



January 6, 2025

Council President LaCava and Councilmembers
202 C Street, 10th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: Prioritize and Safeguard Climate Equity, Mobility Master Plan, Stormwater Maintenance and Infrastructure and Commit to Progressing Building Decarbonization in Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

Dear Honorable Councilmembers,

Climate Action Campaign (CAC) is a non-profit organization based in San Diego and Orange County, CA with a simple mission: to create a zero-carbon future through effective and equitable policy action. As we near the deadline for the second round of council budget memos for Fiscal Year 2026, CAC appreciates your review of CAC's high level budget priorities around Climate Equity, the Mobility Master Plan, Stormwater Maintenance and Infrastructure, and Building Decarbonization for the coming fiscal year 2026.

Climate Equity

As San Diegans face increasingly severe weather extremes—wildfires, scorching heat, and devastating floods—the urgency of addressing climate equity cannot be overstated. The City must honor its commitment to invest in frontline communities that have suffered from generations of neglect. Building essential infrastructure such as protected bike lanes, sidewalks, streetlights, tree canopies, pocket parks, mid-block crossings, and modern stormwater infrastructure with regular maintenance is not optional—it is a necessity. These critical investments require funding prioritization.

Maintaining and expanding the Climate Equity Fund is not just a recommendation; it is a foundational step toward safeguarding our communities. Climate equity must be a top priority in the budget appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year. Communities of Concern deserve modernized infrastructure to ensure their safety as our climate crisis continues to escalate, bringing more intense and dangerous weather events. This is not a matter for delay or compromise—decisive action is required now.

Fund Mobility Master Plan and Vision Zero Quick Build Projects

Climate Action Plan (CAP) targets for 2030 and 2035 are rapidly approaching, and time is running out to meet the critical goals outlined in the Mobility Master Plan (MMP). The MMP addresses CAP mobility benchmarks: 36% of all trips by walking/rolling, cycling, and public transit by 2030 and 50% by 2035. To achieve these, the Council must act decisively now by funding the modernization of community infrastructure by tackling low-cost solutions rather than deferring action to expensive Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs) that remain unfunded.

It is imperative to focus on funding the 11 Focus Areas identified in the MMP, which span all council districts. Many councilmembers have already highlighted the urgency of these investments in their prior budget memos. To advance this effort, the Council should allocate \$150,000 per focus area for quick-build projects that directly address safety and connectivity. These projects—such as installing mid-block crossings, lowering speeds, and high-visibility paint—will make communities safer and more accessible while directly contributing to the City's climate goals and the Vision Zero target for 2025.

An annual investment of just \$1.65 million can catalyze progress on the CAP, MMP and Vision Zero, ensuring sustainable and safe mobility for residents well beyond 2026. The time to act is now—delays will only hinder our ability to meet these vital goals.

Stormwater Infrastructure Investments

San Diegans are still grappling with the devastating aftermath of recent flooding events, which have underscored the urgent need for action. CAC strongly urges the council to make a firm and visible commitment in their budget priority memos to fund both the maintenance and the implementation of the City's stormwater infrastructure.

We understand that \$100 million annually is a known and necessary cost to maintain and improve the City's aging and degraded stormwater infrastructure. While there are less funds available than is needed, CAC implores the City to ensure WIFIA program projects prioritize communities of concern that continue to face disproportionate impacts from climate-driven flood events.

Building Decarbonization

The City has fallen behind on building decarbonization goals that are critical for improving air quality. Decarbonization of existing buildings, which was identified by the IBA as the most consequential strategy to reduce pollution in the Climate Action Plan, is especially important and requires long-term community engagement, planning and implementation. The City will not be able to catch-up if it continues to delay implementation. Equitable community engagement should be prioritized, including staff capacity required, as this is essential for the City to win funding for building electrification programs and policy-development. We ask the City to commit to progressing building decarbonization.

Conclusion

The stakes could not be higher. The escalating climate crisis demands bold and immediate action. Prioritizing climate equity, funding sustainable mobility, modernizing stormwater infrastructure, and advancing building decarbonization are not just budgetary considerations—they are moral imperatives.

Failure to act decisively will exacerbate the disparities that Communities of Concern have long faced. It will compromise the safety and mobility of all residents, and leave San Diego woefully unprepared for the challenges ahead. Conversely, making these investments now will position San Diego as a leader in climate resilience and equity, safeguarding our community's health, safety, and prosperity for generations to come.

CAC urges you to champion these critical priorities in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. The time for incrementalism has passed. We call on you to rise to the urgency of this moment with the commitment and leadership residents deserve.

Sincerely,

Corinna Contreras
Policy Advocate
Climate Action Campaign