

July 19, 2024

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Assembly Appropriations Committee, Chair
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SB 768 (Caballero) – California Environmental Quality Act: Transportation Agency: vehicles miles traveled study – Support

Dear Chair Wicks:

On behalf of the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), I write to express our support for SB 768 (Caballero), which would require the California State Transportation Agency, in consultation with other state agencies, councils of governments, and metropolitan planning organizations, to conduct a study on how vehicles miles traveled (VMT) is used as a metric for measuring transportation impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Madera County, which has a population of less than 200,000, struggles with VMT metrics, particularly its one-size-fits-all application, given our lack of density and vast geographic location, which spreads from the Counties of San Joaquin to Kern and helps facilitate state commerce and mobility. The Bay Area has nearly 60% more people living in an area a quarter the size of the Valley. Los Angeles has more than 2.5 times our population, over 1/6 of the area. VMT reduction is not always possible, given the lack of density, discretionary income, travel patterns/needs, and overall practicality of using a bike, bus, or train as an option for Valley residents.

Our region is the heart of California's transportation system and is a major economic generator within California. Over 25% of the nation's produce comes from the San Joaquin Valley, and roughly 92% is transported by truck, primarily using State Route 99, Interstate 5, and other major east-west corridors, such as State Routes 41, which is a heavily traveled gateway to Yosemite National Park. State Route 99 is consistently identified as one of the nation's most dangerous and fatal highways. Up to four inland ports are being planned in the Valley to help offset logistical pressure on seaports, necessitating greater investments in the state highway system.

MCTC is committed to accelerating our response to climate change by investing in multimodal options, such as active transportation, bus, and rail transportation. We hope a study will calibrate expectations and develop strategies to help us achieve our mutual goals of improving air quality and mobility for all.

For these reasons, we support SB 768 when heard in your Assembly Committee on Appropriations. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our legislative advocate, Gus Khouri, at gus@khouriconsult.com or 916-605-8975. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PTaylor', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Patricia Taylor, Executive Director
Madera County Transportation Commission

cc: Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee