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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 30, 2006

TO: Infrastructure Bonds Conference Committee
Senate and Assembly Policy Committees Considering
Infrastructure Bonds –Water Parks and Wildlife, Housing and
Community Development and Transportation

FROM: Rusty Selix, Executive Director

RE: **Infrastructure Bonds - Utilizing Regional Blueprints to
determine investment locations**

Governor Schwarzenegger stated that his transportation program would reduce congestion. However, even if all of the proposed projects and all of the other projects listed in the regional plans are fully funded, this will not occur unless there are significant changes in land use patterns in the four largest metropolitan areas where over 80% of the population resides.(Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego and Sacramento) These findings have come from so called “ regional blueprint” efforts of members of the California Association of Council of Governments – the state’s regional planning agencies, which are responsible for planning, programming and allocating state and federal transportation funds and housing needs.

Increasingly, these agencies have recognized that land use decisions must be factored into transportation decision-making and that we have to take steps to reduce the amount that each person travels. They have also found that there is a broad consensus that we must make changes to avoid unacceptable future levels of congestion and loss of significant amounts of land containing important natural resources.

They have all developed plans to map areas where more intense development should occur along transit areas with significant transit investment, as well as areas which need to be protected from development in order to preserve important resources. These plans are broadly supported by public and private interests reflecting business, development, environmental, social and housing advocate support across their regions encompassing large and small central and suburban communities.

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"Diversity and Unity"

These agencies will utilize these plans to guide the transportation investments that they are currently responsible for. However, **if we are to reduce congestion other investments must also follow these "regional blueprint" priorities and given the broad support for these plans, these agencies and these plans should be responsible for making the decisions on the location of most transportation, housing and open space acquisition investments that could be part of the bond package being considered.**

Infrastructure investments and affordable housing should be targeted to the areas which the regions are identifying for intensive development. Resource conservation should be targeted to the areas that the regions are identifying for those purposes.

Clearly, there is still a need for state selected interregional transportation projects state parks and other projects of statewide significance. However, a significant percentage should be allocated by formula to regions who would select the locations in accordance with the blueprint plans developed through an extensive public participation process with broad support from business, housing and environmental interests, as well as central city, suburban and rural local government communities.

Federal law was changed in 1991 for transportation and state law in 1997, whereby these regional agencies would place the State Department of Transportation in selecting the majority of transportation projects. This reflected the fact that the purpose of the projects was overwhelmingly to alleviate congestion, which affects us as we live in metropolitan urban areas, rather than building an interstate freeway system, which is a state and federal priority. The same principles should be applied to all other infrastructure decisions. If the project is for a statewide need, it is appropriate for a state agency to be making the decisions on where to locate it. However, if it is for infrastructure to meet regional or local needs then the regions and local elected officials, through these regions, should be making the decisions to select this location where these facilities are to be established and in accordance with these regional blueprint plans where they exist.

The remaining regional transportation planning agencies in the state, beyond these four largest ones, are all moving towards developing these regional blueprints as well to identify these locations. If these are projects for local or regional needs, these regional agencies are in the best position to choose the location in order to coordinate land use and transportation decisions.

It has been noted that over the last 30 years, the average citizen is driving 50% more than they were 30 years ago. The only way to change this trend is to make smarter land use decisions, where cities coordinate their decisions with their neighbors and place types of uses where they can reduce the need for longer trips. This is what these regional blueprints accomplish and the state infrastructure investments should all be consistent with these identified locations and the regions themselves should be choosing the projects for local or regional needs.