



*San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council*

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES

2023 VALLEY VOICE SACRAMENTO





# VALLEY VOICE SACRAMENTO DELEGATION

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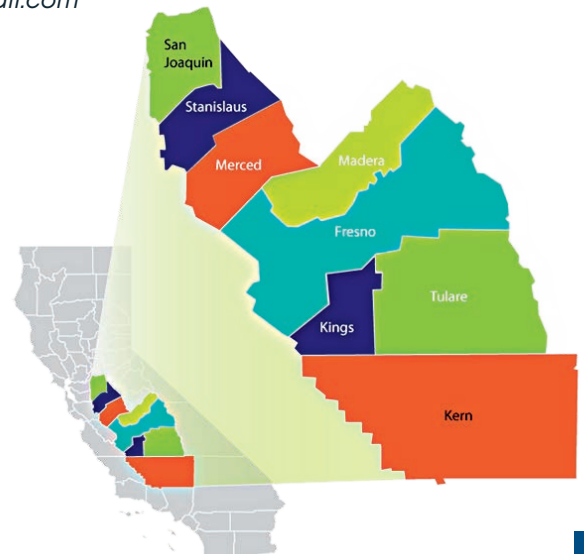
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2023

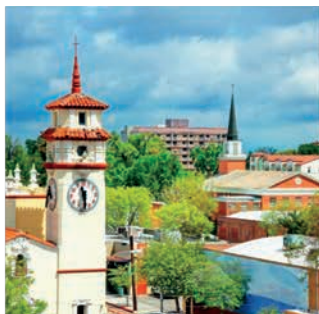
## VALLEY VOICE SACRAMENTO

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY



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# Build Out the System to Maximize Previous Investments



## ✓ Goal

Aggressively pursue funds through the State Budget, California Transportation Commission (CTC) allocation process or any other state sources to address safety, congestion management, and goods movement.

## » Strategy

In 2017, the legislature enacted SB 1 (Beall), which provides \$5.2 billion in annual revenues to fund traffic congestion relief, highway rehabilitation and safety, local streets and roads repair, and multi-modal options through investments into public transportation, commuter and intercity rail, and bicycle and pedestrian programs. In 2020, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) approved funding for several projects in the Valley including: Stockton Diamond Grade Separation (\$100M), North County Corridor (\$20M in FY 22-23), SR 99 improvements in Madera (\$4.6M), SR 46 Widening (\$10M), I-580 interchange improvements (\$24M), and improvements to McHenry Avenue between Modesto and Escalon (\$2.1M).

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 which provides \$1.2 trillion in investments through 2026 for federal-aid highways, transit, highway safety, among other items. California is estimated to receive a guaranteed formulaic distribution of \$40 billion over the next five years as follows: \$25.3 billion for federal-aid highways (60/40 split between state and local agencies); \$9.45 billion to improve public transportation; \$4.2 billion for bridge repair and seismic retrofits; and \$384 million for expanding the electric vehicle charging network.

The San Joaquin Valley is the heart of California's transportation system and is a major economic generator within California. A significant majority—roughly 92 percent— of its commodities are transported by truck, primarily using State Route 99, Interstate 5, and other major east-west corridors. State Route 99 is consistently identified as one of the most dangerous and fatal highways in the nation. One of the major safety factors is capacity flows around the bottleneck areas, where freeway lanes go from three to two lanes in multiple locations across the region. Completion of gap closure should be a state priority.

» **SJVRPC will remain diligent in competing for additional state funds to complete gap closures to improve safety, congestion management, and goods movement throughput on State Route 99 and other regional arterials. This includes building out SR 99 to a minimum of six lanes, consistent with the Caltrans-adopted State Route 99 Business Plan, or consideration of truck-only lanes and temporary lane conversions.**

» **SJVRPC will pursue funding through the state budget, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, any federal appropriation bill, and SB 1 competitive program application efforts, under the Trade Corridor Enhancement Program, Local Partnership program, and Solutions for Congested Corridors Program.**

# Pragmatically Address Air Quality and Mobility Goals Through Operational Improvements

## ✓ Goal

- Support state funding to expand infrastructure and incentives for conversion to electric vehicles to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ensure predictability and stability of transportation revenue should conversion occur due to lack of reliance on petroleum consumption to address greenhouse gas emission reduction.

## » Strategy

On September 20, 2019, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order, N-19-19, directing the California State Transportation Agency to leverage \$5 billion in state funding to encourage mode shift with an emphasis on reducing greenhouse gases and vehicles miles traveled. Regional transportation planning agencies face greater challenges in addressing mobility and congestion management while accounting for local land use planning and complying with state mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. Given the unique geography of the San Joaquin Valley and the travel patterns associated with the jobs-housing nexus and goods movement, reducing vehicle miles traveled is a challenge. The prospects for reducing greenhouse gas emissions however could be realized through investments made to improve the availability of charging station infrastructure and providing incentives for converting from gas-powered to electric passenger vehicles, where feasible, along the state highway system. On September 23, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-79-20, which prohibits the sale of gasoline-powered passenger vehicles by 2035, and promotes zero-emission vehicles for future mobility needs.

Given that transportation is predominantly funded through the gas tax, a successor funding mechanism will be needed. In July of 2021, the California State Transportation Agency adopted the Climate Action Plan for Transportation infrastructure (CAPTI), which prioritizes multi-modal investments to compel mode shift, and limits highway capacity projects to be delivered on an as needed basis.

AB 180, Chapter 44, Statutes of 2022, includes \$1.2 billion for port infrastructure, with 70 percent supporting activities at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and 30 percent to all other ports statewide, including inland port development. On November 4, 2022, the SJVRPC voted to support all inland port projects that forward the interest of boosting the region's economy.



The FARMER Program, administered by the California Air Resources Board and funded through local Air Districts, expedites the turnover of high emitting agricultural equipment, like tractors, harvesters, pumps and utility task vehicles for cleaner and zero emission equipment. This has the benefit of supporting our farmers in the movement to carbon neutrality, but more importantly providing for immediate and discernable community health and air quality improvements across the state, including the San Joaquin Valley.



Since 2017, investments in the FARMER program (complimented by matching funds) have resulted in the reduction of 185,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, 22,210 tons of harmful air pollutants, such as particulate matter and nitrous oxide. Reducing these pollutants expedites the delivery of cleaner air in the state’s Central Valley where residents experience some of the highest adult and childhood asthma rates.



FARMER is one of the most cost effective and timely ways in which the state can advance our communal goals—improving air quality, lessening adverse health impacts, while advancing carbon neutrality. Realizing our vision of a more equitable and healthy future requires us to follow through with targeted and strategic investments that leave no one behind.

Unfortunately, the Governor’s 2023-24 proposed budget does not include any funds for the FARMER program. Therefore, we request that upcoming budget proposals include \$160 million to continue this program.

- » **SJVRPC will advocate for maintaining funding for the FARMER program.**
- » **SJVRPC will collaborate with all stakeholders to implement CAPTI to promote mode-shift where feasible, while also working towards completing key highway projects that enhance safety, and support goods movement, tourism, disaster response, and national defense operations.**
- » **The Valley should be a priority for incentives geared towards zero emission trucks, transit and school buses. SJVRPC will pursue funding made available through the FY 22-23 State Budget for zero-emission vehicles for constituents to augment work that has been conducted for decades by the region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**
- » **SJVRPC will also support operational improvements such as telecommuting, vanpools, shipping more freight via rail, availability of more e-bikes, and promoting opportunities for regions to sell mitigation credits to generate revenue for providing multi-modal options.**
- » **SJVRPC will pursue resources made available through the state budget to build or expand multiple inland ports in the San Joaquin Valley to better facilitate goods movement logistics.**
- » **SJVRPC will also continue to pursue revenue made available through the Cap and Trade, Active Transportation Programs, and Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program, for operations and capital needs for bus, rail and bicycle and pedestrian programs.**



# Transit Funding Reform

## ✓ Goal

Support potential changes to the Transportation Development Act that will assist local public transportation systems with funding eligibility.

## » Strategy

The Transportation Development Act dedicates a statewide ¼-cent sales tax for each county for local transportation purposes. That 1/4 cent sales tax, known as the Local Transportation Fund (LTF), generates over \$1.5 billion annually, primarily for public transit.

Many Valley transit operators have had difficulty in meeting the farebox recovery ratio (FRR) requirements (20% for urban operators) that are necessary to qualify to use funds for operational purposes.

In 2018, StanCOG sponsored the enactment of SB 903 (Cannella), providing operators with temporary relief from FRR requirements. AB 149 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 81, Statutes of 2021, provides statutory relief in meeting farebox recovery requirements for receiving State Transit Assistance (STA), Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), and State of Good Repair funds, through fiscal year 22-23. It suspends Transportation Development Act (TDA) and STA penalties for this duration. The bill also adds a list of new exemptions from the farebox recovery calculation, including on-demand service and micro transit service beyond fixed-route service, costs for security, ticketing services, pensions, planning for improvements in transit operations, integration with other operators and agencies, transitioning to zero-emission operations, and for compliance with state and federal mandates.

- » **SJVPC will continue to monitor the CTA TDA working group and support modifications to the TDA process as appropriate to ensure that transit operators are provided with flexibility to continue accessing funding to maintain and expand service.**
- » **SJVRPC will support efforts to advocate for additional flexibility for TDA, State Transit Assistance Program, and State of Good Repair funding. This includes supporting and extension of AB 149 and seeking additional funding for operations.**
- » **SJVRPC also supports new formula funding dedicated to public transit agencies that operate into state and national parks. These services enhance access to California's natural wonders from within some of the state's most disadvantaged communities and are key partners to reducing congestion and improving air quality. Such funding would support YARTS which provides public transit services through each of the four gateways into Yosemite National Park with a service area encompassing five counties: Merced, Madera, Mariposa, Tuolumne and Mono; and in Tulare County, the Sequoia Shuttle provides a public transit connection to and within Sequoia National Park.**
- » **SJVRPC will continue working with Caltrans on the completion of a multi-modal funding plan for State Route 99.**



# Enhance Passenger Rail Infrastructure and Service

## ✓ Goal

- Provide enhanced passenger rail commuter service connecting the Valley to the Bay Area and Southern California.
- Maintain and increase funding for commuter and intercity passenger rail for Ace/San Joaquins, and ValleyLink. Pursue funding opportunities made available through CalSTA.

## » Strategy

Work cooperatively with CalSTA, Caltrans Division of Rail, Amtrak, CTC, LOSSAN, ACE, San Joaquins, Valley Link and Union Pacific Railroad to expand passenger rail service and connectivity to accommodate Valley residents.

SJVRPC will also continue to diligently work on establishing extended commuter/intercity rail and high-speed rail service and connections to not only offset the impacts of congestion on SR 99, but to also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and expand mobility options.

AB 180, Chapter 44, Statutes of 2022, contains intent language directing \$4 billion over the next two fiscal years for priority capital transit and rail purposes, distributed via a population-based formula. This is speculative funding as the appropriation is contingent upon the availability of funds for FY 23-24 and FY 24-25. AB 180 also provided a one-time augmentation of \$3.63 billion for transit capital projects to be allocated via the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), a competitive program administered by CalSTA. Of that amount, San Joaquin Valley rail operators, such as ACE, the San Joaquins, and Valley Link, are eligible to compete for \$1.4985 billion. Operations funding however will continue to be a critical component for delivering expanded and more frequent rail service.

- » SJVRPC will advocate to increase and acquire funding from CalSTA through the State Rail Assistance and Transit Capital and Intercity Rail Program on an ongoing basis to help expedite delivery of multimodal options and meet 2030 climate goals.
- » SJVRPC supports the Governor's plan and CHSRA's 2022 Draft Business Plan recommendation to pursue, complete without diverting funds to southern California, the Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield interim operating segment, with stations at Madera and Kings/Tulare to provide high-speed rail service to Californians. SJVRPC will await the release of the latest version of the Business Plan to ensure that stated investments match the region's priorities for project delivery and mobility.





# San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council



The San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council is a partnership that exemplifies the regional transportation planning agencies' commitment to working collaboratively to address regional issues, challenges and opportunities. The 18- member Policy Council was established to build regional consensus and provide a forum for the Valley to organize, coordinate and communicate as a region. The Policy Council consists of two elected officials from each of the eight regional planning agencies' policy boards, and the Executive Directors of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority.

Valley Voice is the Policy Council's advocacy program that communicates the region's priorities to policy makers and agency staff in Sacramento and Washington, DC. Each year, a coalition of elected officials and COG staff from throughout the region travel to Sacramento and Washington, DC to advocate on behalf of the valley with a unified voice.

**The San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council is led by Chair Robert Poythress, Supervisor of District 3, Madera County.**

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