

## MEMO

**To:** The Honorable Sheng Thao, Mayor  
Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas and Members of the City Council

**From:** Christopher Townsend, President, Townsend Public Affairs, Inc.  
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**Date:** January 9, 2024

**Subject:** Summary of 2023 State and Federal Legislative Achievements

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### SUMMARY

#### Summary of 2023 State and Federal Legislative Highlights

Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. (TPA) has prepared this report for the City of Oakland as a summary of the 2023 legislative year.

TPA worked with the elected City leadership and Administration to develop, advocate, and secure several major City initiatives through various means including legislation, working directly with our elected leaders in Sacramento and Washington DC, and other efforts. The TPA/City team worked together to secure over **\$87 million in direct funding** for priority projects. A recent addition to the scope of our work on behalf of the City includes grant support and assistance with grant writing. This includes monthly City wide grant check in calls, a monthly memo highlighting various grant opportunities, direct hands on work with specific departments on grant applications, interfacing with state and federal agencies relating to funding opportunities, advocacy for specific submittals, and other efforts.

Please note the following state and federal funding wins below:

- Partnering with Mayor Thao and her office to secure a direct State budget allocation to help address homelessness in the amount of over *\$20 million dollars* (the final allocation amount will be available on 1/31/24) from the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Grant program.
  - This effort included working closely with Senate Budget Chair Nancy Skinner and her staff, Assembly Budget Chair Phil Ting and his staff, the Governor and his Administration, and the Big City Mayors to secure one of the largest allocations.
- Partnering with Council President Bas and the Mayors Office to secure a direct State allocation from Assembly Member Bonta for Fire Station #4/MACRO Headquarters in the amount of *\$5 million dollars*.
  - This effort included working closely with Assembly Member Bonta, her office, the Oakland Fire Department, and others to secure funding to support the Fire Department and MACRO program.
- Partnering with the City Administration to help secure a grant award from the US Department of Agriculture, Inflation Reduction Act Urban and Community Forestry Grant in the amount of *\$8,000,000*.

- Partnering with the Mayor’s Office and the Department of Violence Prevention to secure a C.R.I.S.E.S. Act Grant award in the amount of \$3,558,922.
- Partnering with the Mayor’s Office and Representative Barbara Lee on two pending federal funding requests totaling nearly \$2 million dollars.
- Partnering with the Port of Oakland and stakeholders to help secure critical infrastructure funding for the Howard Terminal site which includes a \$30.2 million Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP) grant and a \$17.4 million Port and Freight Infrastructure (PFIP) grant.

Please note the following state legislative wins below which includes the passage of multiple City legislative priorities into law including:

- **Assembly Bill 645 (Friedman)** that established Oakland as part of the five-year pilot program to install speed safety systems. The City was a co-sponsor of this high priority legislation.
- **ACA 1** allows voters to decide whether a 55% threshold for approving special taxes or incurring bonded indebtedness to fund the construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or replacement of public infrastructure or affordable housing projects is an appropriate standard.
- **ACA 13** requires an initiative constitutional amendment to comply with any increased voter approval threshold that it seeks to impose on future ballot measures. This was in response to the California Business Roundtable Initiative.

### **Additional Summary of Legislative Efforts**

The 2023 legislative year featured a number of anomalies, including a record number of freshman legislators, significant leadership changes in both houses, and the highest number of bill introductions in over a decade. Of the 3,038 bills introduced this year, the Legislature passed close to 1,100 measures. The City (which includes the City Council or Mayor) took formal positions on 61 pieces of legislation and was very active on policy topics such as housing insecurity, mental health funding, supporting the unhoused, public safety, infrastructure, climate resiliency, and other efforts.

Additional legislative efforts included work on the following topics.

#### Broadband

Another budget-related item that TPA and the City worked on and continue to engage in at the Regulatory level is funding for Broadband. In recent State Legislative Sessions, TPA worked closely with the Mayor’s office, the City’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief of Information Technology, and the Oakland Undivided Coalition to advocate for the passage of several major broadband and internet-connectivity-related funding bills, including SB 4 (Gonzalez), AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry), and SB 156 (The Broadband Budget Trailer Bills) which would allocate \$3.25 Billion for state-owned open-access middle mile broadband infrastructure which will run through not just rural, but also urban areas. SB 156 also includes \$2 Billion for local last-mile connectivity projects.

Similar to when TPA advocated during the State Budget process and Legislative Session, at the regulatory level with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), TPA and the City were intimately involved in conversations with key State decision makers to ensure that the major broadband investments included urban-equity components and would ensure that urban jurisdictions such as Oakland would be eligible and competitive for broadband funding.

Throughout the year, TPA and Oakland engaged frequently with the CPUC and other stakeholders to ensure that the open-access middle-mile map was drawn and implemented in an equitable fashion to benefit the most vulnerable communities and individuals in Oakland. In addition to middle-mile broadband engagement on the CPUC level, TPA and Oakland have engaged with the Commission on last-mile project eligibility, feasibility, and other important factors.

TPA worked closely with the CIO and Oakland Undivided group to conceptualize a competitive project for submission to the CPUC for funding through the “Last Mile” Federal Funding Account. This project would allow for greater connectivity in underserved areas of the City, with benefits ranging from: increased ability to access telehealth services and other social services to increasing microeconomic development by empowering residents with expanded job opportunities, job training, networking, and many other benefits. As we continue to move forward post submission, TPA has strategized with the City team on rebuttals to external project challenges.

#### *Big City Mayors (BCM) Coalition Efforts*

Throughout the 2023 Legislative Session, TPA worked with the Big City Mayors (BCM) Coalition, advocates, the Governor’s Administration, and legislative leadership to advocate for the inclusion of direct funding allocations to the state’s 13 largest cities, including ongoing funding for the Homeless, Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program and the Youth Job Corps Program. These efforts included staffing the Oakland Mayor and staff during the BCM Coalition advocacy day and press conference, advising on written content advocating for ongoing, direct funding allocations, and monitoring budget developments to keep staff informed on the status of program implementation changes.

In addition, TPA monitored the development of numerous legislative proposals that sought to modify the formulaic disbursement of funding via the HHAP program. Several measures would have mandated onerous reporting requirements and could have shifted spending authority away from the City and to other local agencies. TPA worked with City staff to keep them informed about these measures and sought input for potential amendments. TPA then worked with legislators and staff to provide informal feedback on how proposals could negatively impact the City’s homeless services programs. Ultimately, these measures were held after multiple negotiations between local stakeholders, the Governor’s administration, and budget leaders.

#### **Summary of 2023 Federal Highlights**

As of the close of the first session of the current congress, legislators have not passed any of the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bills, relying instead on two short-term extensions of Fiscal Year 2023 funding. In total only 23 bills have been signed into law in 2023, leaving a lot of work to be done in 2024. In addition to the FY24 appropriations bills congress must pass legislation to reauthorize the FAA, extend food and nutrition programs, update US Army Corps of Engineers projects, and extend foreign surveillance authorities. Congress will also debate additional funding for international conflicts and immigration.

#### *Federal Advocacy Highlights*

TPA assisted with four separate advocacy trips to Washington, DC for Oakland leaders. In January TPA organized several meetings for Mayor Sheng Thao during her participation in the US Conference of Mayors legislative conference. In May Mayor Thao traveled to DC to meet with the US Department of Energy, US Department of Transportation, and the city’s legislative delegation in support of green energy projects. Councilmember Noel Gallo attended the National

League of Cities legislative conference in March where TPA helped facilitate meetings with Oakland’s legislators. And in November TPA facilitated meetings for Councilmember Janani Ramachandran to assist with Oakland’s road safety and resiliency projects.

TPA assists Oakland with federal grant opportunities, including working to ensure the city can receive and administer the grants. TPA was made aware of the need to extend the statutory obligation deadline for the city’s FY21 RAISE grant which the city received in November 2021. TPA successfully identified other recipients of the grant and built a coalition of supporters around the country for extending the obligation deadline from September 30, 2024, until September 30, 2027. With a coalition of supporters from across the country, TPA worked closely with the late Senator Dianne Feinstein to draft an amendment to the FY24 Transportation-HUD appropriation bill extending the deadline. This amendment was passed by unanimous voice vote by the Senate in September and is currently pending as part of the FY24 appropriations process.

TPA worked with the city to identify competitive projects for consideration by the city’s federal elected leaders. TPA then developed and submitted earmark applications on the city’s behalf. In total, Oakland has \$1,922,757 in pending earmarks. These bills are currently making their way through the legislative process.

**U.S. House of Representatives Earmarks**

Bill	Project	Funding	Status
H.R. 4821	Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan, Development and Implementation of Healthy Lake Initiative	\$959,757	Rep. Barbara Lee sponsored and is pending.
H.R. 5893	Cybersecurity Upgrades	\$963,000	Rep. Barbara Lee sponsored and is pending.

**Process for Reporting**

In addition to weekly legislative updates to City staff, Finance Committee reports, and other communications we send the City, TPA suggests verbal reports to the Rules Committee and then City Council when the State Legislature is on recess. For example, we would report out in April while the Legislature is on Spring Recess and during July while the Legislature is on Summer Recess.