

Robbie Hunter, Council Representative

Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building & Construction Trades Council

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TESTIMONY TO JOINT HOUSE SENATE FIELD HEARING ON TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Los Angeles and Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council represent 150,000 construction trade workers and apprentices who are employed by the privately owned construction industry companies in this area.

For decades there has been an absolute need for a commuter transit and High Speed Rail System for commuters and commerce in California. There has been upgrades and modernization in some regions such as the Alameda Corridor. But these are few and have been less effective due to the lack of a real grid and extended support system that would maximize their potential.

The political, business and labor leaders of the County and City of Los Angeles have made the decision that they cannot expect the federal government to fix the gridlock in our County and state as a coalition we stand ready and able to play the lead roll both in paying for and moving these projects forward hopefully with the help of your committee.

Through a partnership these leaders introduced Measure R to Los Angeles County voters. It was not easy to ask a beleaguered workforce in a time of recession to approve a ½ cent increase in the sales tax.

Measure R needed 2/3rd of the voters to approve the measure which seemed to some impossibility. But the citizens of this County came to realize that if they did not pay for a system to get commuters out of their cars on the clogged freeways and clean the air, then the status quo would continue and we would build more freeways with more cars and congestion, none of which would improve the quality of life for residents or relieve the gross inefficiencies of our freeway system for business.

In the wake of the passing of Measure R a plan emerged commonly known as the “30/10 proposal” which aims to build a dozen projects in 10 years instead of the original 30.

In seeking Federal loans and subsidies this County could speed the building of transportation projects which would provide tens of thousands of private jobs, reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions.

Infrastructure projects not only increases the productivity of the region, the projects themselves are a driving force for the economy.

Construction workers reinvest their earnings directly back into the local economy through mortgage payments, buying consumable items supporting small businesses, paying taxes, and having health and retirement benefits that are provided by a private plan and not the state.

These construction workers are working for private construction companies who competitively bid with the understanding that the lowest and most efficient bid will win the project.

The goal of these private companies and their workers are the same. Do it once....do it right in the least amount of time with the most streamlined, well trained, skilled workforce possible so both the employer and worker will be the chosen contractor for the next project these are also the rules that the Building Trades live by.

With a viable transit system in Southern California many families could be free of the need to own 2 cars or more.

The cost maintenance and operation of an average car in California is over \$4,000 per year. This money could well be used to increase the personal wealth and quality of life for the family. The transit system would help relieve our nation of the chronic need to import oil.

Because of the economic conditions at this time actual construction costs are at an all time low and competition is at an all time high. Many large projects here in Southern California are coming in at 20% and more below projected costs. I don't believe there are any rules that say the Federal and State governments cannot take advantage of this. This is a great time to build.

As a representative of 150,000 construction workers and apprentices in the Los Angeles and Orange County area, I would ask your committee to consider our request to increase funding for the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act.

This is supported by Business, Labor and citizens alike. We are not asking you to pay for these projects, we are simply asking for loans that will be repaid with Measure R funds.

This is a model that I believe the Federal Government could use to show other states that if they do the work, then the Federal Government will support them.