2011 Legislative Platform

Fresno Council of Governments

THE PURPOSE OF THE 2011 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The Fresno COG, in coordination with our member agencies, has established a 2011 Legislative Platform that reflects the current priorities of the Fresno COG in state and federal legislative matters. The Legislative Platform represents a unified voice when communicating legislative priorities to our state and federal legislators as well as to relevant state and federal agencies. It also provides guidance to the Fresno COG staff and our lobbying partners when advocating on behalf of the Policy Board.

The goal of the Legislative Platform is to have a document in place that outlines the legislative priorities of our region that will direct advocacy efforts for improvements in areas such as air quality, transportation mobility, and regional prosperity that will ultimately contribute to an improved quality of life throughout Fresno County.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

• Protect and enhance current funding levels for transportation-related programs.

• Continue to advocate for transportation-related improvements in state and federal legislation that build sustainable communities and facilitate economic development.

• Continue to coordinate advocacy efforts with our local and regional partners to advance common goals and shared interests that will contribute significantly to an improved quality of life for Fresno County residents.

MEMBER AGENCY PRIORITIES

• Advocate for legislative priorities that are consistent with our identified general principles throughout the year by our local member agencies and agreed upon by the Fresno COG Policy Board.

• Pursue state and federal programs that contribute to economic development and support economic recovery.

ONE VOICE ADVOCACY EFFORTS

• Support Federal Surface Transportation Program and FY 2011 Federal appropriation requests for Fresno COG One Voice projects and priorities.

• Continue to pursue state support for the projects and policy issues identified through the Fresno COG One Voice efforts.

VALLEY VOICE ADVOCACY EFFORTS

• Support Federal Surface Transportation Program authorizations and FY 2011 Federal appropriation requests for the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council's Valley Voice projects and priorities.

• Continue to pursue state support for the projects and policy issues identified through the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council's Valley Voice efforts.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

FUNDING - FEDERAL

Actively participate with Caltrans and other interests on the development of state and national consensus principles and priorities that will be favorable to the Fresno County region for the next Federal Surface Transportation Bill anticipated in 2011.

FUNDING - STATE

Support legislation to implement and maximize Fresno County's regional share of bond funding provided by Proposition 1B (includes 99 Corridor improvements and local match programs), and Proposition 84 (includes the sustainable communities and climate change reduction grants).

FUNDING – LOCAL

• Support efforts to reward self-help counties in funding programs and policies.

• Support legislation that lowers the threshold required to pass transportation initiatives to 55%.

• Support legislation that includes the use of design/build, public/private partnerships, and other innovative financing for transportation infrastructure projects.

HIGH SPEED RAIL

• Support federal and state funding for the development of the high-speed rail system in California.

• Support location of High-Speed Rail heavy maintenance facility in the City of Fresno or Fresno area consistent with Fresno County's Expression of Interest.

• Support the Central Valley segment of the high-speed rail system being completed first since its construction is not as complex or costly as other alternatives.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

• Promote the inclusion of transportation and other types of infrastructure funding in any state and federal proposal for an economic stimulus package.

• Support policies that create the skilled and labor ready work force that Fresno County desperately needs to combat high rates of unemployment and poverty of Fresno County residents.

• Remove policy obstacles to the regional economy as a whole, and direct jobs-creation provisions, including a direct wage subsidy for small businesses to create jobs and grants to retrofit public buildings.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

SENATE BILL 375 (2008)

Develop more achievable greenhouse gas (GHG) emission targets than those adopted by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The CARB targets were not based on the best information available from the SJV regions. The SJV urges the CARB to work in conjunction with the Valley MPOs and with the best methodology available to reevaluate the targets in 2012 or earlier.

Enourage legislation and implementation guidelines related to SB 375 that advance Fresno County's transportation and land use goals.

Advocate for additional funding under Proposition 84 and other sources, to adequately assist Regional Transportation Planning Agencies and local governments in implementation of SB 375.

Advocate for expansion of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining for transportation projects that are consistent with a Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Advocate for local agencies to be able to use the EIRs and EISs prepared for the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy when performing project-level CEQA analysis for transportation projects. This will reduce the analytical burden and cost for transportation projects and eliminate duplication of effort.

BLUEPRINT PLANNING

• Support consistent and ongoing funding in the state budget for the implementation of regional blueprints.

• Support consistency with regional blueprints as a major factor in allocating bond funds from state agencies and in developing legislation and state policies on climate change.

PROCESS STREAMLINING

Support legislation and/or administrative reforms to streamline the federal and state government's project delivery process and to eliminate unnecessary and/or duplicative requirements.

AIR QUALITY

Seek the establishment of a new San Joaquin Valley designation as an Air Quality Enterprise/Empowerment Zone at the state and federal levels.

WATER

• Water is currently the most critical issue being faced by the San Joaquin Valley. The San Joaquin Valley needs the support and partnership of State and Federal legislators, and water management and infrastructure agencies as we work through the complex issues surrounding water supply, reliability, and quality.

• The region relies on a combination of ground water pumping and surface water deliveries to supply its water needs, which are crucial to Fresno County's and the San Joaquin Valley's ag-based economies.

• The successes or failures of the agricultural industry reverberate throughout the regional economy.

• The loss of surface water supplies over the last decade, especially the last two years of drought exacerbated by pumping restrictions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, have put a tremendous strain on the agricultural economy and the communities it supports.

• As drought and Delta pumping restrictions reduce surface water supplies, increased pumping pressures are placed on groundwater supplies, risking the long-term reliability and quality of these crucial water sources.

ENERGY

Support the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley's Energy Development advocacy efforts. Their mission is to promote energy use efficiencies and adoption of clean, renewable energy technologies to ensure a reliable supply, grow the economy, and improve air quality.

ABOUT THE FRESNO COG

OUR ROLE:

The Fresno Council of Governments, better known as Fresno COG, brings together mayors, city council members and county supervisors to work on regional issues for Fresno County. Since its inception in 1969, Fresno COG has primarily acted as the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for Fresno County. Fresno COG functions as both the state designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency and for federal purposes, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

ORGANIZATION:

A 16-member Policy Board gives Fresno COG policy direction. The Board consists of the mayors from each of the 15 incorporated cities in Fresno County and the Chairman of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors. Fresno COG offers each of these agencies an opportunity to come together on a level playing field to discuss and resolve transportation and related air quality issues that go beyond their own jurisdictional boundaries.

REGIONAL PROFILE:

Fresno County is classified as an urban county (despite many rural characteristics) and is located in the Central San Joaquin Valley within the state of California. Fresno County is the first most populous county and second geographically largest county in the San Joaquin Valley, encompassing approximately 6,000 square miles. With $5.4 billion a year in commercial crop production it is the nation's leading farm county. The January 2010 population of 953,761 places Fresno as the tenth most populous of the 58 California counties and the City of Fresno is the fifth most populous city in the state, with a population of 502,303. There are fifteen incorporated cities and the county contains a federally-recognized urbanized area – the Fresno Clovis Metropolitan Area – with a January 2010 population of 683,000.

FRESNO COG POLICY BOARD

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Vice-Chair: Mayor David Cardenas ..... City of Fowler
Mayor Jose Flores ..... City of Clovis
Mayor Ron Lander ..... City of Coalinga
Mayor Chris DeFrancesco ..... City of Firebaugh
Mayor Ashley Swearengin ..... City of Fresno
Supervisor Judy Case ..... County of Fresno
Mayor Sylvia Chavez ..... City of Huron
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Mayor Mary Fast ..... City of Reedley
Mayor Joshua Mitchell ..... City of Sanger
Mayor Kenneth Grey ..... City of Selma

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