

**SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES POLICY COUNCIL
VALLEY VOICE 2022**

DRAFT LEGISLATIVE BROCHURE

Introduction

The *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (P.L. 117-58) was signed into law by President Joseph R. Biden on November 15, 2022, authorizing \$1.2 trillion over Fiscal Years (FY) 2022 through FY 2026 for transportation, climate and resiliency, energy, broadband, and water infrastructure programs. As the Biden Administration implements this historic piece of legislation, this legislative brochure outlines priority policies and projects from the San Joaquin Valley. This booklet also highlights regional Congressionally directed spending proposals under consideration in Congress.

About California's San Joaquin Valley

California's San Joaquin Valley lies between the Sierra Nevada Mountain range to the east, the Tehachapi mountains to the south, the coastal ranges to the west and the Sacramento Valley to the north. The region is comprised of eight counties (San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern) and 62 cities. Most of the Valley is rural and economically driven by agriculture and goods movement, with 25 percent of the nation's food supply coming from the region. However, a significant proportion of its residents reside in urban areas, most of which are along the major transportation corridors. The Valley is also home to 23 of the 30 most disadvantaged communities in California. The Valley is currently home to more than four million people, which is about 10 percent of the state's population. However, by 2060, it is estimated that the region will be home to 5.7 million people, a 44 percent increase in population compared to 21 percent for California during the same time period. These growth projections promise to challenge an already stressed regional transportation network, but also provide tremendous opportunity for state and federal investments.

About the 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 17-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 Director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Valley Voice is the Policy Council's advocacy program that communicates the region's priorities to policymakers and agency staff in Sacramento and Washington, DC. Each year for over a decade, 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.

Implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Thank you to the Biden Administration and lawmakers on Capitol Hill for their leadership in passing the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (P.L. 117-58). We welcome the historic investment provided by this \$1.2 trillion measure and look forward to working with federal partners to leverage these resources to make meaningful investments in our community over the next five years from Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 to FY 2026. In follow-up to our 2021 Valley Voice efforts, we were heartened by robust investments in the law for goods movement, electric vehicles, and emissions reduction efforts. We also look forward to working with our partners in the State of California as they administer sub-allocations of the following formula programs to the local level: the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program, the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program, the Bridge Formula Program (BFP), and other existing Federal-Aid Highway Programs. Our member agencies will also take advantage of newly-established discretionary or competitive programs

authorized by the law in the years ahead. We will be sure to engage Members of Congress and the Administration on those opportunities as appropriate. However, given the fact that workforce development and job training investments were largely included in the *Build Back Better Act*, we encourage lawmakers to pass a piecemeal measure or increase levels of funding through the FY 2023 budget and appropriations process to address the multitude of needs for our workforce in the Central Valley.

Buy America Waivers

The Buy America provisions of the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (P.L. 117-58) state that the head of each federal agency must ensure that “none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure...may be obligated for a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States.” While the San Joaquin Valley supports the tenets of the *Build America, Buy America Act*, a common-sense application of the provisions in regulation is needed to ensure project delivery is not delayed. For example, necessary components of fleet vehicles or construction materials such as the bristles on a street cleaning truck are often not manufactured domestically due to the production costs or resource availability. As a result, recipients of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants to purchase certain vehicles or materials must complete a Buy America waiver to receive funds.

The San Joaquin Valley recommends that (1) FHWA and FTA are consistent in the implementation of waivers to the *Build America, Buy America Act* as outlined in recent guidance issued by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to ensure transportation projects are progressing without significant delays; and (2) these agencies develop clear guidelines on exceptions to create a consistent nationwide application of rules at the federal level. We support the temporary waiver of Buy America requirements for construction materials issued by FHWA to reduce the burden, delays, and resources expended over small percentages of materials.

We encourage FHWA and FTA to expedite the review and approval of Buy America waiver requests from the San Joaquin Valley as quickly as the BIL allows. If Buy America waivers are not reviewed or approved in a timely manner, grant recipients may be forced to forfeit their awards and be unable to leverage federal funding toward their projects. We request that FHWA and FTA review any Buy America waiver requests that have been submitted from the San Joaquin Valley, and that the determinations be published for notice and comment in the *Federal Register* as soon as possible.

State Route 99

Due to its location in the center of the State with 31,000 road miles, more than the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento region combined, the San Joaquin Valley is a major generator of economic activity and transportation corridor between large California cities to and from western seaports. Goods movement has become an increasingly important transportation, economic, and environment issue for the eight counties in the San Joaquin Valley. The region’s dominant industries include agriculture, food production, and energy and construction, among many others. The critical role that the San Joaquin Valley plays in California and the nation’s food supply will continue to require an effective goods movement system to distribute and export products quickly and efficiently.

State Route (SR) 99, also known as the backbone of California—is a major goods movement state highway connecting southern California to northern California through the major cities of the San Joaquin Valley. SR 99 is on the National Primary Freight Network and has higher than average truck volumes. Lack of capacity for SR 99 results in congestion, fatal accidents, and poor air quality. The Valley Voice delegation encourages Congress and the Administration to support robust federal investments for this critical corridor, including the SR 99 Corridor Plan, I-5 Freight ZERO Pilot Study, and California Inland Port Study.

Passenger Rail

California is making significant investments in intercity passenger and commuter rail and supports new federal investments for rail included in the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (P.L. 117-58). Modernizing the

state's passenger rail system will reduce emissions by enabling more Californians to switch from driving and flying to traveling by clean, fast, and efficient rail service; open freight capacity to enhance the flow of goods from our fields and ports; connect regional economies (e.g., the Central Valley and the Coast), and sustain an innovative state economy that will help drive America's economic competitiveness. The Valley Voice delegation encourages Congress and the Administration to support federal investments that will enhance intercity passenger rail in the Central Valley, maintain short line rail corridors, and improve last-mile connectivity. We also support federal investments in our region's new inland ports to keep up with demand for goods movement.

Budget and Appropriations **Community Project Funding Requests**

The Valley Voice delegation welcomes the restoration of Community Project Funding (CPF) and Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) through the annual budget and appropriations process. We are grateful that lawmakers providing funding for the following local projects in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022* (P.L. 117-103)

- 1) \$2 million for the Merced County Courthouse Museum Facility Repairs project requested by Representative Costa on behalf of Merced County through the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill;
- 2) \$279,664 for the Water Plant Clarifier Replacement project requested by Representative Costa on behalf of the City of Dos Palos through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill;
- 3) \$950,000 for the Water Loop Line Completion project requested by Representative Costa, Senator Feinstein, and Senator Padilla on behalf of the City of Gustine through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill;
- 4) \$1.5 million for the North Lathrop Multi-Modal Transfer Station project requested by Representative McNerney on behalf of the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission through the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill;
- 5) \$1.5 million for the ACE Locomotive Zero Emission Engine Conversion Project requested by Representative McNerney and Senator Padilla on behalf of the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission through the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill; and
- 6) \$4.485 million for the Manteca Station Rider Safety Improvement and Station Modernization project requested by Representative Harder on behalf of the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission.

The Valley Voice delegation appreciates that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have also agreed to consider CPF and CDS requests submitted by Members of Congress in the FY 2023 appropriations cycle. We urge lawmakers to ensure that the following proposals from the Valley are ultimately funded in any final spending package agreed to by both chambers of Congress:

- 1) Stanislaus Council of Government seeking \$7 million for the State Route 132 West Project Phase 2 project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Harder/Padilla);
- 2) Merced County Association of Governments seeking \$3.86 million for the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) Fleet Replacement Project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Costa);
- 3) San Joaquin Council of Governments seeking \$7 million for the State Route 99/120 Connector Project Phase 1B through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (McNerney/Harder/Feinstein);
- 4) San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission seeking \$1.5 million for the Rail Academy of Central California – Rail/Transit Workforce Development Program through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (McNerney);
- 5) San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority seeking \$1.65 million for the Amtrak Fresno Santa Fe Station project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Padilla);

- 6) San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority seeking \$2.1 million for the Amtrak Hanford Station project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Padilla);
- 7) Tri-Valley – San Joaquin Valley Regional Rail Authority seeking \$4 million to provide green hydrogen fuel for local bus transit operators in San Joaquin County through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Padilla);
- 8) Kings County Area Public Transit Agency seeking \$5 million for the Kings County Regional Multi-Modal Transit Center project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Valadao/Feinstein);
- 9) Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission seeking \$500,000 for the Local Conservation Corps Workforce Development Project through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Costa);
- 10) Madera County seeking \$1.95 million for the State Route 41 Expressway project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Costa);
- 11) City of Fresno – Airports Division seeking \$4.4 million for the FAT Runway 11L-29R Reconstruction Project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Costa);
- 12) City of Fresno – Airports Division seeking \$4.92 million for the FAT Remote Transmitter Receiver (RTR) Relocation Project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Feinstein/Padilla);
- 13) City of Fresno seeking \$4 million for the Tiny Homes Housing Solution project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Costa/Padilla); and
- 14) City of Fresno seeking \$5.616 million for the Electric Bus Purchase project through the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Padilla).

Pending Federal Grant Applications

The Valley Voice delegation encourages Congress and the Administration's support for the following projects seeking federal grant assistance through the Rebuilding America Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program and Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) Program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT):

- 1) The Madera County and Madera County Transportation Commission's application for \$25 million in RAISE funding for the \$51 million SR 41 Expressway project. This project would modernize a rural highway into a facility that provides safe and efficient regional traffic operations.
- 2) The Fresno Council of Government's application for RAISE planning funding for the California Inland Port project. Upon completion, the California Inland Port will be a multimodal network of integrated clean and highly efficient truck, rail, and cargo facilities that will underpin a next-generation ecosystem of goods movement and radically boost the economic competitiveness of California's economy.
- 3) The Kern Council of Government's applications for RAISE and MPDG funding for the Southwest U.S. Goods Movement Freeway Connector through Bakersfield on State Routes 58 & 99 project. This project would construct a connector from eastbound State Route 58 to northbound State Route 99, adding a ramp movement where none currently exists and building two bridges.
- 4) The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission's application for \$25 million in RAISE funding for the North Lathrop Transfer Station and Lathrop Wye Project. This project will enable Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) passengers on trains traveling between Ceres/Merced and Sacramento to be able to transfer at the North Lathrop Station to ACE trains heading to Silicon Valley.
- 5) The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission's application for \$66.7 million in MPDG funding for the \$133.4 million Union Pacific (Fresno Subdivision) Ceres to Turlock Double Tracking Project. This project will construct a new, second mainline track and complete track upgrades on a portion of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Fresno Subdivision between milepost (MP) 1117.4 in Ceres and MP 128.2 in Turlock, including culvert, under crossing, and at-grade crossing improvements.

- 6) The California Department of Transportation and San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority's application for \$87.6 million in MPDG funding for the \$146 million Madera High-Speed Rail Station project. This project will improve and expand the size of the previously-relocated Madera passenger rail station and provide a high-speed rail (HSR) station for California HSR Interim Service to serve Madera County and Northern Fresno County.