



**2017
Fresno COG One Voice
Regional Priorities
Summary**



Fresno Council
of Governments

“One Voice” unites Fresno County communities and regional interests in a voluntary and collaborative effort to seek federal and state funds annually for projects of regional significance. All projects chosen shall contribute significantly to an improved quality of life throughout Fresno County.



2017 Washington D.C. Fresno COG One Voice Delegates

Amarpreet Dhaliwal, Mayor Pro Tem, City of San Joaquin, Fresno COG Policy Board Chair

Bob Whalen, Mayor, City of Clovis

Alma Beltran, Mayor, City of Parlier

Rey Leon, Mayor, City of Huron

Daniel Parra, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fowler, Chairman of the Board, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission

Oliver Baines, Councilmember, City of Fresno

Steven Brandau, Councilmember, City of Fresno

Blake Konczal, Executive Director, Fresno Workforce Development Board

Lee Ann Eager, President and Chief Executive Officer, Fresno County Economic Development Corporation

Jeffrey T. Roberts, Vice President, Granville Homes

Joseph Oldham, Director, CALSTART

Tony Boren, Executive Director, Fresno Council of Governments

Paul McLain-Lugowski, Chief Innovation Officer, Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

Chuck Riojas, Financial Secretary/Treasurer, Building & Construction Trades Council

Sharon Gonsalves, Senior Associate, Townsend Public Affairs

Brenda Veenendaal, Administrative Services Manager, Fresno Council of Governments

Trai Her-Cole, Associate Regional Planner, Fresno Council of Governments

One Voice History

In 2003, the 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.

Originally, Fresno COG looked forward to the Fresno region garnering federal earmarked funds through the One Voice efforts that it might not have otherwise received. However, in 2010 Congress issued a one year moratorium on earmark funding and has since continued to uphold that policy, thereby increasing the importance of advocating for policy and regulatory reform and the preservation of program funding crucial to projects in the Fresno County region.

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 job creation.

2017 One Voice Washington D.C. Regional Priorities Summary

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Transportation Infrastructure & Policies



Veterans Boulevard Interchange Funding

REQUEST SUMMARY:

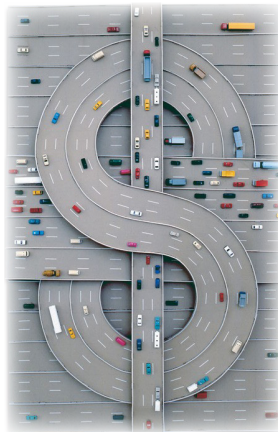
Increased federal funding to support large-scale transportation infrastructure needs, including \$44.5 million for Veterans Boulevard/State Route 99 (SR-99) Interchange.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

Like nearly all municipalities nationwide, the City of Fresno has a backlog of critical transportation infrastructure projects. One such project is the Veterans Boulevard Interchange at SR-99. Veterans Boulevard is a regionally significant project which 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 and improve ancillary roadways surrounding the project.

The project has been phased to most effectively secure funding. To date, \$75.5 million of the necessary \$120 million in funding has been identified. The \$44.5 million gap in funding is primarily due to fuel tax revenues which have remained flat and continue to decrease as a result of greater fuel efficiency and local sales tax measure funds which were negatively impacted by recession-era spending patterns.

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 to work and school and hampering public safety. Traffic exceeds capacity and results in delayed response times for emergency responders such as police, fire and paramedics. School children in the area are negatively affected as buses get caught in the queue and delayed. To avoid further impacts to public safety, quality of life and the local economy, funding must be identified to complete Veterans Boulevard.



Investing in Veterans Boulevard demonstrates a federal commitment to transformative infrastructure which will improve traffic flow and goods movement, facilitate pedestrian movement, reduce vehicle emissions 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 SR-99.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

Existing block grants and competitive funding sources are significantly oversubscribed, with nearly all programs receiving requests for projects which exceed available funding by hundreds of millions of dollars. In some cases, federal discretionary programs receive billions of dollars of requests over and above available funds. For example, in 2016 the Federal TIGER program received \$9.3 billion in requests for \$500 million of available funds. Meanwhile, needs go unfunded, local roadways deteriorate, traffic conditions worsen and regional economic growth is stifled.

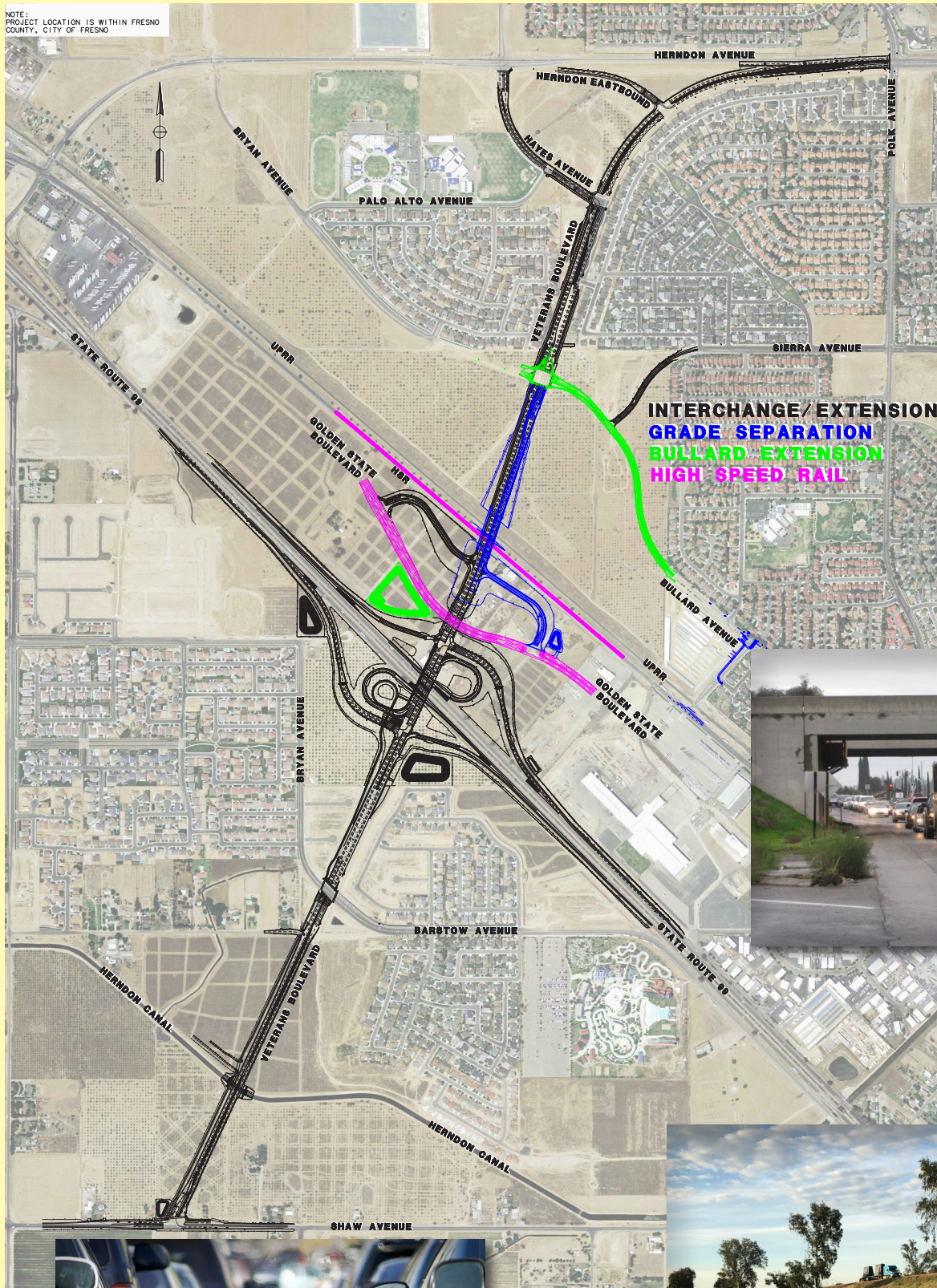
Investment in transportation infrastructure projects can have a significant impact on local economic indicators by generating increased demand for goods and services as well as employment opportunities, particularly in the skilled trades. Infrastructure also spurs private investments near the project area which can have lasting economic returns for the region.



CONTACT:

Bruce Rudd, City Manager
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 621-7770
Bruce.Rudd@Fresno.gov

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



State Route 269 Bridge Construction Funding

REQUEST SUMMARY:

Funding in the amount of \$18 million is needed to construct a new bridge along State Route 269. This project is shovel ready, as it is beyond the minimum 30 percent design and engineering requirement.

- Total Project Cost: \$28,000,000
- Funding Need \$18,000,000

REQUEST BACKGROUND:

The State Route (SR) 269 Bridge passes through the Rural Community of Huron, California and connects to Interstate 5 (I-5). The building of the California Aqueduct resulted in an underestimated volume of water coming down Arroyo Pasajero Creek, which causes major flooding on SR 269 each year. This is the same creek that washed out I-5 in 1997. The 30-year history of flooding has caused a magnitude of closures on this route, severely impacting residents in the City of Huron and in South-west Fresno County.

As recently as January 2017, severe flooding triggered several closures and had a significant impact on the business resiliency of this farming community. This is due to the lack of connectivity to I-5 and the movement of goods from the San Joaquin Valley to ports, manufacturing plants

and distribution centers in both Northern and Southern California.

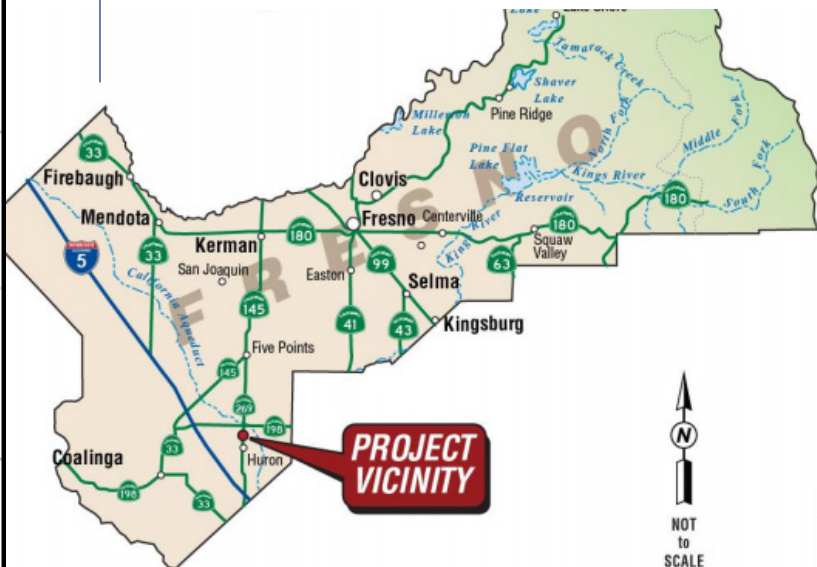
Since SR 269 became part of the state highway system in 1976, the road has been closed over 551 days. This count does not include the severe storms most recently registered in Western Fresno County. Because this highway is the only access to the community from the north, the residents of Huron must take a 28-mile detour for services, shopping, and emergency medical attention.



The cost to the City of Huron, its residents and businesses, has averaged \$454,044 per year for 40 years. That totals over \$18 million expended by a community with a median income of \$21,000 per year. People living in the region are primarily employed by the agriculture industry that our nation and world depend heavily upon.

CONTACT:

Tony Boren, Executive Director
Fresno Council of Governments
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201, Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 233-4148, ext. 204
tboren@fresnocog.org



U.S. Department of Transportation - Uniform Policies for Workforce Training Funds

NEW SKILLS

TRAINING

REQUEST SUMMARY:

A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) policy allowing funding of both on-the-job training programs and vocational classroom training. This policy should be applied to all U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) administrations.

All administration departments within the USDOT identify workforce training funds linked to USDOT projects.

REQUEST BACKGROUND:

FHWA is the only administrative branch currently distributing workforce training money. These funds may only be used for salary reimbursement for on-the-job (OJT) training programs, but not to fund workers enrolled in schools vetted by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) recognized workforce boards or registered apprenticeship programs.

This discrepancy limits local workforce development boards and community partners striving to implement additional methods of getting unemployed and underemployed persons back to work. In order to realize the maximum benefit of federal infrastructure projects, and achieve President Trump's vision for rebuilding our infrastructure while putting millions of Americans to work, consistent policies are needed.

Therefore, making additional workforce training funds linked to USDOT projects available would undoubtedly boost our regional economy. Our Valley does not lack

human capital. What we are missing is an educated and job-ready population to take advantage of the millions of dollars of USDOT infrastructure investments in the Central Valley. Giving low-skill or no-skill workers the tools for advancement will ultimately lead them to securing good jobs and better protect them from future economic downturns like the Great Recession in 2007-2009. Sadly, many low-skill workers who experienced job loss at that time are still unemployed today.



CONTACT:

Blake Konczal
Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board
2125 Kern St. Suite 208
Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 490-7102
bkonzal@workforce-connection.com



U.S. Department of Transportation - Consistent Policies for Targeted Hiring Programs

REQUEST SUMMARY:

A uniform policy pertaining to targeted hiring programs implemented by all administration departments within the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT).

REQUEST BACKGROUND:

Local workforce development boards who are implementing additional methods for getting the unemployed and underemployed persons back to work have revealed that currently the USDOT and its various administrative units lack a uniform policy for targeted hiring initiatives. To realize the maximum benefit of federal infrastructure projects and achieve President Trump's vision of rebuilding our infrastructure while putting millions of Americans to work, consistent policies are needed to address targeted hiring at the operating administrations within the Department.

After years of work, Central California's Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board's (FRWDB) recommended targeted hiring policies for the California High-Speed Rail project were deemed constitutional by the USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and adopted by the

California High-Speed Rail Authority. During the course of this protracted process, discrepancies between the USDOT's administrative units became apparent. While the FRWDB's Targeted Hiring recommendations were eventually cleared by the FRA, and nearly-identical recommendations made by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority were cleared by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), confusion still exists within the USDOT's other administration units – namely the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). During a meeting with the California Department of Transportation's Director, he stated that targeted and/or focused hiring initiatives are not allowed by the FHWA. This sentiment has been echoed by those within that administration, despite the fact that targeted hiring initiatives have been allowed by FRA and FTA after full vetting from their legal counsels. What is deemed legal by two administrations within the same department should be allowed by administrations throughout the USDOT.



Working up a sweat



Isaac Avila mops his face as he works in the heat of the afternoon Wednesday, finishing freshly laid concrete in an alley off Fulton Mall. He said he's from the Bay Area, and the heat, especially so early in the year, is hard to work in. Fresno is heading for a third straight 90-degree day. Story, Page A4

Clearly, a uniform policy is needed, the result of which could be increased job opportunities for Americans in disadvantaged communities that need them most.

There is significant historical evidence of targeted hiring policies getting people back to work during economic downturns. In order to create job opportunities for unemployed and underemployed residents, we are seeking targeted hiring recommendations that were adopted by the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

CONTACT:

Blake Konczal
Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board
2125 Kern St. Suite 208, Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 490-7102
bkonzal@workforce-connection.com

Photo featured on the front page of The Fresno Bee on April 10, 2014 of a Bay Area resident working on a public infrastructure project in Fresno. With the high rates of unemployment throughout Central California, those jobs should be filled by qualified unemployed Central Valley residents.

Regional Workforce - Employment Opportunities



Workforce Development: High-Speed Rail Training Facility & Community Services Block Grant

REQUEST SUMMARY:

- Create policy or regulations that require high-speed rail training facilities be located alongside high-speed rail testing facilities in the Central Valley.
- Provide support to Fresno, California as we strive to become the hub for training high-speed rail workers. A permanent facility 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 across the nation, but gain an innovative presence in the industry worldwide.
- Support the continued funding of Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program to assist with job readiness, human service interventions and economic development.
- Make funding available in the Fiscal Year 2018 budget for Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program funding in the amount of \$750 million. CSBG is critical for job readiness programs and other services that lead to self-sufficiency.

PRIORITY BACKGROUND:

In Fresno County, construction of the high-speed rail project is well underway. This monumental project will require a skilled labor force to construct and maintain the high-speed rail system. Therefore, there is a need for establishment of a high-speed rail educational campus to train workers in the construction of and maintenance of high-speed rail. Because high-speed rail is new to the United States, it is necessary to train workers to build and maintain the high-speed rail line in a world of ever-changing tech-

nology. 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.

The proposed facility is part of a broader vision associated with the location of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's heavy maintenance facility in Fresno County. That 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 the professionals involved in the project from its earliest stages.

Fresno County has a collaborative team which includes workforce, economic and community development organizations that together have developed a strategic plan

to implement our vision. 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.

Need for the training facility is necessary, as our region has an unacceptably high unemployment rate

and a lack of skilled workers to fill the jobs that the construction of high-speed rail will provide. Fresno County is among California's counties with the highest rates of poverty (26%) compared to California's 15.3% rate. 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. CSBG funds will provide the job readiness, work ethic, soft skills and character-building skills and support our population needs. This provision will provide



a trained labor force, exactly what is needed to grow our local economy.

Other critical CSBG benefits

CSBG has been the catalyst for the creation of 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. CSBG also invests in the creation of programs that promote economic op-



Above: Children participating in Fresno EOC's Headstart Program

At left: Fresno EOC's Sanctuary and Youth Services sponsors the Safe Place Program for at-risk youth across Fresno County

Below: Fresno EOC's Conservation Corp graduates

We Stand Together to help all youth in need!

**Safe Place Dedication
Selma Boys & Girls Club**

Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission
Sanctuary and Youth Services
Safe Place Program



portunity and self-sufficiency. Examples include Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI), having lent more than \$22 million to entrepreneurs unable to access financing through traditional means, a growing solar installation enterprise and the creation of social enterprises such as catering and recycling that employ and train disadvantaged workers and generate discretionary revenue to underwrite new initiatives such as support for beginning farmers. CSBG is particularly critical to Fresno 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.

Additional Benefits of California High-Speed Rail

The California High-Speed Rail will bring much needed business and capital to numerous industries in the Central Valley, help eliminate over 12 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions annually to combat global warming, encourage the savings of 2.0-3.2 million barrels of oil each year, and generate total projected employment of 2,388,000 jobs over the life of the project including direct, indirect, and induced jobs.



CONTACTS:

Lee Ann Eager
President/Chief Executive Officer
Fresno County Economic Development Corporation
906 N Street, Suite 120
Fresno, CA 93721
Office: 559-476-2513
leager@fresnoedc.com

Brian Angus
Chief Executive Officer
Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission
1920 Mariposa Mall, Suite 300
Fresno, CA 93721
Office: 559-263-1010
Brian.angus@fresnoeoc.org

Blake Konczal
Chief Executive Officer
Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board
2125 Kern Street, Suite 208
Fresno, CA 93721
Office: 559-490-7102
bkonczal@workforce-connection.com

Establishment of the Sustainable Aviation Project

REQUEST SUMMARY:

This joint venture called the Sustainable Aviation Project (SAP) is an advanced transportation technology project that will recruit, train and place veterans, youth and career seekers from disadvantaged communities into pilot training programs for electric aircraft.

SAP is requesting \$1,500,000 to train approximately 225 career seekers for private pilot certification through ground training at Reedley College Flight Science Program and 35 hours of flight training at a local flight school. Training cost will also include license exam fees, medical certificate, FBI fingerprinting and background checks. For additional supportive services we will leverage and braid Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds to ensure the success of our participants.

PRIORITY BACKGROUND:

What is SAP?

SAP is a partnership between the following seven organizations to begin the first deployment of production electric aircraft in commercial flight training service in the United States:

- Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board
- California Clean Transportation Technology & Solutions CALSTART
- San Joaquin Valley Manufacturers Alliance
- City of Mendota
- City of Reedley
- Local flight school

The electric aircraft will operate out of four airports in Fresno County:

1. Fresno Chandler Executive Airport (KFCH) in southwest Fresno
2. Reedley Municipal Airport (K032) in the City of Reedley
3. Mendota Municipal Airport (KM90) in the City of Mendota
4. Fresno Yosemite International Airport (KFAT) in the City of Fresno.

The project will establish the world's first network of electric aircraft charging infrastructure at regional airports and transform the San Joaquin Valley into a center for innovation related to sustainable aviation and advanced electrified aircraft.

SAP is designed to be a model for replication across airports from Bakersfield to Sacramento and beyond. It will align Fresno County with development work for aerial Personal Rapid Transit vehicles being conducted in the Bay



Area and Northern California and provide invaluable operational cost data for work being done by NASA at their Langley Research Center in Virginia.

Regionally, there are over forty regional airports, most of which are highly underutilized. The four airports that form the initial network of support and charging infrastructure for SAP are representative of the majority of these airports. Lessons learned from deployment of the charging infrastructure and operation of the aircraft associated with SAP will be applied to expansion of an electric aircraft support network in the future to include airports in our region and beyond.

SAP will eliminate the use of leaded aviation gasoline at a rate of 7 gallons per hour of flight training operation per aircraft. Over the 10-year life of SAP, that equals a reduction of 196,000 gallons of leaded aviation gasoline. In addition, toxic air pollutant emissions will be reduced by nearly one ton per year and greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by over 92 tons per year, simultaneously lowering the cost barrier of flight training for aviation careers.

SAP will revitalize the flight training at each of the participating airports due to the lower cost of operation for the electric aircraft. The potential for drawing further private investment into Fresno County with the inherent job growth potential from that investment through this project is significant and would be pursued as part of the long-term plan for the project.

SAP will validate and prove the cost savings and value of electric propulsion for aircraft. This will lead to more

Establishment of a Central Valley Forestry Corps

REQUEST SUMMARY:

A regional partnership in the San Joaquin Valley and its mountain communities comprised of Workforce Development Boards, local conservation corps, and California community colleges is requesting \$10 million to implement a five-year project called the Central Valley Forestry Corps. Together we will recruit, train, and deploy 750 young adults (18-24) tasked with the removal and replacement of dead trees in the Sierra Nevada Range.

PRIORITY BACKGROUND:

Half a decade of severe drought combined with unusually high temperatures has put California's trees under considerable stress. The result is a massive natural disaster for forests within California's Sierra Nevada range. Counties along Central California's San Joaquin Valley (Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kern and Inyo) have been hardest hit. The U.S. Forest Service has identified 102 million dead trees within 7.7 million acres of California's drought stricken forests. In 2016 alone 62 million trees died, representing more than a 100 percent increase in dead trees across the state since 2015. Millions of additional trees are weakened and are expected to die in the coming months and years.



Dead trees create many hazards, including massive wild fire risks, damage to homes and businesses and several transportation impediments as the dead and dying trees are located near the state highway system. Although California and the U.S. Forest Service have taken action to address the disaster, additional assistance in removing dead and dying trees is desperately needed. As this crisis requires substantial human capital and investments from all levels of government, we are prepared to work with all interested entities (Caltrans, county agencies, tribal governments, etc.) in an effort to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

This program will yield numerous economic, workforce, public safety and environmental benefits. Threats from fires would be greatly reduced and tree replacement would help to safeguard against dangers from severe soil erosion. Dead timber could also be used to create and sustain jobs at biomass facilities, where plant material is used to create electricity that is fed into the power grid.



development of electric aircraft, which eventually will pave the way for advanced electric commuter airliners and electric aerial Personal Rapid Transit vehicle deployment in the San Joaquin Valley.

According to the Lung Association's 16th annual "State of the Air" report, the drought is making air quality worse in the Central Valley with Fresno County leading as the worst county in the state for soot pollution. Therefore, Fresno County has a demonstrated need for innovative projects that focus on reducing air pollution and improving public health.

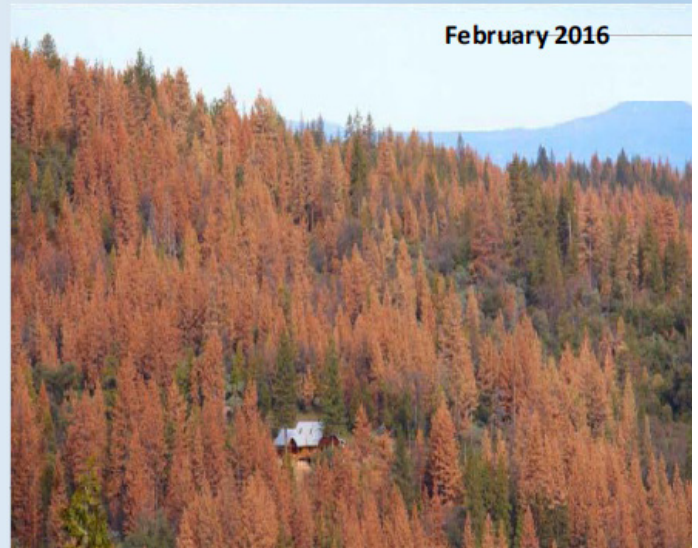
The Sustainable Aviation Project will directly benefit the health of the low income neighborhoods around the airports of Fresno, Mendota, and Reedley by reducing NOx emissions by 7.326 tons and HC emissions by 61.05 tons over the 10-year life of the project. The project will also reduce noise levels from the aircraft operating in flight training activities by 90 percent. In addition, this project will open the door to new career opportunities in aviation for youth and veterans in these communities by lowering the cost barrier for flight training and by providing competitive assistance grants for youth interested in aviation as a career.



CONTACTS:

Joseph Oldham, Director
CALSTART San Joaquin Valley Clean Transportation Center
510 W. Kearney Blvd.
Fresno, CA 93706
Phone: (559) 797-6034
joldham@calstart.org

Tree Mortality - Northern Fresno County, Caltrans report to the California Transportation Commission on 1/28/17



The greatest long-term benefits would result from training unemployed young adults for work. The skills learned, certifications earned and experiences gained through the Central Valley Forestry Corps are transferable to a wide range of growing, in-demand industries, including, but not limited to construction, high-value agriculture, manufacturing and logistics, and energy.

This program would be administered by the United States Department of Labor, through interagency agreements with the United States Department of the Interior and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). While we understand this proposal goes beyond the boundaries of Fresno County, we know that in order to have the most success a regional proposal is necessary.

A significant untapped resource exists in Central California's mountain communities and in the San Joaquin Valley – a large number of unemployed young adults. The initiative would be operated in cooperation with existing local Conservation Corps and the U.S. Forest Service. Over five years, this project would enroll 750 unemployed young adults into Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) one-stop job centers, then California community colleges would train them through a four-week Intro to Forestry Tech



program, followed by six weeks of specialized training in one of three tracks (Forestry, Water or Fire). Finally, local conservation corps would employ them for one to two months, after which they would be placed in private or public sector, unsubsidized jobs.

CONTACT:

Blake Konczal

Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board

2125 Kern St. Suite 208, Fresno, CA 93721

Phone: (559) 490-7102

bkonzal@workforce-connection.com



2017 Fresno COG One Voice Participant Contact List



Amarpreet Dhaliwal, Mayor Pro Tem, City of San Joaquin, Fresno COG Policy Board Chair

amarpreet_2000@yahoo.com
Phone: 559-673-4200
P.O. Box 758, San Joaquin, CA 93660

Bob Whalen, Mayor, City of Clovis

bobw@cityofclovis.com
Phone: 559-324-2060
1033 Fifth Street, CA 93612

Alma Beltran, Mayor, City of Parlier

exeadcc@parlier.ca.us
Phone: 559-646-3545, X227
1100 E. Parlier Avenue, Parlier, CA 93648

Rey Leon, Mayor, City of Huron

admasst@cityofhuron.com
Phone: 559-945-2241
36311 S. Lassen Avenue, Huron, CA 93234

**Daniel Parra, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fowler
Chairman of the Board, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission**

dparra61@gmail.com
Phone: 559-263-1000
1920 Mariposa Mall, Suite 300, Fresno CA 93721

Oliver Baines, Councilmember, City of Fresno

oliver.baines@fresno.gov
Phone: 559-621-8000
2600 Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93721

Steve Brandau, Councilmember, City of Fresno

steve.brandau@fresno.gov
Phone: 559-621-8000
2600 Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93721

Blake Konczal, Executive Director, Fresno Workforce Investment Board

bkonczal@workforce-connection.com
Phone: 559-490-7102
2125 Kern Street, Fresno, CA 93721

Lee Ann Eager, President and Chief Executive Officer, Fresno County Economic Development Corporation

leager@fresnoedc.com
Phone: 559-476-2513
906 N Street, Suite 120, Fresno, CA 93721

Jeffrey T. Roberts, Vice President, Granville Homes

jroberts@gvhomes.com
Phone: 559-436-0900
1396 W. Herndon Avenue, Suite 101, Fresno, CA 93711

Joseph Oldham, Director, CALSTART San Joaquin Valley Clean Transportation Center

joldham@calstart.org
Phone: 559-797-6034
510 W. Kearney Boulevard, Suite 105, Fresno, CA 93706

Tony Boren, Executive Director, Fresno Council of Governments

tboren@fresnocog.org
Phone: 559-233-4148, X204
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201, Fresno, CA 93721

Paul McLain-Lugowski, Chief Innovation Officer, Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

paul.mclain-lugowski@fresnoeoc.org
Phone: 559-263-1049
1920 Mariposa Mall, Suite 300, Fresno, CA 93721

Chuck Riojas, Financial Secretary/Treasurer, Building & Construction Trades Council

cariojas@ibew100.org
Phone: 559-457-0894
5410 E. Homes Avenue, Fresno CA 93727

Sharon Gonsalves, Senior Associate, Townsend Public Affairs

sgonsalves@townsendpa.com
Phone: 916-447-4086
925 L. Street, Suite 1404, Sacramento, CA 95814

Continued...

**Brenda Veenendaal, Senior Regional Planner,
Public Information Officer, Fresno Council
of Governments**

brendav@fresnocog.org
Phone: 559-233-4148, X219
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201, Fresno, CA 93721

**Trai Her-Cole, Associate Regional Planner, Fresno
Council of Governments**

TraiH@fresnocog.org
Phone: 559-233-4148, X205
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201, Fresno, CA 93721

**Assisting the Fresno COG Delegation in
Washington D. C.:**

**Len Simon, President
Simon & Company, Inc.**

len.simon@simoncompany.com
Phone: 202-659-2229
Cell: 202-607-9234
1660 L Street, NW Suite 501
Washington, DC 20036

**Jen Covino, Vice President
Simon & Company, Inc.**

jennifer.covino@simoncompany.com
Phone: 202-659-2229
Cell: 617-869-0193
1660 L Street, NW Suite 501
Washington, DC 20036

**Silvana Caldera, Director of Intergovernmental
Affairs, Simon & Company, Inc.**

silvana.caldera@simoncompany.com
Phone: 202-659-2229
1660 L Street, NW Suite 501
Washington, DC 20036



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