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May 12, 2021

Mr. David Kim, Secretary
California State Transportation Agency
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Denial of Letter of Support – Congressionally Directed Surface
Transportation Project Funding for Trade Corridor Enhancement Program State
Highway project**

Dear Secretary Kim:

We were extremely disappointed with the California State Transportation Agency's (CalSTA) decision not to provide Federal Appropriation letters of support for any State highway project that is considered capacity increasing. The State Route 99 (SR 99) Operational Improvement Project in Madera County is an important project that warrants support. While it does add lanes to the state highway, it is truly a safety, goods movement, and gap closure project meant to address issues with existing and future interregional and statewide traffic volumes. It is concerning, given this project was chosen for Trade Enhancement Corridor Program (TCEP) funding not even one year ago, and CalSTA is not supporting a potential Federal appropriation.

While the SR 99 project does add lanes to the state highway, it is a safety, goods movement, and gap closure project deemed vital to economies in the Madera region and San Joaquin Valley. In Madera County, SR 99 is the most utilized transportation facility by a significant margin. It has the highest volume of truck traffic, the highest volume of bi-county travel, and the highest volume of pass-through travel that never actually stops in Madera County. The SR 99 project addresses safe and efficient operations on federally designated trade corridors of national and regional significance, one of the most heavily traveled non-interstate highways in the nation. This project will remove bottlenecks caused by lane gaps on the route between Fresno and Madera. Today, there are nearly 81,000 daily trips on the facility, 20% of those being heavy trucks (15,500). These volumes present considerable operational and safety challenges today, and the demand for this facility continues to grow by the year.

With this project's significant economic and safety implications, there has been a long history of it being supported by a broad array of significant stakeholders. Improvements have been identified as needed in multiple regional and state reports addressing vital economic trade corridors. The project is a community-supported piece of the region's

Sustainable Communities Strategy, helping curb harmful emissions per capita. The project was recently awarded TCEP funds for right of way, capital, and support. The TCEP funding was considered an instrumental piece in this project's advancement and is construction-ready for federal funding opportunities. To not make good on the potential of the existing TCEP funding by supporting this project considering new Federal funding opportunities materializing was a neglected opportunity and concerning contradiction.

While negative impacts of the facility in its current state are unquestionably felt locally, this project is anything but a solution to a locally sourced problem through increased capacity. Again, we are left hard-pressed to believe this fact is understood or that the message that 'one size does not fit all' bares credence. This project seeks to address a problem yet of a different proverbial 'size'. It is not a treatment in a heavily urbanized metro, nor does it significantly induce new VMT; the volume levels are a constant given the scarcity of available north-south interregional travel facilities able to accommodate the nature of travel on SR 99.

MCTC has partnered with the State on numerous occasions to support State projects by supplementing them with local funds to keep them intact and on schedule. This project continues that history by way of local funds being partnered with STIP, Interregional Improvement Program, SB1 and SR 99 Bond funds, a funding partnership that began in 2012. In 2016, MCTC volunteered to deprogram this project resulting in its removal from the STIP and ITIP. This was done to assist the State during a period of STIP funding shortfall. The project was to be made whole again with the passage of SB 1, a bill heavily supported by leadership in Madera County. As an Advanced Project Development Element, the State would be following through on a commitment to see this important project back on track and adequately reprioritized for delivery in the subsequent STIP and ITIP cycles. The project was reinserted into the 2018 STIP on the premise of this commitment.

We appreciate the message of support offered towards addressing the crucial issues in the San Joaquin Valley, but these messages need to translate into congruent action consistently. This leaves us concerned about the continued support of those messages and the possible lack of recognition for the needs in our region in light of the looming development of the 2022 Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP) development cycle. Our region continues to invest in the State highway system at an increasingly disproportionate rate with local funding. We in Madera County and our neighbors in the San Joaquin Valley have spent years of time and resources to clearly identify our key issues and needs related to the State highway system where support through the ITIP is needed. The ITIP will be vital in providing assistance so more locally sourced Measure funds can be directed to community and neighborhood-level investments.

It is unfortunate CalSTA chose to show they do not support essential State facilities like SR 99 in Madera County and the San Joaquin Valley receiving federal funds. We need meaningful partnership and support from our state partners, especially on State facilities

themselves. We urge CalSTA to support and address the needs of SR 99 in our region and throughout the San Joaquin Valley through conclusive ITIP funding action.

Thank you for your consideration.



Jose Rodriguez, Chair
Madera County Transportation Commission

Cc: Toks Omishakin, Caltrans Director
Diana Gomez, Caltrans D6
LeeAnn Eagar, CTC Commissioner
Mitch Wise CTC Executive Director
Congressman Jim Costa, 16th District
Andreas Borgeas, State Senator, 8th District
Anna Caballero, State Senator, 12th District
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