



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

July 27, 2023

The Honorable Lisa Calderon
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 4650
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: Support for AB 824 (Calderon)—The Highway Greening Act

Dear Assemblymember Calderon,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach, I write in support of AB 824. This bill would require the Department of Transportation to develop a statewide strategic plan to work to achieve at least a 10 percent increase of green highways in urban areas, disadvantaged communities, and low-income communities by 2035. In line with the [Long Beach Climate Action Plan](#), AB 824 will help to reduce air quality pollution through strategic coordination and targeted action.

Low-income Californians and communities of color are disproportionately affected by high concentrations of air pollution because of proximity to networks of highways with dense traffic congestion. Across Long Beach, babies born just a few miles apart have up to a 17.4-year difference in life expectancy. According to the City's [2019 Community Health Assessment](#), chronic lower respiratory diseases were the tenth leading cause of premature deaths from 2016 to 2020. Furthermore, the percentage of adults in Long Beach who currently have asthma (8.6 percent) is higher compared to the state of California (7.7 percent). AB 824 will contribute to better health outcomes and improved quality of life.

The City recognizes the importance of creating more urban green spaces to mitigate air pollution. For example, the Terminal Island Transition Plan feasibility and implementation aims to identify options for increasing access to park space in west Long Beach, an area of the city with significantly less access to open space compared to other areas. Additionally, the Hamilton Loop Project will implement the community's vision to reimagine the embankment along both sides of the SR-91 freeway into a thriving community park space. Furthermore, the realignment of Shoreline Drive will transform an urban freeway corridor into a landscaped local arterial roadway that will create a sizeable "green" buffer between the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, the I-710 Corridor, and the freight rail networks that connect the Ports to the rest of the country. Additional state support also could help improve air quality near the I-710 freeway by installing barriers made out of native Californian plants to trap particulate matter and other pollutants on their leaves. For these reasons, the City supports AB 824.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, State Senate, 33rd District
The Honorable Mike Gipson, State Assembly, 65th District
The Honorable Josh Lowenthal, State Assembly, 69th District