

December 10, 2019

FROM: The Transportation Advisory Board

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TO: Boulder City Council

Subject: 2019 TAB Letter to Council

The Transportation Advisory Board is pleased to share the following recommendations and requests in support of Council's 2020 Retreat. For ease of use, we have prepared an annotated summary immediately below, with an expanded memo at bottom with more information. These recommendations reflect the unanimous view of TAB.

Executive Summary

Before enumerating our recommendations, we are requesting a change to TAB's charter to eliminate the language that prohibits TAB from weighing in on land use issues. TAB's charter has not ever been updated and the world—and Boulder—are different places than they are now. We know that transportation, climate action, and land use policies are more closely linked than when our charter was created, and we see this prohibition as both too restrictive and unnecessarily preventing the constructive sharing of insights on transportation issues that are inexorably tied to land use and CO2 emissions.

TAB is unified in its support for the 2019 Transportation Master Plan update, and understand that realizing the goals and activities presented therein will require us to work closely with other city boards and commissions.

Our three priorities are summarized below:

1. **Increase Transportation Department funding**, outside of sales tax, in ways that help us achieve our goals.
2. **Reform public parking** by moving parking management back to the Transportation Department and aligning our parking policies with established goals regarding SOV trips, GHG reduction, revenue generation, and equity that cut across City departments and workplans.
3. **Move the needle on EcoPass** by reviewing and reforming how we subsidize EcoPasses and transit and be willing to scrap, change, or expand the program to reach our transit and equity goals.

TAB will support Council in every way possible to take the bold actions needed for the City to achieve Vision Zero and fully implement the TMP.

Expanded Memo

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) is unified in our vision for Boulder's transportation system. The recently adopted Transportation Master Plan (TMP) reflects our consensus based views.

Before proceeding with answering your questions, the TAB has a request: Over the last two years it has become obvious that the TAB charter language restricting us from weighing in on any land use issue is too restrictive and limits our ability to support the city's stated goals in the TMP, as well as the city's overall goals in housing affordability, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions, and improvements in equity and diversity. This restriction is part of a system that silos departments and boards, and effectively limits the ability of the city to reach our goals. **We would request that Council amends section 2-3-14-(c) of the charter to remove this restriction.** We want to be clear that we do not want to be an approval board or quasi-judicial, such as planning board, however we do want to offer our thoughts and to advise on issues that to our reading of this section does not allow.

Although you asked about our priorities without regard to our board mission, in our view, because transportation affects nearly all other aspects of city planning and management, it deserves to be the central focus of Council's work in the coming years.

What do you think the City's top three priorities should be for the 2020-2021 work plan?

1. Increase Transportation Department Funding: Finding revenue sources to fund the essential services as well as the needed changes and improvements to our transportation system that will help us reach our goals as stated in the TMP, especially reaching Vision Zero by 2030. Finding and implementing these sources will be difficult and politically painful, as raising revenue always is. We support three initial mechanisms:

- a) Congestion/Cordon Pricing:** Assessing a charge for vehicles to travel along a corridor or cross a cordon line. The fee is variable based on time of day, number of persons in the vehicle, or other variables.
- b) Vehicle Valuation Tax (VVT):** This is a progressive taxation method that would annually tax the value of a vehicle on a progressive basis, i.e. expensive newer vehicles will be taxed at a higher percentage than old and low value vehicles.
- c) Increasing Parking Fees:** Boulder is both under funded in the transportation department and undercharges for parking in the public right-of-way. See item two for how to change this unhealthy system,

2. Reform Public Parking: With the 5-year update to the TMP completed and Vision Zero firmly established within the City of Boulder, the Transportation Advisory Board urges Council to focus on meaningful parking reform as an increasingly urgent (and long neglected) priority. Parking and curbside management can meaningfully impact our goals around traffic congestion, safety, VMT, SOV trips, and GHG emissions. Parking that is cheap or free and readily available draws more cars onto our roads without reflecting the social costs inherent in unnecessary driving or the immense value of our public roadways; parking that is properly managed has the opposite effect. We recommend the following policy changes that would support, rather than undermine, the goals stated in our TMP:

- a) Reassign primary responsibility for parking management to Transportation Staff, rather than Community Vitality staff.
- b). In new and existing development, reduce parking minimums, or even better - convert “minimum parking requirements” to “maximum allowed”.
- c) Update or replace the Neighborhood Parking Program (NPP) to promote fairly priced, equitable, and flexible use of city roadways unbundled from private property ownership or residency.
- d) Price and manage curbsides to encourage alternate modes of transportation, including prioritizing bike parking and access/loading areas for alternate mode users over curbside parking for private vehicles.

3. Reform the Neighborhood ECOPass (NECO) Program: Reform the city’s participation in the EcoPass program for the following reasons:

- a) it is insufficiently valued by RTD
- b) it creates tremendous work for NECO pass coordinators
- c) it results in distribution of city subsidies to wealthier neighborhoods while leaving an inequitable patchwork of neighborhoods without access to EcoPasses.

Reform could come in the form of changes, dramatic expansion, or complete abandonment in favor of some other methodology to be determined.

Note: Items two and three can be achieved with staff time and little to no capital expenditures.

2. *How do your suggestions connect back to the work of your specific board or commission?*

All of our priorities are key to our board’s mission and the TAB is committed to actively pursuing our goals as stated in the 2019 TMP update.

3. *Are there additional boards or commissions that should weigh in on those issues?*

We would request, as appropriate, close interaction with the following boards:

Planning Board

Housing Advisory Board

Human Relations Commission

Environmental Advisory Board

Downtown Management Commission

Any Access District commissions developed citywide (e.g., Boulder Junction)

Further, as long as the office of Community Vitality is involved with managing public parking facilities, the TAB requests the opportunity to advise their staff on such management to ensure their actions serve the city’s larger transportation and other goals.