

April 8, 2015

Tim Hartigan
Air Resources Board
Mobile Source Control Division
P. O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

RE: SUPPORT – LEAP Green Raiteros (Riders) Rural RideShare Pilot Project

Dear Mr. Hartigan,

On behalf of the Fresno Council of Governments, I am writing to express our strong support for Valley LEAP's Green Raitero Rural RideShare Pilot Project for the rural farmworker community of Huron, California. We anticipate that this modest pilot project has the potential to foster the development of a much more comprehensive transportation support system that could help fulfill a large and unmet need in the San Joaquin Valley.

Many farmworker rural communities in Fresno County are a significant distance from the City of Fresno, the county seat and hub of social, health and legal resources. The existing regional transportation infrastructure is compromised due to insufficient funds that have led to limited service for Huron, a rural city approximately one hour southwest of Fresno. For decades now, the community of Huron has had an informal ride-sharing program that has provided farmworker families with a much needed transportation resource. For a small fee, retired farmworker residents known as *raiteros* have been filling the gap by providing residents rides in their personal cars to legal, health oriented and other essential services and important appointments.

The Green Raiteros Pilot Program intends to help formalize the ride-sharing culture in order to enhance the community's transit options by supplementing the existing system and meeting unmet transit needs. By providing two plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, a scheduling system, and a dispatcher, the Green Raitero program will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a long-successful transportation model. Additional aspects of the project include a multi-pronged outreach effort to the community, driver safety training, insurance coverage for the drivers, and a reduction in air and climate pollution.

Valley LEAP is the only Latino Valley-based institution working with communities of farmworkers, immigrants and youth to achieve environmental and climate justice through leadership development and advocacy for policy and systems change. LEAP actively works with communities in both Fresno and Kings Counties on environmental equity matters to improve air quality, transportation options and community development for healthy and safe neighborhoods.

City of Clovis

City of Coalinga

City of Firebaugh

City of Fowler

City of Fresno

City of Huron

City of Kerman

City of Kingsburg

City of Mendota

City of Orange Cove

City of Parlier

City of Reedley

City of San Joaquin

City of Sanger

City of Selma

County of Fresno

The Fresno Council of Governments strongly supports this effort to improve and expand a needed transportation model for vulnerable communities like Huron. We expect that the experience gained through this modest initial phase to the pilot could provide valuable insights into how the development of a more comprehensive raitero system -- that includes other Valley communities -- might not simply provide an alternative to, but also support and supplement, future transit in the Valley. We commit to partnering with Valley LEAP and the green Raitero program and assist in the exploration and development of local funding programs, such as funding through the Fresno County Measure C Rideshare Program and the Taxi Scrip Program for seniors.

Questions regarding this letter may be directed to Melissa Garza at (559) 233-4148. We look forward to working with Valley LEAP, the Center for Energy Efficiency & Renewable Technologies and the other partners of the Green Raitero Rural RideShare Pilot Project in order to realize a more comprehensive and long-needed program for low-income farmworker families throughout California's Central Valley.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Boren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Boren
Executive Director