



**2009 Washington D.C. Trip (February 7-12th)  
"ONE VOICE"**

**TASK FORCE MEETING**

**DATE: Thursday, September 11, 2008**

**TIME: 1:30 – 3 pm**

**PLACE: Council of Fresno County Governments  
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201 (Sequoia Room)  
Fresno, CA  
AGENDA**

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodations**

The Fresno COG offices and restrooms are ADA accessible. Representatives or individuals with disabilities should contact Fresno COG at (559) 233-4148, at least 3 days in advance, to request auxiliary aids and/or translation services necessary to participate in the public meeting / public hearing. If Fresno COG is unable to accommodate an auxiliary aid or translation request for a public hearing, after receiving proper notice, the hearing will be continued on a specified date when accommodations are available.

- I. **Public Presentations.** This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons wishing to address the Committee on items within its jurisdiction but not on this agenda. **Note: Prior to action by the Committee on any item on this agenda, the public may comment on that item. Unscheduled comments may be limited to 3 minutes.**
- II. Welcome / Self-Introductions
- III. Recommendations for 2009 from Simon and Company & Barbara Goodwin Enclosed
- IV. Review 2008 Criteria - Determine any changes Discussion
- V. Next Steps
  1. Call for Projects
  2. Project Selection Process for 2009
  3. COG Board approval of projects
  4. Travel logistics
- VI. Next Meeting – Project Selection – October 22, 2008
- VII. Other Business
- VIII. Adjourn

# SIMON AND COMPANY

INCORPORATED

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Barbara Goodwin

**FROM:** Len Simon  
Shannon Long

**SUBJECT:** 2008 Fresno COG “One Voice”: *Observations and Recommendations*

**DATE:** April 21, 2008

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Thank you again for the opportunity to work with the 2008 Fresno COG “One Voice” delegation. As with previous “One Voice” efforts, 2008 was very productive and the caliber of projects, presentations and meetings continue to improve each year.

In preparation of next year’s “One Voice” meetings in Washington, we wanted to provide recommendations that you may wish to incorporate into the 2009 visit.

### 2009 “One Voice” Recommendations

1. **Format** - While we chose only to invite congressional officials as speakers for the 2008 events, we would recommend that the “One Voice” effort once again include White House officials and new presidential administration appointees. A newly elected president and his or her staff will present an excellent opportunity for the “One Voice” delegation to learn about new and exciting policy initiatives that will have the greatest impact at the local level.

In addition to a new administration, there will certainly be some turnover in Congress and we would suggest briefings with the congressional leadership and key committee members and staff. As with past years, the joint congressional briefing worked well and as you will recall, the congressional staff were thoroughly engaged in the discussion of projects, which continued among them subsequent to the “One Voice” visit.

Although logistical issues prevented us from having the congressional lunch, we recommend that we replicate that format where the “One Voice” group can honor all four House members and congressional staff. We are happy to work with the congressional offices to reserve an on site congressional banquet facility. As you know, there are great demands on the schedules of **Senators Feinstein** and **Boxer** and we suggest individual

meetings with each office. We believe the meetings this year with both senators were excellent and we will work to repeat similar meetings next year.

We will try to end each day's events around 3:00 p.m., although scheduling with key members of Congress does require us to extend meeting times beyond that targeted time. We would also be pleased to work with you on arranging group dinners each night if the delegation chooses to have arranged dinners each evening.

2. **Discussion of Policy Issues** – Similar to past years, we will structure the time with members and their staff to allow discussions of both appropriations and policy. We should take advantage of the time with the members of the delegation and congressional committee staff to discuss both appropriations and policy, which very often have a larger impact at the local level.

3. **Materials** - The materials that the COG staff provided each member of the delegation and their staffs was quite impressive and we would advise that same general package be used next year. The materials should also include the details of both federal and non-federal funding sources for all projects.

4. **Presentations** – We recommend that the COG revive its use of PowerPoint backdrops when discussing the “One Voice” projects, as the slides made it easier for the congressional staff to understand the funding requests and other unique factors which can be presented visually. The slides may also be adapted to reflect policy positions of the group. We may obtain a projector within the next year, which would prevent your staff from having to transport a projector from Fresno.

5. **Grants** - As we have previously suggested, the COG should continue to look for grant opportunities that could be applicable to the “One Voice” funding requests. Beyond the “One Voice” requests, COG members may find that there are funding opportunities available for a number of projects in their respective jurisdictions for which they may wish to seek funding.

6. **Project Selection** – As you know, the appropriations process continues to be controversial following a ban on earmarks in Fiscal Year 2007 and repeated attempts to pass a one-year moratorium on earmarks in appropriations bills. There has been significant discussion in Congress of delaying the Fiscal Year 2009 appropriations process until a new president has been elected, which will certainly have a tremendous impact on earmarks. You are also very familiar with the policy adopted by Congressman Devin Nunes and the number and size of earmarks are becoming increasingly unpopular.

With these factors in mind, we would urge you once again to carefully choose projects that are regional in scope, but remain within the \$2 – 3 million request range. We would also urge you to consider only four appropriations projects for the 2009 program, with a special emphasis on the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, which is discussed further below for your review.

7. **SAFETEA-LU II** – The current surface transportation reauthorization bill expires next year and the 2009 “One Voice” trip will coincide with congressional consideration of a new bill. We urge the “One Voice” group to begin thinking now about both projects and policy provisions that the delegation members would like to see included in the reauthorization measure to ensure those proposals can be part of the “One Voice” discussion in 2009. We also urge you to start and continue dialogue throughout the summer and fall as projects will be officially submitted during the 2009 “One Voice” trip. It is important to note that during project selection, if the “One Voice” delegation designates a project as a SAFETEA-LU reauthorization project, it should not be included as an appropriations project as well. We would certainly be pleased to provide assistance during the project selection phase to ensure that projects are properly designated for authorization as compared to appropriations.

8. **Voices of Fresno County** – The distinction between “regional” projects and those submitted individually continues to be an issue addressed by the congressional staff. The “One Voice” delegation will need to reiterate its message that the “One Voice” projects are regional in nature and have been agreed upon by the local governments represented by the COG. However, as we have mentioned, the same entities that support the “One Voice” projects will also be presenting their own list of projects to the congressional delegation, which often must decide which projects truly are a priority for the region.

We hope that you find this information helpful as you begin to think about your future “One Voice” efforts.

Please let us know if you have any questions or if we may be of further assistance. We look forward to talking with you soon.



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May 15, 2008 (revised per conversation with PAC)

#### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Fresno COG Policy Board  
Fresno COG Policy Advisory Committee  
One Voice Participants and Partners

**FROM:** Barbara Goodwin, Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** *Specific "One Voice" Recommendations for the Future*

#### OBSERVATIONS:

"One Voice" has proven to be a wonderful effort at Fresno COG with very tangible results and some unexpected but very powerful long-term benefits.

- \$13,151,000 in appropriations for "One Voice" sponsored projects – we've received \$104 for every dollar Fresno COG has spent on our previous five trips.  
*(would have been a \$119/\$1 ratio had the 2007 appropriations bill retained our \$1.95 million in earmarks for a total of \$15 million, but this was the year all requested earmark appropriations were eliminated at the national level).*
- Stronger partnership with many Fresno County community organizations, the result of which has been a better communication network and enhanced relationships with specific individuals, all of whom are among the leadership of Fresno County. This enhanced network has served well not only for Fresno COG, but also among and between our "One Voice" trip participants.
- Heightened recognition that Fresno COG is acting regionally, and is an excellent collaborative partner.
- Improved communication with our congressional/senate representatives and their capable and helpful staff. We have also become a better resource for our representatives.
- Wonderful financial sponsors in the community who have enabled One Voice to provide an excellent trip experience complete with professional presentation packages for both our trip participants and for our representatives -- a level of materials beyond what our budget would have allowed.

"One Voice" should continue and also evolve to remain current, strong, and relevant to changing circumstances. I offer the following recommendations, based on my observations, comments from participants, and comments from our lobbyist.

**Member Agencies:** The cities of Clovis, Coalinga, Firebaugh, Fowler, Fresno, Huron, Kerman, Kingsburg, Mendota, Orange Cove, Parlier, Reedley, San Joaquin, Sanger, Selma & Fresno County

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### ***REFINE AND EVOLVE “ONE VOICE”:***

- 1) The original goal to seek additional funding for needed projects of regional significance, those that also contribute to an improved quality of life, should remain.
- 2) We should ask our members and community partners where regulatory reform might be needed in formulas or language that keeps our region from either applying or being competitive, and then develop a strategy for presenting the issue, and seek to implement reform. Address one or two each year.
- 3) We should additionally concentrate on relevant policy issues or projects (*past example: immigration, completion of Mendota prison*) that would benefit from our valuable input and advocacy. We have great expertise in many areas that are underutilized in these instances, simply because a strategic, coordinated and comprehensive effort is not launched. Address one such issue each year.
- 4) Staff should initiate discussions with congressional/senate staff very early on upcoming bills or specific efforts our representatives will be shepherding in the next session. One or more may resonate strongly with our region’s goals. While back in Washington D.C., if our community partners and COG Policy Board have previously endorsed one of these specific efforts, we can break into groups to help our representatives advocate for their bill. As an example, if a bill is meeting resistance from a Midwest or Southern Senator or Congressman, our D.C. representative could ask for an appointment where Fresno COG “One Voice” members would advocate on behalf of the mutually beneficial issue.

### ***CONSIDER HIRING A YEAR ROUND FEDERAL LOBBYIST:***

I realize that the current economy would make this a challenge for most of our members since general fund budgets are constrained. I also want to point out we have been happy with the efforts made by our existing part-time federal Lobbyist, but their efforts are somewhat limited to our trip purposes and relevant issues, identifying upcoming appropriations bills for projects we select and filing the appropriation requests (no small effort). However the reality is that other Valley COGs have hired Lobbyists on an annual contract basis: San Joaquin COG, Merced County Association of Governments, and Tulare County Association of Governments. They pay between \$1,600 - \$7,000 per month and are receiving additional services including earlier and more definitive consultations about the upcoming year, and setting the stage for the types of requests or grant issues that might be selected and competitive. They also then receive year-round follow-up, federal legislative information, and project/issue advocacy from their lobbyists. Fresno COG followed San Joaquin COG’s initial “One Voice” effort, but the other COGs have realized the benefits of such an effort and are attempting to be equally competitive. The Kern COG is also exploring their own “One Voice” effort, and Stanislaus COG also makes an annual trip. We should consider this next step, but structure the effort so that broader benefits (as outlined above) can be realized on an annual basis. A survey to see the amount of dollars the other COGs are bringing in annually may be helpful.

In concert with this recommendation we should also consider differentiating the manner in which we pay our Lobbyist. We currently have the budget included with our dues, but we might be better served to call it a “special assessment” so that timely payments on an increased level of service never becomes an issue on COG member voting rights. As with the state lobbyist’s contract, perhaps a provision to allow members to negotiate and contract with the federal lobbyist for a project-by-project add-on basis, paid for by the COG member. Perhaps, if there is consensus, a portion of the COG’s planning funds could be used to support the effort as long as there is an annual commitment to pursue funding for Measure C projects.

***NEW TRANSPORTATION BILL AND ANNUAL APPROPRIATION BILLS:***

We do need to separate out projects for the new transportation bill from projects we may seek from the more normal appropriation bills. This will also affect, for the 2009 year, the number of projects we select.

For the annual appropriation bills, there should be a project per bill. Multiple projects in one bill may face being competitive with each other, although the major programs within the appropriations bills should be examined to see if there is a solid basis to seek no more than 2 within a single appropriations bill. Our current federal lobbyist is still concerned about how many (i.e. too many) projects are requested. We also need to be realistic on the amounts being requested.

***MARKETPLACE FORMAT:***

With the exception of those meetings that need to be conducted elsewhere due to circumstances, the format of securing a room in one of the congressional buildings for our visit works very well and is efficient for time management. We will heed the desire to have water/caffeine/drinks available each day.

I appreciate and concur with Simon and Company's recommendation to secure appointments in 2008 with White House and other new presidential appointees. I also highly recommend we reach beyond our own congressional members and seek briefings with congressional leadership and key committee members and staff. I was pleased to see these elements in Simon and Company's comments, because we at staff level have been asking and desired to reach beyond our representatives – we need committee leaders and staff to be aware and positively receiving our projects and issues for it is these votes or recommendations that will aid in our success.

***OUR PARTICIPANT BINDERS:***

These need to become thinner for easier manipulation during the trip (much like the size we used in Sacramento). A couple of years ago we put punched back-up project information in separate packets so that participants could choose whether or not they wished to add any pieces to their binder. Also we have provided sightseeing and other helpful information that does not necessarily need to be in everyone's binder, but could be in a separate packet.

Our main project sheets should become two-sided: the type of project information we've had on one side, with the other side being the Fresno County map with the project located and an inset with a more thorough presentation of all funding sources (state, federal, local, other).

***DAILY BRIEFINGS AND DEBRIEFINGS:***

We need to once again conduct daily briefings and debriefings in the a.m. at the hotel. We did not specifically ask for this on the 2008 schedule, but should have since our lobbyists did not include it. We will rectify this oversight.

***MEALS:***

This answer to our survey is always mixed. What we may try is to pass out in the morning a "RSVP" for a planned dinner that night, with a deadline of 1 p.m. for a reply. The planned dinner would be described, but always optional in attendance. We would simply make reservations for the number of "yes" returns at 1 p.m. Generally it is the planned and well attended joint dinners for which the Fresno COG will help subsidize with sponsor donations since non-COG planned dinners are hard to control in potential costs or type of event.

***SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITIONS:***

We will elevate this effort at home (we began this increased effort recently with an annual presentation and formal recognition by the Fresno COG Policy Board). We will also continue to monitor the subject in D.C. which has been challenging of late due to the heightened awareness and "hands-off" approach of sponsored events for elected officials and their staff. The Fresno COG has always been very careful to identify how and in what manner we may recognize the sponsors because of fair political practices and the statements of economic interest. There is proposed regulatory change at the state level which may affect how we need to report our sponsorships (sponsoring an agency effort vs. sponsoring individuals). We will provide further updates as this issue progresses.