One Voice 2018
Planning Meeting

Thursday, April 26, 2018
3:30 pm

Merced County Association of Governments
369 W. 18th Street, Merced CA

1. Review updated itinerary and final strike teams*
2. Review folders and binders
3. Practice overall talking points*
4. Comments/Questions from committee or public
5. Adjourn: See you in Washington, DC!

*attachment
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<tr>
<th>Transportation and Water</th>
<th>Economic Development and Education</th>
<th>Public Safety and Housing</th>
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| **Water Speaker:** Mike Jensen  
  Government & Public Relations Officer  
  **MERCED IRRIGATION DISTRICT** | **Economic Development Speaker:** Daron McDaniel  
  Supervisor  
  **MERCED COUNTY** | **Public Safety Speaker:** Ruben Chavez  
  Chief of Police  
  **CITY OF LIVINGSTON** |
| **Transportation Speaker:** Josh Pedrozo  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF MERCED** | **Economic Development Speaker:** Robert Dylina  
  **MERCED BOOSTERS CLUB** | **Public Safety Speaker:** Doug Dunford  
  City Manager  
  **CITY OF GUSTINE** |
| **Transportation Speaker:** Mike North  
  Management Analyst  
  **MERCED COUNTY** | **NEA Speaker:** Mike Villalta  
  Mayor  
  **CITY OF LOS BANOS** | **Public Safety Speaker:** Pat Nagy  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF GUSTINE** |
| Jose Delgadillo  
  Member  
  **MCAG - CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE** | **Economic Development Speaker:** Jim Soria  
  Mayor  
  **CITY OF LIVINGSTON** | **Housing Speaker:** Matt Serratto  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF MERCED** |
| Paul Creighton  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF ATWATER** | **Education Speaker:** Nathan Quevedo  
  Media & Communications Manager  
  **MERCED COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION** | Andy Krotik  
  Government Affairs Director  
  **MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS** |
| Alex McCabe  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF LIVINGSTON** | **Education Speaker:** Robert Morse  
  **CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE** | Brian Raymond  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF ATWATER** |
| Patrick Pittenger  
  Executive Director  
  **MCAG** | Frank Quintero  
  Director of Economic Development  
  **CITY OF MERCED** | Eva Garibay  
  Public Program Specialist  
  **MCAG** |
| Richard Harmon  
  Central California Senior Director  
  **TOWNSEND PUBLIC AFFAIRS** | Joe Oliveira  
  Councilmember  
  **CITY OF GUSTINE** | Laura Kroeger  
  Federal Associate  
  **TOWNSEND PUBLIC AFFAIRS** |
| | Zac Commins  
  Federal Associate  
  **TOWNSEND PUBLIC AFFAIRS** | |
ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Talking Points

SPEAKERS
Mike Jensen

MIKE JENSEN

- We are grateful that Congress increased funding in the latest spending bill to provide solutions to water storage issues and assistance to communities with unsafe or inadequate drinking water.

- However, water is the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, and despite the lifting of the drought designation, there are still problems to be solved.

- So while we are here in DC, we are communicating that reality to our legislators and the relevant agencies, and we are also highlighting the ways we see the federal government can help provide relief to the crisis today and for future years.

  o **Flood Control:** We support flood control investment to approach issues that help formerly drought-starved areas cope with a sudden influx of water.

  o **Storage:** We also support the investment in additional storage capacity for the region, including through the Spillway Enhancement Project at Lake McClure and the construction of the Temperance Flat Reservoir.
    - We are hoping to increase the upper-flood control capacity at Lake McClure by 57,000 acre feet.
    - The reservoir currently as a storage capacity of just over 1 million acre feet.
    - The project would be paid for by the Merced Irrigation District and would require no federal funding.
    - However, the project cannot proceed without a review of flood control criteria by the Army Corps of Engineers.
      - **REQUEST:** How can help facilitate such a review so we can move forward with this important project?

OTHER QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION (IF NEEDED)

- How can we help advance the Corps’ work in DC?
- What key programs or efforts are underway through the Corps that the Valley should be aware of?
We are grateful that Congress increased funding in the latest spending bill to provide solutions to water storage issues and assistance to communities with unsafe or inadequate drinking water.

However, water is the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, and despite the lifting of the drought designation, there are still problems to be solved.

So while we are here in DC, we are communicating that reality to our legislators and the relevant agencies, and we are also highlighting the ways we see the federal government can help provide relief to the crisis today and for future years.

- **Flood Control:** We support flood control investment to approach issues that help formerly drought-starved areas cope with a sudden influx of water.

- **Local Infrastructure:** We support funding for local infrastructure projects, such as municipal wells, as well as safety equipment and cameras at well sites.
  - **REQUEST:** What funding opportunities would you recommend that our communities apply for to support investment in flood control and local infrastructure?

- **Water Quality:** We understand that the Bureau does not have full jurisdiction over water quality, but we also wanted to express our support for efforts to preserve water safety and quality.
  - **REQUEST:** Would you be able to share some advice and best practices regarding improving water safety and quality in rural communities?

**OTHER QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION (IF NEEDED)**

- What key programs or efforts are underway through the Bureau that the Valley should be aware of?
- How can we help advance the Bureau’s work while in DC?
RUBEN CHAVEZ

- Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today.
- We have met with your staff on past One Voice trips, but since then, many new members have joined and many priorities have changed.
- While the majority of our region’s future funding priorities are facilities, we are always excited to partner with DOJ to fund other areas of law enforcement, thus helping free up funding for facility improvement and construction.

PAT NAGY

- We would like to discuss how communities in Merced County might be able to further partner with the COPS office to improve public safety in our community.
  - Merced County is a rural region with great opportunity but also many challenges and not enough resources to address them.
- We are interested in learning about the programs BJA administers.
  - Our region needs greater resources to tackle major public safety issues, including drug abuse and gangs.
  - We also strive to create closer partnerships with the community and stress the importance of public involvement in the policing process.

MATT SERRATTO

- We know that the COPS office doesn’t typically fund construction, but we have a project with equities in gang abatement we wanted to discuss.
  - We are currently attempting to construct a six-field soccer complex on City-owned property in Merced with the intention of using it for youth gang abatement.
  - The project would include soccer fields, lights, restrooms and parking.
  - The complex would provide practice and playing opportunities for our underserved youth population.
    - Merced, California is home to more than 30,000 youths.
    - Many recreational opportunities are unavailable to them due to low family incomes.
    - Gangs actively recruit our young population and there are more than 25 gangs in the City.
    - There are more than 4,000-plus youths in organized soccer leagues in the City, and one-league is based in the heart of the City’s low-income population.
• A soccer complex would go a long way towards combating crime and investing in our underserved youth population.
  • Can you help us identify whether the soccer field, or any adjacent efforts to use the area for gang abatement purposes, would align with any existing BJA programs?

DOUG DUNFORD (Optional Questions)

• Given the fierce competition for law enforcement funding nationwide, can you offer us some suggestions regarding how we might make our own applications for future rounds of BJA programs competitive?
• What are the best practices you see for combating drug trafficking and gang issues in rural communities like those in Merced County?
• Are there any other issues on which we can help you in your work in DC?
Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We enjoyed a great meeting with your staff last year and gained valuable information. However, our delegation and local focus has shifted since then, and we are thrilled for the opportunity to touch base with you on COPS programs. First of all, we want to thank you for the support of the Department of Justice (DOJ). The City of Gustine received a Hiring award in 2017, which will be significant for the City’s law enforcement needs and priorities. While the majority of our region’s future funding priorities are facilities, we are always excited to partner with the COPS office to fund other areas of law enforcement, thus helping free up funding for facility improvement and construction.

We would like to discuss how communities in Merced County might be able to further partner with the COPS office to improve public safety in our community. Merced County is a rural region with great opportunity but also many challenges and not enough resources to address them. We have received hiring grants in the past, but we are interested in other programs the COPS office administers: Our region needs greater resources to tackle major public safety issues, including drug abuse and gangs. We also strive to create closer partnerships with the community and stress the importance of public involvement in the policing process.

We know that the COPS office doesn’t typically fund construction, but we have a project with equities in gang abatement we wanted to discuss. We are currently attempting to construct a six-field soccer complex on City-owned property in Merced with the intention of using it for youth gang abatement. The project would include soccer fields, lights, restrooms and parking. The complex would provide practice and playing opportunities for our underserved youth population.

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- A soccer complex would go a long way towards combating crime and investing in our underserved youth population.

**DOUG DUNFORD (Optional Questions)**

- Given the fierce competition for COPS funding nationwide, can you offer us some suggestions regarding how we might make our own applications for future rounds of COPS Hiring - and - Community Policing Development Programs more competitive?
- What is your advice for the best way to be a great and competitive applicant for community policing and anti-drug programs, and whether microgrants would be a good opportunity for success for our community?
- What are the best practices you see for combating drug trafficking and gang issues in rural communities like those in Merced County?
- Are there any other issues on which we can help you in your work in DC?
SPEAKERS
Mike Villalta, Nathan Quevedo, Daron McDaniel

MIKE VILLALTA

• Thank you for meeting with us today
• We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and to learn about programs and resources available that can assist Merced County our local communities to address workforce development and education.
  o Our region is prime for new economic development opportunities, which we believe have significant implications and opportunities for workforce development.
  o We are a region that strongly supports Career and Technical Education and recognize the importance of preparing our students and young adults for the workforce, particularly for the workforce needs of our region.

NATHAN QUEVEDO

• We understand that your office oversees discretionary funding for workforce investment, such as the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program and H-1B Technical Skills Training grant program.
  o We are interested in learning more about how this works.
• We are also interested in the grant programs you have regarding reintegration of ex-offenders and youth programs.
  o We have a major crime issue in our region, and are looking for all possible solutions to ensure we can reduce crime and grow our productive workforce.
  o Furthermore, we are taking steps to ensure that youth are brought up in a safe and healthy culture.
  ▪ We are in the process of creating local soccer fields in Merced as both a youth investment and gang abatement effort

DARON MCDANIEL

• We understand that the President’s infrastructure proposal describes ways to enhance Career and Technical Education and workforce development, which we find encouraging.
• We also understand that Secretary Acosta sits on a task force on apprenticeships
  o Can you tell us more about the task force’s progress?
  o What can we do to be helpful?
Our delegation has made the trip to Washington each year to advocate for a long-term federal surface transportation investment, so we were pleased with the passage of the FAST Act last Congress and we hope there will be further investment through a comprehensive infrastructure package soon.

There are two key programs in the FAST Act that we think can provide the needed investments in our region's infrastructure - TIGER (now BUILD) and INFRA.
- The region has great needs for infrastructure investment, so we were pleased to see that Congress tripled funding for the TIGER program in the latest spending bill.
- We are interested in seeing TIGER (BUILD) and INFRA funding distributed with increased consideration for economically disadvantaged areas.

And now I’ll turn it over to my colleagues to provide an overview of several major regionally significant projects needed to serve existing communities and planned growth.

Atwater-Merced Expressway (AME)
- This is a multiple-phase project that constructs a new 4-lane expressway from Highway 99 to the Castle Commerce Center (former Castle Airforce Base) to Highway 59/Bellevue and UC Merced.
- It will connect major destinations to the state highway system and alleviate heavy freight and commuter traffic through congested areas in Atwater and Merced.
- Phase 1A was completed in 2016, which replaced fast lane on/off ramps with a new interchange and constructed the first leg of the new expressway.
- This was a $66 million project, funded with $19 million from local impact fees and regional funds, and $47 million from the California state transportation bond in 2006.
- The next phase is Phase 1B, which will construct the new expressway to Castle Commerce Center, which will include an overpass over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.
- This phase will connect the Castle Airport and Commerce Center to Highway 99.
- Cost for environmental, design, right of way and construction is $79 million.
- Given your funding priorities, do you think this project may be a good candidate for federal funding for future phases?
Merced County, and specifically the City of Merced, is a hub for current and future passenger rail services.

- **Amtrak - San Joaquin Service**
  - The San Joaquin line is one of Amtrak’s most successful services, holding the sixth highest ridership in the nation.
  - This line serves the Merced Amtrak Station and operates five roundtrip trains to Oakland and two to Sacramento daily.
  - The long-term vision is to improve efficiency by offering more frequent trains to Oakland and hourly trains to Sacramento.

- **Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Extension**
  - Currently a commuter train that operates between Stockton and San Jose.
  - ACE plans to open service to Merced in 2027.
  - This extension would expand passenger rail services for our communities and connectivity with the Northern California megaregion.

- **California High Speed Rail**
  - Merced is planned to be part of the initial operating segment, connecting the Central Valley to the Silicon Valley.
  - Additionally, Merced is a candidate site for the Heavy Maintenance Facility.

Additionally, Merced County is at the center of the technological developments that will change how we all travel.

- The former Castle Airforce Base in Atwater (now the Castle Commerce Center) has served as the closed course testing ground for Waymo, Alphabet’s (Google’s parent company) autonomous vehicle company, since 2013.
- The Merced County region is interested in supporting autonomous vehicle growth in a safe and regionally beneficial way.
- We are eager to be partners with the federal government as it crafts autonomous vehicle policy.

**Optional Questions to Prompt Discussion:**

- Do you think our passenger rail projects, including the expansion of ACE service to Merced, could be competitive for federal funding opportunities?
- What do you see as the Administration’s priorities related to autonomous vehicles?
- How is the Administration engaging with Congress on its transportation infrastructure priorities more broadly?
- How can we best help you in your work in DC?
NATHAN QUEVEDO

- Thank you for meeting with us today
- We understand that the Department of Education spans a vast array of topics, but we’d like to highlight a few in Merced County.
  - Career and Technical Education
    - Communities in Merced County strongly support Career and Technical Education (CTE), which is extremely beneficial to our region:
      - Prepares youth for the workforce
      - Responds to rapid changes in industry and job market
      - Integrates into our community through UC Merced and community colleges
    - We also know that the President’s infrastructure proposal describes ways to enhance career technical education, workforce development, and Pell Grant support for those programs.
    - We are eager to support CTE at the federal level and hope that federal legislation supporting CTE can be included in any Higher Education Act reauthorization.

DARON MCDANIEL

- One major opportunity to connect to economic development is our position at the forefront of autonomous vehicle technology.
  - Merced County is specifically positioned to be a testing ground for technological developments that will change how we all travel.
  - The former Castle Airforce Base in Atwater (now the Castle Commerce Center) has served as the closed course testing ground for Waymo, Alphabet’s (Google’s parent company) autonomous vehicle company, since 2013.
  - The Merced County region is interested in supporting autonomous vehicle growth in a safe and regionally beneficial way.
- We are hopeful we can find ways to connect the natural opportunities provided by our location with economic development in the region through workforce investment and career and technical education.

ROBERT MORSE

- We also wanted to discuss an idea we had for how to study and facilitate school bus ridership, and see if it would be a good opportunity to partner with the Department of Education.
- Our delegation is seeking funding opportunities to survey Merced County parents, school district transportation programs, and transit programs to ascertain why the majority of students living less than one mile from school arrive either by walking or riding in a passenger vehicle.
- In California, only 11 percent of our students travel to school via a school bus.
  - At the same time, students are 70 times more likely to arrive at school safely when traveling on a school bus over a passenger vehicle.
- Safety should be the number one concern when it comes to our children.
- Additional funding for safe routes to school using bus transportation will help ensure that our children and their parents can worry less about getting to school safely.
  - 85 percent of annual student injuries and fatalities during normal school travel hours were by passenger vehicle.
  - Less than 5 percent of these injuries and fatalities were by bus.
Thank you so much for meeting with us today.

We would be happy to share with you some information about our region, but also to learn more about EDA’s funding priorities, and how our opportunities and interests align with those priorities.

Merced County is a region with great economic opportunity within a wide variety of industries and sectors. We are primarily an agricultural community with a range of agricultural-related industries, but as you will hear from my colleagues, we are exploring opportunities related to industrial development, manufacturing and trade.

We are also interested in hearing from you about programs to support the development and retention of small businesses. In particular, we have identified a need for resources to support existing small businesses in Merced County through infrastructure modernization and training programs.

One of our region’s most promising opportunities for economic development is our position in the development of autonomous vehicle technology.

- The former Castle Airforce Base in Atwater (now the Castle Commerce Center) has served as the closed course testing ground for Waymo, Alphabet’s (Google’s parent company) autonomous vehicle company, since 2013.
- In addition, the Mid-California International Trade District is also strategically located in Merced County.
  - On the site of a former Strategic Air Command Air Force Base, the MCITD is being transformed into a state-of-the-art master planned business environment for global business. The project site is a unique state of the art 2,000-acre multimodal industrial development that is designed to house about approximately 8 million square feet of modern technology-oriented industrial development.
  - The project’s underlying objective is to develop a next-generation eco-friendly Central California business environment due to its design, planned uses and streamlined connectivity to key supply chain points. Already home to over 60 tenants, including Google and the University of California-Merced, the project is designed to be a bustling hub of economic activity with about 10,000 people working onsite.
  - Merced County is also working with the Port of Los Angeles to turn the site into a hub for manufacturers and provide the Port with a Central California focal point for goods movement.

Another tool we have to help with federal investment is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and we are trying to identify ways to support projects included in the CEDS, such as the Downtown Gustine Revitalization project.

- The Gustine Downtown Revitalization Project is intended to provide much needed
infrastructure upgrades to Gustine’s “Main Street” (5th Street).

- No major infrastructure upgrades have been made to the downtown in at least 40 years.
- Revitalization and infrastructure upgrades will attract residents and businesses by improving the walkability in the downtown, improving ADA accommodations, and increasing property values in and around the downtown area.
- Because the downtown area is Gustine’s primary commercial center, these compounded effects have made economic vitality within the downtown difficult for the small businesses located within the downtown.

**FRANK QUINTERO**

- And finally, we are interested in learning more about funding available to conduct feasibility studies for new industrial park sites in the region.
  - Merced County is well-positioned to serve as the epicenter for industrial activity and distribution of goods throughout California and the Western United States.
  - We have State Route 99 – the backbone for goods movement in central California – which runs along the east side of the county, while Interstate 5 runs along the west.
  - With this potential, we are interested in exploring a number of potential sites for industrial parks to help create jobs and spur economic activity.
  - There are several sites for potential development greater than 1200 acres and we are in need of $300,000 to conduct feasibility studies, particularly for a joint industrial park owned and overseen by the County and the respective cities.
- We also want to explore possible federal funding assistance that you may be aware of to support construction a six-field soccer complex on City-owned property in Merced.
  - The project would include:
    - State-of-the-art soccer fields
    - Restrooms
    - Water-conserving irrigation system
    - A parking lot with a permeable surface to help recharge groundwater
    - Lights to provide winter practice and playing opportunities.
  - The complex would provide practice and playing opportunities for our underserved youth population.
    - Merced, California is home to more than 30,000 youths.
    - Many recreational opportunities are unavailable to them due to low family incomes.
    - Gangs actively recruit our young population and there are more than 25 gangs in the City.
    - There are more than 4,000-plus youths in organized soccer leagues in the City, and one-league is based in the heart of the City’s low-income population.
    - A soccer complex would go a long way towards combating crime and investing in our underserved youth population, which would also increase our employment rates and investment in economy-driving activities.
MIKE JENSEN

- We are grateful that Congress increased funding in the latest spending bill to provide solutions to water storage issues and assistance to communities with unsafe or inadequate drinking water.

- However, water is the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, and despite the lifting of the drought designation, there are still problems to be solved.

- So while we are here in DC, we are communicating that reality to our legislators and the relevant agencies, and we are also highlighting the ways we see the federal government can help provide relief to the crisis today and for future years.

  - Water Quality: We support efforts to preserve water safety and quality.

    - At the same time, we have communities on the westside of the San Joaquin Valley that are struggling with regulatory inconsistencies in terms of Chromium 6.
      - The State of California has lowered the standard of acceptable levels of Chromium 6, far below the federal standard. It is causing undue financial impacts to local jurisdictions such as Los Banos.
      - REQUEST: What advice do you have for jurisdictions dealing with this regulatory issue?

    - We understand that EPA does not have full jurisdiction over local infrastructure projects, but we also would like to express our support for these projects, such as municipal wells as well as safety equipment and cameras at well sites.
      - REQUEST: Are there any EPA programs that you think could be a good fit to help bolster our efforts to improve our local water infrastructure?

        - How can we best support your work in DC?
BRIAN RAYMOND

- We know that the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG), Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S), and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants will not be available again until the FY 2018 round.
- However, many of us are new to this trip, so we are hoping to learn more about how we can about the grant cycles moving forward.
- We also would like to hear more from you about how we can be competitive.
  - Many of us represent economically disadvantaged areas that needed often need greater resources to properly ensure the safety of our communities.
As FHFA is well aware, California is the epicenter of a major housing crisis, which both puts untenable pressure on individuals with housing as well as exacerbates the struggles of those currently homeless.

- There is a tight housing market in Merced County, partially due to students and short-term rentals.
- Aside from a moral issue, homelessness is a public health issue, a public safety issue, and a budget issue: housing homeless individuals lowers emergency room costs, thereby improving hospital budgets, local budgets, and preserving human dignity.

We are eager to combat the problem however we can, and we have taken some important steps in Merced County, including working on projects that would facilitate permanent supportive housing, as well as market rate and affordable housing projects.

We want to identify opportunities to help our constituent communities with low average incomes access housing, and to help first-time homebuyers access credit. We also hope to mitigate situations in which individuals lose their homes.

Your national perspective is invaluable. Can you shed some light on some of the trends you’ve seen from Washington, DC?

OTHER POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION

- What have other communities done that have been successful?
- How can we partner with the federal government to combat these issues with area and regionally-specific efforts?
Thank you for taking the time to meet with us about an important public health and safety issue for our region.

The City of Gustine is seeking federal assistance in mitigating a significant health hazard due to an infestation of cattle egrets in our community.

Although the cattle egret is considered to be an invasive species and a species of “least concern” for extinction, they are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

- Cattle egrets have few, if any, predators.
- Cattle egrets typically lay three to four eggs and sibling rivalry during nesting is intense.
  - This rivalry usually results in the deaths of some of the chicks, which are thrown out of the nest with other waste, presenting hazards to public health.
- While cattle egrets can be helpful to cattle ranchers by eating pest, they also spread diseases such as heartwater, infectious bursal disease, and Newcastle disease.
- Cattle egrets are also dangerous near airports as they pose a threat to small aircraft.

In the City of Gustine, the most concentrated area contains approximately 500-600 birds within less than a quarter of an acre in Harry Schmidt Park.

- These birds leave excessive feces, fallen eggs, and deceased chicks.
- The City has lost revenue from two popular facilities in the park due to their presence.
- Their presence causes a health hazard for children at one of the park’s playground structures.
- During the fall, City staff and volunteers have logged retrieval of more than 40 dead carcasses a day.

The City carries out various mitigation efforts, all of which stop the moment the first nest is found due to Migratory Bird Treaty Act protections.

- The City has worked with many groups, including our regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife office, to attempt to control this growing issue.
- The City has spent more than $45,000 over the past 18 months to institute measures to discourage the birds from nesting in the City, including:
  - Tree shakers
  - Propane Cannons
  - Hawk Kite over our Community Center
  - Grape Seed Extract, which is a bird irritant
  - Streamers tied to the trees
  - Lasers at dusk and night
  - Predator bird noises
  - Drastic pruning of trees
- Mounted 6 owl boxes throughout the park
- Personal Protective Equipment for Animal Services and volunteers to pick up the dead birds

- We are asking for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service exemption from the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and further federal assistance to address this significant issue.
  - **REQUEST:** How can we work with you to get a permit to fully address this public health and safety hazard?
Thank you for meeting with us today.

We are here to share with you some of the challenges we face in California with the income eligibility limits for subsidized childcare programs such as Head Start.

- Minimum wage increases and low-income limits for these programs have resulted in families losing eligibility for child care assistance long before they achieve financial self-sufficiency.
- This could be accomplished through congressional changes to the Head Start Act, allowing California a higher income level or granting California a waiver, similar to what has been granted in Hawaii and Alaska.

Would California be a good candidate for a waiver?

Would any other changes to eligibility limits need to occur via congressional action?
Thank you for meeting with us today.

Our delegation makes the trip to Washington, DC each year to advocate for federal surface transportation investment, so we were very excited to see some major progress in the Fiscal Year 2018 omnibus bill, which allocated additional funding to several critical sources we care about.

There are two key programs we think can provide the needed investments in our region’s infrastructure, and we believe deserve continued investment - TIGER (now BUILD) and INFRA.

- We are interested in seeing this program funding distributed with increased consideration for economically disadvantaged areas.

We know that you take a full national perspective when allocating federal funding levels, but we would like to give you a local perspective on how those funding sources trickle down to help regions like ours.

By way of this, we want to offer a quick overview of several major regionally significant projects needed to serve our communities.

**Atwater-Merced Expressway (AME)**

- This is a multiple-phase project that constructs a new 4-lane expressway from Highway 99 to the Castle Commerce Center (former Castle Airforce Base) to Highway 59/Bellevue and UC Merced.
- This project will connect major destinations to the state highway system and alleviate heavy freight and commuter traffic through congested areas in Atwater and Merced.
- Phase 1A was completed in 2016, which replaced fast lane on/off ramps with a new interchange and constructed the first leg of the new expressway.
- This was a $66 million project, funded with $19 million from local impact fees and regional funds, and $47 million from the California state transportation bond in 2006.
- The next phase is Phase 1B, which will construct the new expressway to Castle Commerce Center, which will include an overpass over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.
- This phase will connect the Castle Airport and Commerce Center to Highway 99.
- Cost for environmental, design, right of way and construction is $79 million.
- We think this would be a great candidate for federal highway investment.
JOSH PEDROZO
- We are currently working to expand passenger rail service to Merced County through continued funding for the Amtrak San Joaquins, the Altamont Corridor Express, and High Speed Rail.
  - **Amtrak - San Joaquins Service**
    - The San Joaquin line is one of Amtrak’s most successful services, holding the sixth highest ridership in the nation.
    - This line serves the Merced Amtrak Station and operates five roundtrip trains to Oakland and two to Sacramento daily.
    - The long-term vision is to improve efficiency by offering more frequent trains to Oakland and hourly trains to Sacramento.
  - **Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Extension**
    - Currently a commuter train that operates between Stockton and San Jose.
    - ACE plans to open service to Merced in 2027.
    - This extension would expand passenger rail services for our communities and connectivity with the Northern California megaregion.
  - **California High Speed Rail**
    - Merced is planned to be part of the initial operating segment, connecting the Central Valley to the Silicon Valley.
    - Additionally, Merced County is a candidate site for the Heavy Maintenance Facility.
      - DOT has already agreed that this kind of project is a good candidate for federal rail investment, and we hope to continue to partner with the federal government on expansion.

MIKE NORTH / DARON MC DANIEL
- Additionally, Merced County is at the center of the technological developments that will change how we all travel.
  - The former Castle Airforce Base in Atwater (now the Castle Commerce Center) has served as the closed course testing ground for Waymo, Alphabet’s (Google’s parent company) autonomous vehicle company, since 2013.
  - The Merced County region is interested in supporting autonomous vehicle growth in a safe and regionally beneficial way.
  - We are eager to be partners with the federal government as it crafts autonomous vehicle policy as we think our region could be a great candidate for federal investment in autonomous vehicle technology.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
- What can you tell us about how Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations drafts are progressing?
- Do you foresee similar investment in transportation and infrastructure in this upcoming year?
- What would you recommend for continued advocacy for higher infrastructure investment?
- How can we best help you in your work in DC?
While we have seen a significant decrease in the number of homeless persons over the last year, Merced County continues to struggle with homelessness and the impacts it has in our communities.

- In 2017, our county’s homeless population decreased by 12.5 percent.
- Currently, there are approximately 450 homeless individuals living on the streets throughout the County of Merced.

As HUD is well aware, California is the epicenter of a major housing crisis, which both puts untenable pressure on individuals with housing as well as exacerbates the struggles of those currently homeless.

- There is a tight housing market in Merced County, partially due to students and short-term rentals.
- Aside from a moral issue, homelessness is a public health issue, a public safety issue, and a budget issue: housing homeless individuals lowers emergency room costs, thereby improving hospital budgets, local budgets, and preserving human dignity.

We are eager to combat the problem however we can, and we have taken some important steps in Merced County, including working on projects that would facilitate permanent supportive housing, as well as market rate and affordable housing projects.

- The Merced City and County Continuum of Care has made a tremendous impact on reducing the number of homeless individuals through the associated funding provided by HUD.
- We are meeting with the VA to talk about the HUD-VASH Voucher program and how we help the remaining homeless veterans in Merced County, and reach our goal to end veteran homelessness.
- We were pleased to see that Congress continued to provided funding for the HUD-VASH program.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION (IF NEEDED)

- What else can we be doing to help combat homelessness in our region?
- What have other communities done that have been successful?
- How can we partner with the federal government to combat these issues with area and regionally-specific efforts?
MIKE VILLALTA

- We want to thank you for the support of the arts.
- Merced County and many of its communities, including Los Banos and Merced, have rich histories in art appreciation and have active Art Councils.
  - Los Banos has a dynamic Art Council and extensive community performances at the Ted Falasco Arts Center and the Los Banos Community Theater
  - Merced also has an Art Council and the famous Merced Theatre, which is a significant example of architecture in the area.
- We would like to learn more about Challenge America, Art Works grants and other federally funded public arts programs that we might compete for:
  - Architecture/Visual Arts
  - Theater
- We know that there is significant uncertainty regarding the NEA’s budget that might prevent impact grants this year and in the future.
  - Given this uncertainty, can you provide us insights on how the NEA is proceeding with the Art Works program this year and preparing for Fiscal Year 2019?
  - Can you provide us information on Art Works and any other grant priorities this year, and any suggestions for how we can be competitive if we pursue a grant?
ROBERT DYLLINA

- Thank you for meeting with us today, and during National Small Business Week at that.
- We know that SBA funds small businesses directly, and we are eager to identify ways we can bring information back to our entrepreneurial residents to help them build their businesses, especially.
- Merced County is a rural region with great opportunity for small businesses but also many challenges and not enough resources to address them.
- We appreciate the opportunity to introduce ourselves, to learn more about SBA’s funding priorities, and to identify whether Merced County communities’ ideas and projects align with those priorities.
- We are also interested to know what kind of work you’ve done alongside local governments to assist small businesses, and any ways we can be helpful on the ground in Merced County.

JOE OLIVEIRA

- We are working to make our communities more hospitable to small businesses, but there are still challenges.
- We have a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and are trying to identify ways to support projects included in the CEDS, such as the Downtown Gustine Revitalization project.
  - The Gustine Downtown Revitalization Project is intended to provide much needed infrastructure upgrades to Gustine’s “Main Street” (5th Street).
  - No major infrastructure upgrades have been made to the downtown in at least 40 years.
  - Revitalization and infrastructure upgrades will attract residents and businesses by improving the walkability in the downtown, improving ADA accommodations, and increasing property values in and around the downtown area.
  - Because the downtown area is Gustine’s primary commercial center, these compounded effects have made economic vitality within the downtown difficult for the small businesses located within the downtown.

FRANK QUINTERO

- Another way we are investing in our small businesses is we are seeking funding in other parts of this trip to conduct feasibility studies for new industrial park sites in the region.
  - Merced County is well-positioned to serve as the epicenter for industrial activity and distribution of goods throughout California and the Western United States. We have
State Route 99 – the backbone for goods movement in central California – which runs along the east side of the county, while Interstate 5 runs along the west.

- With this potential, we are interested in exploring a number of potential sites for industrial parks to help create jobs and spur economic activity.
- We are also looking towards creating infrastructure that will naturally boost small businesses, like our planned construction a six-field soccer complex on City-owned property in Merced.

  - The project would include:
    - State-of-the-art soccer fields
    - Restrooms
    - Water-conserving irrigation system
    - A parking lot with a permeable surface to help recharge groundwater
    - Lights to provide winter practice and playing opportunities.

DARON MCDANIEL

- Another major opportunity to connect small businesses to increased economic development is what we are doing at the former Castle Airforce Base – now the Castle Commerce Center.
- Castle has served as the closed course testing ground for Waymo, Alphabet’s (Google’s parent company) autonomous vehicle company, since 2013.
  - The Merced County region is interested in supporting autonomous vehicle growth in a safe and regionally beneficial way
  - We are always looking for opportunities to ensure that natural advantages in our region reach our local business population.
- Also, the Mid-California International Trade District is strategically located in Merced County.
  - Also out at Castle, the MCITD is being transformed into a state-of-the-art master planned business environment for global business. The project site is a unique state of the art 2,000-acre multimodal industrial development that is designed to house about approximately 8 million square feet of modern technology-oriented industrial development.
  - The project’s underlying objective is to develop a next-generation eco-friendly Central California business environment due to its design, planned uses and streamlined connectivity to key supply chain points. Already home to over 60 tenants, including Google and the University of California-Merced, the project is designed to be a bustling hub of economic activity with about 10,000 people working onsite.
  - Merced County is also working with the Port of Los Angeles to turn the site into a hub for manufacturers and provide the Port with a Central California focal point for goods movement.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION

- Given what we’ve told you about Merced County and our projects, what kind of information can we bring back to our small business owners?
- What would you recommend we do that we are not already doing?
Thank you for meeting with us today.

Our delegation makes the trip to Washington, DC each year to advocate for federal surface transportation investment, so we were very excited to see some major progress in the Fiscal Year 2018 omnibus bill, which allocated additional funding to several critical sources we care about.

There are two key programs we think can provide the needed investments in our region’s infrastructure, and we believe deserve continued investment - TIGER (now BUILD) and INFRA.

- We are interested in seeing this program funding distributed with increased consideration for economically disadvantaged areas.

We know that you take a full national perspective when allocating federal funding levels, but we would like to give you a local perspective on how those funding sources trickle down to help regions like ours.

By way of this, we want to offer a quick overview of several major regionally significant projects needed to serve our communities.

Atwater-Merced Expressway (AME)

- This is a multiple-phase project that constructs a new 4-lane expressway from Highway 99 to the Castle Commerce Center (former Castle Airforce Base) to Highway 59/Bellevue and UC Merced.
- This project will connect major destinations to the state highway system and alleviate heavy freight and commuter traffic through congested areas in Atwater and Merced.
- Phase 1A was completed in 2016, which replaced fast lane on/off ramps with a new interchange and constructed the first leg of the new expressway.
- This was a $66 million project, funded with $19 million from local impact fees and regional funds, and $47 million from the California state transportation bond in 2006.
- The next phase is Phase 1B, which will construct the new expressway to Castle Commerce Center, which will include an overpass over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.
- This phase will connect the Castle Airport and Commerce Center to Highway 99.
- Cost for environmental, design, right of way and construction is $79 million.
- We think this would be a great candidate for federal highway investment.
JOSH PEDROZO

- We are currently working to expand passenger rail service to Merced County through continued funding for the Amtrak San Joaquins, the Altamont Corridor Express, and High Speed Rail.
  - Amtrak - San Joaquins Service
    - The San Joaquin line is one of Amtrak’s most successful services, holding the sixth highest ridership in the nation.
    - This line serves the Merced Amtrak Station and operates five roundtrip trains to Oakland and two to Sacramento daily.
    - The long-term vision is to improve efficiency by offering more frequent trains to Oakland and hourly trains to Sacramento.
  - Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Extension
    - Currently a commuter train that operates between Stockton and San Jose.
    - ACE plans to open service to Merced in 2027.
    - This extension would expand passenger rail services for our communities and connectivity with the Northern California megaregion.
  - California High Speed Rail
    - Merced is planned to be part of the initial operating segment, connecting the Central Valley to the Silicon Valley.
    - Additionally, Merced County is a candidate site for the Heavy Maintenance Facility.
      - DOT has already agreed that this kind of project is a good candidate for federal rail investment, and we hope to continue to partner with the federal government on expansion.

MIKE NORTH / DARON MC DANIEL

- Additionally, Merced County is at the center of the technological developments that will change how we all travel.
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- What would you recommend for continued advocacy for higher infrastructure investment?
- How can we best help you in your work in DC?
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Our delegation makes the trip to Washington, DC each year to advocate for federal surface transportation investment, so we were very excited to see some major progress in the Fiscal Year 2018 omnibus bill, which allocated additional funding to several critical sources we care about.

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**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- What can you tell us about how Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations drafts are progressing?
- Do you foresee similar investment in transportation and infrastructure in this upcoming year?
- What would you recommend for continued advocacy for higher infrastructure investment?
- How can we best help you in your work in DC?
Thank you so much for meeting with us today.

Our delegation is in Washington DC this week to advocate for a variety of projects but also learn about opportunities and resources that are available to our region through the federal government.

We appreciate the opportunity to introduce ourselves to you, and to learn more about USDA’s funding priorities and how our efforts may align with those priorities.

To kick us off, I’ll hand it over to Josh Pedrozo to talk about an infrastructure project.

Merced County has a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and have come to Washington to advocate for funding for projects that are included in the CEDS, such as the Downtown Gustine Revitalization project, and also for funding to study new opportunities that will create jobs and spur economic activity in the region.

The Gustine Downtown Revitalization Project is intended to provide much needed infrastructure upgrades to Gustine’s “Main Street” (5th Street).

The core goals of the revitalization and infrastructure upgrades are to improve the downtown commercial occupancy rates, improve the walkability in the downtown, improve ADA accommodations, and increase property values in and around the downtown area.

No major infrastructure upgrades have been made to the downtown in at least 40 years. Because the downtown area is Gustine’s primary commercial center, these compounded effects have made economic vitality within the downtown difficult for the small businesses located within the downtown.

We also want to learn more about funding available to conduct feasibility studies for new industrial park sites in the region.

Merced County is well-positioned to serve as the epicenter for industrial activity and distribution of goods throughout California and the Western United States. We have State Route 99 – the backbone for goods movement in central California – which runs along the east side of the county, while Interstate 5 runs along the west.

With this potential, we are interested in exploring a number of potential sites for industrial parks to help create jobs and spur economic activity.
There are several sites for potential development greater than 1200 acres and we are in need of $300,000 to conduct feasibility studies, particularly for a joint industrial park owned and overseen by the County and the respective cities.

- We also want to explore possible federal funding assistance that you may be aware of to support construction a six-field soccer complex on City-owned property in Merced.
  - The project would include:
    - State-of-the-art soccer fields
    - Restrooms
    - Water-conserving irrigation system
    - A parking lot with a permeable surface to help recharge groundwater
    - Lights to provide winter practice and playing opportunities.
  - The complex would provide practice and playing opportunities for our underserved youth population.
    - Merced, California is home to more than 30,000 youths.
    - Gangs actively recruit our young population and there are more than 25 gangs in the City.
    - There are more than 4,000-plus youths in organized soccer leagues in the City, and one-league is based in the heart of the City’s low-income population.
    - A soccer complex would go a long way towards combating crime and investing in our underserved youth population, which would also increase our employment rates and investment in economy-driving activities.

MATT SERRATTO
- **Merced Police Central Station:** We are currently in the process of identifying funding opportunities to assist with the replacement of an antiquated Merced Police Central Station with a state of the art 50,000 square-foot Police Headquarters.
  - The Merced Police Department has outgrown its current headquarters facility.
  - The original building was constructed in 1959, has been remodeled twice, and no longer meets the needs of the Police Department.
  - A new Police Headquarters will also allow Police functions to be centralized to one location such as the evidence storage facility.
  - We have conducted a site evaluation and are in the process of acquiring an existing building but are looking for $18 million from a variety of sources to contribute to the total project cost of $35 million.
- Knowing what you do about Merced County, can you help us identify rural development funding streams for police stations, and help us understand what can we do to be competitive?

**QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION**
- Can you tell us a little about your role and how you interact with rural communities like ours?
While we have seen a significant decrease in the number of homeless persons over the last year, Merced County continues to struggle with homelessness and the impacts it has in our communities.

- In 2017, our county’s homeless population decreased by 12.5 percent.
- Currently, there are approximately 450 homeless individuals living on the streets throughout the County of Merced.
- The number of homeless veterans in Merced County has dropped from 88 in 2016 to 9 in 2018.

The Merced City and County Continuum of Care has made a tremendous impact on reducing the number of homeless individuals through the associated funding provided by HUD and the VA.

Although we have already been quite successful in our efforts to help homeless veterans in Merced County, we would like to determine how we could help our remaining homeless veterans in Merced County.

- We were pleased to see that Congress continued to provide funding for the HUD-VASH program.

We are hoping to learn what programs for which we may be a good fit and best practices you would recommend for us to take back to California to implement to best help our homeless veterans.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | Breakfast and Briefing  
Holiday Inn Washington-Capitol  
500 C Street SW - House room |
| 9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. | Travel  
421 Cannon House Office Building |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.* | Congressional Roundtable: House of Representatives  
Walker Barrett, Legislative Director, Congressman Jeff Denham  
Andrew Renteria, Legislative Director, Congressman David Valadao  
Jilian Plank, Legislative Director, Congressman Devin Nunes |
| 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure – Majority Staff  
Chris Vieson, Majority Staff Director  
Geoff Gosselin, Deputy Majority Staff Director  
Other Attendees TBD |
| 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.* | Lunch  
421 Cannon House Office Building |
| 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.* | House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure – Minority Staff  
Kathy Dedrick, Minority Staff Director |
| 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. | U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Rural Development  
Bette Brand, Administrator, Rural Business  
David Foster, Acting Chief of Staff, Rural Business Programs  
Other Attendees TBD  
NOTE: Rural Housing Administrator transitions on 4/30/2018 – new Administrator has been invited but is currently uncertain about attendance |
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| 2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Congressional Roundtable: Senate  
                     Roscoe Jones, Legislative Director, Senator Dianne Feinstein  
                     Clint Odom, Legislative Director, Senator Kamala Harris |
| 3:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | U.S. Department of Justice, COPS  
                     Russ Washington, Acting Director  
                     Jennifer Rosenberger, Program Analyst |
| 3:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | Wrap-up and Debrief  
                     Discuss Day 2 Strike Teams |
| 4:00 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. | Downtime |
| 6:15 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. | Dinner with Staffers from the Office of Congressman Costa  
                     Capitol Hill Club  
                     Grant/McKinley Room |
## THURSDAY, MAY 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Strike Team 1</th>
<th>Strike Team 2</th>
<th>Strike Team 3</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation and Water</td>
<td>Economic Development and Education</td>
<td>Public Safety and Housing</td>
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| 9:00 AM | **U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation**  
1849 C St NW  
Robert Wolf, Director of Program and Budget  
POC: Otelia Quarles (202) 513-0501 | **U.S. Economic Development Administration**  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Darmika Stanfield, Congressional Affairs Specialist  
POC: Darmika Stanfield, number TBD | **Federal Housing Finance Agency**  
400 7th Street NW  
Melvin L. Watt, Director  
Additional Attendees TBD  
POC: Bill Merrill, number TBD |
| 9:30 AM | **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**  
441 G Street NW Office 3G96  
Bradd Schwichtenberg, Deputy Chief SPD and SAD RITs  
POC: Bradd Schwichtenberg (202) 573-1644 | **U.S. Small Business Administration**  
409 3rd Street SW  
George Brown, Deputy Assistant Administrator  
POC: George Brown (202) 205-6972 | **U.S. Department of Justice - Bureau of Justice Assistance**  
810 7th Street NW  
Jon Adler, Director  
Kevin Jenkins, DOJ Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist  
POC: Kevin Jenkins (202) 514-0907 |
| 10:00 AM | **U.S. Department of Justice - Bureau of Justice Assistance**  
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td>House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development - Majority Staff&lt;br&gt;2358A Rayburn House Office Building&lt;br&gt;Matt Anderson, Legislative Aide</td>
<td>400 7th St SW&lt;br&gt;Courtney Spearman, Design Specialist, Visual Arts&lt;br&gt;Carol Lanoux Lee, Theater Specialist, Performing Arts</td>
<td>POC: Matt Anderson, 202-225-2141&lt;br&gt;POC: Courtney Spearman, 202-682-5603</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 AM</td>
<td>Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development - Majority and Minority Staff&lt;br&gt;186 Dirksen Senate Office Building&lt;br&gt;Gus Maples, Professional Staff Member, Majority&lt;br&gt;Nathan Robinson, Professional Staff Member, Minority</td>
<td>451 7th St SW&lt;br&gt;Neal Rackleff, Assistant Secretary for Community Development&lt;br&gt;Stephanie Fila, Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations&lt;br&gt;Additional Attendees TBD</td>
<td>POC: Stephanie Fila, number TBD</td>
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<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch On Your Own</td>
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<td>12:30 PM</td>
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| 1:30 PM | U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity | 200 Constitution Avenue NW | Byron Anderson, Senior Advisor, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs  
POC: Byron Anderson 202-693-4605 |
| 2:00 PM | U.S. Department of Transportation | 1200 New Jersey Ave, SE | Chris Mitton, Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist  
Sean Poole, Special Assistant, Office of Governmental Affairs  
Attendees TBD From: TIGER/INFRA  
FAA  
NHTSA  
FRA  
FHWA |
| 2:30 PM | U.S. Department of Education | 400 Maryland Avenue, SW | Adam Honeysett, Director, State and Local Engagement  
Dr. Michael Eric Wooten, Acting Assistant Secretary, Career Technical and Adult Education  
Additional Attendees TBD  
POC: Sean Poole, (202) 366-3132 |
| 3:00 PM | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | 1849 C St NW | Assistant Director Jerome Ford  
Other Attendees TBD  
POC: Delores Bigby, number TBD |
| 3:30 PM | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW | Peter Grevatt, Director, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water  
Joe Tiago, Special Assistant, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water |
<p>| 4:00 PM | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services | 330 C Street, SW | |</p>
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<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td><strong>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Administration, Homeless Programs Office</strong>&lt;br&gt;810 Vermont Avenue NW</td>
<td>Ann Linehan, Acting Director, Office of Head Start&lt;br&gt;POC: TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30 PM</td>
<td>Delegation Downtime &amp; Travel</td>
<td>Anthony Love, Senior Advisor and Director of Community Engagement&lt;br&gt;Christopher D. Syrek, Executive Director of State and Local Government Affairs&lt;br&gt;Henry Huntley and Ted Diaz, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs&lt;br&gt;POC: Anthony Love, 202-461-1902</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 PM</td>
<td><strong>Delegation Dinner TBD</strong></td>
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