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Date To Be Added, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Finish What We Started – A Call to Action to Complete State Route 99, Invest in our Economy, and Improve Safety and Quality of Life in California

Dear Governor Newsom:

The undersigned organizations, businesses, and associations write to urge you and your Administration to fully commit to completing State Route (SR) 99 which serves as a critical north south corridor for goods movement throughout California, supports the largest agricultural region in the United States, and the 4.4 million residents of the San Joaquin Valley. Despite recent investments into the corridor, SR 99 remains unfinished resulting in needless congestion hampering economic activity, negatively impacting quality of life, and deleteriously impacting air quality and climate change. The currently incomplete SR 99 also poses dangerous conditions for the traveling public – created by going from six-lanes to four-lanes and back again numerous times. Making good on the promise of SR 99 will have many and varied positive outcomes for the *entire* State of California – decreasing congestion, alleviating safety issues and associated fatalities and serious injuries, increasing our economic competitiveness and vitality, and the creation of living-wage jobs, just to name a few. Moreover, these benefits can be realized while also achieving the state's air quality and climate change goals.

The San Joaquin Valley has been working with the state for twenty-years to fulfil the vision of SR 99. The SR 99 corridor on average supports 1.3 million daily truck trips. Approximately 90-percent of freight through the San Joaquin Valley is moved by truck and those trucks trips primarily occur on SR 99. Over 44 percent of all employment in the San Joaquin Valley is associated with goods movement-dependent industries, which is higher than goods movement related employment in all other regions of California. The SR 99 corridor also supports the state's geographic and agricultural production center – generating more than \$45 billion in agricultural products annually and providing 25-percent of the nation's food supply.

Recent investments into the SR 99 corridor, including significant local funding from countywide sales-tax measures and Proposition 1B (the 2006 \$19.9 billion transportation infrastructure bond),

have helped close the gap but those improvements will be for not if we do not finish the job. Eight segments totaling 35 miles out of the 274-mile SR 99 corridor through Merced, Madera, and Tulare counties remain unfunded. These unfinished segments include approximately 12 dangerous bottlenecks along this vital corridor. SR 99 is also part of the Primary National Freight Network and is prioritized in several state transportation plans including the SR 99 Business Plan.

Recently, your Administration has begun to focus on the reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as way to meet our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions goals. While reducing VMT in certain contexts is not only feasible but perhaps even preferred, there are other settings, including the movement of goods through the San Joaquin Valley, where widening the existing system to its full and long-planned potential is necessary. The choke points and safety issues created as heavy-duty trucks and passenger vehicles move from six to four lanes throughout SR 99 corridor can only be fully eliminated by completing the system. Furthermore, as we transition to a zero-emission fleet, electric trucks which have less cargo capacity than their diesel counterparts due to the size and weight of their batteries, will result in *more* trucks on our roads to move the same amount of cargo, let alone increased goods movement which is a continued economic and jobs goal.

During your tenure as Governor, you have made climate change a central pillar of your Administration and we applaud you for your efforts to address the defining crisis of our time. From aggressive policies to move the state further away from dependence on fossil fuels by transitioning to electric and other alternative fuel vehicles to conservation goals to protect of thirty percent of the state's land and coastal water, California continues to lead the way in the fight against global warming. At the same time, we must also be vigilant with respect to how our climate policies impact our economy, the provision of living-wage jobs, cost of living in the Golden State, and ultimately upwards mobility for *all* Californians. The state's multimodal transportation system, including its highways, streets, and roads are the backbone of our robust economy and policies that undermine our infrastructure will have deleterious consequences. Taken together, we must find a way to fight climate change while also continuing to invest in a surface transportation network that moves goods, services, and people efficiently and safely.

In closing, we recognize the multiple challenges facing the state, including our ambitious climate goals, and are confident a completed six-lane SR 99 corridor can and should play an important role in California's future. In fact, the San Joaquin Valley has demonstrated it can meet the state's aggressive GHG emissions reduction goals while finishing SR 99 through the development, adoption, and state approval of its SB 375 mandated Sustainable Communities Strategy. We respectfully request that the California State Transportation Agency and the California Department of Transportation work with the San Joaquin Valley to develop and implement a 15-year plan to complete SR 99 – to finish what we started. We stand ready to work with you and your Administration towards this virtuous end.

Sincerely,

cc: The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
The Honorable Laura Friedman, Chair, Assembly Transportation Committee
The Honorable David Kim, Secretary, California State Transportation Agency
The Honorable Toks Omishakin, Director, California State Department of Transportation

The Honorable Hilary Norton, Chair, California Transportation Commission
Mitch Weiss, Executive Director, California Transportation Commission