

City of Los Angeles Work Group Budget 101 - April 16, 2019

Presentation script

Outcomes

- Understanding overall City of LA budget process
- Pro tips on reviewing annual budget (blue books)
- Recap previous budget advocacy work
- How to get engaged this and next fiscal year

Outline

- Power of budget advocacy
- Annual budget process overview
- Reviewing a budget
- Lessons from the past: Vision Zero case study, complete streets and sidewalk repair program
- Engagement this year and next year

Power of Budget Advocacy

We are excited to have everyone on the phone the day before the Mayor's State of the City address, which is also the day the draft budget comes out for the City of Los Angeles. The City's annual budget programs close to \$10 billion dollars in public funds for the City for the next 12 months. (In way of comparison the budgets for Metro and LAUSD are \$7 billion each, and span the whole County.)

- What makes great policy? Equal funding and an implementation plan, which is one of the key reasons budget advocacy is so important. When the City espouses great goals and ideas does it show up as a funded priority? When we ask our City officials to deliver services or programs, they need to know: is it in the budget?
- This budget season allows for a chance to ask and advocate for those issues. As we will cover in this presentation, budget advocacy is a continuous process. For many City departments that starts in September, but from today until budget adoption in June is still a good time to look at how we fund and prioritize our public funds for mobility.
- This can be a key time to advance awareness about the issues we care about, as media outlets like the Los Angeles Times will cover the budget process. The media will be looking for stories to cover on highlights of the budget and City's priorities and funded/unfunded programs. In previous years they have reached out to mobility advocates for insights and concerns for their stories.

City budget process & timeline

The City of LA fiscal year starts on July 1 and ends 12-months later on June 30. The City of LA's annual budget is officially adopted by the Mayor and LA City Council every year in June. An 'FY20' budget, for example, refers to a budget that starts July 2019 and ends June 2020. The three major versions of the City budget are: department proposed budget, Mayor's proposed budget, and the final approved budget. We'll go through each using a rough timeline showing how the City of LA budget is created and approved every year.

City of Los Angeles Work Group Budget 101 - April 16, 2019

Presentation script

- **September to November** is the true start of each budget season. City department heads and budget staff develop their department's annual budget. Costs include salaries and wages for their department's staff, plus new and ongoing initiatives assigned to that department. Department budgets are due to the Mayor's Office before the Thanksgiving holiday. While City departments start the budget process, their actual approved budgets are mostly determined by the elected representatives: the Los Angeles Mayor and Councilmembers.
- **November to April** the Mayor's Office works closely with City departments and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to review and revise each department's proposed budget. The CAO is the financial advisor to the Mayor and City Council and assists in the preparation and administration of the city budget each year. These conversations shape the Mayor's annual proposed budget and are not public meetings.
- **Every year in April** the LA City Mayor gives a State of the City address. It is a public event where the Mayor outlines his or her office's priorities for the City for the upcoming fiscal year and unveils the Mayor's proposed budget. The Mayor will often focus on specific themes or signature initiatives of their administration, ranging from transportation to homelessness to smart technology. Think of the State of the City address as the narrative behind that year's budget. This year the State of the City is...tomorrow! Once the Mayor's proposed budget is released, it then goes to City Council for review and approval.
- **In May** the LA City Council Budget & Finance Committee hosts public hearings on the proposed budget for each of the city's departments. Typically, about 7-10 departments will be scheduled for each hearing and there are about four to five hearings that last about two weeks. These hearings are hosted at City Hall and members of the public may attend, listen, and give timed public comment on any of the agenda items. The Budget and Finance committee chairperson has authority to schedule these hearings, determine the agendas, and set the allotted time for public comment. The chairperson also runs the public hearings and can control the conversation and discussion amongst the rest of the committee. Agendas for these public hearings that list which department budgets will be reviewed are posted no less than 72 hours before each hearing. This year, the chair of the Budget & Finance Committee is Councilmember Paul Krekorian (CD 2). Other members of this year's committee are Councilmembers Curren Price (CD 9, Vice chair), Mike Bonin (CD 11), Paul Koretz (CD 5) and Bob Blumenfeld (CD 3). While these public hearings are a valuable way for constituents to give public comment and testimony on the proposed budget, many fiscal decisions have been made at this point so huge or significant changes to the budget at this point of the process--without any previous advocacy with elected officials--is unlikely. Once the Budget & Finance committee approves the budget, with or without any Council revisions, the budget goes to the full 15-member City Council for approval. By June 1, City Council needs to approve the annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year. On July 1, that new fiscal year begins.

Reviewing a budget

City of Los Angeles Work Group Budget 101 - April 16, 2019

Presentation script

When the Mayor's Proposed Budget -- also called the "blue book" -- drops tomorrow, there are two ways to access it. You can download it on the CAO's website (cao.lacity.org/budget) or you can go to the Chief Legislative Analyst's office in City Hall and pick up a free hard copy. Once these proposed budgets are approved, a new version of the budget is released: the approved budget called the "white book."

- We find it helpful to start with Section 3, which are the fund schedules. That allows you to look at significant funding streams that impact the public right-of-way and begin to research where the funds are going.
- We look at fund schedules for (typically found in Volume 1):
 - Gas Tax & SB 1
 - Prop A
 - Prop C
 - Measure R
 - Sidewalk Repair Fund
 - Measure M
 - Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Trust Fund
 - Street Damage Restoration Fee Fund
- These are some of the largest streams of funding going to mobility improvement and can help start to frame our understanding. Next, we reach out to partners who work at the three key Departments/Bureaus impacting the public right-of-way:
 - Department of Transportation
 - Bureau of Street Services
 - Bureau of Engineering
- We hope to hear directly from city staff what are their priorities, staff reports, and needs. This is not a simple or a linear process. Understanding the budget proposal involves pulling together different parts of information and working with many partners to begin to get a full picture. One thing this has been illuminated for Investing in Place over the years is that there is not one single budget that guides City of LA public right-of-way investments. And each annual proposed budget just looks at that specific fiscal year. The blue books do not provide information on how much funding from last year's budget line items was spent and what is rolling over. It is an extensive process but over the years we have found working with fellow advocates and partners we can pull together an understanding of the proposed budget and successfully advocate.

Lessons from the past: Safe Routes to School, Vision Zero case study, complete streets and sidewalk repair program

- One of our team's first powerful experiences with budget advocacy was in 2011 where mobility advocates, LADOT staff and Council offices worked together to leverage Measure R local return to fund the City's first pedestrian staff. At that time LADOT had a bike department but no dedicated staff working on walkability. Hard to believe/not so hard to believe. Thanks to partners from across different sectors, budget advocacy efforts resulted in new staff who were funded to begin implementation on the City's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Strategic

City of Los Angeles Work Group Budget 101 - April 16, 2019

Presentation script

Plan/Program. Fast forward eight years to today and you can see the rippling and long-term effects that budget advocacy impact has had. Los Angeles has one of the nation's largest SRTS program that brought home \$32 million in State Active Transportation Program (ATP) funds for the program last year.

- Like many public policies and programs Vision Zero in LA has had its ups and downs but one thing that has remained consistent is its growing budget and resources. In 2018 the City of Los Angeles approved a \$37 million annual budget for Vision Zero, a budget increase of over 1,100% in three years. Shout out to great work from Los Angeles Walks, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, People for Mobility Justice, AARP in Los Angeles, and the LA Vision Zero Alliance.
- And last year (FY18-19) City of LA budget contained the largest sidewalk infrastructure investment the City has made in years, with a total annual investment of \$41 million allocated to sidewalk repair and improved accessibility.
- We also saw the funding in last year's budget (FY18-19) for the creation of the Complete Streets Corridors program, which is one of the most promising mobility programs where we are looking at corridors and prioritizing by social equity. The corridors selected for these investments are using many factors when selected including the Vision Zero High Injury Network, which is the closest proxy to a social equity measurement used by the City of Los Angeles to guide projects and investments. It is also super exciting because this program includes sidewalks in significant investments for redesign. For instance one of these projects underway is Reseda Boulevard in Council District 3 (West Valley), an approximately \$20 million project with protected bike lanes, curb extensions, bus landing, and crosswalks.

In this year's draft budget, we will be looking for continuation and growth in investments in these programs.

Engagement this year and next

Now that everyone on this call is an expert in reviewing 500-page budgets, how can we all weigh in? For this fiscal year, we are at the point in the timeline that the Mayor is about to release his proposed budget (tomorrow during State of the City). While this is a public event, attendance is based on invitation. In the past the address has also streamed live on the Mayor's Facebook page during the event. Investing in Place plans to pick up our heavy blue book copies and review proposed budgets for departments that manage issues we track, including the Department of Transportation, which covers Vision Zero and the active transportation network in the City; Bureau of Street Services, which manages bus shelters, sidewalk furniture, and urban tree canopy; and Bureau of Engineering, which manages the sidewalk repair program and the six Complete Streets corridors.

City of Los Angeles Work Group Budget 101 - April 16, 2019

Presentation script

We will also track the Budget & Finance committee meetings when they are scheduled for early next month. [**UPDATE: City of LA budget hearings have been scheduled with agendas online [here](#).**] Are folks on this call interested in possibly attending and providing public testimony, depending on the proposed budgets for next fiscal year?

Going forward, we've found that there are three basic steps to developing your budget advocacy game:

1) Relationships are everything

Anyone who wishes to shape the city's budget in a meaningful way might consider cultivating relationships at multiple levels within city government. Key players who most influence the City of LA budget include: staff representing department general managers, staff from policy and budget teams of Office of the LA Mayor, and the five city councilmembers who serve on the LA City Council Budget and Finance committee. Remember, while you may live in a district of a councilmember who is not on the Budget and Finance committee, as a member of the public you can still engage with other council offices on issues covered by the committees they sit on.

2) Know your issues

If you wish to strengthen your "asks" to city officials to deliver a public service or infrastructure, consider accompanying your requests with recommended allocation of resources. Some questions you might study ahead of the ask might include: With what funds could the city pay for the initial ask? Who would maintain the service or infrastructure after it is launched? If the city should maintain any new infrastructure, then how will the city pay to maintain its upkeep? Have any other cities done something similar to what you are requesting? Anyone can rely on relationships during city budgeting and a working knowledge of public finance to strengthen their asks.

3) Show up and show out

Our elected officials understand that they are representatives. When members of the public can demonstrate huge support or opposition to an issue, our policymakers are more likely to listen. Anyone can show that they represent the interests of many constituents through sign-on letters, large groups at public hearings, widespread social media campaigns, and other methods. As we mentioned earlier, many media outlets cover the annual budget process so advocates are also well positioned to comment on priorities and goals we want to see funded through that platform. We find that the most effective advocacy is to combine individual relationships with city officials with public shows of vast support.