

**Testimony of Jeff Stone, Chairman, Riverside County Transportation Commission
to the U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee**
Hon. Barbara Boxer, Chair
September 4, 2008

Good Morning Madam Chair, it is great to see you again. My name is Jeff Stone, a member of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and Chairman of the Riverside County Transportation Commission. On behalf of all 30 elected officials on the Riverside County Transportation Commission and the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, which includes your friend and neighbor Supervisor Roy Wilson, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for your invitation to have the interests of Riverside County represented at this hearing and in the next transportation bill.

I also chair the Western Riverside Council of Governments, and am a member of the Regional Council of the Southern California Association of Governments.

This is not news to you Senator Boxer but we have a transportation crisis in our nation. And the crisis is right here in Riverside County and throughout all of Southern California. So, let me cut right to the chase. The New Authorization is a time for action and change. The major issues have been studied to death, and if we cannot put forward a bold vision for the future of our country in the next transportation bill, the status quo will devour our local and national economies, our environment and public health will continue to deteriorate, and we will continue to fall behind the rest of the world. Your Committee and the leaders on this panel cannot shirk away from the call to action that we face at this time in America's history.

Madam chair, the preeminent challenges we face, and which I know are no surprise to you are goods movement, air quality, and congestion relief.

The international supply chain is suffocating Southern California, and especially in Riverside County. While the goods movement industry provides jobs and revenue to our regional economy, it also levies a tax on public health, urban mobility, and the environment. During these shaky economic times, the federal government should be doing more to guarantee that goods get to market and that urban economic centers such as Southern California and the Inland Empire are free of gridlock and pollution. We in Southern California believe that the solutions to each of the issues of goods movement, air quality and congestion relief go hand in hand with each other.

For the record, we, as a region, are doing our part. The Riverside County Transportation Commission has put forward its own local half-cent sales tax dollars, development impact fees, and federal formula funds into a prioritized program of 21 grade separations that span from Corona to the Coachella Valley. Even after committing over \$200 million of our own money and \$160 million state bond dollars, we still have a \$565 million funding gap to complete these 21 high priority grade separations, not to mention that when we are done with this program there will still be 40 more at-grade crossings in Riverside County where nearly 200 trains per day will continue to carve up our communities, create congestion, and cause pollution.

I know that air quality and greenhouse gases are some of your major concerns and well they should be. I want you to know that in the transportation community, we believe that wise infrastructure investments can also be good air quality projects. As you have heard Barry Wallerstein testify, we have an air quality circumstance in this region that is unique to this country. I would like to speak on behalf of all of the transportation agencies in Southern California and say that the next transportation bill must prioritize

transportation funds for air quality mitigation on a needs basis. Due to the overwhelming needs in regions such as Southern California, if this country is to meet its goals with regards to pollution reduction and greenhouse gases, Congress literally cannot afford to dilute air quality funding by making it an entitlement to all regions – it must be targeted to where there is the greatest need. While I cannot guarantee how other regions in the nation perform, I offer the commitment on behalf of the board of elected officials I represent that we will deliver results if Congress makes the strategic decision to invest where it is needed most.

This brings me to the concept of a performance-based outcome driven system. In Riverside County and throughout all of Southern California the goods movement, air quality, and congestion needs far outweigh the funds available to solve them. Regardless of how large the next transportation bill is, it will still not be enough – therefore it seems to make sense that Congress would direct its investments on a performance basis. Senator, I know that you represent over 35 million constituents; as an elected official myself, I understand the challenges you face of trying to respond to each request. It simply can't be done and you must make the tough decisions that benefit the greatest number and provide the greatest benefit. Transportation investments should be no different. This transportation bill should invest where there is consensus, and where there are performance outcomes. I would like to propose that Congress buys certain objectives, rather than buying specific projects. Restoring a national vision to the federal transportation program requires us to move beyond looking at individual projects, and looking at systems, corridors, and regions – and looking at the results that we are achieving and being held accountable for those results. A performance based system will allow us to address congestion, goods movement, and air quality in a systematic manner across all modes: highway, rail and transit. If

Congress takes a performance-based approach in the next bill, I want you to look at Southern California as a logical place to test drive this concept.

As you have heard from my colleagues in Orange County, they have been using a performance based approach to the 91 Express Lanes for many years – and it has been an overwhelming success. In fact, we in Riverside County are now taking the lessons learned from Orange County and will be applying a performance-based HOT lane program to expand both highways and public transportation. We will do this by extending the 91 Express Lanes into Riverside County and connecting them to brand new express lanes on Interstate 15, which will soon connect to lanes in San Diego County. This will be an integrated congestion management system that will be unprecedented in this country, and it is all being implemented through leadership and action at the local level. We are partnering across county lines and looking at regional benefits like never before. We are implementing projects that are responsive to public concerns, and we are managing the system in a 21st Century way.

Madame Chair, we must also look at the waste in the program. We have 108 different programs with which we have to work within. The waste in project delivery process is costing the taxpaying public billions. According to the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenues Study Commission's report, when you add \$1 federal dollar to a transportation project you can add up to an additional 8 years to the project delivery. A \$ 1 billion project today completed in 2022 will cost the taxpayers an additional \$3-4 billion dollars is horrific. Taking 10-15 years to complete a transportation project in this country is the destruction of our nation's economic development and vitality.

I want to close by underscoring the unity of Southern California as we head into the next authorization bill. We have successfully banded together to secure state bond dollars for goods movement totaling over \$1.6 billion. This is something no one, not even the Governor, though we could do – and we pulled it off with flying colors. We have committed to remaining united as we head to Washington because we have seen what successful regional coalitions can accomplish – and also because we understand the difficult job you have, and understand that you need a Southern California that speaks with one voice. I have every confidence in the leadership that you will provide on this committee, and together I believe we can partner to create a new vision for transportation in America that will begin to transform the infrastructure of Southern California. I want to reiterate to you that Southern California is a region of action, and especially in the Inland Empire – we have many examples of this beyond what I have time to share with you today; and now is the time for action. But we cannot do this alone – we need federal partnership on: Goods movement, air quality, and congestion reduction through a performance-based system, and fewer programs and less project delivery time.

Thank you again for this opportunity to address and I am happy to answer any questions you have. I hope to see you out in Riverside County again soon.

Sincerely,

Jeff Stone

Chair, Riverside County Transportation Commission

Riverside County Board of Supervisors