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Assembly California Legislature



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January 12, 2017

Brian Kelly
California Secretary of Transportation
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Secretary Kelly:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) will soon be facing a critical decision point regarding the I-710 Northbound Freeway Project with the upcoming release of a final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and choice of preferred alternative. Although I have generally supported the I-710 Northbound Freeway Project over the years, I have grown increasingly frustrated with the project and now question the overall benefit of extending the I-710. Since 1959, Caltrans and LA Metro have been debating this project and proposing unworkable ideas to construct the I-710 North, all the while, our population continues to grow, state roads and highways deteriorate and our climate continues to change. Policy making under these new realities requires us to view solutions through different lenses.

During the public comment period on the draft I-710 North EIR, I submitted nearly two-dozen questions and comments about the project, and enquired as to whether or not any of the proposed alternatives would truly ease congestion or simply redirect it to other parts of the San Gabriel Valley. While waiting for the responses to my questions and the thousands of comments provided by my constituents, the Voters in Los Angeles County passed Measure M with nearly 70% of the vote. This measure increases the countywide sales tax to provide funds to improve mobility, and provide more transportation options, including investing in a popular bus and rail system. As our state adopts smart growth, Transit Oriented Development, multimodal interconnected approaches to our transportation future it is clear to me that large freeway projects like the I-710 North are no longer practicable or environmentally sustainable.

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Despite the \$2 to 3 billion budget estimate, I recognize the likelihood that the state will spend in excess of a billion dollars a mile to construct a tunnel that will be congested from day one. That this plan will not reduce traffic on the regional network represents a misguided "tunnel vision" that does not embrace creative and smart problem-solving. I can no longer offer even faint support for a project that so clearly fails to address California's modern transportation challenges.

The Legislature and the Governor are now entering the third year of discussions surrounding a long-term solution for funding transportation infrastructure in our state. To spend the total amount of new revenue generated in the first year of a potential compromise funding package on a 4.2 mile freeway tunnel would make no sense. Therefore, I would request Caltrans and LA Metro work with the affected communities to select a more suitable measure of efficiently moving people between Downtown Los Angeles and the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. In light of the escalating fiscal, environmental, and political challenges this project has, and continues to face, I believe the time is now to move beyond the 710 freeway. That is why I am putting forth a bill that will require the Department of Transportation to reject the tunnel alternative and convene a 710 Transit Study Zone Committee to recommend new solutions to the 710 freeway extension, that will benefit the community and fit into the state's long term goals.

Secretary Kelly, I appreciate all of the work you and your staff have put into crafting a feasible solution to the I-710 North Project and for your consistent willingness to engage in open and frank discussions regarding this project. I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my request and look forward to your favorable response. Exploring clean, and efficient transit systems that maneuver our ever increasing population reliably through local communities and regions has to be what governs our thinking as we move forward.

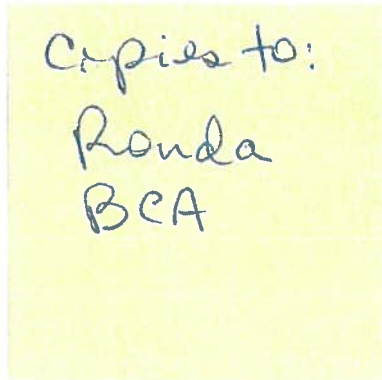
Sincerely,



CHRIS R. HOLDEN

Assembly Member, 41st District

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