Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Administration Committee

September 10, 2025 **Agenda Item 4h-25-1130**

Contract Amendment (Sole Source) – KneeDeep Times e-Magazine Production: Ariel Rubissow Okamoto, Editor ($95,000)

Subject:

Bay Area Regional Collaborative (BARC) staff requests the Committee's approval to negotiate and execute a contract amendment with Ariel Okamoto, KneeDeep Times editor, to add $95,000 for a total contact amount not to exceed $295,000 for a one-year extension of KneeDeep Times monthly issue publications from September 1, 2025 through August 30, 2026.

Background:

BARC is a collaborative of regional and state agencies created by state legislature to coordinate on crosscutting regional issues affecting more than one agency. BARC is staffed by MTC, via a memorandum of understanding with the Association of Bay Area Governments, Bay Area Air District, and the BAy Conservation and Development Commission. Since 2021 by Joint Resolution of the BARC Governing Board, BARC has focused on climate resilience and adaptation. While BARC uses inter-agency collaboration to make the regional response to climate change more effective, there is also critical need for public awareness and engagement on these issues.

KneeDeep Times is a digital publication of in-depth journalism focused on local and regional responses to a variety of climate hazards, climate change adaptation planning and practices. Pending committee approval to add another year of funding, this will be the third year of BARC's support to incubate this publication, whose readership is growing every year. BARC sees this investment in the *KneeDeep Times* as advancing climate literacy, sharing information on effective practices, and lifting up opportunities for multi-objective planning to increase climate resilience across the region as we collectively confront the on-going impacts of climate change. Importantly, this year KneeDeep Times intends to build stronger relationships with BARC member agencies to generate articles highlighting the efforts, progress, challenges, and opportunities of regional agencies in this space.

The KneeDeep Times is a non-profit enterprise with issues free to the public. It is managed by Ariel Okamoto, a trusted journalist who has worked on Bay Area environmental issues for decades. She served as the editor in chief for the Estuary Magazine, which was a long-time publication of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership.

The original sole-source procurement was for compelling business reasons because there is no other comparable publication focused on these issues in this region, particularly in its attention to frontline communities and community voices. This proposed amendment would extend the contract for one additional year from September 1, 2025, through August 31, 2026 and add $95,000 with a total not to exceed $295,000. The BARC Governing Board approved budget for fiscal Year 2025-2026 included $85,000 for KneeDeep Times. BARC anticipates an additional $10,000 interagency contribution to the contract agreement from the San Francisco Estuary Partnership.

BARC believes its relatively modest investment in *KneeDeep Times* provides the foundation for a long-lived publication that will only become more relevant to more people as the region confronts the impacts of climate change.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Staff recommends that the Committee authorize the Executive Director or designee to negotiate and enter into a contract amendment with Ariel Rubbisow Okamoto in an amount not to exceed $95,000 for KneeDeep Times publications from September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2026.

Attachments:

- Request for Committee Approval – Summary of Proposed Contract Amendment

Andrew B. Fremier

Request for Committee Approval

Summary of Proposed Contract Amendment

Work Item No.:	1612
Consultant:	Ariel Rubissow Okamoto San Francisco, CA
Work Project Title:	KneeDeep Times Magazine
Purpose of Project:	Public Outreach and Education for Climate Literacy and Resilience
Brief Scope of Work:	**Publish one year of monthly issues (12) of KneeDeep Times, a free on-line magazine covering climate resilience stories**
Project Cost Not to Exceed:	This amendment: $95,000 Previous amount: $200,000 Total approved contract amount based on this action: $295,000
Funding Source:	BARC receives funding from its four formal member agencies. This contract amendment will continue to split the costs evenly between MTC General Fund, 3900 and Air District, 3144 (contributions.
Fiscal Impact:	BARC Governing Board approved this budget amount for KneeDeep Times for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 on April 18, 2025.
Motion by Committee:	That the Executive Director or designee is authorized to negotiate and enter into a contract amendment with Ariel Okamoto for publishing twelve issues of *KneeDeep Times* described above and in the Administration Committee Summary Sheet dated September 10, 2025 and that the Chief Financial Officer is authorized to set aside $95,000 for such amendment.
Administration Committee:	Gina Papan, Chair
Approved:	September 10, 2025