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(202) 659-2229 • Fax: (202) 659-5234 • www.simoncompany.com

Fresno Council of Governments

One Voice 2018

April 22-26, 2018

MEETINGS SUMMARY

Congressional Roundtable Discussion with Legislative Directors

Office of Representative Jim Costa (CA-16)

Scott Peterson, Deputy Chief of Staff/Legislative Director

Office of Representative Tom McClintock (CA-04)

Chris Tudor, Legislative Director

Office of Representative Devin Nunes

Jilian Plank, Legislative Director

Office of Representative David Valadao

Andrew Renteria, Legislative Director

Chris Tudor stated “My boss [Congressman McClintock] is very much on board with addressing the water shortages and dead forestry. He supported the CALFED water storage projects seeking \$300 billion worth of new spending.” Reflecting on the recent Omnibus, Chris worries that “a sovereign debt crisis could occur very suddenly.” Congressman McClintock was glad that tax cuts were passed, but he believes that spending needed to be cut to reflect the changes in federal revenue.

Regarding the Farm Bill, Scott Peterson believes we will likely end up with an extension due to disagreement over policy reforms involving food programs that were included in the House bill. Congressman Costa voted for the balanced budget amendment to address the national debt and anticipated trillion dollar deficits. Congressman Costa remains focused on immigration and trade policy, and he believes that NAFTA needs to be renegotiated.

Jilian Plank stated that Congressman Nunes’ top priority remains “finding a long-term resolution for our water shortage crisis.” In his capacity as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, tax reform was a “huge victory” this past year. Congressman Nunes supports NAFTA, free trade, and a “do no harm” approach. They are working with the Administration on trade, in order to avoid any harm to the Valley and its agricultural producers and commodities trade.

Representing Congressman Valadao, Andrew Renteria was also focused on water and the Bureau of Reclamation’s recent announcement of a 40 percent allocation. They are seeing if they can get more funding for water. For immigration, he expects that the House will use the “Queen of the

Hill” rule (H. Res 774) to discharge and advance a legislative solution to address the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program. There will be four pieces of legislation considered by the House of Representatives, and whichever bill receives the most votes beyond a majority will advance to the Senate for their consideration. The bills include the “clean” *House Dream Act* (H.R. 3440), the *USA Act* (H.R. 4796), the *Securing America’s Future Act* sponsored by Chairman Goodlatte (H.R. 4760), and a yet to be unveiled proposal by Speaker Paul Ryan, which is expected to reflect the Administration’s priorities. Right now, at least 190 Democrats and 50 Republicans in the House support this action. Andrew was glad to help with many of the group’s Appropriations requests earlier this year.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW)

James R. Willson, Majority Counsel

Christopher Newman, P.E., Majority Staff, USDOT Detailee

We were joined by Chris Newman and James Willson. In response to the federal/local match requirements, Chris stated that “flipping the 80/20 match requirement is not foreseen as a good model.” Many stakeholders have expressed their concern over that policy reform that was included the Administration’s infrastructure proposal. He stated that “[The process] is a little funny since we’re off-cycle from the surface transportation reauthorization,” and he believes that new legislation “would delay getting new funding out to projects that are shovel-ready.” The Department of Transportation would have to write new program guidelines and regulations.

Therefore, the EPW Committee wants to maintain its focus on the FAST Act and current programs that are working well. EPW priorities include drafting a bill to address the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. Staff mentioned their forthcoming transportation proposal will be more “traditional” than the existing Administration proposal, prioritizing existing programs and maintaining a rural set-aside. The Committee may use pilot programs as a vehicle for certain ideas from the Administration, potentially including federal-local match flip. They want to have a bipartisan draft bill ready for when opportunity for consideration arises. James is currently working on the upcoming reauthorization for the Economic Development Administration.

Follow Up:

- Chris and James asked for specific legislative language on Farm-to-Market routes since the local roads do not currently meet the FHWA eligibility requirements.
- Forward the California VMT Study.

U.S. Department of Transportation

Office of Congressional and Government Affairs

Anthony Bedell, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs

Chris Mitton, Government Affairs Officer

Sean Poole, Government Affairs Officer

Chris Mitton kicked off the discussion with an overview of the Department’s current focus areas. The Department has been working on a pilot program for drones, and they will selected ten communities to participate. They will also issue forthcoming guidance on autonomous vehicles.

Secretary Chao has a major focus on safety. The Department has committed \$100 million for A/V research and pilots for demonstration.

The Omnibus provided \$8.5 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 funding for the Department. There is \$1.5 billion available for BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grants, formerly known as the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program. Congress provided \$3.5 billion is for programs and operations of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Another \$2.6 billion was provided for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program for light-rail and bus rapid transit projects. FTA expects to approve another 2-3 Small Starts projects through the CIG Program. The Department mentioned that there is an estimated \$250 million worth of additional funding for the rural bridge rehabilitation program, which was included in the recent Omnibus. They advised the local officials to let Caltrans know that they are aware of this new money being funneled through the State of California for distribution to local projects.

Regarding the INFRA Program, Deputy Assistant Secretary Anthony Bedell was impressed by the local match provided by the City of Fresno for the Veterans Boulevard project. The Secretary's Senior Review Team (SRT) will receive approximately 40 recommended projects from the 10 policy teams conducting the initial peer review of the FY 2018 applications. The Department expects to announce awards in late May or early June. As far the cost share, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bedell said the Department didn't really see less than a 40% match committed by applicants in recent proposals. The FY 2019 applications are expected to open up this summer with an anticipated deadline in September for a January announcement.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Jordan Bonfitto, Associate Director, External Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs

Rebeckah Adcock, Senior Advisor to the Secretary

Alan Mackey, Senior Advisor and Farm Bill Coordinator

Geoffrey Armes and Albert Hu, Rural Development

Al serves as the Farm Bill coordinator on behalf of the Department. He acknowledges the fact that there is not new money available to support the programs authorized in the legislation. The Department has to write the bill according to the baseline projections. Approximately 51 percent of funding for the U.S. Forest Service is being used for public lands management and firefighting efforts. As of now, the House bill is not bipartisan, largely due to the nutrition title. It was passed 26-20 on a party line vote. The Administration wants to pursue reforms that will better provide a "hand up" solution for those in need, not a "hand out." They want to "Do right" by America. Al believes that the "real" farm bill will come out of conference with the Senate. He hopes that legislation can pass out of both chambers to go to conference.

Rebeckah briefed the group on the efforts of the USDA Rural Prosperity Task Force. There are four issue areas being examined: quality of life, technology/e-connectivity, regulatory reform, and rural development. They are exploring how the federal government can be additive for units of state and local government. They understand that these communities have resource-based economies and sub-level economies. For instance, a rural community may depend on agriculture with a different sub-level focus on recreation in order to diversify its assets and attract investment. In terms of technology, they want to promote economic development and connectivity through the

internet and broadband. They seek to deploy high-speed internet broadband to communities in need. There is funding available, including the Community Facilities Program.

Under the Office of Rural Development, USDA provides \$2.6 billion worth of Direct Loans on a first come, first serve basis. They are offering a 3.875% fixed loan for a 40 year term. The Department offers \$150 million worth of Guaranteed Loans with a 90% guarantee. Last, Rural Development has a \$40 million grant program that typically supports 90-100 projects on an annual basis with grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$40,000 each. For needs less than \$20,000 in federal assistance, the USDA State Rural Development office led by Anita Lopez can address those needs.

U.S. Department of Labor

Employment and Training Administration

Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs

Byron Anderson, Senior Advisor

Office of Workforce Investment

Amanda Ahlstand, Administrator

Robert Kight, Director, Adult Services and Workforce Systems

David Camopielle, Staff

Office of Apprenticeship

Daniel J. Villao, Deputy Administrator

We met with a number of officials from the U.S. Department of Labor. The Department is currently engaging with new sectors pursuing innovative approaches. The leadership is very interested in making new investments in new and emerging sectors, which could include high-speed rail. They would be interested in providing support to Fresno if local officials were willing to distribute the curriculum online for the general public.

LeeAnn provided an overview of the region's recent success with ecommerce, including Amazon and Ulta Beauty. The welfare-to-work program has been very successful with full retention after 18 months to date. Approximately 6,000 people need to be trained although the high-speed rail project has been moving slower than anticipated. In 2018-2019, cohorts of 300 people will be trained, instead of the cohorts of only 25 each. The One Voice group was asked to compile a matrix of federal resources they're pursuing. The Department is concerned with the retirement books for the trades. The Department would like to see the trucking training program converted to a formal apprenticeship model and program. The Administration's budget proposal reflects the Secretary's interest in apprenticeship models.

Generally speaking, the Department wants to leverage local investments that are sustainable over time without additional federal investments. The Administration is very interested in the use of public-private partnerships wherever appropriate. The federal government also wants to improve transferability of licensure requirements across state lines to improve access to job opportunities. Integrated service delivery is another priority. The Department advised the One Voice delegation to look into the YouthBuild Program for targeted resources for youth in the area. The solicitation will open later this year.

John Bailey is the Acting Regional Administrator of the Department, and he is tasked with administering the programs authorized by the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. There are three potential sources of funding available.

1. H1B Fees are collected for training workers for medium- to high-skill careers.
2. Dislocated Worker Reserve may provide assistance for those dislocated by the California wildfires.
3. Small Demonstration Grants for the Opioids Epidemic are available for projects that address that issue.

Follow Up Items:

- Provide hard, quantitative numbers for high-speed rail training facilities and develop a matrix of federal funding opportunities.
- Forward the 2017 Conservation Corps White Paper.
- Follow up discussion with John Bailey, Acting Regional Administrator, regarding three potential funding sources outlined above.

White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

William “Billy” Kirkland, Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs

No summary available.

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D–CA)

Steve Haro, Chief of Staff

Josh Esquivel, Deputy Legislative Director

Trevor Higgins, Legislative Assistant

Senator Feinstein’s staff believe that the Veterans Boulevard project is the type of project that this Administration will want to fund given the local match provided by the City of Fresno and its partners. They directed the One Voice group to additional financing that may be available, including the DOT TIFIA Credit Assistance Program and USDA Rural Loans. In regard to high-speed rail, the Senator’s staff do not think that the CA HSR Authority has reached the tipping point where the project is definitely going to happen. They drew attention to the opposition that is prevalent in the House of Representatives. For the Senator, water will continue to be her top priority. She worked to successfully advance the Water Infrastructure for Improvements to the Nation (WIIN) Act in 2016, but there is still more work to be done to address water storage needs. Her staff is in direct contact with Mario Santoyo on a frequent basis.

U.S. Representative Devin Nunes (R – CA 22)

Congressman Nunes touted the success of passing tax reform in December. He would like to make the individual changes to the tax code permanent. He doesn’t think anyone will want to go back to old system. The goal is to give people opportunity to invest how they want. The Congressman believes that State government is out of control in California. On Opportunity Zones, the

Administration wants “to get it done” in the next couple of months. We anticipate that additional guidance will be provided by the IRS in the next month.

Follow Up Items:

- Work with Congressman’s staff to facilitate a discussion with U.S. DOT regarding Veterans Boulevard.

Senate Agriculture Committee
Haley Donahue, Majority Staff Assistant

The Senate Agriculture Committee would like to see a farm bill passed by September. Their proposal should be out sometime in May. There will be a focus on trade, rural development, and broadband deployment. The Senate does not intend to include changes or work requirements for the SNAP Program.

U.S. Representative David Valadao (R – CA 21)

As an Appropriator, Congressman Valadao is focused on getting the FY 2018 dollars out the door. He hopes to move infrastructure dollars to local communities whenever possible. They are starting work on the FY 2019 budget and appropriations process in the House. For the Farm Bill, the Congressman is working on dairy and cotton related language, and he thinks there are way too many benefits for large farms in the current draft of the bill. The Congressman is optimistic about immigration and the use of the “Queen of the Hill” rule to allow debate and amendment process. Lastly, Congressman Valadao asked the group for their assistance getting the Senate on board to address California’s water needs.

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security
Chance Costello, Research Assistant

The One Voice group briefed the Senate Commerce Committee staff on the high-speed rail project and progress to date with acquiring Right of Way, maintaining a 92 percent business retention rate, and anticipating how to train nearly 2,000 Full Time Employees (FTEs) for careers in the field. Regarding any forthcoming infrastructure proposals, the Commerce Committee is supportive of maintaining the tradition 80 percent federal/20 percent nonfederal cost share requirements authorized in current law for a number of transportation and infrastructure grant programs. The Committee’s priorities include freight, rural development, and connectivity.

U.S. Representative Jim Costa (D – CA 16)

Congressman Costa joined the group to provide an update on a number of topics. The One Voice delegation thanked the Congressman for his assistance with the Buy America waiver requests that were finally approved by U.S. DOT. Regarding the Administration’s infrastructure proposal, the Congressman believes there “needs to be more meat on the bones” in order to address

transportation, infrastructure, and water needs. He believes that any forthcoming legislation would be moved piecemeal, starting with the FAA Reauthorization. On the topic of trade, he is very concerned and maintains that the last thing we need is a trade war. He has been very frustrated with the lack of progress on immigration reform to date. He is supportive of the regional priorities including the HSR training facility.

House Transportation Stakeholders Group Convened by U.S. Representatives Earl Blumenauer and Rodney Davis
Jon Bosworth, Legislative Assistant

The One Voice group provided an overview for Jon regarding California High-Speed Rail and the proposed training facilities in Fresno. He provided updates regarding the work of the Transportation Stakeholders Group and their bipartisan work to address the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund and secure revenue necessary to support our nation's infrastructure. They will be convening a gathering of folks involved with HSR projects throughout the country in Washington, DC in May.

House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee
Highways and Transit Subcommittee
Nicole Christus, Majority Professional Staff

We were joined by Nicole Christus, Majority Professional Staff for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Highways and Transit Subcommittee. She stated that the Committee is currently examining how to raise more revenue for the Highway Trust Fund, which is a top priority. She expects that the Water Resources Development Act reauthorization will be out next month.

The Committee hopes to introduce a transportation bill before August seeking to address the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. The Committee believes that an increase in user fees will need to be part of it as well – there are currently high level discussions taking place on this topic. The Committee wants to keep the FACT Act intact without changes since we're only on the third year of implementation of the five year bill. Nicole does not anticipate any new policy or changes to grant programs. She believes that there may be a one- or two-year extension of the FAST Act on the horizon while policymakers review options to address funding needs on a long-term basis.

The Committee insists that any new proposals must enjoy bipartisan support if there is any chance of passing the House and Senate. Looking ahead to the next budget, we may see around \$10 billion more funding for transportation and infrastructure programs. In regards to federal/local match, staff said the most important criteria remains regional significance. Last, Nicole recommended a potential pilot program for Farm-to-Market routes, stating this approach would be easier than changing the current law.

Follow Up Items:

- Work with Nicole on draft legislative language for Farm-to-Market Routes pilot or other legislative paths forward following Fresno COG's staff discussion with Tulare in the weeks ahead.

U.S. Representative Tom McClintock (R – CA 04)

We finished our series of meetings with Congressman McClintock, who had limited time to spend with the One Voice group. He is very concerned about federal spending, stating “we’re spending as much on interest as we do on deference. At some point, we’re heading into the edge of the storm. We could have a sovereign debt crisis and lose access to capital markets when the national debt spirals.” He would be supportive of the Millerton Road project if the local cost share is at least 50 percent of the total project cost to ensure efficient use of federal taxpayer dollars. He is still pursuing regulatory relief for public lands management in his district.