



2018
Fresno COG One Voice

Regional Priorities
Summary



Fresno Council
of Governments

2018 Washington D.C. Fresno COG One Voice Delegates

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One Voice History

In 2003 Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) initiated the first “One Voice” effort, seeking Federal and/or State funding for projects of broad, community-wide benefit within Fresno County. The One Voice goal was to assemble a public-private delegation, select prioritized projects, and then visit Congressional and Federal departmental representatives in Washington, D.C. to pursue funding and grant opportunities.

Fresno COG’s One Voice delegation continues to inform legislators about the region’s priority needs, appealing to federal decision makers for their support during the competitive grant processes. By advocating for policy and regulatory reform we continue to find ways to eliminate unnecessary procedures so that government agencies and the business community can work together efficiently toward transportation infrastructure job creation.

2018 One Voice Washington D.C. Regional Priorities Summary

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Transportation Infrastructure & Policies

Veterans Boulevard Interchange



REQUEST SUMMARY:

1. Move expeditiously to review applications submitted to the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program, which includes a request for \$44.5 million to construct Veterans Boulevard
2. Increase federal funding to support large-scale transportation infrastructure needs that strengthen nationwide economic vitality

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

Veterans Boulevard is a regionally significant project that will construct a six-lane connecting arterial roadway in northwest Fresno, an interchange at SR-99, grade separations over the Union Pacific Railroad, High-Speed Rail line and Golden State Boulevard, a multipurpose trail and make improvements to roadways surrounding the project.

The City of Fresno is poised to move dirt, lay asphalt and get people and goods moving along State Route 99 (SR-99) through the Veterans Boulevard Interchange Project. Unfortunately, available funding for transportation infrastructure falls severely short of local needs. A funding gap resulting from the recent recession prevents moving ahead with construction.

To address the funding gap, an application has been submitted to the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program for the project's interchange and roadway extension components of the project. The application includes a request for \$44.5 million, matched with an investment of \$31.4 million in local and state dollars. With Federal investment, Veterans Boulevard could be operational by December 2020.

PROJECT NEED:

Like nearly all municipalities nationwide, the City of Fresno has a backlog of critical transportation infrastructure projects. Existing block grants and competitive funding sources are significantly oversubscribed, with nearly all programs receiving requests for projects that exceed available funding by hundreds of millions of dollars. While needs go unfunded, local roadways deteriorate, traffic conditions worsen and regional economic growth is stifled.

Each day, thousands of residents face delays due to inadequate infrastructure for an area which has seen significant growth in the last 20 years. These delays clog roadways, negatively impacting residents' commutes and slow goods

movement through the region. Traffic impacts response times for emergency responders such as police, fire and paramedics. School buses get caught in the queue and are delayed.

Investing in Veterans Boulevard demonstrates a federal commitment to transformative infrastructure which will improve traffic flow and goods movement, facilitate pedestrian travel and stimulate the economy through local job creation. The project will also improve east-west connectivity between north Fresno and the rural communities west of Highway 99.

Cost benefit analyses suggest that constructing the project will result in an estimated travel time savings valued at \$25 to \$43 million for the region, and increase active modes of transportation by over 23,000 hours annually. Other benefits include improved interactions between roadway users and the elimination of bottlenecks in the freight supply chain as a result of grade separations.

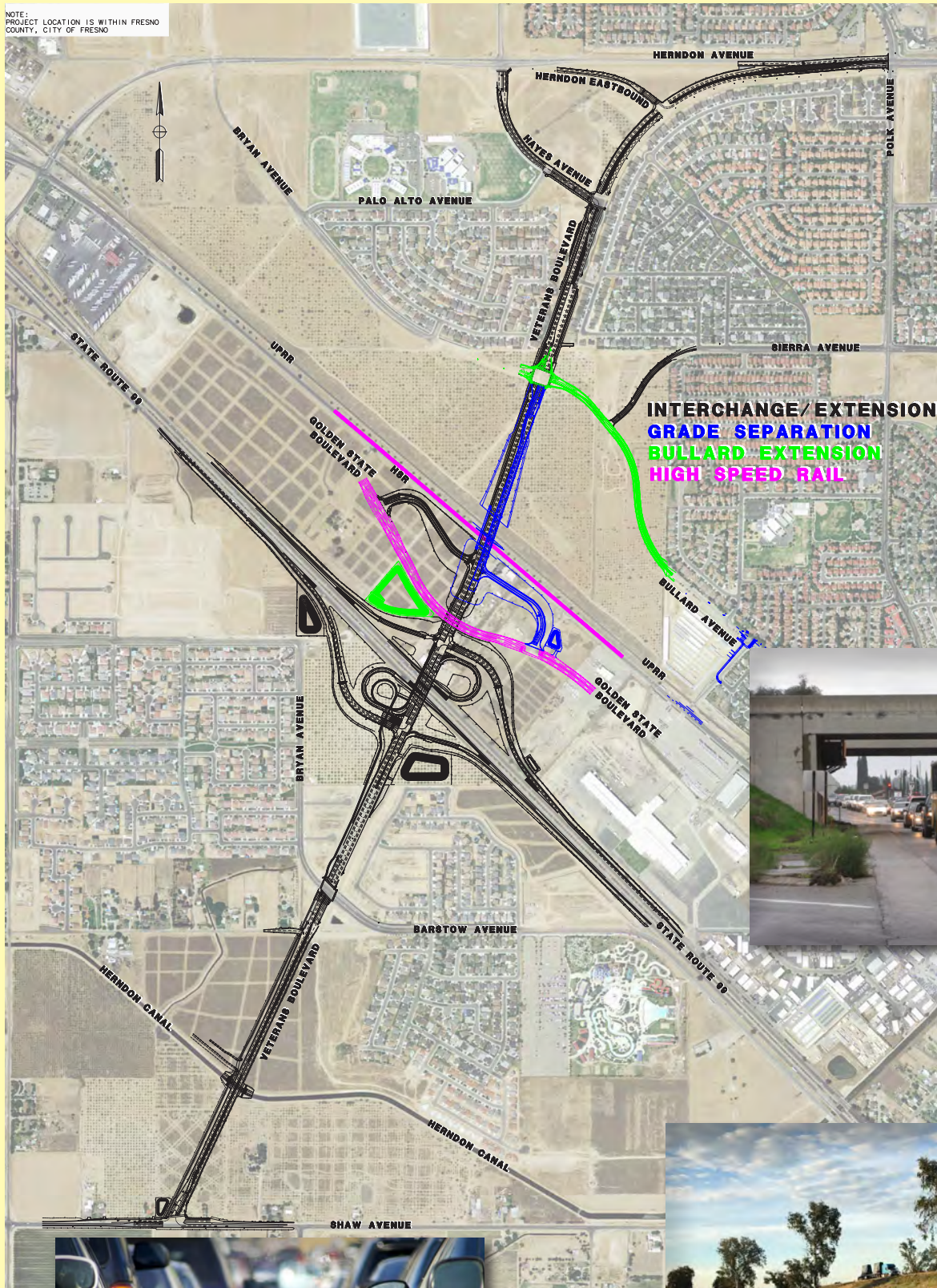
PROJECT STATUS

The Environmental review phase of the project is complete. Design and right of way phases will be complete in early 2018. Construction funding of \$44.5 million is the last remaining piece of the financial portfolio to advance. With Federal investment, the project will be ready to begin construction in May 2019.

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NOTE:
PROJECT LOCATION IS WITHIN FRESNO
COUNTY, CITY OF FRESNO



Millerton Road Widening Project

REQUEST SUMMARY:

Provide funding for the Millerton Road Widening Project, to complete the design, right of way acquisitions, utility relocations and the construction of the project. Total remaining project costs are estimated at \$30 million.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

The proposed project widens a 4.7-mile stretch of Millerton Road from a two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided arterial roadway. It spans from North Fork Road to one mile west of Auberry Road, (as indicated on the map included on page 4). Through this project the county endeavors to accomplish the following objectives:

- Accommodate a higher level of projected traffic demand, and promote improved traffic operations, as well as bike and motorist safety
- Increase community safety by decreasing the California Fire Department's response times to fires in the region
- Bolster regional tourism by better accommodating seasonal traffic to the scenic Millerton Lake State Park
- Improve access to Table Mountain Rancheria tribal lands (the project has been preliminarily designed by Table Mountain Rancheria's consultant group, AECOM).

The project will achieve these objectives by transforming the current two-lane rural roadway into a four-lane divided arterial roadway with paved shoulders, including signed and striped bicycle lanes. Several public road intersections, private road intersections, and driveway intersections would be improved to accommodate the widening of the road and median improvements. Additionally, the project will include new, pocketed, left-turn lanes, and a new, two-lane, pre-stressed I-girder bridge to complement the already existing bridge and to accommodate the additional two lanes. These alterations will contribute to a higher level of safety and utility for motorists and bicyclists.

Finally, erosion control measures will line all embankment area slopes, as well as on cut slopes when the slope material will support growth. The reconstructed roadway would generally follow the alignment of the existing roadway, with deviations needed to upgrade the horizontal and vertical geometry to current standards.

PROJECT NEED:

Millerton Road is the primary corridor that Table Mountain Rancheria tribe members rely on to access their lands and governmental operation. It is used by more than 1,300 employees of Table Mountain Rancheria and thousands of patrons and is integral to their economic success.

The widening and improvements to be constructed as a part of this project will tie the foothill area to the Fresno/Clovis metropolitan area. By supporting regional development and economic growth, property values can be improved and related construction and service industries will be buoyed. Additionally, the residual impacts and job creation caused by such investment will reverberate throughout the region.

Several housing and commercial developments are in various stages of planning and construction along Millerton Road. The Millerton Specific Plan provides for a mixed-use development on 1,420 acres, with an ultimate population between 8,000 and 10,000 people, who will reside in approximately 3,500 dwelling units. That population will be supported by retail commercial uses, public services and utilities, parks, and a public school.

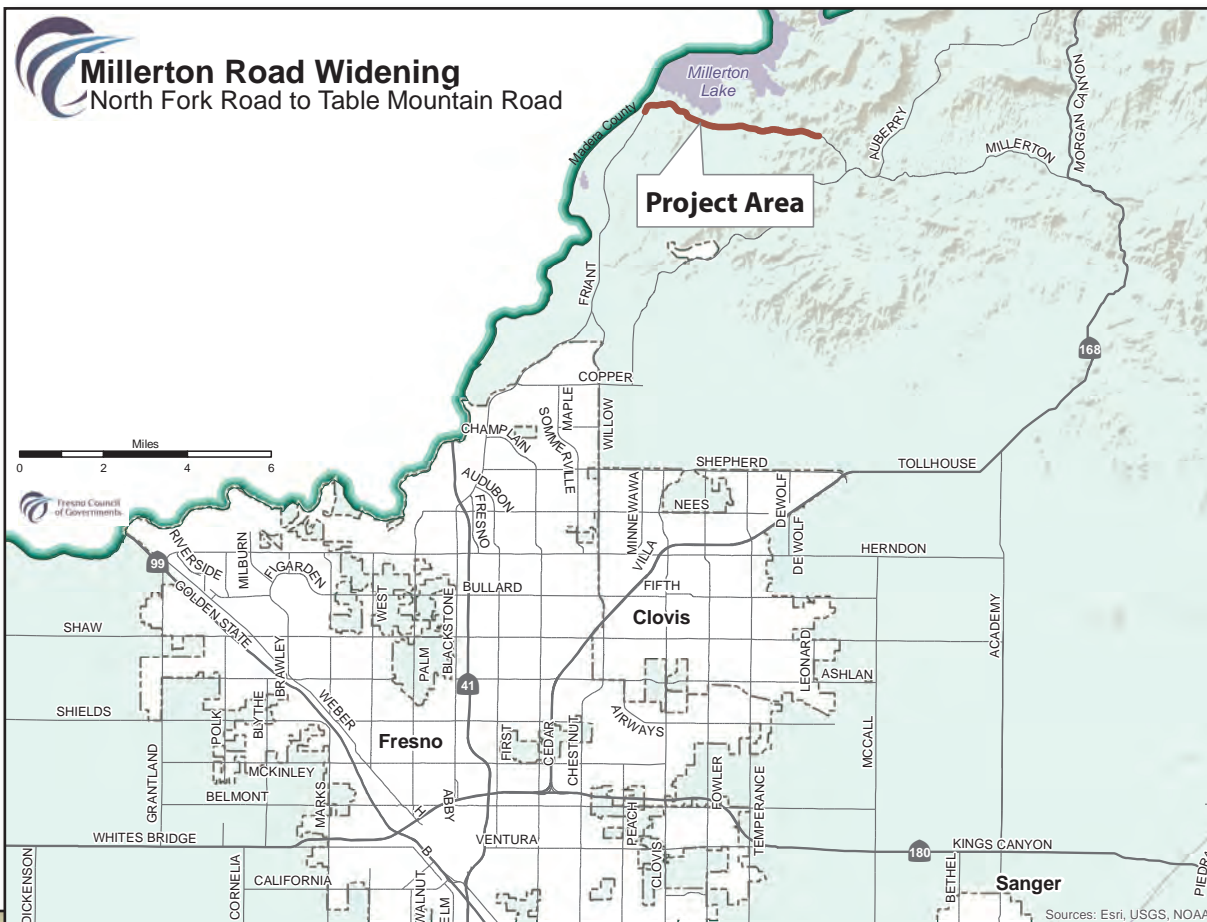
The Plan's objective requires a system of major roadways to accommodate increased traffic volumes associated with the newly adopted land uses and increased densities. The Millerton Road Widening Project will establish design and improvement standards for future road improvement projects. Therefore, it is imperative that the Millerton Road Widening Project set an outstanding precedent of reducing visual impact and maintaining a semi-rural character whenever possible.



The project was included in the Fresno Council of Government's 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, and designed to meet federal guidelines. The County has submitted several grant applications to the United States Department of Transportation for consideration under their TIGER grant programs for various components of the project, but has yet to receive funding.

The recreational activities at Millerton Lake State Park provide a considerable contribution to the local economy. Tourism increases traffic flows and congestion, but the negative effects of this traffic influx will be reduced by the proposed road improvements. Additionally, improved traffic conditions will enhance the overall experience for Millerton Lake State Park's visitors.

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	DATE:	SCALE IN YARDS		DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS & PLANNING
DESIGNED: D.N.	10/03/2017			MILLERTON ROAD WIDENING NORTH FORK ROAD TO TABLE MOUNTAIN ROAD
DRAWN: D.N.	01/18/2018			
STATE BRIDGE NO. N/A				

Lower Match for Federal Transportation Infrastructure Funding

REQUEST SUMMARY:

The Department of Transportation (DOT) should maintain focus on a project's capacity to "support national or regional economic vitality" in considering which proposals to fund. DOT should abide by the Congressional directive included in the Fiscal Year 2018 Omnibus and apply this practice across its discretionary grant programs, placing less emphasis on leveraging federal funding in its evaluation criteria.

REQUEST BACKGROUND AND NEED:

In recent years, the Administration has placed greater emphasis on non-federal matching funds in its evaluation of discretionary grant applications across a number of programs. In consideration of the scarcity of federal resources available to support national infrastructure, we understand why the Department would prioritize proposals that leverage more state, local or private funding. In recent rounds of TIGER or INFRA Grant Programs, the Secretary and US DOT staff gave priority to projects that brought more non-federal money to the table. However, the focus on nonfederal overmatch unjustly punishes our most disadvantaged communities that lack excess state or local contributions. Public-private partnerships have proven to be ill-suited for interchange improvements or other, smaller-scale improvements that may nonetheless demonstrate a tremendous impact on the freight system. Poorer regions that do not command the local or state resources necessary to provide a sizable match may go unfunded, despite their projects' abilities to meet freight mobility goals. Therefore, DOT should focus more on federal goals for commuter and freight mobility than on matching requirements.

We encourage the Administration to abide by the Congressional intent established in Federal transportation policy as authorized under the FAST Act or other statute. We appreciate Congressional leadership on this issue and their inclusion of language directing the Secretary of Transportation to not use the Federal share as a selection criterion in awarding TIGER funds to eligible projects in the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2018.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act established several provisions focused on safe, efficient and reliable freight movement – including a discretionary grant program investing \$4.5 billion over the bill's five-year lifespan to eliminate freight bottlenecks and improve critical freight movements. The original grant program – Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for Long-Term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) – emphasized better freight movement on the national highway system as its top priority, and guarded federal interests by 1)



limiting the total federal funding that a project could employ and 2) requiring a detailed benefit-cost analysis to demonstrate efficiency.

Under the revised INFRA grant program criteria and President Trump's recently announced infrastructure program, greater scoring emphasis is placed on the amount of local, state and private money that may be leveraged against federal dollars. This approach potentially puts mid-sized and rural projects at a competitive disadvantage regardless of their merit on other mobility-related goals.

BENEFIT:

By again heavily emphasizing mobility achievement within the program scoring criteria for all transportation infrastructure programs, DOT will be moving closer to Congressional intent in funding projects that are in the national interest and contribute more significantly to the national economy.

Fresno County could potentially be eligible for multiple project improvements under revised scoring criteria, including Veterans Boulevard, SR 180 and the five half-interchanges along SR 99, including Cedar-North, Chestnut and American avenues. These improvements position the region to better accommodate large-scale distribution centers such as Amazon and Ulta, while also helping to move agricultural goods more efficiently.

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Farm-To-Market Road Maintenance Funding

REQUEST SUMMARY:

Support funding for maintenance of critical farm-to-market routes that have heavy truck traffic, through a set-aside in the next Transportation or Farm Bill.

REQUEST BACKGROUND:

Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley are among the most productive agricultural regions in the world, producing more than 360 agricultural commodities. It is the heart of California's robust agricultural economy and a leading producer of almonds, tomatoes, grapes and milk, among other crops. California's dairy industry generated \$6.2 billion in milk production in 2016, accounting for 19 percent of all milk produced in the United States.

There are at least 775 dairies and many milk processing facilities in the Valley transporting millions of pounds of milk and milk products per day that travel on local county and city roads to connect to the state highway system. Unlike other agricultural goods with a short, defined harvest season, dairies must transport their products off site every day, causing significant strain on frequently traveled roadways and reducing the pavement's lifespan. According to Caltrans, a fully loaded dairy truck can weigh up to 80,000 pounds. A roadway carrying 500 trucks per day is comparable to 5 million vehicle passenger cars trips per day.

NEED AND BENEFITS:

Poor road conditions in agricultural regions are exacerbated by significant truck traffic that supports national and international agricultural commodities, coupled with a significant lack of funding for rural-area road maintenance. San Joaquin Valley counties are concerned about the localized impacts to our roads while the milk products, along with many other Valley produced commodities, are transported for global consumption.

Funding set-asides for farm-to-market routes could yield millions of dollars in additional transportation funding for the Fresno County region.

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Regional Workforce - Employment

High-Speed Rail Training Facility



REQUEST SUMMARY:

Provide support to create a permanent, national high-speed rail training facility in Fresno County to serve as the hub for training workers for the entire country. Education of this kind will be necessary to keep up with the advancing technology, especially if the United States wishes not only to utilize this system but gain an innovative presence in the industry worldwide.

PRIORITY BACKGROUND:

Fresno County will, in the next 20 years, experience massive, unprecedented public works projects. While this is welcome to a region characterized by unabated poverty, these opportunities require a local workforce able to meet demands of such economic expansion. Among the projects primed to deliver exceptional employment and career opportunities are:

- High-Speed Rail and the High-Speed Rail Training Facility
- Significant expansion of Community Medical Centers
- Fresno's downtown Intermodal Transit Hub
- City of Fresno's Water Infrastructure Bond
- State Center Community College District infrastructure projects
- Fresno Unified School District bond projects
- Major Caltrans projects

In Fresno County the High-Speed Rail project is well underway. This monumental project will require a skilled labor force to construct and maintain the nation's first high-speed rail system. The Fresno County Economic Development Corporation, the Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board, Fresno City College and many other partners are working to construct an educational campus that will train workers on the construction and maintenance of high-speed rail systems.

The proposed facility is part of a broader vision associated with locating the California High-Speed Rail Authority's heavy maintenance facility within Fresno County. That



Above: The Cedar Avenue Viaduct will carry high-speed trains over Highway 99 before descending into the station area in Downtown Fresno.



At Right: Staff tour the Fresno River Viaduct in Madera County.

vision includes an educational center, transportation operations facility, an ongoing training site, a facility for businesses and countries to showcase their products, and an industrial park for companies that provide services and products to the high-speed rail. As this burgeoning industry grows, it will be able to rely upon both the training and the firsthand experience of professionals involved in the project from its earliest stages.

PROJECT NEED:

Because high-speed rail is new to the United States, it is necessary to train workers not only to build but also maintain the high-speed rail line in a world of ever-changing technology. Fresno County has both the land and population to create a high-speed rail educational center, not only for the State of California, but for the entire country.

A training facility located in Fresno County is necessary to offset the Central Valley's unacceptably high unem-

ployment rate, as well as the lack of skilled workers to fill high-speed rail construction and ancillary industries jobs. Fresno County is among California counties with the highest rates of poverty (26%) compared to a 15.8% rate in California. Identified as an economically distressed area due to its low, per-capita income figures, the region is representative of those areas needing to diversify job opportunities through technical training. With the construction of high-speed rail and the need for a trained labor force to fill the needed jobs, the proposed training facility is exactly what is needed to grow our local economy.

Fresno County has a collaborative team of leaders representing workforce development, economic development, education and trade organizations, that have developed a strategic plan to implement this vision. Additionally, Fresno County's eighteen public and private universities, community colleges, and technical institutes stand fully prepared to implement a cutting edge curriculum to train the workforce high-speed rail will require. We are asking for your support to make Fresno County the hub for high-speed rail training in the United States.



Above: Students at the Cypress Mandela Center in Oakland, California lead a classroom activity before heading into the warehouse for more hands-on training. The Center's curriculum would be replicated for the Fresno HSR training facility.



Above: An instructor explains how students will construct a house from the ground up as part of their training at the Cypress Mandela Center.

At right: Lee Ann Eager, CEO of Fresno County's EDC, speaks to students at the Center.



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Community Services Block Grant

REQUEST SUMMARY:

1. Maintain or increase funding for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program with at least \$742.8 million budgeted in Fiscal Year 2019
2. Reauthorization of CSBG: Community Economic Opportunity Act (when introduced)

REQUEST BACKGROUND:

The One Voice delegation respectfully asks for continued funding of the Community Services Block Grant program, the source for emergency, human service interventions, and economic development that Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) extends to our county's most vulnerable residents. We also encourage support and co-sponsor reauthorization of the Community Economic Opportunity Act when it is reintroduced this session. The Act authorizes funding for the CSBG.

The Congressional delegation has consistently recognized the value of CSBG to their constituents and have all supported reauthorization and stable funding for the program. We appreciate their assistance with our fiscal year 2018 Appropriations requests in support of the Program. Their leadership resulted in \$742.8 million for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to administer authorized CSBG payments in the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2018.

Maintaining federal CSBG funding is the single most important tool our community has to mitigate the impacts of emergencies such as the opioid epidemic, and to create economic opportunities for our most needy residents. Fresno EOC is the locally designated steward of CSBG funds for Fresno County.

CSBG honors local assessment and design of programs that meet urgent local needs and generate economic opportunities. It correctly requires governance of the CSBG-funded agency by locally appointed and elected leaders, as well as those representing service recipients. CSBG is particularly critical to our county, where one in four live in poverty. It is a responsible, local instrument allowing for local determination and the creation of local solutions to ameliorate the persistent, unabated poverty our region has become all too well known for.

CSBG funding makes it possible for Fresno EOC to deliver emergency services such as food and utility assistance to thousands of our county residents each year; it continues to be the lifeline for many still devastated by the economic downturn.

CSBG has catalyzed robust economic initiatives such as Access Plus Capital, a small business lender through which hundreds of jobs have been created with investments now exceeding \$26.2 million. It was the source through which vital human services such as the Sanctuary Youth Shelter, its transitional living centers, Central Valley Against Human Trafficking (CVAHT), the Conservation Corps, and SOUL charter school were started.

CSBG has also been leveraged to create social enterprises such as Fresno EOC's growing solar installation business, catering, and commercial recycling efforts—all of which will employ and train disadvantaged workers and generate discretionary revenue for new local ventures.

Fresno EOC has prioritized economic stimulus and entrepreneurship with its allocation of CSBG funding to the following programs:

1. Access Plus Capital has provided \$26.2 million in loans and technical assistance to 715 low-to-moderate income borrowers since 2009
2. Turn-key commercial recycling operations recovering CRV containers, used oil, tires, and electronic waste
3. Commercial food production center producing and delivering more than 7,500 meals per day
4. Commercial vehicle fleet detailing
5. Nielsen Conference Center
6. Solar PV and solar water heater installations
7. Taxi scrip services
8. Landscaping and grounds maintenance
9. Investment in the formation of a thriving credit union in Southeast Fresno
10. Catering business

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EOC Commercial Food Production



Self-Help Credit Union



EOC Access Plus Capital Loans



Solar PV Installation



Commercial Recycling Operations



Taxi Sclp Service

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Fresno County - Heart of California

Located in the center of California's San Joaquin Valley, Fresno County is the most productive agricultural county in the nation. Although most of the county is rural and economically driven by agriculture, a significant population resides in urban cities, most of which are along the major transportation corridors. State Route 99, a major goods movement state highway known as the backbone of California, connects southern California to Northern California, running through the City of Fresno.

Fresno County's 15 cities share 7,068 publicly maintained road miles, 52% of which are rural. Fresno County's public road system accommodates 24,279 average daily vehicle miles traveled, approximately 2.6% of California's 99,321 total daily vehicle miles travelled (*Source: Caltrans 2016 California Public Road Data Report*). Due to its location in the center of the state, Fresno County serves as a major transportation corridor for goods going to and from western sea ports.

Home to a very diverse population of nearly 1 million people, Fresno County is the tenth most populous county, with the fifth largest city in California. As a part of the third largest region in California, growth in the San Joaquin Valley is projected to double in the next 45 years. Some key facts about Fresno County:

- Fresno County has two \$1 billion crops. Almonds are the top crop produced in Fresno County with a value of \$1.3 billion, with grapes coming in second at \$905 million. Fresno County crop value in 2014 was \$5.506 billion in gross production. Drought conditions and water policy impacts have decreased gross production nearly \$1 billion annually since 2012 (*Source: 2014 FC Farm Bureau Crop Report*).
- Millions of tourists visit Fresno County on their way to three national parks and three national monuments each year, contributing to the State of California's \$121 billion in tourism spending and 1 million tourism-related jobs. (*Source: 2014 California Travel Impacts, Dean Ryan Associates*).
- While significant improvements have been made, the Fresno County region still has the most polluted air quality in the United States, due to the mountain

ranges that border the valley, trapping particulates from the major urban areas within and adjacent to the region (*source: 2015 ALA State of the Air report*).

- Fresno County continues to suffer from significant economic and environmental challenges, including demographics, weather, topography, transportation deterioration and decay.

Despite a 1.7 million strong workforce—10% of California's workers—and significant business and development investment interest, Fresno County continues to be an example of problematic social and environmental justice issues, with significantly lower median household income levels and higher unemployment rates than both national and state averages. Federal support for programs and activities that protect agricultural production, strengthen transportation infrastructure, improve workforce training and opportunities for economic growth within the Fresno County region are crucial for the state's and nation's long-term health.

