

November 15, 2024

RE: Comment Letter - **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE**

The City of Indio supports a balanced approach to CAPTI's transportation funding that respects the unique needs of our community. We offer the following comments and recommendations for a more inclusive plan:

Unique Regional Needs and Realities

- **Driving is a Necessity:** In Indio, cars are essential. Public transportation options are limited, and the greater distance between homes, services, and businesses makes driving a part of everyday life. Our extreme desert temperatures, especially in summer, also limit walking and biking as viable alternatives. Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) without these realities in mind would place an unfair burden on our residents.
- **Growth and Economic Demands:** Indio's rapidly growing population and tourism industry require strong road infrastructure. As the largest and fastest-growing city in the Coachella Valley, with a 73% population increase since 2000, Indio meets the housing needs of all income levels. Nearly 1.4 million people visit annually for our renowned events, like the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival and Stagecoach Festival, adding a large seasonal demand to our roads.
- **Supporting Local Businesses:** A strong road network is essential for local businesses and essential services. Reduced road funding could harm businesses that rely on vehicle traffic, like auto repair shops, gas stations, and dealerships, potentially leading to job losses in these sectors.
- **Wear and Tear from Increased Deliveries:** The rise of online shopping and food delivery has led to more heavy trucks on residential streets, causing faster road degradation. Where one trip might have covered shopping, dining, and errands, we now see multiple daily deliveries. Maintaining our roads under these conditions requires more investment, not less.
- **Impact on Disadvantaged Communities:** Indio's Jewel Community, one of the state's most disadvantaged, already faces economic and environmental challenges. Policies like congestion pricing, aimed at reducing VMT, may hit low-income individuals hardest, as they rely on cars for commuting and have limited public transit access.

Flexibility in CAPTI Funding Criteria

- **Adjustments for Suburban and Rural Areas:** CAPTI guidelines should allow more flexibility for communities like Indio that lack dense public transit networks or high-density housing options.
- **Allow VMT-Neutral Projects:** We recommend allowing critical road projects to qualify for funding if they can remain VMT-neutral, recognizing that reducing VMT is more challenging in regions with spread-out populations.

- **Balanced Funding for Roads and Sustainability:** CAPTI could develop a model that funds both road infrastructure and sustainable transportation. This balanced approach would support Indio's immediate mobility needs alongside long-term sustainability goals.
- **Pilot Programs with Sustainable Infrastructure:** Launching pilot programs that incorporate sustainable elements into road projects (such as renewable energy for lighting) would align infrastructure goals with environmental objectives.

A Balanced Approach to VMT Reduction

VMT reduction offers environmental benefits, especially in urban areas with more transit options. But for suburban and rural communities like Indio, policies should balance these goals with practical realities. Policymakers should ensure that CAPTI's objectives are achieved equitably, recognizing the varied transportation needs across California.

By considering these recommendations, CAPTI can better support sustainability while respecting the unique needs of communities like Indio, creating a balanced and inclusive approach to transportation planning.

Respectfully submitted,



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City Manager