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United States Senate, Committee on Environmental and Public Works: Briefing on  
Federal Transportation Program

Testimony of Brad Poiriez  
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Good afternoon. My name is Brad Poiriez. I am the Air Pollution Control Officer of the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District located in El Centro CA, which is one of 35 local air districts in the state of California. Our primary mission is protecting public health by reducing air pollution through a range of programs that include implementing state and federal regulations, voluntary incentive programs, promotion of clean and healthy transportation alternatives and public education.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today

Imperial County is home to roughly 160,000 residents. Imperial County consistently has had the highest asthma hospitalization rate in California. Approx. 21,000 people have been diagnosed with asthma - so as you can see - Imperial County continues to have air quality issues that have contributed to health impacts on the people living in the Salton Sea Air Basin. PM 10 and 8-hour Ozone levels have exceeded the federal health-based standards. ICAPCD's efforts to attain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are ongoing and continue to be a challenge.

The Imperial County APCD is currently federally designated as a "Serious" Non-attainment area for PM10 and "Moderate" non-attainment area for 8-Hour Ozone. EPA has also made a proposal that all of Imperial County be designated non-attainment for PM2.5. All nonattainment pollutant designations require submittal of plans by which the APCD will come into attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Right now the ICAPCD is concurrently working on both the PM10 and Ozone plans.

The PM10 SIP under development will demonstrate that Imperial County would be in attainment "but for" emissions being transported from Mexicali Valley in Mexico and natural events. As PM10 fugitive emissions from unpaved roads are considered a significant source of PM10, an intensive road paving program has been incorporated into our local rules but is only as effective as the amount of funding that can be earmarked for that particular purpose.

With stationary source reductions becoming scarce, the ICAPCD recognizes that progress towards clean air will depend largely on the current and proposed mobile source strategies.

In 2008, for the two pollutants contributing to ozone formation, the largest source of ROG and NOx emissions in our planning inventory are from mobile sources, which are projected to emit approximately 44% of the total ROG and 86% of the total NOx in 2009. Additionally, the state of California estimates that almost 40% of the statewide greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector. Clearly, attainment of the 8-hour ozone NAAQS and meeting GHG reduction goals will not be achieved without an aggressive strategy to reduce ROG and NOx emissions from mobile sources.

Imperial County APCD is part of the San Diego Border Corridor and applies for funding to the State through this designation in the Prop 1B, Goods Movement State Grant program. Imperial County is home to many companies that utilize the major highway trade routes to both Ports of LA and Long Beach, much of which has increased with the passing of NAFTA and with the close proximity to Mexicali Mexico - much of this increased traffic passes through the major cities in Imperial County. The biggest traffic congestion issues that are currently adversely impacting Imperial County's air quality is that of the thousands of vehicles that idle at any given time daily at our ports of entry due to the border wait times. Since air quality knows no political boundary, improved vehicle movement through the land ports of entry located in Imperial County would greatly reduce the amount of tailpipe emissions that are transported into Imperial County from Mexicali, Mexico.

To accomplish the goals of reducing off-road and on-road mobile source emissions, Imperial County has partnered with EPA and CARB in incentive programs for owners of heavy-duty on-road and off-road vehicles, to install exhaust purification equipment, and acquire low emission, and alternative fuel vehicles (Prop. 1B, CARL MOYER, LESB). The ICAPCD has also provided funds for the installation of alternative fuel infrastructure (CNG and Electric). The ICAPCD has also been implementing a very active review process for local land use projects with resulting mitigations of both construction and operational emissions having positive impacts on projects design to reduce associated emissions. All of these examples of programs being implemented rely on funding and program direction from a variety of sources ranging from local, state, to federal. Enhancing the structure and design of the federal transportation program has the potential to greatly benefit our local programs and to improve public health.

The following are a few recommendations:

First, the federal transportation program should recognize, bolster, and give funding priority to those states and regions that have adopted land use and transportation planning laws.

Second, the federal government should establish national transportation goals related to reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality and bettering public health, especially measured by safety.

Third, policy and funding guidance and directives should support these goals. A "fix-it-first" emphasis will strengthen existing communities and repair crumbling or obsolete facilities before they fail. We should eliminate funding formula biases, such as different local match requirements among programs that favor one over the other. Increased operating funding for existing transit systems is badly needed, as our local transit agency continue to struggle to maintain existing transit routes.

And Lastly, programs directly related to air quality such as the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program should be designed to reduce congestion as well as help improve air quality especially where the congestion exists at POE's due to lack of federal priorities in modernizing the land ports. These program funds should be specifically targeted to those areas that need the most help in combating their associated serious air quality problems.

**Working together with this committee, the transportation and air quality communities can develop a federal transportation program that supports our nation's economy while improving public health and the quality of life in our communities. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with you.**