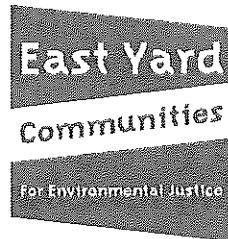


PC - Erlin Martinez



## ***Fighting for Life***

East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice – 2317 Atlantic Blvd. Commerce, CA. 90040

October 18, 2016

Mayor Robert Garcia  
City of Long Beach  
333 W Ocean Blvd  
Long Beach, CA 90802

### **RE: WHY EYCEJ OPPOSES MEASURE M**

#### **LET US BE CLEAR**

We, the hundreds of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice members from East LA, Southeast LA and Long Beach, will not support forcing our communities to pay a tax to indefinitely fund the environmental racism that has affected us for generations. We repeat, **WE WILL NOT SUPPORT FORCING OUR COMMUNITIES TO PAY A TAX TO INDEFINITELY FUND THE ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM THAT HAS AFFECTED US FOR GENERATIONS.**

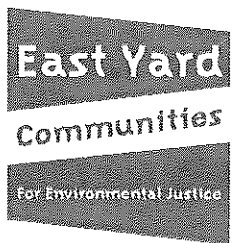
Unless equity and meaningful public participation are a fundamental part of all funding and planning, for all transportation projects/policies/measures/propositions or otherwise, any effort will reinforce and reproduce the injustices we have been fighting for generations.

While Measure M promises to make everyone's commute better, our communities face the threat of increasing contamination from fossil fuel trucks and cars, while others will get cleaner air in their communities through public transportation and active transportation investments.

We already carry a disproportionate toxic burden in the region, with 8 freeways (10, 710, 60, 5, 105, 91, 405, TI Freeway) in our communities handling local, regional, interstate and international traffic.

We already carry a disproportionate toxic burden for the nation, with the Ports in our communities handling 40% of the nation's imported goods, which look like 40,000-60,000 truck trips in our communities daily, along with multiple railyards pushing trains from our communities out to the rest of the nation.

Our communities have carried a toxic burden for the Western United States, resulting in Exide battery recycling poisoning thousands of East LA and Southeast LA families, over multiple generations. The City of LA has been threatening our communities for over a decade with the proposed toxic SCIG (Southern California International Gateway) railyard project, an



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environmentally racist project which would serve to increase profits for a private company and service goods movement for companies shipping overseas and across the country.

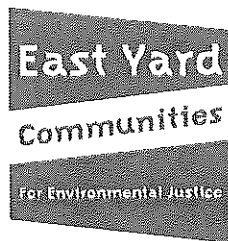
State planning is upholding the status quo, and the status quo is environmentally racist. We refuse to disproportionately absorb the negative impacts of State and private projects that include “local hire” policies that create jobs for Orange County residents while leaving our communities to suffer extreme unemployment. While other parts of the County benefit, Measure M represents an increase in tax and toxic emissions for our communities. We are not here for that anymore.

### **WHAT’S AT RISK?**

If Measure M is approved, our lives are at risk, literally. The toxic exposures in our communities, especially diesel particulate matter, already compromise our health, resulting in respiratory illnesses, cancer and premature death. What we have seen from transportation agencies (Metro, CalTrans) is antiquated transportation ideas (freeway expansion) and resistance to community leadership. For 4 years we have battled CalTrans to study Community Alternative 7, a community generated and community preferred alternative for the I-710 Project (710 from Long Beach to East LA). After getting some traction with Metro, just this last week we learned that one of the viable options for ensuring freight trucks are zero emissions, a catenary system, has been cut out of the project analysis. The claim that these entities are trying to be “technology neutral” is untrue since they are simply continuing a long history of excluding community based alternatives. When we look at the SR-710 (aka the 710 Tunnel) project, East LA was virtually excluded from the scoping process and community members had to fight to participate in the environmental review process after finding out the project threatens to displace businesses and compromise community health with an increase in toxic vehicle emissions.

With our opposition to Measure M, we know we risk straining relationships (political and otherwise) that have already been strained through our unrelenting struggle for justice on other issues. We also understand that in the past our communities have already been sacrificed in the service of maintaining political relationships or under the assumption that political favor could be leveraged in the future. When we envision moving forward the long struggle for justice for our communities, these types of political games and crony capitalism amongst elected officials, agencies and non-profit organizations, is not part of this struggle. In many ways, this is what has allowed for injustice to be maintained.

Some might wonder if we did enough to advocate and shape Measure M. Like our



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communities, our organization is under resourced and over burdened. Looking at our struggles and victories over the last year and half, when we were first contacted about the "Measure R2 strawman", no one can say we haven't been hard at work fighting for justice for our communities. We appreciate efforts by Supervisor Solis to support Community Alternative 7 and attempt to move the Gateway COG to be more responsive to community priorities on multiple projects and during the Measure M process. We appreciate Investing in Place and EnviroMetro for being responsive to our input around equity and mandatory zero emissions for freight investments, amongst other priorities. Before Measure M, we have created grassroots, bottom up solutions to transportation issues in our communities and have faced fierce opposition from CalTrans, Metro and the Gateway COG, so when allies engage us with open ears we are especially appreciative.

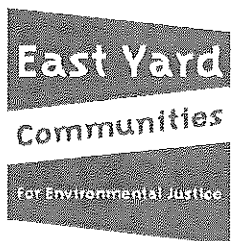
Unfortunately, we also saw the writing on the wall, with the lack of responsiveness to early input on the measure. We saw it again with efforts to get the Metro Board to be responsive to our communities on the I-710 project, which were ultimately undermined by the City of LA and the Gateway COG. Perhaps this acquiescing to the Gateway COG was an attempt by LA Mayor Eric Garcetti to win favor that could payoff in the form of Measure M support, which failed given the Gateway COG's opposition to Measure M. Most recently, we saw Mayor Garcetti visit the Commerce City Council, attempting to get them to reverse their opposition to Measure M with appeals to unity across the region, even floating the idea of Commerce hosting water polo games for the 2024 Olympics. This fell flat when we reminded the council that we had to sue the City of LA because their SCIG project was going to do train maintenance in the City of Commerce, with no plans to mitigate toxic emissions. The unity Mayor Garcetti mentioned was not felt when we successfully defeated the City of LA in court and they decided to spend hundreds of thousands dollars more to appeal the case.

### **EYCEJ DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

We engaged in a 3-month education and dialogue process with our members across the sub-region. At our membership meetings, we came to consensus on opposition to Measure M. This recommendation was taken to our Board of Directors, made up of our membership, and our opposition to Measure M was solidified on September 28, 2016.

### **KEY POINTS FOR OPPOSITION**

Our members brought up multiple issues with Measure M. Below are points that were consistently brought up across our membership:



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- Measure M is a regressive tax. Regressive taxes result in lower income families paying a disproportionately higher percentage of their income, compared to higher income individuals.
- Measure M has no “sunset,” meaning it will continue with no end unless a different measure is passed in the future to end it. Given the amount of money and political will required to pass a measure in the County, it is virtually impossible for low income communities of color, the communities most negatively impacted by transportation projects in the region, to remove the tax once it is approved.
- Measure M lacks equity in planning and implementation. It continues a status quo in planning, resulting in a disparity in how funds would be collected and distributed. Claims of “fair” or “equal” funding schemes only work to uphold the legacies of environmental racism.
- The Gateway Cities Council of Governments (Gateway COG) has failed to represent the needs of our communities in most transportation project planning, often actively undermining our communities. This was the same during the planning phase of Measure M, where they:
  - Ripped out active transportation funding for the sub-region
  - Worked to undermine Community Alternative 7 at the Metro Board
  - Opposed mandating that freight investments be zero emission
  - Weakened Measure M and then opposed it

### **WHAT WE SUPPORT**

We support public transit.

We support active transportation.

We support zero emissions freight.

We support equity planning and meaningful community involvement.

We support genuine “local hire” guarantees.

We support a change in leadership at the Gateway COG.

We support community self-determination.

We support nothing less.

Sincerely,

East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice