



Central California
**REGIONAL OBESITY
PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Healthy Environments • Healthy Choices • Healthy People

May 19, 2014

Chairman Mary Nichols and Members
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: ARB Review of San Joaquin Valley SB 375 Plans

Dear Chairman Nichols and Members of the Board:

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) brings together local health departments and community-based organizations to work on policy, systems and environmental change efforts to prevent obesity and create healthier communities in the San Joaquin Valley. Since 2006, CCROPP has been successful in moving forward interventions that increase access to healthy food and promote physical activity in schools and neighborhoods.

We thank the ARB for its work to date in its comprehensive approach to addressing climate change, which we see as one of the greatest health threats to our San Joaquin Valley communities. We see SB375 as a huge opportunity to simultaneously address climate change and to promote the community changes that will be required to improve health outcomes and reduce obesity and chronic disease.

In the Valley, one third of our children are now overweight or obese, and upwards of 60% of our adult population is overweight in some counties. The key contributors to obesity and overweight include barriers to physical activity and limited access to healthy foods.

Land use and transportation policies are a major contributor to impediments to physical activity in our communities. Current land use policies have caused sprawl and a depletion of our farmland. Sprawl has perpetuated our auto dependency as we continue to build further and further away from the core of our communities, leaving residents little choice other than to drive. Our land use policies should favor density and a reinvestment into our existing communities. Our transportation policies should favor *active transportation*. The Valley currently has woefully underdeveloped pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure which disincentivizes physical activity and places our residents at risk for harm. This is evident in that the Valley has some of the highest rates of pedestrian and bicyclist injury and fatality in California. In our rural communities, it has long been established that we have failed to

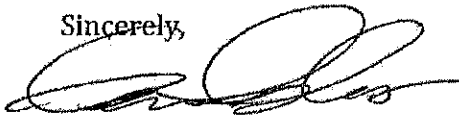
meet the transportation needs of rural residents. Some studies indicate that 86% of motor vehicle accidents happen on rural roads in the Valley. We could virtually eliminate these accidents by building a public transportation system that is efficient and equitable for our rural residents. Investing resources in active transportation projects including practical rural public transportation would encourage more physical activity, promote safety, mitigate contributors to air pollution and improve our air quality.

Air pollution in and of itself is an important barrier to physical activity. Think of the number of poor air quality days in the Valley that discourages children and families from being outdoors. And of course, air pollution is another major environmental risk to health, particularly in the Valley, which has amongst the worst air quality and highest rates of asthma in the U.S. The good news is that there is reciprocity in this relationship between our air quality and our physical activity. If we get more people physically moving for their regular trips to school, to work, and to shopping then we can have a huge impact on improving our air quality as well as reducing chronic disease and promoting good health.

Land use and transportation policy also directly affects our food system and our communities' access to healthy foods. The depletion of our farmland through failed policies creates great perils for our economy and our food security. Farmland should be preserved through our land use policies. However given the contributing factors of air pollution from current farming practices we really must incentivize sustainable agricultural practices that protect our natural environment, while preserving farmland. Likewise our transportation policies should address the burden placed on our air quality with the transport of our food products from our region. This extraction often leaves our communities without access to healthy products grown in the fields surrounding them. Ensuring that farmland is preserved, that sustainable practices of farming are practiced and that our bounty is not completely transported out would help to also minimize poor air quality, while increasing access to healthy foods.

With the health of our Valley residents in mind, we urge the Air Resources Board to ensure that every San Joaquin Valley Council of Governments (COG) meets the GHG targets via ambitious policy action. We are very concerned that, while an improvement on earlier versions of SCS, many of the proposed San Joaquin Valley SCS do not reflect the ambitious plans and policies that we need to promote healthy active transportation and transit, conservation of our agricultural land and jobs, and reducing air pollution. Those of us who live in the Valley and work to promote healthier communities need ARB to support strong policies and investments in our health.

Sincerely,



Genoveva Islas, MPH
Program Director