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Local Government Officials, Labor, Transportation Advocates in Riverside County Urge Legislature to Pass Transportation Funding Package

Two weeks after the California Transportation Commission voted to cut \$750 million in transportation funding statewide, local elected officials, labor groups and transportation officials gathered Friday morning to urge the Legislature to pass a transportation funding package. The local officials spoke about the fact that without a decision by the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown to dedicate more funding to transportation, other critically important transportation projects could languish. *For more, see Page 2.*



League Adopts Housing Affordability as a Strategic Priority; Legislature Also Focusing on Issue

Proposals under Legislative Discussion Range from Identifying More Resources to Removing Local Authority

Last November the League board of directors, following a policy setting retreat with other League leadership, identified addressing housing affordability and securing more resources to assist the chronically homeless as one its top [three policy priorities](#) for 2016. *For more, see Page 2.*



Upcoming Legislative Hearings of Interest to Cities

The Legislature will host a number of oversight and informational hearings on a variety of policy areas of interest to cities in the coming weeks. *For more, see Page 4.*

'STIP' Continued from Page 1...

California motorists today annually spend \$762 just to fix repairs caused by poor road conditions. The deferred maintenance on the state highway system is pegged at \$59 billion. The funding shortfall to maintain the existing local streets and roads system is \$78 billion. [The CTC's defunding of projects](#) through the California State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in the coming five years will only add to the transportation infrastructure crisis.

Friday's news conference in Riverside County at the I-10/Jefferson interchange improvement project in Indio included a large group of stakeholders who told reporters first-hand about the dire condition of the roads as well as the types of jobs created with funded transportation projects.

League President and Rancho Cucamonga Mayor L. Dennis Michael was among the city officials at the podium. "What's needed is a long term, stable funding source for transportation," said Michael. "We need the legislature and Governor Brown to vote on a package of bills that will bring that that stable funding to the Coachella Valley and to cities and counties throughout California."

President Michael was also joined by:

- Indio Mayor Glenn Miller;
- Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley;
- El Centro Council Member and Southern California Association of Governments President Cheryl Viegas-Walker, El Centro;
- Coachella Mayor Steve Hernandez;
- Indian Wells Mayor Dana Reed;
- Palm Desert Mayor Pro Tem Jan Harnik
- Indian Wells Council Member Doug Hanson
- Southern California Partnership Executive Director John Hake; and
- Riverside County Supervisor Chuck Washington.

Additional news conferences throughout California may be planned in the coming weeks. The League will update members with new information.

'Homelessness' Continued from Page 1...

The applicable policy reads: *Improve Housing Affordability. Increase state and federal financial support, reduce regulatory barriers, and provide additional incentives and local financial tools to address chronic homelessness and improve housing affordability and availability in cities throughout the state.*

The rationale for this priority is obvious: cities are on the front lines of this issue but there is little to work with. The causes include growing income disparity, uneven recovery from the recession, fewer jobs paying a living wage, flawed and disorganized systems of social services and decades of federal divestment in affordable housing production, coupled with the recent elimination of California's redevelopment agencies and the exhaustion of state housing bonds.

California has an estimated affordable housing shortage of more than one million homes. Funding for development and preservation of affordable homes dropped by a whopping 79 percent, from approximately \$1.7 billion annually to nearly nothing. Collectively, it's not a pretty picture.

Recent League Actions

- **Leadership Meetings:** The League's executive officers in early January met with leadership in the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown to discuss League strategic priorities and goals, including concerns about affordable housing. Executive officers also met with leaders from the California Building Industry Association to discuss shared priorities and how we can partner, especially around the need for affordable housing.
- **Outreach to County Partners:** Executive Director Chris McKenzie recently met with the County Administrative Officers (CAOs) and specifically discussed League priorities

around housing affordability and homelessness. Discussion ensued on the possibility of forming a joint task force with the CAOs on homelessness issues.

- **Internal Homeless Working Group:** The League convened an informal homelessness working group last fall comprised of city staff and elected officials from 19 diverse cities to help the organization craft positions on how state policies can best serve local communities in addressing this crisis. The committee examined what currently works at the local level, cities' needs and the ways in which state and federal programs and policies are successful or problematic in the effort to address homelessness. Local governments, nonprofits and social service agencies are innovating at the local level with solutions to get people housed and into the treatment programs they need to permanently get off the streets. Funding is one of the greatest challenges to success.

The group drafted a series of principles that League policy committees adopted in mid-January. The principles recommended that the League should support legislation and advocate for additional funding for emergency housing, affordable housing, mental health, permanent supportive housing, homelessness prevention programs, etc. Recommendations were also made to support funding streams that are flexible and that incentivize regional cooperation, policies or legislation that enhances the use of housing vouchers and changes in problematic policies or regulations that hinder work in this area to name a few. These principles will be considered by the board of directors when it meets Feb. 18-19. The consensus is clear — *California needs legislation that combats homelessness should focus on solutions and provide resources that get people off the streets and into shelter and housing.*

Recent Legislative Action

- **Fall Informational Hearings:** During the fall recess, several Senate Transportation and Housing Committee hearings were held focused on homelessness, housing affordability and crisis, mental health and other services for veterans.
- **Senator Kevin de León Launches Ambitious Funding Proposal:** Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) [announced on Jan. 5](#) a bipartisan proposal to fund efforts to combat homelessness and help California's lowest income residents. Called [No Place Like Home](#), the Senate leader projects that this initiative would fund 10,000 or more housing units throughout the state. This constructive approach would establish a \$2 billion bond to build permanent supportive housing for mentally ill homeless individuals to be funded by the Mental Health Service Act (Proposition 63 of 2004).
- **Other Helpful Legislation:** Feb. 19 is the Legislative deadline to introduce bills. Numerous bills are expected to be introduced in the coming weeks aimed at providing additional resources for affordable housing.
- **Upcoming Hearing:** [The Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee](#) will hold an informational hearing on Feb. 25 titled Challenges and Opportunities: Homelessness in California's Local Communities.
- **Proposal to Remove Local Authority:** Sen. Carol Liu (D-La Canada Flintridge) recently introduced [SB 876](#), which proposes to reduce local regulatory authority to address homeless activities in public and private spaces. While the author may be well-intended, the League disagrees that removing local authority to regulate homeless activities offers a solution; rather it would compound problems for local communities. The League's [opposition letter](#) is online.

Next Steps

City officials should expect a robust discussion in the Legislature this year on how to respond to housing affordability and chronic homelessness challenges. That's positive and appropriate. The League will engage in these discussions and advocate for constructive proposals that bring resources and assist local agencies. While there will be opportunities to secure significant

additional resources, clearly local control and flexibility must be protected as well. Legislators should be encouraged to help not hinder local efforts to address affordable housing challenges.

'Hearings' Continued from Page 1...

Following the fast approaching Feb. 19 bill introduction deadline, expect to see a decrease in informational hearings as the Legislature prepares for hearings on the FY 2016-17 budget and specific legislation.

Some hearings, if not all, will be televised. The [Senate](#) and [Assembly](#) publish weekly television schedules, but audio is always available online. In addition, many hearings are also webcast via the [California Channel](#).

Here are a number of upcoming hearings of interest to cities:

Feb. 10

Joint Hearing of the Assembly Accountability and Administrative Review and Natural Resources Committees, 10 a.m., State Capitol, Room 437

- Oversight Hearing: State Environmental Incentives for Low and Moderate-Income Families

Feb. 11

Assembly Select Committee on California's Clean Energy Economy, 1-4 p.m., State Capitol, Room 437

- Energy Efficiency of Existing Buildings

Feb. 17

Joint Hearing of the Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications and Transportation and Housing Committees, 1:30 p.m., State Capitol, Room 4203

- Ride-hailing Disruption: Establishing a Level Playing Field In the Transportation-for-Hire Market

Feb. 18

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, upon adjournment of session, State Capitol, Room 4203

- Informational Hearing: Cap-and Trade: Addressing Legislative Budget Priorities

Feb. 22

Joint Hearing of the Senate Transportation and Housing and Assembly Transportation Committees, 1:30 p.m., State Capitol, Room 4202

- Joint Hearing: Overview of California Air Resources Board Air Quality and Emissions Reduction Programs as they Relate to the Transportation Sector

Joint Hearing of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Resources and Transportation, 1:30 p.m., State Capitol, Room 447

- Informational Hearing: Wildfires, Drought and Climate Change's Impact on Tree Mortality

Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee, 1:30 p.m., State Capitol, Room 126

- Informational Hearing: Tax Incentives for Economic Growth

Feb. 23

Joint Hearing of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife and Senate Natural Resources and Water Committees, 9:30 a.m., State Capitol, Room 4203

- State Implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

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Feb. 25

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, upon adjournment of session, State Capitol, Room 4203

- Informational Hearing: Challenges and Opportunities: Homelessness in California's Local Communities

March 3

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review, Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection, Energy and Transportation, 9:30 a.m., State Capitol, Room 112

- Oversight Hearing: Medical Marijuana, ELPF, Proposition 1, State Obligations, LAO Presentation, Budget Overview

March 8

Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, 9:30 a.m., State Capitol, Room 112

- Oversight Hearing: Assessing California's Chronically Underfunded Water Needs: Options for Moving Forward

March 9

Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Resources and Transportation, 9:00 a.m., State Capitol, Room 447

- California Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Agency, and CalTrans

March 14

Joint Hearing of the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development and Assembly Business and Professions Committees, 9 a.m., Room 4203

- Sunset Review Oversight Hearing: California Massage Therapy Council

March 16

Senate Transportation and Housing Committee, Upon Adjournment of Session, State Capitol, Room TBD

- California Transportation Commission 2016 STIP Fund Estimate

State Water Board Extends, Alters Water Conservation Mandate

Cities Specific Data Due by March 15 to Receive Credit

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) on Tuesday voted to extend through October the emergency urban water conservation regulation, while making some modest changes to address the concerns raised by cities and water agencies.

New in the update are adjustments of between 2 to 8 percent, maximum, which will be based on hotter-than-average climate, population growth and investments in drought-resilient water sources. Cities must provide specific data to the board by March 15 to determine the size of an adjustment.

The regulation continues to mandate how much water suppliers must save based on their residential gallons per day data from July through September 2014.

The update also creates penalties for homeowners' associations or community services organizations that impede property owners who reduce or stop watering during the declared drought emergency.

The board directed its staff to report back on water supply conditions in April, leaving the door open for further adjustments based on additional rain and snowfall in the coming months.

The emergency regulation aims to reduce statewide water use by 20 percent compared to 2013. Over a seven-month period, the prior regulation has resulted in a 25.5 percent reduction in water use.

State officials praised Californians for their conservation efforts but underscored the need for continued conservation. Despite recent storms, the state's reservoirs and groundwater basins remain depleted after four years of record drought.

[The emergency regulation fact sheet](#) has more detailed information.

Help Refresh the League of California Cities® Website by Completing a Short Survey

The League of California Cities® is refreshing its website and would like to continue to provide current updates on legal, legislative and educational issues on a regular basis through a central, streamlined site. In order to do this, the League is conducting a brief survey to better understand the value and use of its [website](#) and featured website tools.

Survey responses will help redesign the League's homepage and corresponding features to better serve its audience. Members are encouraged to take the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/league2016newsletter> by Friday, Feb. 19.

California City Solutions: Santa Maria's Short Film on Gang Life Leaves an Impression

*This story is part of an ongoing series featuring Helen Putnam Award entries. The 2015 entries are available on the League's website as a resource for cities in a searchable database called [California City Solutions](#). Santa Maria's *Life Facing Bars: A Gang Prevention Documentary* was submitted in 2015 for the Public Safety award category.*

The city of Santa Maria's innovative 37-minute documentary "[Life Facing Bars: A Gang Prevention Documentary](#)" delivers a powerful message to youths and is drawing nationwide interest from law enforcement, nonprofits and educators. Selected by the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival as one of 2014's top short featured documentaries, the film exposes kids to reality about the gang culture's manipulations and consequences. This is done by convicted gang members and through compelling interviews with prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys, and educators. Hundreds of DVDs of the film have been sent to organizations across the country.

Year after year, when the Santa Maria Police Department's gang suppression officers traveled to schools and organizations to urge kids to stay out of gangs, the police always did the speaking. Outreach efforts lacked the compelling impact of firsthand perspectives from gang members, some of whom joined at young ages.

In Santa Maria alone, there are more than 1,000 documented gang members and in one year alone, 88 percent of the city's homicides were gang-related. An alarming trend nationally is the gang recruitment of children in junior high school. Many kids are told glamorized versions of the gang lifestyle by older peers, and find an appeal in protection from bullying, attention from girls, and respect from their peers. Notorious for never speaking with police, it was rare for gang members to renounce their gang code and share information about the realities of gang life and about the stark reality of *Life Facing Bars*.

Santa Maria Police Department Lieutenant Daniel Cohen, who has been investigating and policing local gangs for 14 years as a detective and a supervisor, believed that vivid testimony about the real truths and consequences from those who lived the gang culture could serve as a powerful warning for young people.

Cohen has seen the multitude of victims left in the wake of gang crimes. He has witnessed young men mature behind bars and others who never got the chance. He remembered one particular interrogation with a gang member, a young man who confessed to shooting someone. The man broke down into tears at the interrogation table. "I asked him, 'Do you have any regrets?'" Cohen said. "And he said, 'I wish someone would have warned me.'"

That interrogation confession gave the lieutenant an idea. He wanted to find a way to expose young people who are intrigued by the fascination of gang culture to the realities and consequences that it brings.

In the early 2000s, the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office started rigorously applying several gang enhancement laws that had been on the books since the 1980s. Local gang members were being sent to jail for longer stretches of time, which re-shaped the local gang culture in an unprecedented way.

More gang members came forward with information and shared their own experiences — but these interactions were not being captured on video. Cohen recognized the need to proactively reach the community's youth before their exposure to gangs. By capturing and sharing these stories, the department could positively influence these impressionable minds, but faced the challenges of financing and generating a professional-quality video, and of course, gaining permission to access and interview convicted gang members.

Every time Lieutenant Cohen used a few video clips of comments from gang members at the end of his outreach presentations, they resonated with his audiences; however, he knew that was only scratching the surface. This led him to consider the idea of a more meaningful film that covered all the bases, with an appealing production quality for the young crowd he targeted. The gang prevention documentary, *Life Facing Bars*, was Cohen's brainchild, which he executed in addition to his full-time regular duties.

Cohen had three objectives for the film: to uncover the lies gang members use to manipulate and brainwash kids to join the gang lifestyle, to drive home the harsh reality of the gang lifestyle and the serious consequences of their actions, and to give the kids practical ways to avoid the lifestyle and to get involved in more positive activities.

He recruited Cal Poly San Luis Obispo senior and filmmaker Matthew Yoon. They showed samples of Yoon's work to Santa Maria Police Chief Ralph Martin who gave approval for the documentary. Cohen asked the Santa Barbara Foundation, a nonprofit organization that sponsors community projects and philanthropy, to sponsor the project, and additional funding came from the Santa Maria Police Council.

Cohen worked with the District Attorney's Office. Senior Deputy District Attorney Ann Bramsen, a gang prosecutor in Santa Maria, quickly understood the powerful potential. With her assistance, Superior Court judges were apprised of the project and discussions took place with defense attorneys.

Cohen and Yoon spent months on the project, driving to prisons for interviews and then producing and narrating. Several gang members from all over Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties were interviewed for the film, showing their tattoos and recounting their time in prison with some having spent only months outside of prison since jumping into gang life at the young ages of 11 or 12. Behind bars they talked about having children who barely know them and missing out on birthdays and holidays. One of the most moving moments of the film comes from an interview with a gang member's tearful 8-year-old son, who is only allowed to see his father every three months, and will never spend time with him outside of prison.

By participating, each gang member surrendered the gang code of snitching and each of them was aware that they or their loved ones are a target while they are incarcerated or upon their release.

Also spotlighted in the film are many of the community's high-profile personalities who work with gang members in the justice system, such as Superior Court Judge Rogelio Flores, Prosecutor

Ann Bramsen, and Defense Attorney Michael Scott. They remind viewers that time for a crime can double or even triple if gang allegations are involved, and the person accused of a crime does not have to be a gang member themselves to face those allegations — association is often enough.

The film took more than a year of planning, interviewing, and editing. The Santa Maria Police Department released the film at a local movie theater in March 2014, before an audience of 350 people including prosecutors, judges, city council members, school district officials, and nonprofit leaders. It was also uploaded to YouTube the same month and has received more than 240,000 views, with an additional Spanish version released in December 2014.

The documentary was shown at the 21st Annual San Luis Obispo International Film Festival in March 2015. Lieutenant Cohen has also sent hundreds of DVDs of the film to organizations across the country, as the poignancy of the film is not lost on organizations outside of Santa Barbara County or even California.

When producing *Life Facing Bars*, Cohen had junior high and high school students specifically in mind. Classroom presentations were the intended audience, which is the main reason why the film's length was kept to shorter than 40 minutes. This allows for a screening of the film with 20 minutes left over for questions and discussion, all within the usual hour time slot allotted for visiting presenters.

While *Life Facing Bars* does address a hugely negative issue, the film also provides a wealth of content that offers a potential solution to the complex issue of gang involvement. The fourth chapter, titled "Escaping Your Environment," includes interviews with local educators like Pete Flores, Santa Maria High School's assistant principal of student affairs, who explains the importance mentors have in education and shares his own story of a counselor who kept him in school. The film is being used by numerous local nonprofit groups, including the Boys & Girls Club of Santa Maria.

Expanding Efforts to Treat Opioid Overdoses

Addiction to opioids such as heroin, morphine, and prescription pain relievers continues to challenge the social and economic wellbeing of counties big and small. Heroin use specifically has increased dramatically in the past five years, and subsequently, overdose-related deaths more than doubled from 2011 to 2014. In an effort to provide assistance with this national epidemic, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy hosted a community forum on the opioid overdose in Knox County, Tenn. At this forum, state and local leaders announced that the National Association of Counties, the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities, and the United States Conference of Mayors with the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance, Premier, Inc., and Adapt Pharma are offering NARCAN® Nasal Spray at a 40-percent discount.

NARCAN®, a potentially lifesaving opioid withdrawal medication, is the only FDA-approved, ready-to-use nasal spray version of naloxone hydrochloride. It can stop or reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, and access to this medication will allow public agencies to combat the number of drug-related overdose deaths across the country. Adapt Pharma is offering a 40-percent discount, \$37.50 per dose (\$75 for a two-pack carton) in an effort to make the medication more affordable and accessible, through the U.S. Communities Purchasing Alliance and Premier, Inc. NARCAN® is a simple product; its ease of use can save lives, even in the most high stress situations.

"The Administration has made it a top priority to expand access to the overdose reversal drug naloxone and medication-assisted treatment because we have lost too many of our family members and friends to the opioid epidemic," said White House National Drug Policy Control Director Michael Botticelli. "This public-private partnership to secure discounts for state and local agencies can help ensure that these life-saving medications are available wherever they are needed."

The National Governors Association threw support behind the agreement and highlighted the collaboration as an effective one. “Governors are at the forefront of the fight against opioid abuse,” said National Governors Association Chair Utah Governor Gary Herbert. “At the last NGA Summer Meeting, governors convened to discuss the opioid epidemic. There we discussed that to turn the tide, there must be a coordinated response across all levels of government, which this purchasing effort helps to achieve.”

Clarence Anthony, CEO and executive director of the National League of Cities, emphasized the importance of cooperation among Adapt Pharma and U.S. Communities. He stated that “American cities are facing an epidemic of opioid addiction. Providing affordable access to drugs like NARCAN® Nasal Spray is critical to saving lives in the event of an opioid overdose. This public-private partnership is a vital step in stemming the opioid addiction epidemic in our communities.”

NARCAN® is also a simple product; its ease of use can save lives, even in the most high stress situations, and even when administered by understandably panicked bystanders.

The National Association of Counties views the offering as a perfect fit for its Safe and Secure Counties Initiative, and will continue to work with state associations of counties to develop policy recommendations and promote promising practices to address the opioid epidemic plaguing communities. “Medication-assisted opioid treatment can mean the difference between life and death,” said NACo President Sallie Clark, commissioner, El Paso County, Colo. “We see the devastating effects of prescription drug abuse and heroin use because counties are at the intersection of the local health, justice and public safety systems. We welcome this public-private partnership to support our response to this national crisis.”

U.S. Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director, Tom Cochran, understands how critical it is for local leaders to take advantage of this enormous opportunity. “Mayors across this nation are grappling with solutions to address the exponential rise in opioid overdoses occurring in our cities. We believe the expanded availability of this treatment is another tool for mayors and cities to use in their efforts to stem this epidemic,” he stated. The U.S. Conference of Mayors created a special mayors’ task force on substance abuse, prevention and recovery services, which will be headed by Boston Mayor Martin Walsh with the support of the organization’s president, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake.

Drug abuse can be absolutely devastating for individuals, families, and communities. The announcement of the discounted offering of NARCAN® is an indication that local leaders and organizations are willing to unite with private companies to combat addiction and overdose deaths.

U.S. Communities combines the purchasing power of more than 62,000 public agencies. The program offers no user fees, best overall supplier government pricing, quality brands, integrity, experience, and oversight by public purchasing professionals. For more information, please visit www.uscommunities.org. For more information on how U.S. Communities is poised to combat prescription drug abuse and heroin use, please visit www.uscommunities.org/suppliers/premier-medical/combating-drug-abuse/.
