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MEMORANDUM

To: **Tony Boren**
Executive Director

Date: March 28, 2011

Subject: **Status report for March 2011, going forward**

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

At the present time, I'm involved in three (3) major projects on behalf of Fresno COG:

- High Speed Rail,
- Farmland Conservation,
- Transit Consolidation.

Beyond that, I'm assisting the City of Reedley, which is a member of the COG, in advancing a funding measure at the earliest possible moment; and the City of Mendota, with an outreach program designed to inform local constituents of the significant accomplishments of its City Police Department, since its inception, approximately one year ago. Other projects will be forthcoming as directed by Fresno COG's Executive Director, of course.

I will speak, briefly, to each of the three major projects on behalf of Fresno COG.

Creators of the...



High Speed Rail:

I have been asked to assist with CONSENSUS BUILDING among stakeholders with regard to the High Speed Rail Project; in particular, with the Agriculture Industry. This effort has two components:

1. Work to facilitate consensus with the agricultural community in Fresno County as it relates to High Speed Rail';
2. Assist the **Fresno Works** media team in developing a proactive message media strategy as it relates to High Speed Rail.

At the present time, a meeting is being set up with members of the "Fresno Works" Subcommittee of HSR. These include: Tony Boren, Executive Director of COG; Lee Ann Eager, EDC; Allie Rodriguez, Supervisor

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An Institute for CONSENSUS BUILDING

Henry Perea's Office; Brenda Veenendaal, Fresno COG Public Information Officer; and Bryn Forhan, California High Speed Rail Authority. The primary focus of the upcoming meeting will be to ensure that our "consensus building effort" in Fresno County is in "sync" with the outreach the High Speed Rail Authority staff currently has underway.

Not only does this assignment capitalize upon the expertise that SRI brings to the table with respect to CONSENSUS BUILDING and public affairs (public outreach and media relations), but it takes advantage of the work that we've been doing over the past year and a half involving Farmland Conservation in Fresno County. Through these efforts, I've personally met with many (if not most) of the *influentials* within the County's Agriculture Community.

Farmland Conservation:

As noted in last month's status report, 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). We formed a Review Committee for the expressed purpose of reviewing the Research Instrument and making recommendations for enhancements to the Instrument BEFORE fielding the scientific survey.

The individuals who were invited to serve on this committee were: **Tony Boren**, Fresno COG; **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; **Shawn 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, **Ed Thompson** of the American Farmland Trust; and, **Lynn Gorman**, Deputy Director of Planning for Fresno County.

The committee met on March 16th, reviewed the Instrument, and provided me with feedback and constructive recommendations. I'm inputting these changes and enhancements to the Instrument at the present time and will submit Version 2 to Tony Boren within the next day or two. Tony will secure additional input from specific members of the Review Committee; once he is satisfied with the Instrument, the study will be fielded. From the time we enter the field with the scientific survey, we will have *findings* within approximately 4 weeks.

At that point in time, I will be prepared to formalize the **Farmland Conservation Model** that is being 'tested' in the upcoming survey, which will lead to the next, and final phase of the process. That final phase will involve working through the various elements of a Farmland Conservation Model, which will lead to a '**Go, No-Go**' recommendation being submitted to Tony for consideration by the PAC and the Policy Board.

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.

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' 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 were planned; each Workshop was intended to culminate with a **Go, No-Go recommendation**; if the recommendation from Workshop 1 was a 'No-Go', then it would be submitted to the Executive Director of COG, Tony Boren and subsequently to the PAC and Fresno COG's Policy Board. If the recommendation from Workshop 1 was a 'Go'...then we would proceed to Workshop 2.

The first Workshop was held in February. **Paul Jewel** and his team presented the findings, to date, and made specific recommendations. This led to a lively and extremely constructive discussion among operators. Not surprisingly, **questions surfaced** from the Operators that merit additional investigation; Paul and his team members are addressing these question now. Once **Nelson\Nygaard** has had an opportunity to address the questions that came out of Workshop 1, we

will convene once again; and the first Go-No Go recommendation will be made. As noted above, depending on the outcome of the next workshop, a decision will be made to move on to Workshop 2, or to recommend a 'No-Go' and the exercise will be terminated.

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.

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.

To date, we have conducted two projects for the City of Mendota, having to do with assisting them in creating their own City Police Department; and, we will begin another project involving public outreach in the near future. We've conducted two projects for the City of Reedley; one of these projects (having to do with fiscal stabilization) should continue when the economy begins to show recovery. We've worked with the City of Huron; I have reason to believe that we'll be meeting with the City Manager of the City of San Joaquin in the near future; and, we'll be talking with the City of Orange Cove, soon. 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 were 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 in prior years, I joined the delegation who traveled 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.

Warmest regards,



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