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MEMORANDUM

To: **Tony Boren**
Executive Director

Date: January 31, 2011

Subject: **Status report for January 2010, going forward**

The intent of the present document is to provide you with a **Status Report** regarding SRI's activities in January 2011 and our activities going forward.

I'm presently involved in two major projects for Fresno COG; Transit Consolidation and Farmland Conservation; plus, one major project for the City of Reedley, which is a member of the COG. Other projects will be forthcoming as directed by Fresno COG's Executive Director, of course.

Transit Consolidation in Fresno County:

As mandated through Measure C, Fresno COG was directed to conduct a comprehensive study to determine whether or not it is practical, or even feasible, to consolidate the three primary public transit agencies in Fresno County. The three Agencies are: (i) the City of Fresno's, Fresno FAX; (ii) the City of Clovis', Clovis Transit Service (Stageline and Round Up); and (iii) Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA).

The idea that underlies transit consolidation in Fresno County is to create a seamless regional transit system to make it possible for people to traverse (navigate) from any point in the County to any destination in the County with minimal inconvenience and at a reasonable cost. Beyond providing seamless transportation, the intent is to minimize and/or eliminate the duplication of services among agencies; thus, maximizing the ROI (*return on investment*) of tax dollars earmarked for public transportation. In fact, creating a regional transit system is a center piece of the **Blue Print** effort, which is being designed to enhance mass transit throughout the Central Valley and beyond.

Toward that end, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, a transportation planning firm headquartered in San Francisco, was retained to handle the technical aspects of the feasibility study. Under the direction Paul Jewel, a questionnaire was developed and submitted to each of the three agencies; this Instrument was designed to secure the 'intelligence'

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needed for comparing the three transit agencies on specific dimensions...which is necessary in order to develop a model for basing a **Go, No-Go Decision** regarding Transit Consolidation in Fresno County.

An **Exploratory Committee** was formed, simultaneously; this Committee is comprised mostly of professional staff who have expertise in public transit. Members include:

- ☑ Fresno COG, **Tony Boren**, Executive Director
- ☑ Fresno COG/City of Fresno; **John Downs**
- ☑ Fresno FAX; **Ken Hamm**
- ☑ City of Clovis; **Shonna Halterman**, Clovis Transit Service (*Stageline and Round Up*)
- ☑ Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA), **Jeff Webster**
- ☑ Southwest Transportation Agency and Chair of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint, **Kirk Hunter**
- ☑ SRI, **Gary Manross**, facilitator and consensus building

Two Workshops are being planned; each Workshop will culminate with a **Go, No-Go recommendation**, which will be submitted to the Executive Director of COG, Tony Boren; and subsequently to the PAC and Fresno COG's Policy Board.

The first Workshop is scheduled for February 4, 2011; thus, it will have been conducted by the time I report, in person, to the PAC and Board meetings on February 11th and 24th, respectively. I will plan on providing a brief overview of the outcome of Workshop 1 when I make my in-person presentation to the PAC and the Board in February; I will submit a comprehensive report of Workshop 1 as part of next month's Status Report.

The composition of Workshop 1 is being limited to the members of the Exploratory Committee. Nelson\Nygaard has, in hand, the feedback from the three transit agencies; as of the writing of the present status report, Nelson/Nygaard has completed the preparation of the materials that will be presented and discussed at this workshop.

If this workshop results in a recommendation NOT to move forward, then the feasibility study will be concluded. If this workshop results in a recommendation to move forward, then the Exploratory Committee will be renamed to **Formation Committee** and expanded to include representatives of Fresno County, each of the 15 Cities in Fresno County, various special interest organizations (e.g., the BIA, Chamber of Commerce, Sierra Club), and others who see themselves stakeholders in Transit Consolidation in Fresno County and want to be part of the process. The second Workshop will then be orchestrated and, as with Workshop 1, will culminate with a **Go, No-Go Decision**.

As you know, I will be facilitating BOTH Workshops. Also, assuming a 'Go' decision, I will be orchestrating and facilitating individual meetings with a host of stakeholders agencies, groups, and organizations who want to be made aware of, and weigh in on, any move toward transit consolidation in Fresno County. This is where SRI's expertise in **CONSENSUS BUILDING** will be in play, much like with Measure C. Of course, in addition to facilitating Workshop 1 and Workshop 2, I will record the minutes of both Workshops and submit them to you for Fresno COG's permanent records.

Farmland Conservation:

Version 1 of a Research Instrument (questionnaire) has been completed for a scientific, BENCHMARK survey of registered voters in Fresno County (much like the BENCHMARK survey conducted for Measure C). Part of this exercise is formalizing the **Model for Farmland Conservation** that came out of the Exploratory Stage of the study; the voter survey will be the final element, which will determine whether or not SRI will recommend moving forward with the effort aimed at Farmland Conservation or shelve this notion for the foreseeable future.

At the present time, a Review Committee is being formed, which will review the Research Instrument and make recommendations for enhancements to the Instrument BEFORE fielding the scientific survey. As you know, I have recommended the following people to be invited to serve on the Review Committee: yourself; Ed Thompson of the American Farmland Trust; John Wright, principal of Planning Wright and former Director of Planning for the City of Clovis; Ryan Jacobsen, Executive Director/CEO of the Fresno County Farm Bureau; Sayre Miller, McFarlane Farms; Sean Stevenson, Harlan Ranch; Jerry Prieto, Former Ag Commissioner for Fresno County; and Carol Hafner, present Ag Commissioner for Fresno County; Mike Prandini, CEO of the Building Industry Association of San Joaquin Valley, and Lynn Gorman, Deputy Director of Planning for Fresno County. Perhaps you will invite others to serve on this review committee.

When we enter the field will depend upon how long it takes for those on the Review Committee to review the questionnaire and resolve any concerns that surface through this process. My sense is that this process will result in 3 or 4 iterations of the Research Instrument; at least, that's typically the case (although, given the emotional link to Farmland Conservation by the various stakeholder groups/organization, this may take longer than normal).

Fortunately, as noted in prior status reports, there is NOT a huge pressure for making a 'Go, No-Go' decision, since the depressed economy in the State has slowed the form of development in the Central Valley that is threatening the region's farmland. That said, we are moving forward with this process in the most expedient manner possible.

Once we have this "intelligence" in hand, we will be prepared to make a recommendation of what amounts to a '**Go or NO-Go**' decision. At that point in time, all of the "intelligence" gathered, to date, will be synthesized, analyzed, and a recommendation made whether or not Farmland Conservation should be moved forward.

The feasibility study will culminate with a comprehensive report.

Serving the smaller Cities, who are members of Fresno COG:

SRI continues to work with specific members of Fresno COG; in particular, the smaller cities which do NOT have the resources to commission the types of professional services that SRI brings to the proverbial table. Most of this work is being provided on a pro bono basis; where that's not possible, SRI only passes through it's out-of-pocket expenses...which amounts to granting a 40% to 50% discount for the professional services.

At the present time, for example, we are assisting the City of Reedley address certain fiscal challenges being faced, today; in particular, with the City's LMD (Landscape Maintenance District). We have completed a scientific survey of property owners in Reedley; I have DEBRIEFED the City Manager and the City's Department Heads of the *findings* from this scientific survey; I will be DEBRIEFING City Council later this month. Our report concludes with specific conclusions and recommendations for how best to move forward. SRI will continue to partner with the City on a pro bono basis, going forward.

To date, we have conducted two projects for the City of Mendota, having to do with assisting them create their own City Police Department; we worked with the City of Huron; we'll be meeting with the City Manager of the City of San Joaquin in the near future, to name but three. We will continue to assist members of Fresno COG in a variety of ways that bring to the members professional services that would otherwise not be feasible.

2011 One Voice:

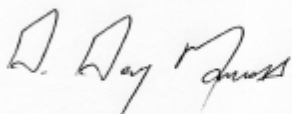
As we have for the last two years, SRI will be one of the co-sponsors for the annual **One Voice** trip to Washington, D.C., where Fresno COG members meet with members of Congress, among others, in an effort advance the collective interests of constituents throughout Fresno County and the region (Central Valley). As before, I will join the delegation who will be traveling to Washington, D.C. from February 26th thru March 3rd.

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley:

SRI is still anticipating working with **The Partnership**, under the direction of Mike Dozier, Executive Director, to assist the organization in realizing specific goals, objectives, and expectations that are consistent with the professional expertise and resources that our Institute brings to the proverbial table. We will pursue this effort once we have our present projects a bit further along, since the work being envisioned is intense (in terms of SRI manpower required) and the fact that these professional services will be provided on a pro bono basis.

Of course, there are other projects that SRI will be asked to work on. However, the above projects are those that are on the front burner. If you have any questions and/or comments you would like to share, please know that I'm telephone close and I monitor my e-mails quite closely.

Respectfully submitted,



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