

News Release



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Governor Calls for Increased Transportation Infrastructure, More Roads, More Ports, Better Air Quality for a Better Future for Californians

In State of the State address, Governor Schwarzenegger tackles transportation and air quality as first points of action for improving the state's infrastructure, joining former California Governors Brown, Deukmejian, Wilson and Davis in devising a suitable So Cal green freight strategy

LOS ANGELES – Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, in last night's State of the State Address, spoke with brutal honesty about the highs and lows of his two-year-old administration – citing specifically the missteps of the last year. He also spoke frankly about the absolute necessity of improving the state's aging infrastructure that is "at the breaking point now." Heading his list of needed infrastructure improvements were transportation and air quality, two key issues that Southern Californians struggle with everyday. The Southern California Leadership Council, a public policy group founded by four former California Governors and the business community from seven Southern California counties (San Diego, Orange, LA, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, and Imperial), has been working on a solution to continue the economic prosperity of international trade while minimizing its negative effects in the region. It is called the "Green Freight Initiative."

The state appears to be stuck between a rock and a hard place as international trade has been both an indisputable boon and general nuisance for Southern Californians. While the trade improves the region's economy by creating new jobs, it also sends countless tons of freight along our already congested highways, creating dangerous and costly problems and polluting the air.

"Almost half of everything made in Asia and sold in the U.S. comes through California, comes through our ports," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "Our ports are jammed to capacity. The cargo ships are lined up – waiting. Ports in Washington, Oregon, Texas and Mexico are vying for a chance to take business away from us."

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“California is already on the leading edge of global economy and it’s changing and growing by leaps and bounds. And yet we will let this advantage slip from our fingers if we don’t make the long-term investment in our ports, our roads, our schools, our information systems and the other entire infrastructure required to compete in a world that thrives on innovation.”

According to the L.A. County Economic Development Corp. (LAEDC), the cargo moving through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in trucks, trains and enormous container ships has directly created more than a quarter of a million jobs and indirectly sustains employment for an additional 300,000 people. Still more permanent jobs will be added as annual container traffic continues to climb, with the prospect for growth limited only by the region's heavily strained port, rail and highway capacity.

“With more than 14 million containers moving through just the Los Angeles Basin this year – bouncing along clogged freeways and local streets – it’s easy to see why people living along our major trade corridors often feel that a reduction in trade would be preferable to an increase,” said Robert Wolf, co-chair of the Southern California Leadership Council (SCLC) and chairman of Germania Corporation, a regional industrial and office development company.

“It is clear Southern California must continue to compete in international trade, but who should pay to help fix the resulting problems we all deal with on every morning and evening commute? We believe it should be a joint effort between the public and private sectors,” said Ray Holdsworth, SCLC co-chair and president of AECOM, an LA-based global engineering services firm.

The Southern California Leadership Council understands that the private sector wants the ability to increase capacity, but local communities tend to block projects that increase container movement unless they also see a clear strategy for relieving traffic congestion and improving the air. The state, meanwhile, needs the new permanent jobs and taxes generated by moving more international goods to pay back the bonds needed for critical environmental and community projects.

“Trade growth, congestion relief and air quality are interdependent,” said Wally Baker, senior VP of Public Policy, LAEDC, and member of the Governor’s Goods Movement Work Group. “We need to take on these issues as a singular whole if we are to improve our quality of life and continue our economic growth.”

On transportation, the Governor noted last night: “If we add 1200 miles of new highway and HOV lanes into congested areas, and add 600 miles of mass transit, we can actually reduce traffic delays in the next ten years, even as our population grows and at the same time this investment in transportation will create 150,000 new jobs for our state.”

On air quality: “Congestion on our roads and in our ports pollutes our air. Pollution decreases our productivity and increases our health care costs. When one in six children in the Central Valley go to school with an inhaler, it is time to consider clean air as part of our critical infrastructure.”

The Leadership Council believes the way forward is to build support for a coordinated effort in which the public and private sectors will each pay only for those projects from which they derive tangible benefits. The state must only pay for projects that make communities more livable, such as eliminating delays at rail crossings or reducing or eliminating diesel pollution along freeways. Meanwhile, the private-sector partners should focus their investments on adding capacity and efficiency, and paying for any state-mandated environmental mitigation.

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For interviews or more information about the Southern California Leadership Council’s solution for the coexistence of international freight transit and clean air, please contact George McQuade, 818-340-5300 or 818-618-9229, or visit www.MayoCommunications.com or www.MayoPR.com.