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Committee on Environmental and Public Works
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Field Hearing
San Diego, California

Testimony of Chandra L. Wallar
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- Good afternoon. I am Chandra Wallar, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County of San Diego's Land Use and Environment Group which includes the Air Pollution Control District.
- Thank you Senator Boxer, EPW Committee members and staff for the opportunity to testify today. It's a pleasure to highlight for you the County's air quality priorities and activities. We are in a unique position to bring our mutual goals to fruition in the next authorization of the federal highway, transit and highway safety bill.
- I was especially pleased to read that one of Senator Boxer's primary goals for this bill is to improve air quality in California and nationwide. The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District is the regional government authority responsible for regulating emissions of pollutants that impact the health, safety, and welfare of its residents.
- This District is one of 35 local air districts in the state of California whose primary mission is protecting public health by reducing air pollution through a range of programs including public education, promotion of clean and healthy transportation alternatives, implementation and enforcement of State and federal regulations and administration of voluntary incentive programs.
- The County is a leader in innovative programs to significantly lower pollution levels. We were the first in the nation to require vapor controls at gas stations. We were also the first to approve much-needed emission reductions from mobile sources as mitigation for new large stationary sources. And since 2003, the San Diego Air Pollution Control District has allocated \$27 million in State and local grants to a broad range of projects benefiting virtually everyone from local agriculture to trucking, transit companies to fork-lift operators, and railcars to marine vessels.
- In fact, in 2005 San Diego County distinguished itself as the most improved metropolitan area in the nation in reducing ozone air quality exceedances, demonstrating that air quality programs work and that environmental protection and commerce can coexist and share common goals.
- However, our work is not done. Despite tremendous progress, the region does not yet attain current federal smog standards, and new, more health-protective federal

standards will create additional challenges in further controlling emissions while maintaining a healthy economic climate.

- In San Diego County and throughout much of the nation, the primary source of air pollution—including smog-forming emissions, toxic cancer-causing pollution, and greenhouse gases—sits in our own driveways, our vehicles.
- State and federal standards for light- and heavy-duty vehicles and cleaner fuels are reducing emissions from motor vehicles. However, the benefits of cleaner tailpipes can't keep pace with current and foreseeable trends of steadily increasing motor vehicle use. Growth in vehicle miles traveled has far outpaced population growth and is one of the most stubborn obstacles to lasting air quality progress.
- Accordingly, techniques for reducing motor vehicle emissions must encompass both technology improvements to vehicles and fuels, and programs encouraging other, less-polluting transportation choices.
- The residents of this region are making their own substantial financial investments in a transportation network that is vibrant, competitive, safe, and environmentally sustainable. In 1988, the region adopted a half-cent transportation sales tax, and renewed the tax in 2004 for an additional 40 years. Federal programs should reward proactive regions such as San Diego by providing matching funds for projects that reduce transportation emissions.
- Chairman Greg Cox is working with partners to designate San Diego County as a recipient of a proposed \$50 million federal grant investing in infrastructure and programs to shift automobile trips to walking and biking. With our favorable climate and active population, San Diego County is a natural incubator for this project.
- The County's extensive General Plan Update, due for adoption in 2010, will cluster rural development much more than in the past, and help reduce vehicle trips, particularly if federal support for rural transportation needs is available. We are also developing a greenhouse gas mitigation program that rewards developments that reduce their carbon footprints.
- The changes in growth patterns these plans bring about will reduce emissions from "business-as-usual" growth scenarios. The federal transportation bill should recognize and support these local efforts, through additional funding for clean air grants and transit, and incentive programs rewarding smart growth plans and other air quality-supportive projects.
- On a broader scale, Congress is considering legislation to control greenhouse gas emissions, and California's AB 32 and SB 375 will establish greenhouse gas reduction targets for each region of the State. The federal transportation bill should acknowledge and support these current greenhouse gas reduction efforts, and help provide funding and regulatory support to help streamline project approvals so that climate-supportive transportation projects proceed expeditiously.

- The federal transportation bill should also ensure regional travel models are sensitive to non-polluting modes and reduced trip generation rates from compact and transit-oriented developments, and lifecycle costs of transportation investments should include consideration of long-term air quality benefits. Continued funding for incentive programs is key to achieving these objectives.
- Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the County supports a more streamlined approach to allocating federal funds. Flexibility that allows agencies to allocate federal funds for a range of projects, based on need, is greatly beneficial in more quickly implementing air quality improvements.
- The County looks forward to working with Senator Boxer and members of this Committee as discussions regarding the transportation bill continue. Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify.