

July 22, 2021



E-TRANSMITTAL/ U.S. REGULAR MAIL

Ms. Mariana Moore, Chair
Measure X Community Advisory Board
County Administrator's Office (CAO)
1025 Escobar Street, 4th Floor
Martinez, CA 94553

RE: MEASURE X FUNDING ALLOCATION SUPPORT FOR THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY BUDGET

Dear Chair Moore and Members of the Measure X Community Advisory Board:

On behalf of the San Pablo City Council, I am writing to urge you to recommend allocating an appropriate proportion of Measure X funding to provide for an expanded Contra Costa County Library Budget. In San Pablo, our ongoing partnership with Contra Costa County Library Services has been vital in providing critical and much needed services in our community.

Any Measure X allocation would directly support a County-wide increase to **56 hours for all County Library** branches, facility upgrades (which are desperately needed in many of our county's libraries, particularly those located in impacted communities), staffing, collection development, and operational support.

The County Librarian's request is fully consistent with the purposes of Measure X, especially the following key targets:

- Support crucial safety-net services
- Invest in early childhood services
- Protect vulnerable populations
- Fund other essential services

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many of the divides that increasingly define our region. During the year-long closure, our County Library staff demonstrated how vital their services are to our community members, particularly those who are under-resourced and overburdened. They handed out free lunches and produce, mobile hotspots, literacy materials, and craft kits; delivered books to homebound community members; conducted robust online programming; assisted patrons with unemployment, EBT benefits, tutoring services, and accessing other crucial safety net services—the list goes on and on.

The Contra Costa County Library's per capita operating income falls significantly short of the median for libraries state-wide, and particularly that of other Bay Area County Libraries. Our County Library system receives funding equivalent to 1.5% of 1% of property tax for all properties (aside from those in the city of Richmond, which operates its own library system). This amount accounts for just 0.97% of the County's current operating GF budget.

Currently, the cost of additional operational hours beyond the County-funded minimum threshold is borne by local cities, like San Pablo, as well as facilities maintenance. While *some* of our County's cities and their libraries' have library support groups and foundations that contribute substantively to fill in the equity gaps produced by minimum level of support in services, programming, open hours, facilities maintenance, etc. There are many others who simply cannot. This also applies to County libraries in unincorporated areas, such as El Sobrante, Kensington (both within District 1), and Bay Point (located in District 5) that do not have a potential local City base from which to draw. The resulting picture is wildly disparate. In other words, the current funding model and allocation reflects, contributes to, and even exacerbates our county's inequities. ***We can and we must do better for our County's system of libraries.***

The significant revenue expected from the Measure X Sales Tax Measure (estimated at \$81M/year) has the potential to level the playing field and to infuse our County Library system's delivery of equitable services and contributions to impactful outcomes with real backbone. Measure X is an unprecedented opportunity to address and ***redress*** some of the massive disparities— both their causes and effects—in our region's healthcare, education, housing, public safety, economic, and environmental sectors, among others. Local libraries are one of the most vital spaces of civic involvement and education, literacy promotion, and intellectual freedom in a democratic state, and they have increasingly become part of the social safety net for many populations, especially our most vulnerable populations.

There is no doubt that we need more vigorous and inclusive community services, and there is no doubt that this funding boost can assist in this endeavor. I understand that the County Library's funding request is one competing interest among a number of other competing interests you are considering for overall Measure X funding allocation. However, I hope you can see how capably it responds to the core imperatives of the Measure X sales tax funding measure.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Pabon-Alvarado, Mayor
City of San Pablo

cc: County Supervisor John Gioia, First District (John.Gioia@bos.cccounty.us)
Monica Nino, County CAO (Monica.Nino@cao.cccounty.us)
Lisa Driscoll, County Finance Director (Lisa.Driscoll@cao.cccounty.us)
Allison McKee, Contra Costa County Librarian (Alison.Mckee@library.cccounty.us)

San Pablo City Council
City Manager
City Attorney

