



May 21, 2020

Pasadena Planning Commission
175 N. Garfield Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91101
c/o Jennifer Paige
jpaige@cityofpasadena.net

RE: Proposed St. John Vehicle Capacity Project - CIP Inclusion and Consistency with the General Plan

Dear Members of the Pasadena Planning Commission,

As local students concerned about the safety, health, well-being, and future of our fellow Sequoyah School students and Pasadena, we are writing to submit our opposition to the proposed St. John Capacity Improvement project that you will formally consider adding to the City's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list at an upcoming meeting.

The proposed project is not consistent with the Guiding Principles of the City's 2014 adopted General Plan. Specifically, the project fails to meet the standards outlined in following principles (via www.ourpasadena.org):

Pasadena Guiding Principle: Make car-free circulation possible. - *Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without cars.*

- The intersection of California Blvd and Pasadena Ave already has documented safety issues involving people walking and driving. The proposed addition of dual/double right turn lanes would further compromise the safety of the marked crosswalk to local children, families, and residents who rely on it to access nearby schools and businesses. **Intersections with dual/double lanes have more potential conflict points between people driving vehicles and walking. As a result, intersections with these capacity "improvements" have more crashes involving pedestrians.** Given the frequency that the existing crosswalks are used by students and families of Sequoyah School, this is of particular concern. **Numerous Sequoyah School parents and teachers have been injured in car accidents in and around the intersection,**



and we have witnessed countless close-calls with fellow students, parents, and teachers crossing the street. Sequoyah School's junior high students, for example, cross Pasadena Ave for lunch every week, and teachers have to guard them from cars turning right from California Blvd from the existing right turn lane. Adding a second right turn lane will decrease the already limited visibility of students crossing the street and put students in more danger than they are already in.

- According to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, traffic crashes remain the number one cause of premature death for children aged 5-14, and number two cause for children 1-4, young adults 15-24, and adults 25-44. Rather than helping make “car-free circulation” possible, the proposed project will make it even harder and more dangerous for anyone not in a car to navigate this dangerous crossing.

Pasadena Guiding Principle: Balance all areas of sustainability. - Pasadena will be socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable.

- On March 5, 2018 the Pasadena City Council unanimously adopted the [Pasadena Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#). According to the plan, the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in the City is the transportation sector, primarily vehicle trips. The proposed project is designed to move more vehicles through the intersections of California Boulevard and St. John and Pasadena Avenues. Yet this contradicts the key strategy in the City's adopted climate plan: create an interconnected transportation system and land use pattern that shifts travel from personal automobile to walking, biking, and public transit by improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure (page 34). The plan also specifically calls out the need to continue to “Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety” and “Decrease annual commuter miles traveled by single-occupancy vehicles” (page 37). **Funding projects that promote climate-damaging forms of transportation when the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in 2019 that the effects of climate catastrophe will be irreversible by 2030 not only goes against Pasadena's guiding principle of being socially and environmentally sustainable, it also robs our generation of a habitable future.** Pasadena has a moral imperative to ours and future generations to use this one-time funding on projects that promote sustainable transportation projects (such as student transit passes and complete streets initiatives), rather than on increasing vehicle capacity.



- Focusing so much one-time funding to encourage more vehicle throughput via a project that was proposed without meaningful public participation is particularly inappropriate in today's context of historic traffic lows. **More working professionals and institutions of all types are gaining valuable experience and expertise in telecommuting, a trend that could be supported and encouraged by the City as we navigate one crisis and begin to prepare for the climate crisis. Climate change has already negatively affected Pasadena and will continue to affect Pasadena if the City continues to prioritize vehicle trips.** In 2020, the City needs to shift the decades-long focus on moving more vehicles through intersections faster to moving people and reducing vehicle trips. Investing millions in funding eligible for more sustainable alternatives will only induce additional car trips, negating intended benefits to travel times and automobile congestion, the purported justification for this project. This outcome is increasingly well-documented and acknowledged in the academic world, including by the California Office of Planning and Research, which advised agencies in 2017 that “each percent increase in lane miles results in a 1.03 percent increase in vehicle travel”.

Pasadena Guiding Principle: Welcome community participation. - *Community participation will be a permanent part of achieving a greater city.*

- Despite clear and significant public safety and health impacts, the proposed project did not include meaningful community engagement or participation before it was submitted for funding with Metro, in contrast to other submitted projects that were already listed on the CIP. Key local stakeholders, including our school Sequoyah School, were not involved in the planning process, only notified after the fact. The project was only publicly discussed as one of dozens of potential projects shared at Pasadena Transportation Commission and later City Council meetings, where the only project details shared consisted of a brief summary of the project. Given the long-term health, safety, and environmental impacts of the proposed project, this level of outreach cannot be deemed sufficient to the City's community participation standards, let alone the cherished “Pasadena Way.” Engaging the community after a project has been almost fully vetted and planned is not acceptable.

Guiding Principle: Be a leader in the region. - *Pasadena will be a cultural, scientific, corporate, entertainment, and educational center for the region.*



- In contrast to other 710-corridor communities including the City and County of Los Angeles, Pasadena is currently moving forward with over \$250 million in projects that are singularly focused on enhancing vehicle capacity, to the detriment of public health, public safety, greenhouse gas emissions, and the region’s worst-in-nation air quality. This is inherently in conflict with the City’s purported commitment to being a scientific and educational leader in the region. The City’s clean air, public safety, public health, and climate action goals necessitate a swift transition to a more sustainable, multi-modal future with fewer vehicle trips.

Pasadena needs to set a higher standard for public works and mobility projects planned for the next decade. While we face the current crisis head on, we cannot lose sight of the very real, very serious climate crisis looming in the not-so-distant future that has the potential to be deadlier and harder to contain than the current public health crisis. **We urge the Planning Commission to direct City staff to renegotiate this project with Metro as neighboring communities like San Marino, Los Angeles, and Los Angeles County have successfully done.** These are Measure R taxpayer dollars that are eligible for projects to “*reduce automobile dependency, encourage multi-modal trips, improve traffic operations, and maximize the use of the latest available technologies to enhance performance of the existing transportation system to minimize impacts of the regional traffic on the communities along the SR-710 corridor*” (2017 Metro Board of Directors Motion redirecting use of 710-N funds).

Sincerely,

Ozzy Simpson

Hub Coordinator, Sunrise Sequoyah
Hub Coach, Sunrise L.A. Youth
12th grade, Sequoyah student since
kindergarten

Audrey Bluestone

Hub Coordinator, Sunrise Sequoyah
11th grade, Sequoyah student since 10th
grade

Julian Suh-Toma

Hub Coordinator, Sunrise Sequoyah
12th grade, Sequoyah student since 9th grade

Leon Gold

11th grade, Sequoyah student since
kindergarten

Greta Simpson

9th grade, Sequoyah student since
kindergarten



Charlotte Walker

12th grade, Sequoyah student since 9th grade

Harlow Lehman-Rhoads

9th grade, Sequoyah student

Selina Yang

12th grade, Sequoyah student since 9th grade

Unfunded, Alternative Measure Reallocation Projects Submitted by the City of Pasadena

- Pasadena Avenue/St. Johns Avenue Complete Streets - \$15,000,000
- Allen Avenue Complete Streets - \$1,500,000
- Hill Avenue Complete Streets - \$1,500,000
- Avenue 64 Complete Streets - \$2,000,000
- Rapid Bus Improvements - \$10,000,000
- Student Transit Passes - \$200,000
- Electric Transit Vehicles - \$28,000,000
- Bicycle Transportation Action Plan Projects - \$5,000,000
- The Arroyo Link - Multi-Use Path - \$2,000,000
- Mobility Hubs - \$10,000,000