



6.1 Summary And Conclusions

Community involvement is an integral part of the project development process. Once themes have been identified, local and State officials can prioritize, program, and develop proposed projects.

So what have we learned? We’ve learned that there is a high level of interest in improving the Route 99 corridor; interest by government agencies, stakeholder groups, and individuals. We have learned that Route 99 is critical to the economic vitality of the Valley. Further, it is key to changing the image travelers have of this Golden State and the valley that defines its Heartland. We have learned that people want to be proud of the route, but they currently are not. And we have learned that there is universal support to improving the image, condition, and capacity of the route. People want to enjoy the experience of traveling up and down this great valley on a highway that truly reflects the character of its communities and its people.

Issues noted by stakeholders along the corridor include:

- Enhancing overall driver experience,
- Safe and efficient movement of people & goods,
- Fair share of transportation funding,
- Community identity,
- Corridor identity,
- Economic vitality.

6.1.1 Enhancing Overall Driver Experience

There is a strong perception that the driving experience along the Route 99 corridor is not one that portrays an invitation to either stop to visit cities and communities, or attract business interests to the San Joaquin Valley. Modernizing the freeway, shielding unsightly views, and enhanced litter clean-up are some of the actions that can help address this issue.

Showcasing tourist attractions and historical and cultural resources also provide an opportunity to both enhance traveler experience, and boost tourism to the San Joaquin Valley. Providing information to travelers through information kiosks at Safety Roadside Rest areas, special radio channels, internet web sites, and Route 99 corridor coupon brochures can also enhance the traveling experience.

6.1.2 Safe And Efficient Movement of People And Goods

Virtually everyone wants and expects a safe and efficient driving experience. Caltrans’ top priority is addressing safety needs. Improvements that address current safety and congestion needs have been programmed. There is over \$ 1.2 billion of safety,



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rehabilitation, operations, capacity, and aesthetic improvements currently in the “project delivery pipeline”. While not all of the funds are formally committed to these projects, by having the preliminary engineering and environmental studies or project design phase programmed, Caltrans is authorized to work on these projects so the construction funds can be committed to them when needed. As additional safety and congestion relief needs and funds are identified, they will be added to the currently programmed projects.

6.1.3 Fair Share Of Transportation Funding

There is very strong perception that the San Joaquin Valley has historically not received transportation funding comparable to the fuel taxes generated in the Valley. There has been no definitive information generated which supports or dispels this perception. Current State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) fund allocation formulas do not consider fuel tax generated within each county as criteria to distribute transportation funding. Instead, the STIP formula is based upon 75% population and 25% State Highway center line miles. In addition, the pot of funds are separated by geography, with 40% going to the 45 counties in the “north counties group” and 60% going the 13 counties of the “south counties group”. The San Joaquin Valley has six “north” and two “south” counties.

When all of the currently programmed Route 99 projects are fully funded and constructed, more than \$1.2 billion will have been spent on the corridor. This will be more than has been dedicated to Route 99 over the past two decades. This represents a significant improvement but does not mean the corridor needs will be satisfied. To meet the 20 year Transportation Corridor Concept Facility, 4 to 5 times this amount of funds would be needed.

6.1.4 Community Identity And Aesthetic Accoutrements

The single constant at every public meeting up and down the San Joaquin Valley was the desire that Route 99 look nice and convey the community identities to travelers. Interestingly, not all communities have established a specific community identity. Therefore, the first action item communities need to accomplish would be to establish a theme so they can take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

On the other hand, clearing trash, weed control in landscape areas, graffiti removal, and shielding unsightly views are a matter of commitment by Caltrans, local communities, and volunteer groups.

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6.1.5 Corridor Identity

Surveys of participants at both the Highway 99 Task Force and the five public outreach meetings held throughout the Valley identified that the San Joaquin Valley does not have an identity. In fact the north Valley tends to identify itself with the San Francisco Bay Area while the south Valley tends to identify itself with the Los Angeles area. The Valley needs its own identity.

Establishing a Route 99 Corridor identity can go a long way toward establishing a Valley identity as discussed in Chapter 4. A proposed corridor theme was developed by a special committee of San Joaquin Valley representatives. The proposed Route 99 corridor theme statement is **“Route 99 The Mainstreet of California’s Heartland-Linking Heritage To Innovation.”**

6.1.6 Economic Vitality

Effective transportation facilities represent a lifeline to economic vitality. Route 99 is the vital link in that lifeline transportation system, acting as the spine connecting the population and economic centers of the Valley with the east-west highways.

Fresno based Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI) representatives have initiated an effort to designate State Route 99 as part of the federal Interstate system. They have maintained that it is essential that Route 99 be designated an Interstate route if the Valley is to be successful in attracting businesses to locate in the San Joaquin

Valley, or for existing business to invest in expansion.

Several issues have surfaced regarding Interstate designation. Under existing law, new Interstate routes must meet full Interstate standards. Will some or all Interstate standards be waived by the U.S. Department of Transportation? What is the benefit versus the cost? The cost to meet standards, in current dollars, has been roughly estimated at between \$14 and \$19 billion. How much of this funding would be needed anyway to meet the Caltrans Transportation Corridor Concept Facility? Where will this funding come from?

Discussions of these issues, led by the Great Valley Center, are currently underway with the RJI, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Caltrans, and various elected representatives. Information and data is being developed by Caltrans to help these stakeholders come to a consensus on this issue.

6.2 Next Actions

So where do we go from here? We have gathered information, sought community input, performed planning and engineering studies, and developed potential aesthetic themes that can unify the corridor and the Valley it serves. But what are we to do with this information and data? It is time we put action behind our studies. What are the next steps?



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They should include:

- Obtain local agency acceptance of the themes identified in this report and immediately begin incorporation of those elements into the route as opportunities present themselves.
- Clearly identify and prioritize needed improvements to the route.
- Aggressively pursue additional State and Federal funding for these corridor improvements. These must not only improve the functionality of the route, they must improve the traveling experience.
- Identify potential applications for public private partnerships to assist in government's efforts to improve the route.
- Obtain consensus on Interstate designation, fully identifying and mitigating the potential consequences of this decision.
- Pursue and facilitate local efforts to improve the corridor, using the case studies identified in this report as potential models.

As transportation funding begins to improve we find ourselves at a crossroads. Will we continue to do business as usual, piecemealing our efforts to improve the route, focusing on functionality while largely ignoring the traveling experience? Or will we take this opportunity to provide leadership and vision for the Valley we call home? If the actions described in this report are aggressively pursued, we will be laying the groundwork for a new beginning for the San Joaquin Valley.

6.2.1 Local Agency Acceptance

Consistent with Goal 1, Objective 1A, the next step will be to seek resolutions of acceptance of the Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan from cities and counties located on the highway. Metropolitan Planning Organizations will also be asked to support the Master Plan. The intent is to seek support for the Master Plan as a guide and not as a mandate. It is hoped to accomplish this activity during 2005.

6.2.2 Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan Advisory Committee

The Route 99 Corridor Master Plan Advisory Committee will consist of a cross-section of groups and individuals that represent various government, private and industry sectors. Composition of the Advisory Committee could consist of (suggestion only):

- Three (3) public members, one each representing the south, central and north regions.
- One (1) Caltrans functional expert.
- An MPO representative.
- A member representing the three (3) counties in District 10.
- A member representing the four (4) counties in District 6.
- A member representing the cities in District 10.
- A member representing the cities in District 6.



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- A member representing the Beautification Committees.
- A member representing the Chambers of Commerce.
- A member representing Economic Development Commissions.
- A member representing the tourism industry.
- A member representing the trucking industry.
- A representative from the Great Valley Center.

TOTAL: 15 members

The Advisory Committee will review projects for compliance with the Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan and Caltrans' current standards and practices. The committee will consider whether the proposed improvements ensure that the Corridor Theme - "Route 99-The Mainstreet of California's Heartland-Linking Heritage to Innovation," is consistently yet uniquely applied throughout the Route 99 corridor.

The Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan Advisory Committee should review proposed improvements during project initiation and prior to project approval. Review guidelines will be established by the Advisory Committee to advise on the proposed improvements.

6.3 Update of the Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan

The Enhancement Master Plan Project Development Team, in conjunction with the Advisory Committee, will update the Enhancement Master Plan on a periodic basis.

Any applicable changes and updated pages will be updated on the Master Plan website.

The website is <http://www2.dot.ca.gov/dist6/99masterplan/>

