

**Statement of Imperial County Supervisor Victor Carrillo  
On Behalf of the Imperial Valley Association of Governments  
Before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
San Diego Field Hearing at SANDAG Headquarters  
November 14, 2008**

My name is Victor Carrillo, I am here representing the Imperial Valley Association of Governments, which is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Imperial County. I am also the County Supervisor for the first district of Imperial County which is a rural county about 100 miles to the east of this meeting site. Imperial County maintains some 2500 miles of rural roads in a largely agricultural community that also shares three ports of entry with the Republic of Mexico.

One of the aspects of the previous TEA authorizations that we found particularly useful has been the Coordinated Border Infrastructure provisions or CBI. International ports of entry create significant issues with congestion, air quality, and other environmental concerns in border communities. From the trade and commerce perspective, our international ports of entry rival our seaports when it comes to the movement of goods. In fact if you convert the truckloads of goods that cross in and out of California from Mexico, the Calexico and Otay Mesa ports handle an equivalent number of TEUs that already surpasses the Port of Oakland. With the projected growth in commerce at these POEs, we will soon be moving goods at a rate that will rival that of the Port of Los Angeles or Long Beach. However, while much attention has been given to modernizing our seaports and their ancillary transportation infrastructure, we find that the pace of modernizing our aging ports of entry is agonizingly slow. The average port of entry on our southern border is 40 to 50 years old, and they were never intended to provide the kind of security that is now required in this post 9-11 world.

Right in my district at the downtown Calexico Port of Entry, GSA recently backed away from their proposal to expand the port to a barely adequate 20 northbound lanes. They now have redesigned their plans and currently propose to deliver only 16 lanes for northbound traffic and have revised the southbound capacity from 8 lanes to only 3. The only stated reason for this downsizing is that the cost of delivering the required 20 northbound and 8 southbound lanes is too expensive for GSA's budget. The MAP-21 authorization must take into consideration the economic value to border communities and to the nation of restoring the level of vibrant trans-border commerce and movement of people that once existed.

The Committee must also address the global warming considerations of failing to invest in modern border infrastructure that will eliminate the long lines of vehicles idling in traffic while waiting to cross into the United States. The environmental and health impacts to border communities that result from these inadequate federal transportation facilities is a disgrace. As I said earlier, the Committee must continue the CBI portion of the transportation authorization and it should significantly expand the size of this important program. I would go on to suggest a SPECIFIC earmark to provide the GSA with adequate resources to construct the full size Port of

Entry at Calexico that was originally envisioned, including the covering of the New River where it crosses from Mexicali into the United States and currently creates yet another significant negative public health and environmental impact. This should be a \$355 million project, the Committee should demand that the full project be built rather than settle for a facility that will be outmoded before groundbreaking ever takes place.

While we are currently experiencing a brief respite from the high fuel prices of last summer, we need to consider that there should be alternative modes of transportation to move people from their homes to workplaces, schools, shopping and medical care. The reauthorization must include adequate funding for small communities to expand their investment in mass transit, and provide a means to acquire new capital equipment to enable us to provide transit services to low income, elderly, students, and disabled. Funding programs for transit need to be reliable and the programs need to be flexible to enable communities to tailor their programs to best suit the transit needs in the individual communities.

Here in California last week, the voters approved a first-in-the-nation program to establish a high speed rail system in California. Besides the program that was approved by the voters, there are 2 or 3 other high speed rail projects in various stages of development in California and southern Nevada.

This next reauthorization should contain a vision for the future, similar to that of the original national transportation act that was conceived by President Eisenhower in the 1950's. In the San Diego/Imperial Valley region we did a study of the feasibility of creating a maglev system that would connect San Diego to the Imperial Valley and eventually to Yuma and Phoenix, then into New Mexico and Texas.

Just as the Eisenhower plan envisioned a system of interstate highways to connect every region and major city in the country, we should be considering that the future in this country must look at the technology that is already in use in Europe and Asia and should be the framework for the future here in the United States, especially for short trips of less than 500 miles. The convenience and time savings over air transport that is possible with a high speed rail network that connects the downtowns to downtowns without all the hassles and delays that are inherent in flying are reason enough to be looking into expediting our investment in this kind of transportation infrastructure. The realities of climate change and the need to wean our nation off of transportation modes that rely upon imported fossil fuels is the reason that makes it imperative that we move forward in this area with the kind of determination that defined the original interstate highway program.

My colleague and Chairman of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, Mr. Gary Wyatt will provide some additional observations on what should be considered for inclusion in this important transportation reauthorization.

Thank you.