



*Supporting the economic, social and environmental
well-being of California's Central Valley.*

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Ms. Sunne Wright McPeak
Secretary
CA Business Transportation & Housing Agency
980 Ninth Street Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814 2742

Dr. Alan C. Lloyd
Secretary
CA Environmental Protection Agency
1001 I Street 12th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814 2828

Dear Secretaries McPeak and Lloyd:

The Great Valley Center is a nonprofit agency founded in 1997 to support the economic, social and environmental well-being of California's Great Central Valley. Since its inception, the Center has provided capacity building services to thousands of Valley residents and organizations, helped secure the preservation of thousands of acres of prime farmland, provided more than 600 Valley elected officials, community organizers and youth with leadership training, published a series of annual indicator reports measuring the economic, environmental, health, community well-being and educational condition and status of the Valley, and provided resources and facilitation services directed toward a variety of Valley issues and constituencies. Currently, the Great Valley Center is engaged in the Highway 99 improvement process and has assisted in regional transportation planning efforts within the Central Valley.

California's efforts to improve goods movement throughout our state directly impact this region, and especially the San Joaquin Valley. The Great Valley Center supports the State's plans to improve Highway 99 contained in the Goods Movement Plan, but strongly urges an expedited effort to facilitate improvements beyond those contained in the report. In fact, while we share the State's desire to improve transportation infrastructure adjacent to our ports, we consider a high priority to be overall improvement of the Highway 99 corridor. Providing necessary fixes to the port regions only exacerbates the conditions in the San Joaquin Valley if improvements for that area are delayed. While planned improvements to the corridor also help facilitate goods movement, the funding for many of the projects has not been identified or committed and is likely to only be available by pooling a variety of resources. This is why it is critical that the San Joaquin Valley issues be equally represented at the table and any resources designated for goods movement include funding for Highway 99 improvements.

Transportation infrastructure improvements in the San Joaquin Valley have been neglected for too long. Highway 99 is just one example of this infrastructure shortfall, but its improvement is the key element in a long-term solution to the challenges facing the San Joaquin Valley. .

Let's look at some facts:

- The San Joaquin Valley is the fastest growing area in California, with a population growth rate greater than that of Mexico.
- The San Joaquin Valley region ranks lowest in the nation in terms of federal investment per capita, beating even the Appalachian region in this dubious category.
- Air quality and environmental health issues are exacerbated by the Valley's topography, making solutions more difficult in one of the nation's most challenged air quality regions.
- According to the Congressional Research Service, social indicators such as poverty and graduation rates rank the San Joaquin Valley as the lowest in California, if not the nation.

Highway 99 is the transportation spine of California's San Joaquin Valley. Any lasting improvement in the economic and environmental quality of the Valley requires major investment in the Highway 99 corridor. This will provide a positive impact on the goods movement challenges for the entire state, and begin to address the Valley infrastructure shortfall issue at the same time. Conversely, funding improvements in other portions of the state without addressing the Valley does not provide a solution.

To improve goods movement in California, Highway 99 needs your attention now.

- There has been a historical underinvestment in the Highway 99 corridor as compared to other major California corridors.
- Significant safety issues exist along the corridor such as at-grade intersections where traffic can enter, exit, or cross the highway without the benefit of a freeway interchange.
- The impact on Highway 99 of increased port capacity makes the need for priority improvements urgent.
- Highway 99 is the only corridor in California where nine urbanized centers are not connected by freeway.

- As one of four “Port to Border” regional corridors and as a “Major International Trade Highway Route”, the corridor experiences three times the state average in truck traffic with an expected growth rate of 60% over the next twenty years. This has been and will continue to be exacerbated because of substantial investments in California ports resulting in a significant increase in truck traffic on the 99 Corridor without commensurate investments to handle the increase.
- As the world’s premier agricultural production area, real time delivery of the Valley’s annual \$14 billion agricultural products is dependent upon this corridor

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley met last week and asked that California commit to invest \$6 billion to finance improvements in the 99 corridor over the next ten years. It is important to realize this amount reflects the infrastructure improvements identified in the recently completed Highway 99 Business Plan. Each of the eight councils of governments in the San Joaquin Valley has endorsed the Business Plan and has also called for an expedited schedule of improvements (\$4 billion over ten years).

California faces major infrastructure shortfall problems—but nowhere are they as critical as in the San Joaquin Valley. Improvements to goods corridors in the port regions are necessary to the economic health of California. But that is only half the battle. It makes no sense to improve those areas, investing billions of dollars and providing other economic development incentives if we neglect timely and overdue improvements in California’s most underserved goods transportation corridor—Highway 99 through the San Joaquin Valley.

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, the eight San Joaquin Valley Councils of Government and the Great Valley Center urge that your commitment to improve goods movement for California includes comprehensive attention to the San Joaquin Valley corridor.

Sincerely,



Carol Whiteside
President