



# California Freight Mobility Plan

## Final

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

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## Introduction

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The State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Office of System, Freight and Rail Planning, Freight Planning Branch is in the process of preparing the California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP). The CFMP is a comprehensive, long-range planning document encouraged by the federal transportation law, "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" [(MAP-21), Public Law 112-141].

One of the major components of the planning process being used to help inform the development of the California Freight Mobility Plan is receiving comment and input from four focus groups conducted in different regions of the State:

- San Francisco Bay Area
- San Joaquin Valley
- Southern California: Los Angeles and the Inland Empire (San Bernardino)

This public opinion research is one component of a broader public engagement and input-gathering effort on the part of Caltrans. Results of the focus groups will help Caltrans identify significant freight system, environmental, and health issues of concern to communities near major freight corridors and intermodal facilities to be addressed in the CFMP. Input received from attendees at the focus groups will be used to inform the Freight Advisory Committee (FAC) and in the development of the CFMP.

A range of between 4 and 13 participants were present at each of the focus group sessions. Exhibit A provides a listing of the number of participants by participating agency. A range of between 24 and 366 potential stakeholder agency representatives were identified for the focus group sessions. Of the range of stakeholders referenced above, between 24 to 108 stakeholders listed for each focus group were actually contacted either by email or telephone to recruit potential participants. During each session, the VRPA Team delivered a PowerPoint slide presentation, which included a set of questions. The questions consisted of both multiple choice (polling) and open-ended discussion questions. Participants were able to provide input on the polling questions by utilizing a technology that provided each participant with a clicker with buttons that represented each of the answer choices. Responses were immediately recorded and displayed on the PowerPoint slides so participants and the VRPA Team could observe the results, which helped facilitate further discussion on each topic.

Focus groups provide a method to conduct "qualitative research". While phone surveys or other quantitative research methods use much larger sample size populations, focus groups emphasize the language, perceptions, and attitudes that can help Caltrans better understand

why community advocacy groups and other organizations (stakeholders) think the way they do, and what criteria they use to form their opinions. While the findings highlighted in this Summary Report shed light and add depth to public opinion research on community attitudes, the findings from focus groups cannot be projected or attributed to all similar stakeholders in each of the regions/sub-regions where focus groups were held.

The Planning Public Engagement Contract (PPEC) was used to plan for and conduct focus group outreach activities. VRPA Technologies, Inc. (VRPA) and its subconsultant team were contracted to do outreach activity by Caltrans.

## Expected Outcomes

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The following expected outcomes were prepared to ensure that the focus groups furthered the CFMP outreach process:

- Improve and increase Caltrans' understanding of freight transportation community concerns, issues, and impacts from freight transportation;
- Improve relationships with community groups through continued involvement throughout the CFMP development process; and,
- Ability to supply a more accurate and complete list of freight transportation impacts on communities during development of the CFMP.

## Summary of Findings

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The polling and discussion questions posed at each of the four focus group sessions covered a wide variety of topics related to freight mobility. Participants were asked to provide their opinions regarding Caltrans' role, the public's role, public outreach, benefits, impacts, critical issues, and suggestions for improvement. The sessions produced several common themes among all focus group participants including the following:

- Focus group respondents agreed that outreach to the public is difficult, but it is essential to the planning process. There needs to be more collaboration between and among elected officials, government agencies, the freight industry, and the public.
- Effective public outreach throughout the State requires coordination with environmental justice representatives. This would entail a grassroots and targeted approach involving environmental justice organizations working with Caltrans, regional, and local agencies to inform and educate underrepresented communities about freight planning issues and solutions. Since respondents felt that environmental justice communities were most impacted by freight activities, it is essential that they be targeted in outreach efforts utilizing methods with the highest chance of success.
- The respondents offered some suggestions to improving outreach with the public, and especially the underrepresented communities. They recommended that planning

documents be prepared in a language that is short and to the point, and easily understood by the general public and environmental justice communities. The documents also need to be made easily accessible. Some respondents indicated that radio is the primary source of information to environmental justice communities and should be utilized in outreach efforts. While placing materials on the Caltrans website was also considered a favorable idea, respondents agreed that the website should be enhanced to include more information, and that the information provided should be made easier to understand.

- Many focus group respondents mentioned the need for “green” technologies. Along with the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 375, “green” techniques and solutions should be considered in the CFMP to address current and future freight impacts. The freight industry should consider new technologies and strategies to reduce impacts, specifically to environmental justice communities.
- Focus group respondents identified various impacts of the freight system, which include health, noise, air quality, traffic congestion, ground vibration, degradation to pavement, and diversion of resources and energy. All respondents agreed that communities and neighborhoods adjacent to freight facilities were most impacted, which typically include underrepresented groups and environmental justice communities.
- The freight impact that respondents were most concerned about was health. Although long-term impacts such as environmental risks and health effects are difficult to determine, respondents felt that short- and long-term health goals should be developed and included in the CFMP, to be implemented over time. Caltrans also needs to consider population growth and assess the risks of goods movement on future populations.
- Several respondents suggested the need to provide a cost/benefit analysis in the CFMP. They felt the cost/benefit analysis should be conducted as a part of the planning process to determine those modes and mobility improvements that would reduce health costs and enhance a healthy well-being.

## **Focus Group Locations and Schedule**

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The VRPA Technologies, Inc. (VRPA) Team, under contract with Caltrans Office of Community Planning, conducted four focus group sessions in June 2013. The four focus group sessions were held as follows:

- June 4, 2013 - San Joaquin Valley Session in Fresno at AIS Market Research office located at 1320 E. Shaw Avenue, Suite 155, and held between 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM
- June 13, 2013 - Los Angeles Area Session in downtown Los Angeles at the main offices of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) located at 818 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, and held between 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM

- June 26, 2013 – San Francisco Bay Area Session in downtown Oakland at the Elihu M. Harris State Office Building located at 1515 Clay Street, Room 12, and held between 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM
- June 27, 2013 – Inland Empire Session in San Bernardino, California at the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG)/Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) offices located at 1170 West 3rd Street, Suite 140, and held between 12:30 PM and 3:30 PM

## **Summary of CFMP Focus Group Sessions**

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A detailed summary report of the focus group sessions has prepared and can be obtained on request by contacting the [Caltrans Office of System and Freight Planning](#).