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MEMORANDUM

TO: Tony Boren
Marla Day
Barbara Steck

FROM: Len Simon

SUBJECT: 2010 Fresno COG “One Voice”: *Observations and Recommendations*

DATE: May 5, 2010

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with the 2010 Fresno COG “One Voice” delegation. I feel compelled to invoke Dickens by saying “*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times*”. In other words, I thought our run-up to the “One Voice” from the fall planning period right up until the days before was the best of the efforts we’ve undertaken over the years, while the cancellation because of Washington’s record-breaking week long snow emergency made it the worst, because it really was a great agenda!

However, even from calamity there is always something to learn so I’m please to make some observations and recommendations based on the total experience:

- (1) A Later Date. As we’ve discussed, prudence suggests that we plan the 2011 “One Voice” a bit later in the year. I’m pleased that the COG has moved in that direction focusing on the last week in February. I predict excellent weather.
- (2) A New Congress. The additional 2-3 weeks will also give us time to work with a new Congress elected this November which may be significantly different that the one we have dealt with in the last two years;
- (3) New Delegation Member. Specifically, with the retirement of Rep. Radanovich, we know for sure that there will be a new member of the Fresno area delegation. Consequently, additional time to work with him and his staff, whoever he is, to orient him to “One Voice”, will be quite helpful.
- (4) Mix of Congress and the Administration. The agenda for 2010 “One Voice”, outside of our own delegation, concentrated very strongly on the Obama Administration and its major new initiatives. In 2011, as the Administration heads

into its third year, we recommend that the agenda reflect a mixture of the executive branch agencies and the White House.

- (5) Policy and Grants. Earmarks continue to be contentious. With Reps. Nunes and Radanovich choosing not to do earmarks this year – along with the entire House Republican Caucus - there was a major chunk of the COG agenda which we could not practically discuss with them. We don't know yet if the Caucus position will be extended next year. But to be on the safe side, our agenda should be equally divided between *projects, grants and policy*.
- (6) New Initiatives. The Obama Administration has been prolific in recent weeks in the roll-out of new initiatives – Sustainable Communities, Livable Communities, Challenge Grants, Promise Neighborhoods TIGER II, and Smart Growth among the most prominent. We recommend that COG do an inventory in the fall of which of its members and participants are seeking funding under these programs to help steer the agenda for February.
- (7) Economic Recovery. If the past is prologue, there will still be lots of interest in February on how each of the individual communities is doing regarding economic recovery. We recommend that COG undertake to help participants organize an “Economic Recovery Profile” focusing on core statistics on how their communities are doing and what they have received to date under the Recovery Act.
- (8) Briefing Book. I was impressed as to how streamlined and compact the COG Briefing Book was in 2010 in comparison to previous years. I think that approach is a good one and should be continued for 2011.
- (9) The Year of Projects. 2011 could be the “perfect storm” year for projects, with congress considering bills for transportation, water resources and appropriations each with its own call for projects and separate criteria and considerations for inclusion. “One Voice” will need to be judicious and careful in the selection and promotion of these projects.
- (10) Presentations. We recommend that the COG provide its “Briefing Book” to Congressional staff and others on a CD or flash stick in addition to hard copy so that it is easier for the congressional staff to utilize them in for subsequent purposes.

We hope that you find this information helpful as you begin to think about “One Voice” 2011. Please let us know if you have any questions or if we may be of further assistance.

We look forward to talking with you soon.