



JOEL ANDERSON
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: April 22, 2025

09

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT:

ADVANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ENGAGEMENT BY EXTENDING AGENDA REVIEW TIME (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego's (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) holds regular bi-weekly sessions to address a wide range of community matters, enabling informed discussions, decision-making, and public participation. Meeting agendas are made available to the public in advance, in compliance with legal requirements, promoting transparency and inclusivity. However, there is an opportunity to enhance transparency and accessibility by extending the time for stakeholders to access and analyze agenda items. Other jurisdictions follow similar practices, allowing the public more time for review and input.

For residents of unincorporated areas, attending Board meetings at the County Administration Center (CAC) presents significant challenges. The drive alone can take over three hours, particularly during peak traffic hours, to arrive by the 9:00 AM start time. Public transportation is often not a viable alternative, as limited routes connecting rural communities to downtown San Diego require multiple transfers and result in travel times that also exceed three hours. Additionally, some bus and trolley services begin operating only shortly before the start of Board meetings, making it nearly impossible for residents to arrive on time. Residents who work traditional business hours must also request time off, creating financial and logistical burdens, particularly for hourly workers. Despite remote alternatives like calling in and submitting electronic comments, challenges remain for backcountry residents during Public Safety Power Shutoffs. The inability to participate in real-time limits their engagement and effective communication, significantly restricting public involvement in the decision-making process.

By extending the agenda review period, residents would have more time to analyze agenda items, make necessary arrangements, and ensure their voices are heard in the democratic process. Various jurisdictions, including the California Legislature and other cities and counties, employ similar practices, granting the public extended periods to review legislative and policy items before governing bodies cast their votes. In addition to the Legislature, which requires bills to be introduced and in print for a minimum of thirty days before they can be acted upon, other

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jurisdictions provide anywhere from seven to ten days for public review, emphasizing the importance of transparency and public access in decision-making processes. By adopting such best practices, the County of San Diego can continue to lead in promoting transparency and facilitating public participation.

To further strengthen transparency and public engagement, today's action proposes adjusting the Board agenda process, providing the community with more time to review and contribute to discussions on proposed items before they are voted upon by the Board. This aligns with the County's commitment to open governance and encourages a broader range of perspectives to shape Board decisions.

RECOMMENDATION

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to investigate the potential to adjust the current process for publicly posting Board of Supervisors (Board) meeting agendas to provide the public additional time to review items that will be considered and voted upon during Board meetings and report back to the Board in 180 days with recommendations. The analysis should include an assessment of additional public notice times up to and including 30 days before consideration at a Board meeting.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

By extending the amount of time the public has to review Board of Supervisors meeting agendas and related materials, we create a more accessible process for underserved individuals who may have limited access to technology, mobility issues or other challenges and need additional time to comprehensively review agenda items. This inclusivity ensures that all community members, regardless of their background or ability, can engage actively and contribute their perspectives.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

A more informed and engaged public contributes to social sustainability. By providing stakeholders the time and information necessary to provide meaningful input on matters of public interest, we nurture a sense of trust, responsibility, and shared commitment to the well-being of our community.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

By fostering transparency, promoting informed decision-making, and strengthening civic engagement, today's action aligns with the County of San Diego's strategic goals and demonstrates its commitment to accountable and inclusive governance practices.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

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The County of San Diego (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) convenes regular Board sessions generally held on a bi-weekly basis, with sessions typically occurring every other Tuesday and Wednesday to address a diverse array of issues that impact the County and its residents. During these sessions, Board Members discuss a wide range of topics, including budget, policy, legislative, planning and land use matters. These meetings offer an opportunity for Board Members to obtain information from County departments, engage in informed conversations, deliberate on proposed actions, and make decisions that set the direction of the County. Additionally, these meetings allow residents, stakeholders, and others to participate in the democratic process by providing input, expressing opinions, and gaining insight into the decision-making processes that affect their daily lives. By adhering to this consistent meeting schedule, the Board ensures that it remains accessible and responsive to the evolving needs and concerns of the community it serves.

In preparation for each Board meeting, the County makes the agenda available to the public six days before the meeting, on the Wednesday preceding the scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday Board sessions. Any changes to the agenda, such as revisions to items or the addition of urgent items are posted on the Friday preceding the scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday Board sessions. By publicly posting the agendas and making them available on the County’s website, the County adheres to a timeframe in compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act, California’s open meeting law.

The agenda docketing and posting requirements are described in the following policies:

1. County of San Diego Administrative Code Section 503
2. Board of Supervisors Rules of Procedure, Rules 1 and 2, and
3. Board of Supervisors Policy A-72, “Board of Supervisors’ Agenda and Related Processes”

Although the current process aligns with legal requirements and provides the public a slightly larger window of time to review the items to be considered by the Board, an opportunity exists to amplify transparency and accessibility by granting stakeholders a greater extended period to access and analyze the agenda items. By posting Board meeting information further in advance of the meeting, we can offer the public more time to review proposed items, identify potential changes, and communicate more thorough input to the Board. This change would reflect the County’s commitment to inclusive, accessible and transparent governance, as it would allow for a broader range of perspectives to be considered during Board discussions.

Attending Board meetings can present significant challenges for residents in the unincorporated areas, many of whom must travel long distances to reach the County Administration Center (CAC). Public transportation is not a viable alternative for many, as routes connecting rural communities to downtown San Diego are limited, requiring multiple transfers and extending travel times well beyond three hours. According to San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) data, residents in unincorporated areas often require at least two transfers between buses and trolleys. Many of these bus routes have infrequent service, and some first trips do not begin until after 6:00 AM, making it nearly impossible to arrive at the meeting on time. Even those who can utilize early transit face long wait times at transfer points, adding significant delays.

Even for those with personal vehicles, travel remains a significant barrier. Residents in Borrego Springs must drive approximately 99 miles, with an estimated travel time of 120 to 170 minutes

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under normal conditions. Other rural communities, such as Julian (70–90 minutes), Jacumba (65–100 minutes), and Potrero (50–90 minutes), experience similarly lengthy travel times, further exacerbating accessibility challenges. Additionally, traffic congestion along Interstates 8, 15, and 5 regularly causes substantial delays during morning rush hours, making the commute even longer.

The burden extends beyond travel logistics. Many residents who work traditional business hours must request time off either for travel to the CAC or to call into the Board’s sometimes lengthy meetings, creating financial and logistical hardships, particularly for hourly workers. Further complicating civic engagement, backcountry residents frequently experience communication blackouts during Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), preventing them from submitting electronic comments or calling in to provide testimony.

Providing additional time for agenda review is critical to ensuring that all residents, particularly those in unincorporated and working-class communities, have the opportunity to participate effectively in the democratic process. Many residents must plan their schedules in advance, including arranging transportation, coordinating childcare, or requesting time off work. Without sufficient notice, many individuals are effectively excluded from the decision-making process.

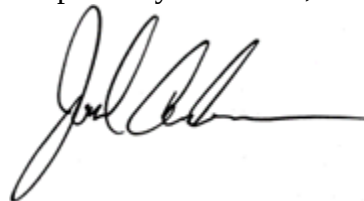
There is precedent by other jurisdictions to provide the public more time to review legislative and policy items before their governing bodies vote on the items. For example, the California Legislature requires bills to be introduced and in print for a minimum of thirty days before they can be acted upon. Additionally, some cities and counties in California provide the public anywhere from seven to ten days to review items before they are voted on, in addition to several using a committee system that provides for additional public review and opportunities for input. Locally, there are special districts that provide the public seven to ten days before considering agenda items. By employing best practices, the County of San Diego has an opportunity to continue to lead on the issue of transparency and public access.

Today’s action recommends adjusting the Board agenda process to provide the public additional time to review agenda items, thereby strengthening transparency and engagement. This will empower the public to contribute more effectively to discussions about proposed items before they are voted upon by the Board.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

By offering an extended window for the public to review and provide input on agenda items, this proposal aligns with the Strategic Action Plan 2025-2030 and reinforces the plan's core principles of engagement, inclusivity, transparency, accountability, efficient government operations, and a community-centric approach.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel B. [unclear]", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

ATTACHMENTS:
N/A