



One Voice 2018 Planning Meeting

Thursday, April 12, 2018
3:30 pm

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

1. Welcome
2. Discuss itinerary and strike teams*
3. Review print material (handout)
4. Review talking points/key messages*
5. Comments/Questions from committee or public
6. Adjourn: FINAL meeting **April 26, 2018** at 3:30 pm, MCAG

*attachment



**MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
ONE VOICE 2018
ADVOCACY TRIP—WASHINGTON, D.C.
MEETING ITINERARY**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 2

8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Briefing Holiday Inn Washington-Capitol
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Travel from Hotel to Capitol Complex Room TBD
10:00 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.	Congressional Roundtable: Senate Clint Odom, Legislative Director, Senator Kamala Harris Roscoe Jones, Legislative Director, Senator Dianne Feinstein
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Rural Development Anne Hazlett, Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	U.S. Department of Justice, COPS Russ Washington, Acting Director Jennifer Rosenberger, Program Analyst
3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Full Delegation Meeting TBD
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Wrap-up and Debrief Discuss Day 2 Strike Teams
4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Downtime <i>If needed, transportation will be arranged from the hotel to Capitol Hill Club—meet in lobby.</i>
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Dinner with Staffers from the Office of Congressman Costa Capitol Hill Club Grant/McKinley Room

	Proposed Time
	Confirmed



THURSDAY, MAY 3

	Strike Team 1	Strike Team 2	Strike Team 3
	Transportation and Water	Economic Development and Education	Public Safety and Housing
8:00 AM	Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works Attendees TBD	Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Attendees TBD	
8:30 AM	House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Attendees TBD	Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Attendees TBD	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Administration, Homeless Programs Office Anthony Love, Senior Advisor and Director of Community Engagement Additional Attendees TBD
9:00 AM			
9:30 AM	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Bradd R. Schwichtenberg, Deputy Chief SPD and SAD RITs Additional Attendees TBD	U.S. Small Business Administration Holly Turner, Associate Administrator for the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Additional Attendees TBD	
10:00 AM			U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance Jon Adler, Director Additional Attendees TBD
10:30 AM	U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation Attendees TBD		



	Strike Team 1	Strike Team 2	Strike Team 3
	Transportation and Water	Economic Development and Education	Public Safety and Housing
11:00 AM		National Endowment for the Arts Courtney Spearman, Design Specialist, Visual Arts Carol Lanoux Lee, Theater Specialist, Performing Arts	
11:30 AM	U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service Attendees TBD		U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Neal Rackleff, Assistant Secretary for Community Development Stephanie Fila, Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations Additional Attendees TBD
12:00 PM			
12:30 PM		Lunch On Your Own	
1:00 PM	Lunch On Your Own		Lunch On Your Own
1:30 PM		U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Megan Baird, Program Specialist	



	Strike Team 1	Strike Team 2	Strike Team 3
	Transportation and Water	Economic Development and Education	Public Safety and Housing
2:00 PM	U.S. Department of Transportation Attendees TBD from: TIGER/INFRA FAA NHTSA FRA FHWA	Eugenie Agia, Program Specialist Additional Attendees TBD	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Attendees TBD
2:30 PM			
3:00 PM		U.S. Department of Education Adam Honeysett, Director, State and Local Engagement Dr. Michael Eric Wooten, Acting Assistant Secretary, Career Technical and Adult Education Additional Attendees TBD	
3:30 PM			U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Firefighter Grants Attendees TBD
4:00 PM	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water Peter C. Grevatt, Director Additional Attendees TBD		
4:30 PM		U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Ann Linehan, Acting Director, Office of Head	



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5:00 PM		Start Additional Attendees TBD	Federal Housing Finance Agency Melvin L. Watt, Director Additional Attendees TBD
6:00– 8:00 PM	Delegation Dinner TBD		

PROPOSED STRIKE TEAMS

Transportation and Water	Economic Development and Education	Public Safety and Housing
Mike Jensen (speaker, water)	Daron McDaniel (speaker, economic development)	Ruben Chavez (speaker, public safety)
Josh Pedrozo (speaker, transportation)	Robert Dylina (speaker, economic development)	Doug Dunford (speaker, public safety)
Mike North (speaker, transportation)	Mike Villalta (speaker, economic development for NEA meeting)	Pat Nagy (speaker, public safety)
Jose Delgadillo	Jim Soria (speaker, economic development)	Brian Raymond
Paul Creighton	Nathan Quevedo (speaker, education)	Andy Krotik
Alex McCabe	Robert Morse (speaker, education)	Matt Serratto
	Frank Quintero	
	Joe Oliveira	
Patrick Pittenger (staff)	Stacie Dabbs (staff)	Eva Garibay (staff)
Richard Harmon (staff)	Zac Commins (staff)	Laura Kroeger (staff)



2018 Overall Talking Points

TRANSPORTATION

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Our delegation has made the trip to Washington, DC 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 and INFRA.
 - The region has great needs for infrastructure investment.
 - We are interested in seeing TIGER and INFRA funding distributed with increased consideration for economically disadvantaged areas.
- We would like to start by giving you 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.
 - 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.
 - Passenger rail service
 - We are looking for support for expanded 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
 - Merced's Amtrak Station will be upgraded with a second platform to meet increased needs
 - 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 at Castle Commerce Center

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

- *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.*

PUBLIC SAFETY

CATTLE EGRET ABATEMENT

- 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 Species 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.
- The City carries out various mitigation efforts, all of which stop the moment the first nest is found.
 - The City has worked with many groups to attempt to control this growing issue.
- Removing the cattle egret from Migratory Bird Species Act protection would allow the City to respond to public health and economic concerns.
 - Cattle egrets would be safe to roost in nearby state parks and national wildlife refuges.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- First of all, we want to thank you for the support of the Department of Justice (DOJ). Merced County enjoys the support of the DOJ, and the funding has had a significant impact on several cities in Merced County.
 - We support funding for local public safety projects, including the construction of municipal police stations. We would like to briefly mention some of our individual city law enforcement funding priorities:

- 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 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.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

- Merced County continues to struggle with homelessness and the impacts it has in our communities.
- Currently, there are more than 500 homeless individuals living on the streets throughout the County of Merced.
- 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 have met 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.

EDUCATION

INCOME ELIGIBILITY FOR SUBSIDIZED CHILDCARE

- We would like to see an increase in the eligibility limits for subsidized childcare programs, including 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.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION STUDY

- 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.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GENERAL

- Merced County is a rural region with great opportunity but also many challenges and not enough resources to address them.
- We have 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, lights, restrooms and parking.
 - The fields would have a state-of-the-art irrigation system to conserve water, a parking lot with a permeable surface to help recharge groundwater, and 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.

WIRELESS INFRASTRUCTURE

- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me about the committee's work on telecommunications issues and providing us the opportunity to give perspective from Merced County.
- The County of Merced is a rural county with a population of about 270,000 people located in Central Valley of California.

- I want to discuss some of our concerns with legislation that would limit local authority as it relates to wireless telecommunications facilities.
- Merced County fully supports the deployment of wireless facilities to ensure that our citizens and businesses have access to quality telecommunications services.
 - Our communities adopt policies and regulations, including permitting processes, fees, and land use zones, that serve to protect and advance the health, safety, and quality of life of our citizens.
 - We remain concerned about any legislation that would reduce the ability of local governments to collaborate with the wireless industry to ensure the public receives maximum benefit and proper health and safety considerations are taken into account.
 - We are particularly concerned about legislation that would impose a “shot clock” time limit for local governments like ours to process potentially unlimited wireless facility applications of all sizes.
 - We are worried that any legislation would also interfere with our ability to manage our own property and our ability to receive appropriate compensation for its use.
 - We were pleased that legislation that would’ve stifled local control of telecommunications infrastructure at the state level was vetoed by Governor Brown last year.
 - As Congress considers efforts to improve the rollout of wireless and broadband deployment, we hope that there can be a more balanced approach that does not undermine input from local governments.

PUBLIC ARTS

- 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
- We would like to learn more about Our Town grants and other federally funded public arts programs that we might compete for
- We know that there is significant uncertainty regarding the NEA’s budget that might prevent impact Our Town grants this year and in the future
 - Given this uncertainty, can you provide us insights on how the NEA is proceeding with the Our Town program this year and preparing for Fiscal Year 2019?
 - Can you provide us information on Our Town priorities this year and any suggestions for how we can be competitive if we pursue a grant?

WATER

- We are grateful that Congress passed bipartisan drought relief legislation to provide short- and long-term drought relief, 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 Washington, 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.
 - Storage: We 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 feet.
- The reservoir currently has a storage capacity of just over 1 million acre feet.