



TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC WORKS POLICY COMMITTEE
Highlights
Thursday, January 22, 2026

ATTENDANCE

Members: Newell Arnerich (Chair); Chelsea Byers (Vice Chair); Robert Armijo; Michael Barrett; Liz Becerra; John Campbell; Jan Clark-Crets; Shannon DeLong; Richard Enea; Bob Engler; Mario Enriquez; John Erickson; Jim Ernst; Justin Ezell; Dean Francois; Terry Gaasterland; Thomas Gaffery; Nicholas Godin; Shayra Hernandez; Kerry Hillis; Janet Jernigan; Mike Johnson; Katharine Jones; Chris Kelley; Linda Krupa; J.R. Matulac; John McAlister; Brian McCarthy; Jennifer Mendoza; Linda Molina; Paul Nagengast; Adolfo Ozaeta; John Peraza; Christian Punsal; Alonso Ramirez; Kristine Scott; Larry Spicer; Fred Strong; Jennifer Torres-O'Callaghan; Bill Uphoff; Alex Walker-Griffin; Colleen Wallace; Cesar Zepeda

League Partners: Haig Kartounian

Staff: Damon Conklin, Legislative Advocate
Waleed Hojeij, Policy & Legislative Affairs Analyst

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks from Chair Newell Arnerich, who expressed his appreciation for the committee's continued engagement and commitment. He noted the strong turnout and emphasized the importance of the committee's policy work for the year ahead.

Vice-Chair Chelsea Byers followed with additional introductory comments, highlighting the collective excitement surrounding this year's Policy Committee meeting. She stressed the value of collaboration as members begin addressing the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Members of the policy committee then introduced themselves with their names, the city they represent, and how long they have been serving on the policy committee.

II. Public Comment

Chair Arnerich opened the floor up for members of the public who wish to speak. No public comment was provided.

III. Committee Orientation

Cal Cities Advocate, Damon Conklin, provided the committee with an overview of the policy committee. He outlined how issues are added to the agenda, the standards to determine statewide policy significance, the role of the board of directors, and various legislative positions that the committee can take.

IV. Existing Policy and Guiding Principles Update

Mr. Conklin delivered an update on the organization's existing policy and guiding principles. He provided an overview of the seven Cal Cities policy committees and described the biennial update process for the guiding principles, which serve as a reference point for Cal Cities' formal advocacy and issue positions. Cal Cities staff presented the recommended updates to the existing guidelines and principals. Members of the policy committee provided feedback on ways to improve the document. There was an extensive discussion on the California High Speed Rail project. Members of the policy committee felt it was more appropriate to acknowledge the challenges cities are facing with the project, and to update our policy with more neutral language. It was felt that there needed to be more in-depth discussions regarding our existing guidelines and principles, so Chair Arnerich proposed the creation of a working group to provide Cal Cities staff with more feedback on how to better update the policies. We received five volunteers for the task force and Cal Cities staff were directed to follow up with them after the policy committee meeting, to schedule virtual meetings. The updated policy received no "no" votes for submission to the board of directors.

V. Survey and Adoption of 2026 Work Plan

Cal Cities policy analyst, Waleed Hojeij, presented the top three priorities identified by members: infrastructure and maintenance funding; transportation systems, mobility, and safety; and climate resilience, wildfire, and emergency preparedness. These priorities were reflected in the proposed 2026 Work Plan, which outlined key focus areas such as long-term funding needs, safety measures, support for multimodal transportation, and investments to strengthen community preparedness. After a brief discussion, the committee unanimously voted to submit the workplan to the board of directors.

I. Ebike Roundtable Discussion

Members received an informational presentation on the statewide e-bike roundtable conducted by Mr. Hojeij. Staff reported that cities across the state are facing increasing challenges related to high-speed devices, particularly with youth riders and parents who may not be aware of the capabilities of certain e-bikes. members described enforcement challenges, confusion between e-bikes and unregulated e-motorcycles, and significant safety concerns as injuries and fatalities among young riders continue to rise. The committee also reviewed legislation addressing clearer distinctions between device types, stronger limits on speed modifications, age requirements, mandatory education or permitting, and improved manufacturer identification to assist with enforcement. Members of the policy committee felt this was a topic of high priority, so Chair Arnerich proposed the creation of a working group to provide Cal Cities with more feedback as e-bikes issues continue to develop. We received six volunteers for the task force and Cal Cities staff were directed to follow up with them after the policy committee meeting, to schedule virtual meetings.

II. State budget and SB1 Funding

Frank Jimenez, staff from the Legislative Analyst's Office, provided an overview of the state budget and SB 1 funding. The presentation explained that the Governor's proposed 2026–27 budget reflects a roughly \$3 billion deficit, significantly smaller than earlier projections, while still facing long-term structural challenges. Members received a detailed overview of the state budget process, the role of special funds in transportation finance, and the administration's proposal to authorize short-term loans to certain Bay Area transit agencies. Updates were also provided on changes to Cap-and-Invest allocations under SB 840, potential impacts on transit programs, and shifts in funding for zero-emission vehicle and rail investments.

III. Road Charge Program

Laura Prehoda, an expert with Caltrans, delivered an informational presentation on the Road Charge Program, which the state continues to study as a potential replacement for the gas tax. The presentation focused on the four major challenges facing the current gas tax model like increased fuel efficiency, growth in zero-emission vehicles, inflationary reductions in purchasing power, and inequities in how fuel taxes are distributed among drivers. She explained that the road charge concept is intended to be revenue-neutral and would maintain existing funding formulas while stabilizing transportation funding long term. Members were also briefed on the state's pilot studies, federal grant-supported research, and ongoing technical evaluations.

IV. Legislative, Budget, and Regulatory Update

The meeting continued with a legislative, budget, and regulatory update presented by Mr. Conklin. Staff discussed newly introduced bills for the 2026 session. They also provided broader updates on transportation, broadband, and public works issues within the state budget, including continued delays in broadband infrastructure funding and significant climate- and transportation-related allocations. Additionally, they discussed potential issues for 2026, such as implementing clean fleet regulations, ensuring compliance with evolving permitting requirements, and protecting SB 1 revenues. Staff concluded by reminding members of Cal Cities' online bill search tool.

V. Adjourn

The meeting concluded with closing remarks from Chair Arnerich and Vice-Chair Byers, who thanked members for their engagement and reiterated the importance of the committee's work in shaping statewide policy. The meeting adjourned, with members reminded that the next in-person meeting will take place on March 26, 2026, in Costa Mesa.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 26 (Hilton Orange County/ Costa Mesa), 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.