

**SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES POLICY COUNCIL
VALLEY VOICE 2023**

FEDERAL PLATFORM

Discretionary Spending

The Valley Voice delegation understands that the Administration and lawmakers reached an agreement to lift the debt ceiling and take steps to reduce the national debt with the enactment of the *Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023* (P.L. 118-5) earlier this year. We are concerned that the law effectively freezes topline Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 nondefense discretionary spending at FY 2023 levels, and some lawmakers are pursuing further reductions beyond those levels. As appropriators continue work on FY 2024 spending bills, we urge Congress to avoid cuts to key discretionary transportation programs authorized by the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58) and the *Inflation Reduction Act* (P.L. 117-169). Maintaining those investments in the FY 2024 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (T-HUD) spending bill will help the Regional Planning Agencies in their work to enhance mobility, safety, goods movement, and air quality in the Central Valley. Programmatic reductions would counter our ability to fully realize the potential of the federal investments in our regional infrastructure that were to be provided by the historic laws.

Highway Infrastructure

We urge lawmakers to reach agreement on all twelve annual spending bills to ensure local projects sponsored by the Policy Council and its member agencies are ultimately funded. While we acknowledge the fiscal restraints imposed by the *Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023*, we ask lawmakers to maintain proposed investments in the FY 2024 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (T-HUD) spending bill that will support the following highway infrastructure projects:

- 1) The State Route 99/120 Connector Project Phase 1B sponsored by the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOCG). This project will improve the connector from northbound State Route (SR) 99 to northbound SR 120 by widening the connector to two lanes and adding merge/weave lanes on westbound SR 120 between SR 99 and the Main Street Interchange. Congressman Josh Harder (CA-9) submitted a \$5 million Community Project Funding (CPF) request for the project from SJCOCG for potential inclusion in the House FY 2024 T-HUD spending bill.
- 2) The SR-132 Dakota Avenue to Gates Road Project sponsored by the Stanislaus Council of Governments. This project will support the final design of a seven-mile east-west freeway between Interstate 5 and SR 99 in Stanislaus County that will relieve congestion, improve interregional and regional circulation, and enhance operations and safety. Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) submitted a \$5 million Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request for the project from StanCOG for potential inclusion in the Senate FY 2024 T-HUD spending bill.

State Route 99 Corridor Priority Projects

The Valley Voice delegation requests robust assistance from our federal partners to strengthen the State Route (SR) 99 corridor in the Central Valley. We ask for support for key segments and connections to SR 99 that have been identified as priorities for the Policy Council in the year ahead.

Insert SR-99 map of priority projects here.

Air Quality

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) disapproval of 2018 PM_{2.5} contingency measures remains an ongoing concern. Working toward a resolution that avoids sanctions is a top priority for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the eight Regional Planning Agencies. Proposed contingency measures submitted by SJVAPCD conform with draft guidance issued by EPA on March 17, 2023, and those would result in significant reductions to fully satisfy fair-share reductions from sources

under the jurisdiction of the District. While we await the EPA review of those measures as well as the release of a federal implementation plan (FIP) anticipated in the summer months of 2023 that could impact next steps, we understand that the implementation of federal funding sanctions could occur as early as December 2023 if a resolution is not attained working with the federal agency.

We urge EPA to work with our partners at SJVAPCD toward a resolution on the 2018 PM2.5 contingency measures and approval of the plan to avoid sanctions. Sanctions will adversely impact the ability of the RPAs to ensure the timely and effective delivery of transportation and infrastructure projects that receive federal resources authorized by the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58). This would counter the goals of the Biden Administration to advance transportation projects and initiatives that will improve air quality in alignment with the objectives of the Clean Air Act, while enhancing other mobility, safety, resiliency, and equity outcomes for our constituents in the San Joaquin Valley. We ask for the cooperation of EPA and federal partners in coordinating together on these air quality planning efforts to approve the 2018 PM2.5 contingency measures and avoid potential impacts to project delivery.

Passenger Rail Infrastructure

The Valley Voice delegation supports new federal investments that will enhance passenger rail service in the Central Valley. We encourage lawmakers and the Administration to support the following projects of local and regional significance:

- 1) The North Lathrop Transfer Station and Lathrop Wye Project sponsored by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC). This project will enable transfers between three northbound Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) trains (Merced to Natomas) and three southbound trains (Stockton/Natomas to San Jose) and enhance connectivity to the Tri-Valley, Silicon Valley, and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. SJRRRC applied for federal funding for the project through the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program.
- 2) The San Joaquin Valley Rail Corridor Vision Program sponsored by SJRRRC. This project will lay the groundwork for the expansion of San Joaquin Intercity Passenger Rail service frequencies and service territory to provide connections to initial service on the California High Speed Rail (HSR) operating segment. SJRRRC applied for federal funding for the project through the FY 2022 Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program.
- 3) The North Central Valley Rail Capacity Enhancement Project sponsored by SJRRRC. This project proposes an ambitious suite of corridor-based capacity improvements that will enable the expansion of state-supported intercity passenger rail service and enhanced freight rail velocity and efficiency that is critical to the corridor's agricultural sector. SJRRRC applied for federal funding for the project through the FY 2022 and 2023 Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Program.
- 4) The Rail Academy of Central California (TRACC) sponsored by SJRRRC. This project is a strategic partnership between educational and business entities to train and place students into quality transportation-related jobs in the railroad and transit sectors. SJRRRC applied for federal funding for the project through the FY 2022 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program.
- 5) A project sponsored by SJRRRC expand the Altamont Corridor Express from Natomas to Ceres to run over new tracks by installing Positive Train Control (PTC) systems on Modesto & Empire Terminal (M&ET) rolling stock. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) submitted a \$2.812 million Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request for the project for potential inclusion in the Senate FY 2024 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (T-HUD) spending bill.

We anticipate that an announcement on the RAISE program will be made by the end of June. Announcements on other programs may also be made prior to the Valley Voice trip in September. Therefore, we will need to revise this section accordingly as developments unfold.

Buy America

The San Joaquin Valley recommends that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are consistent in the implementation of agency waivers to the *Build America, Buy America Act*. We encourage FHWA and FTA to expedite the review and approval of Buy America waiver requests from the Central Valley and that those determinations be published for notice and comment in the *Federal Register* as soon as possible.

Water Infrastructure

Local governments within the Central Valley are considering various federal funding streams for projects to enhance the safety, reliable, and consistency of our regional water supply. These include a \$1.6 million Community Project Funding (CPF) request for the Stockton Diamond Sewer Upsizing Project sponsored by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) and submitted by Congressman Josh Harder (CA-9) to the House Appropriations Committee for potential inclusion in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies spending bill. We urge lawmakers to reach agreement on FY 2024 appropriations legislation to ensure water infrastructure projects like these are ultimately funded.

The Valley Voice delegation is also concerned about the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) review of the 2019 Biological Opinions (BiOps) for water deliveries from the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP). It has caused significant uncertainty about the future water supply for local governments and our residents, businesses, and farmers.

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