

One Voice History

In 2003, the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) decided to undertake a “One Voice” effort seeking federal and/or state funding for projects of broad community-wide benefit within Fresno County. The goal was to assemble a public-private delegation, select prioritized projects, and then visit our Congressional and federal departmental representatives in Washington, D. C. to pursue funding and grant opportunities. The Fresno COG proposed this as an annual effort and has made a similar effort at the State level in Sacramento.

The message we heard during each of our visits to Washington, D.C. was that we were welcomed and encouraged to return and to continue communications, building upon the broad-based coalition we were assembling. The “One Voice” approach is positively recognized and viewed as a means of assisting our federal representatives identify, prioritize and shepherd much needed projects through the federal budget process. No accomplishments in connection with “One Voice” activities would be possible without the outstanding leadership of the Fresno COG congressional delegation.

Although the “One Voice” effort does not represent the sole advocacy for the Fresno region (Fresno County, individual cities and other public authorities pursue important objectives in Washington as well), it does provide an opportunity to give special focus to a core group of projects and priorities around which the broadest group within the county can unite.



Fresno Council
of Governments

2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 233-4148
fresnocog.org



“One Voice” unites Fresno County communities and regional interests in a voluntary and collaborative effort to seek federal and state funds annually for projects of regional significance. All projects chosen shall contribute to an improved quality of life throughout the Fresno County region.



The Fruits of One Voice

Now, more than ever, it is important to advocate for policy and regulatory reform. It is also imperative that the One Voice delegation advocate for the preservation of funding programs that are crucial to projects in the Fresno County region. Although Congress has chosen to stop earmarking, the federal government still distributes hundreds of billions of dollars through discretionary grant programs.

Fresno COG's One Voice delegation continues to inform legislators about the region's priority needs, helping identify funding sources for projects that appeal to federal decision makers for their support during the competitive grant processes. With this support the Fresno COG region has been successful at obtaining discretionary grant funding for many planning and construction projects beyond establishment of the moratorium on earmarks. By advocating for policy and regulatory reform, Fresno COG One Voice has had legislation introduced and enacted that streamlines the way federal and state agencies work together. We continue to find ways to eliminate unnecessary procedures so that government agencies and the business community can work together efficiently toward job creation.

The "fruits" of One Voice to-date include the following:

In 2015 Congress enacted transportation legislation which contained many of the policy positions advocated by "One Voice" in recent years, including:

- Congress passed a five-year surface transportation reauthorization bill, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)
- FAST Act establishes a National Multimodal Freight Policy and requires the development of a National Freight Strategic Plan to implement the goals of the new National Multimodal Freight Policy.
- FAST Act establishes both formula and discretionary grant programs to fund critical transportation projects that would benefit freight movements.
- The Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (NSFHP) program is authorized at \$4.5 billion through 2020.
- Approximately \$800 million in discretionary funding is available through FAST-LANE grants in Fiscal Year 2016.
- FAST Act adopted a number of project delivery enhancements to further speed the permitting processes and codifying the online system to track projects and inter-agency coordination processes.
- FAST Act strengthens Buy America requirements that promote domestic manufacturing through vehicle and track purchases.
- DOT extends the Local Hire Initiative, which explores new ways to make it easier for states and cities to hire local residents for transportation projects. This pilot program allows recipients of highway and transit grants to use hiring programs in which preference is given to local residents, low-income workers, and veterans.

Both the House and Senate worked towards authorizing legislation to respond to the crisis resulting from the California drought, including:

- House approved Rep. Valadao's drought legislation, the Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015 (H.R. 2898).
- Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced the California Emergency Drought Relief Act of 2015 (S.1894).
- Administration established the National Drought Resilience Partnership.
- Department of Commerce and Department of Interior utilized regulatory flexibility to optimize pumping operations and increase water supplies when precipitation occurred during spring storms.

Other Federal Priorities

While earmarked projects are no longer available in federal authorizing or appropriations legislation, Congress and the Administration continued to ensure that competitive discretionary grant programs would be available, many of which were high priorities during "One Voice" advocacy. These have included, but are not limited to:

- The Department of Justice (DOJ) State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)
- The Department of Interior (DOI) Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)
- Department of Commerce (DOC) Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant programs
- Department of Agriculture (USDA) Pest Prevention Program, Agriculture Canine Inspection, and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).