

Discussion Memo

Background

In accordance with the TransNet Extension Ordinance, an Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee (ITOC) was established to provide an enhanced level of accountability for expenditures made under the Expenditure Plan. The ITOC functions in an independent, open, and transparent manner to ensure all voter mandates are carried out as required in the Ordinance, and to develop constructive recommendations for improvements to the financial integrity and performance of the TransNet program.

The membership of the ITOC consists of seven voting members, each of whom represents a specified area of expertise. The terms for the professional licensed architect, civil engineer or traffic engineer category will end on May 2030.¹ The position for a licensed engineer in the field of transportation project design or construction became vacant in June 2025.

Selection Process

The ITOC selection process consists of two steps pursuant to the TransNet Extension Ordinance. First, the Technical Screening Committee reviews applications and recommends candidates for each position. Second, the Selection Committee is asked to consider applications for each position based on recommendations provided by the Technical Screening Committee. For a member eligible to serve for an additional term, an application for reappointment to continue as a member of the ITOC must be submitted.

The TransNet Extension Ordinance states:

1. **Technical Screening Committee:** A Technical Screening Committee will be established to review applications received from interested individuals. This Committee will consist of three members selected by the Executive Director from high-level professional staff of local, regional, state, or federal transportation agencies outside of the San Diego region, or from one of the region's colleges or universities in a transportation-related field, or a combination thereof. The committee will develop a list of candidates determined to be qualified to serve on the ITOC based on the criteria established for the open position(s) on the ITOC. The Technical Screening Committee will recommend two candidates for each open position from the list of qualified candidates for consideration by the Selection Committee. The recommendations shall be made within 30 days of the noticed closing date for applications.
2. **Selection Committee:** A Selection Committee shall be established to select the ITOC members from the list of qualified candidates recommended by the Technical Screening Committee. The Selection Committee shall consist of the following:
 - Two members of the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors
 - The Mayor of the City of San Diego
 - A Mayor from the cities of Chula Vista, Coronado, Imperial Beach, or National City selected by the mayors of those cities.
 - A Mayor from the cities of El Cajon, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, or Santee selected by the mayors of those cities.
 - A Mayor from the cities of Carlsbad, Del Mar, Encinitas, Oceanside, or Solana Beach selected by the mayors of those cities.

¹ The TransNet Extension Ordinance states that "ITOC members shall serve no more than eight years unless the member's first term was less than four years, in which case the member may serve an additional two terms after the partial term. In no case, however, shall any member serve more than ten years on the ITOC."

- A Mayor from the cities of Escondido, Poway, San Marcos, or Vista selected by the mayors of those cities.

The selection of ITOC members shall be made within 30 days of the receipt of recommendations from the Technical Screening Committee. All meetings of the Selection Committee shall be publicly noticed and conducted in full compliance with the requirements of the Brown Act. Should the Selection Committee be unable to reach an agreement on a candidate from the qualified candidates recommended by the Technical Screening Committee, the Selection Committee will request that the Technical Screening Committee recommend two additional qualified candidates for consideration, and the same selection process outlined above for new members will be initiated.

Technical Screening Recommendations

Request for Reappointment

Consistent with the TransNet Extension Ordinance, the ITOC member currently serving in the position below applied by the submittal deadline to continue as a member of the ITOC for Selection Committee approval as follows:

- Francisco Rivera – a licensed architect, civil engineer or traffic engineer with demonstrated experience of ten years or more in the fields of transportation and/or urban design in government or the private sector.

The Technical Screening Committee met on December 17, 2025, and noted that Mr. Rivera has strong qualifications and relevant expertise in his subject matter. The Committee considered Mr. Rivera's attendance record and willingness to participate in various ITOC subcommittees. In addition, Technical Screening Committee members considered the benefits of having experienced members with institutional memory on the ITOC to provide meaningful input informed by their knowledge of the TransNet program over the years.

The Technical Screening Committee recommends the reappointment of Mr. Rivera for consideration by the Selection Committee.

Requests for Appointment

Consistent with the TransNet Extension Ordinance, the Technical Screening Committee held a virtual meeting on December 17, 2025, to review and discuss candidate applications for the vacant ITOC position. A total of four applications were received for the one open position, which requires a licensed engineer with appropriate credentials in the field of transportation project design or construction, and a minimum of ten years of experience in a relevant and senior decision-making position in the government or private sector.

The Technical Screening Committee commented on the well-qualified applications received from all candidates. In its review, the Technical Screening Committee considered factors such as the applicant's quality of responses to the application questions, the depth of each applicant's experience, the level of understanding of the role of ITOC, and the skills the applicant would bring to ITOC.

Consistent with Ordinance provisions, the Technical Screening Committee recommends that the following two candidates be advanced for consideration by the Selection Committee based on their qualifications.

The candidates for the licensed engineer with appropriate credentials in the field of transportation project design or construction are:

- Melanie Estes – The Technical Screening Committee considered Ms. Estes’ substantial experience previously working for Answer Advisory Management as Chief Delivery Officer, overseeing large multidisciplinary project teams with multiple stakeholders, overseeing contracts with public sector clients, and having in-depth knowledge of various contract delivery methods.
- Lima Saft – The Technical Screening Committee considered Ms. Saft’s substantial experience previously working for Caltrans, delivering quality Transportation and ITS projects, and promoting and incorporating new technology into current and future projects.

ITOC Term Limits

In 2017, the SANDAG Board of Directors amended the TransNet Extension Ordinance to further stagger ITOC terms to prevent turnover of more than two members at any one time, and to allow members filling mid-term vacancies to serve additional terms (not to exceed a total of ten years). In addition, the TransNet Extension Ordinance amendment acknowledged that if more than two members need to be replaced during the same recruitment period, the Selection Committee would determine the length of each member’s first term to limit concurrent future turnover.

The ITOC member requesting reappointment (a licensed engineer with appropriate credentials in the field of transportation project design or construction) was originally appointed in September 2023. Altogether, Mr. Rivera has served for a total of two years. The proposed new term end dates are also noted.²

Table 1. Proposed Term Limits for ITOC Members

ITOC Member Requesting Reappointment	Francisco Rivera
First Term Start	September 2023
Second Term Start	June 2026
Proposed Term End Date	May 2030

The ITOC member, serving in the capacity of a licensed engineer with appropriate credentials in the field of transportation project design or construction, was reappointed in May 2024 for a four-year term, set to conclude in May 2028. However, after five years of service, this professional resigned from the ITOC due to personal reasons. Based on the proposed term end date of May 2028 for the replacement of the licensed engineer with appropriate credentials in the field of transportation project design or construction category, term limits for all seven ITOC members would be as follows and would ensure term expirations do not result in more than two vacancies at any one time. Alternatively, the Selection Committee could elect to stagger terms differently than proposed below for the professional in the management of large-scale construction projects as shown in grey cells.

² In accordance with the TransNet Extension Ordinance, ITOC members are to serve a term of four years, except that appointments may be less than four years to ensure the terms of the ITOC members are sufficiently staggered. The TransNet Extension Ordinance also states that ITOC members shall serve no more than eight years unless the member’s first term was less than four years, in which case the member may serve an additional two terms after the partial term. In no case, however, shall any member serve more than ten years on the ITOC.

Table 2. Term Limits for All ITOC Members

Term expiring May 2026 (Proposed Re-appointment)	Terms expiring May 2027	Terms expiring May 2028	Terms expiring May 2029
A licensed architect, civil engineer, or traffic engineer (Francisco Rivera)	A professional in biology or environmental science (Lorraine Ahlquist)	A professional experienced in real estate and land economics (David Santistevan)	A chief executive officer or person in a similar senior-level decision- making position of a major private sector employer (Sunnie House)
	A professional in the field of municipal/public finance and/or budgeting (Maryam Babaki)	A licensed engineer with appropriate credentials in the field of transportation project design or construction (Vacant)	A professional in the management of large- scale construction projects (Jacqueline Appleton- Deane)