster than changing

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<sup>1</sup> e.g., “How did you provide the information and tools [community members] needed to fully participate as a partner?”; “What are the potential unintended impacts or consequences of the proposed action?”

<sup>2</sup> e.g., “How will your proposed action address root causes to decrease racial/ethnic, income, and/or other inequities, increase positive outcomes, and reduce negative impacts on historically marginalized communities?”

<sup>3</sup> e.g., “What is your plan to report back to the community with updates from ongoing project evaluation and findings?”; “Prepare and attach a summary of your EPET analysis. Explain who the action might impact, noting specific historically marginalized communities or others facing disparities in access to opportunities, and how the action is designed to 1) enhance positive impacts and/or 2) reduce negative impacts for them. Note any mitigations for negative impacts. Use this summary in any associated board report, box, or other document explaining this decision.”

the rules for consensus building and approval midstream— just as important key decisions are being made.

### **Residents Must Have a Say When It Comes to Building Zero Emissions Infrastructure in Corridor Communities**

Principle 1 begins with the premise that the \$50 million authorized by the LA Metro Board will be leveraged by pursuing additional discretionary regional, state, and federal funding to reach a target of \$200 million. It's worth noting that the project team, and not the Task Force, has proposed that the split for this seed money should be a minimum of \$45 million, serving to leverage investment for infrastructure, while \$5 million will be earmarked for targeted grant assistance to help secure subsidies to support truck turnover for smaller operators.

We agree that Metro has an opportunity to catalyze the transition to Zero Emissions by supporting ZE infrastructure along the corridor. Most people impacted by the I-710 want to see a shift to clean, zero-emissions technology that will result in cleaner air, healthier corridor communities, reduced emissions, and greater job opportunities. Yet the rush to build infrastructure without robust community involvement runs the risk of repeating past planning mistakes.

CEHAJ has consistently demanded that no project sponsored or supported through this project lead to the displacement of residents or small businesses. These households and businesses have borne the brunt of freight pollution, segregation, traffic, and disparate health outcomes from having a freeway run through their community. They should be one of the first groups consulted regarding the siting of infrastructure, and any project design and implementation should reflect plans to address community needs and concerns.

Therefore, we ask Metro for a firm commitment to ensure that impacted residents have a seat at the table when it comes to planning infrastructure in or near their communities. One way to do this is to refine the language in Principle 2 around community engagement with a clear and unequivocal statement that Metro will not merely engage and collaborate with the communities directly impacted by the selected sites, but actually offer them decision-making power over siting decisions. We further propose that rather than simply stating that Metro will develop a methodology and evaluation criteria for ZE charging/fueling site selection, it commits to having representatives living in corridor communities play a role in co-designing the infrastructure site plan as part of Task 1.3. Similarly, impacted residents should have a say regarding the types of infrastructure being deployed, not just the location of these facilities. Currently, Task 1.3 vaguely references criteria for “ZE Charging/fueling site selection” without delineating what type of “fueling” will be considered. Community residents should be fully informed and invited to the decision-making process when it comes to identifying the types of “fueling” considered— whether it involves hydrogen or some other fuel being piped, shipped, or stored in their neighborhoods.

### **Metro Must Firmly Commit to Community Benefits**

We support the notion stated in Principle 2 that the ZE Truck Program should be intended to reflect and address the needs of local communities. We agree that removing diesel trucks and deploying ZE heavy-duty truck technology with supporting infrastructure aided by the ZE Truck Program is

a vital step toward reducing the harmful emissions that have long plagued the corridor communities.

Yet, we also need Metro to commit unequivocally to fully funding community benefits that flow from the ZE Truck Program in addition to the Task Force-developed investment plan. As noted in Metro's presentation, communities along the I-710 corridor continue to bear the burden of freight pollution disproportionately. Corridor communities within Metro's study area are predominantly comprised of lower-income households and communities of color. It is, therefore, essential that the ZETP investment plan aligns with the Task Force-approved Equity Guiding Principle calling for:

“A Commitment to: (1) strive to rectify past harms; (2) provide fair and just access to opportunities; and (3) eliminate disparities in project processes, outcomes, and community results.”

Every aspect of the ZE Truck Program developed through the working group should reflect this commitment. The ZE Truck Program's Principle 3 holds that the plan will provide and protect community benefits at the outset and throughout all phases of the project by creating economic opportunities through job training and workforce development associated with ZE infrastructure development. Yet when asked at Working Group Meeting #8 about how these programs would be funded, the response given by Metro was unclear—suggesting that perhaps funding to support these efforts might not be secured at the outset or consistent throughout all aspects of the Program.

The funding of community benefits is vital to the ZE Truck Program and should be prioritized as Metro allocates its limited funding. We, therefore, ask that similar to Task 4—which calls for the development of a full-funding strategy to realize the ZE drayage deployment—Metro also commit to fully funding initiatives that will bring community benefits to impacted residents, whether in the form of job training and hiring opportunities, mitigation measures such as air filtration and monitoring, as well as other initiatives vital to community protection.

Similarly, we ask that Metro commit to developing metrics to measure and track whether Metro is providing community benefits and incorporate this commitment into Task 5. Metro should track health, local hire, and water quality, among other metrics, to understand whether the protections afforded to residents through these investments actually pan out and lead to meaningful improvements in the lives of corridor residents. In addition, Metro should track its efforts to do outreach to corridor communities and develop an evaluation tool to determine whether Metro-sponsored community benefits programs have incorporated community input in their design and implementation. These elements would add greater weight and meaning to Principle 2 concerning Community Engagement, which calls for the ZETP Working Group, the CLC, the Equity Working Group, and the Task Force, to integrate community benefits into every aspect of planning, development, and implementation of the ZE Truck Program.

## **Coordination with potential funding partners should not come at the expense of agreed-upon equity and sustainability principles**

Principle 4 of the ZE Truck Program calls for Metro to “coordinate with funding partners, regional agencies, and local communities to identify a set of projects that will advance the deployment of ZE Class 8 truck technology within the I-710 South Corridor Study area...” The proposed principle further states that ZE Truck Working Group “will develop the ZE Truck Program to be aligned with and able to secure funding from discretionary program opportunities at the regional, state, and federal level.”

While we agree that the deployment of ZE truck technology and infrastructure is the ultimate goal of this particular working group, efforts to secure funding should not come at the expense of principles already agreed upon through the CLC and Taskforce process. As stated earlier, these principles include pursuing greater equity by seeking projects that can repair past harms and promote greater sustainability. Ultimately, the funding pursued through the ZE Truck Working Group should, at a minimum, align with these fundamental core values that the Task Force has already agreed to. Metro’s commitment to equity should be reflected in greater weight being given to the community’s needs and concerns to repair past harms rather than allowing highly-resourced industry groups to drive the direction of investment plans.

Moreover, Principle 4 should also include a clearer statement concerning the need to coordinate with impacted corridor community residents to ensure that programs funded through the ZETP align with Metro’s equity principles. This statement should affirm Metro’s commitment to bringing impacted residents to the decision-making process as co-designers of specific investment and deployment plans, as stated above. So while there may be 50 stakeholder organizations involved in developing the ZETP, the needs of locally impacted communities must be elevated in this process to ensure that any investment plan does not perpetuate past harms or create obstacles to addressing community needs.

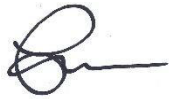
It’s worth noting that the Charter provides a process through which specific working groups are called upon to “clarify issues, surface questions and concerns, and develop proposals that align with the Task Force values.” (Charter, p. 10). At the last ZETP Working Group meeting, we failed to hold a specific discussion on how the guiding principles of equity and sustainability are furthered by the proposed principles and scope of work. This is yet another reason why the proposals being developed at the ZETP Working Group must be vetted through the CLC and the Task Force before being presented Metro Board as being endorsed by participants.

To that end, Metro must commit to sharing and receiving meaningful feedback on the proposals for the ZE Truck Program strategies from the CLC. The type of engagement required for such feedback demands a stronger effort to share information with the CLC early and often to ensure that members have a firm understanding of the proposals before being asked to offer their assessment and approval. CLC education will be vital for meaningful engagement, especially with some of the more technical aspects of the re-envisioned 710—like the ZE Truck Program. There have been reports, for example, of CLC members feeling like they have not received enough information about investment proposals and presentations from Metro staff moving too quickly for CLC members to have an understanding that would allow them to form questions and have a

meaningful discussion. In those instances when the CLC members have asked questions of some of the more technical aspects of the pre-investment plan opportunities, they have gone unanswered with no assurances of follow-up by Metro staff. This lack of support offered to the CLC to meaningfully consider proposals circumvents the CLC's role in the Charter's decision-making process. Metro has an opportunity to correct this by ensuring that the CLC is well informed and has enough time to analyze and understand the proposals before endorsing or rejecting a particular path on corridor-related investments that affect their communities.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and look forward to our continued discussion at the next working group and Task Force meetings.

Sincerely,



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