

Hosted by:



San Joaquin Valley

# REGIONAL POLICY CONFERENCE

ALL PATHS LEAD TO YES!



Sponsored by:



April 29, 2024- May 1, 2024



Visalia Convention Center



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# WELCOME NOTE:

## AMY SHUKLIAN, TCAG BOARD CHAIR



We offer you a warm welcome to Tulare County, where our mission is to provide the residents and community with dedicated service, in order to improve safety in the region, economic well-being, and quality of life. We accomplish these goals through strategic partnerships, collaboration, innovation, and commitment to saying YES!

Tulare County is known to be the top agricultural producer in the country, with an extensive variety of crops, livestock, and orchards, resulting in Tulare County

being the home of the World Ag Expo held each year in the City of Tulare.

This year's Policy Conference is taking place in the City of Visalia, the gateway to Sequoia National Park. The downtown area is home to many businesses and restaurants for you to peruse, so please enjoy the city and all it has to offer while you're here.

Thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to attend the 2024 San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Conference and to be part of the discussion and vision that will shape the future of the San Joaquin Valley. Your input matters.

Your participation matters. Your voice matters.

Your attendance proves that you are committed to delivering innovative and effective solutions for the challenges affecting the cities and communities in the San Joaquin Valley. Let's work together to explore the paths to YES!



# WELCOME

Monday, April 29, 2024–May 1, 2024  
Visalia Convention Center  
303 E Acequia Ave  
Visalia CA 93291

## **MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2024**

**4:00 PM**

Registration at Visalia Marriott

**6:00–9:00 PM**

Welcome Reception

McDermont X, 365 N Sweetbriar Ave  
Lindsay CA 93247

Transportation provided from  
Convention Center to Reception

## **TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2024**

**8:00–9:00 AM**

Breakfast, Networking, Registration

**9:00–9:15 AM**

Welcome Remarks & Introductions

**9:15–10:15 AM**

Keynote Speaker: Richard “Kiki” Torrez

**10:15–10:30 AM**

Break

**10:30–11:10 AM**

Main Session: How Do All Paths Lead to  
Yes in the State of CA

**11:10–11:15 AM**

Break

**11:15–11:55 AM**

Breakout Sessions:

Caltrans Partnership & HWY 99

How to Deliver Quality Affordable Housing

Innovations in Active Transportation

**11:55 AM-NOON**

Break

**NOON-1:00 PM**

Lunch & Speaker

**1:00-1:40 PM**

Main Session: A Message From the  
Governor's Office

Main Session: Navigating Equity In  
Transportation

**1:40-1:50 PM**

Break

**1:50-2:35 PM**

Main Sessions:

Valley Elected Officials Part I

**2:35-3:00 PM**

Break

**3:00-3:45 PM**

Breakout Sessions:

A Vision for Rail & Transit

RTP 2026 Challenges & Opportunities

Let's Talk Grants

**3:45-3:50 PM**

Break

**3:50-4:35 PM**

Main Session:

CTC Commissioners: A Vision for California

**4:35-4:55 PM**

Closing Remarks & Reminders

**5:00-8:00 PM**

Dinner (on your own) Downtown Visalia

Women in Transportation Mixer

WELCOME



## **WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2024**

**8:00–9:00 AM**

Breakfast, Networking, Registration

**9:00–9:45 AM**

Main Session: Richard “Buddy” Jones, SR.

**10:00–10:10 AM**

Break

**10:10–10:50 AM**

Main Session: Valley Elected Officials Part II

**10:50–11:00 AM**

Break

**11:00–11:40 AM**

Breakout Sessions:

Our Partners in the Valley

Housing Elements & Prohousing Designations

The Road to Yes For Agriculture & Air Quality

**11:40–11:45 AM**

Transition Time

**11:45–12:15 PM**

Main Session: Thoughts from DC

**12:15–12:30 PM**

Break

**12:30–1:30 PM**

Lunch & Recognition/Awards

Mark Thomas is more than a planning and design firm. We are a company that is dedicated to improving how we all move through our world.

From civil and structural engineering, construction management, land surveying, landscape architecture and urban design, to grant funding assistance and district management, a Mark Thomas project is defined by its seamless design, quality craftsmanship, and community focus and thoughtfulness towards the surrounding natural environment.

It's not about simple connection, but creating a better way for all of us to Move Forward.

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# KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

## RICHARD “KIKI” TORREZ



Photo Credit:  
Ron Holman, Visalia Times Delta



Richard Torrez nearly reached the peak of his sport when he won a silver medal in the super heavyweight division at the 2020 Olympics.

Torrez was previously a two-time national champion in the division as well as the winner of the 2017 Golden Gloves competition. Following his Olympic triumph, he turned professional and won his debut fight. Torrez has since continued to dominate, running out a 6-0 record to start his pro career. Even before the success in the ring, the Torrez family was well-known in the boxing world. Torrez is a third-generation boxer from the San Joaquin Valley. His grandfather, Manuel, was a southwest Golden Gloves champion and his father, Richard Sr., made the quarterfinals in the U.S. Trials for the 1984 Olympic team.

### MODERATOR:

### PETE VANDER POEL III



Supervisor Pete Vander Poel III serves as Tulare County Supervisor representing District Two, which includes the city of Tulare and the communities of Allensworth, Alpaugh, Earlimart, Pixley, Teviston, Tipton, Waukena, and surrounding rural areas. He was first elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2008. Supervisor Vander Poel was born and raised in Tulare County, where he now lives happily with his wife, Ashley, and three children: Pete John, Emmilene, and James. He received his primary education from the Tulare public school system, graduating as a valedictorian from Tulare Union High School.

He then went on to graduate cum laude from the College of Honors at University of California, Los Angeles, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies and a minor in Accounting. Since assuming office, Supervisor Vander Poel has remained committed to helping make Tulare County a better and safer place.



# MAIN SESSION

## HOW DO ALL PATHS LEAD TO YES IN THE STATE OF CA



Kiana Valentine  
Executive Director  
California Transportation

In the face of significant challenges, California is embarking on ambitious endeavors aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and expanding access to affordable housing. While facing some obstacles, such as potential funding cuts for housing and transportation, they will demonstrate the need and opportunities to enhance critical goods movement corridors. Our esteemed panel of experts will illuminate how these challenges can be transformed into avenues for success.



Keith Dunn  
Dunn Consulting



Bill Higgins  
CALCOG

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## Breakout Session

# CALTRANS PARTNERSHIP & HIGHWAY 99

### MODERATOR:



**Gail Miller**  
Associate Regional Planner  
TCAG

Caltrans's five priorities are: Safety, Modality, Innovation, Efficiency and Partnership. For many years, Caltrans and TCAG have been able to partner in an effort to keep your roads safe and reliable. The teams, both at Caltrans and TCAG, are devoted to ensuring all communities are served and represented. Listen in as these two agencies once again come together to discuss what the future holds for the Central Valley.

### PANELISTS:



**Nabeelah Abi-Rached, P.E.**  
Deputy District 6 Director  
Asset / Program & Project  
Management

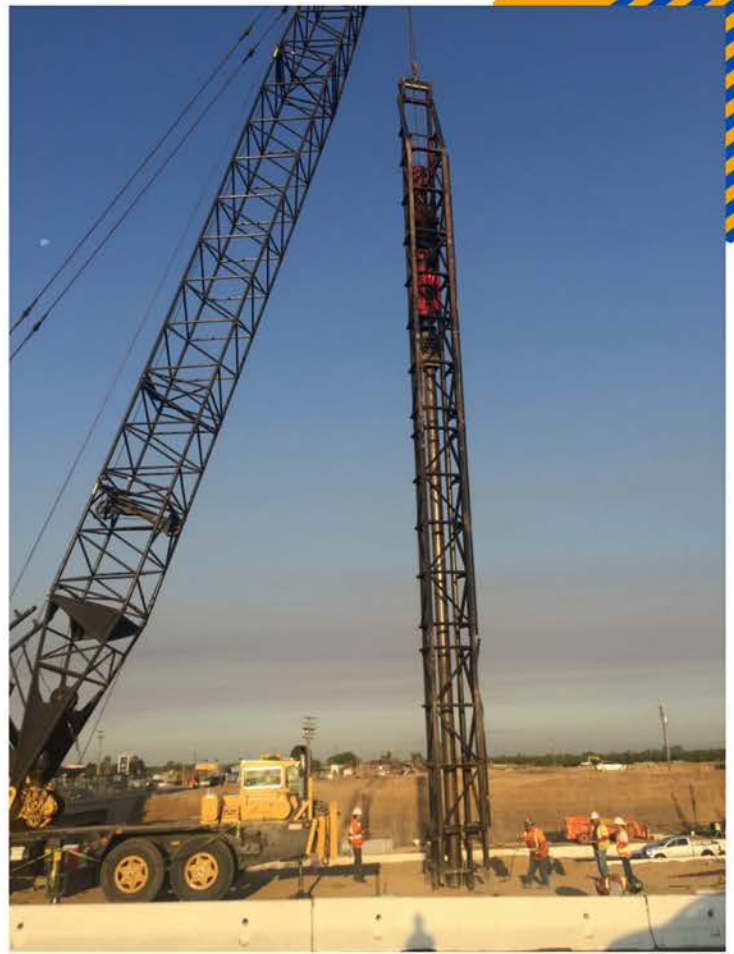


**Michael Navarro**  
Deputy District 6 Director  
Planning, Local Assistance and  
Environmental Analysis



**Gurwinder Sekhon**  
Project Management District 10  
Caltrans





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## Breakout Session

# HOUSING HOT TOPICS & HOW TO DELIVER QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### MODERATOR:



Amy Shuklian,  
Supervisor  
County of Tulare

Facilitated by Self-Help Enterprises (SHE), a nationally recognized community development organization whose mission is to work together with low-income families to build and sustain healthy homes and communities, this panel will explore hot topics in affordable housing and approaches to effectively develop high quality communities. The partnerships that SHE has cultivated are an excellent example of building pathways to successful quality affordable housing projects. The session will explore current challenges with affordable housing finance, updates on the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program, share information about the San Joaquin Valley pipeline project, and provide updates on various tools for by-right permitting of affordable housing projects.

### PANELISTS:



Kristine Williams  
Senior Program Director  
Enterprise Community Partners



Betsy McGovern-Garcia  
Vice President  
Self-Help Enterprises





## Breakout Session

# INNOVATIONS IN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

### MODERATOR:



Vicky Riddle  
Councilmember  
City of Exeter

Cutting edge treatments, from pedestrian bridges to protected intersections, require forward-thinking professionals to push the envelope on what's possible. These professionals will share some of the "big picture" thinking required to reform our built environments, making neighborhoods safer places to walk and bike.

### PANELISTS:



Lisa Marie Alvarado  
Community Queen  
Womxn Wise



Melissa Blau  
Transportation Project  
Management  
City of Fresno



Diego Corvera  
Engineer  
City of Visalia



Sean Brewer  
Assistant City Manager  
City of Coalinga

# LUNCH WITH TOKS



Toks Omishakin was appointed the 4th Secretary of Transportation for the state of California by Governor Gavin Newsom in February of 2022. Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, Secretary Omishakin and his wife have two children. He has a Ph.D. in Engineering Management from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Jackson State University; and a Bachelor of Arts in Engineering

Technology from Mississippi Valley State University. As Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CALSTA), he has oversight of 8 State Departments, Boards and Commissions that, combined, have more than 42,000 people and a budget that exceeds \$30 billion annually. Prior to his appointment as Secretary, his extensive experience includes working as Director of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and Deputy Commissioner with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). He has worked tirelessly in multiple transportation organizations, such as being the Chair of the Council on Active Transportation for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and also serving on the board of America Walks. He has been awarded the Excellence in Leadership Award by the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) NorCal and named Person of the Year by the California Transportation Foundation (CTF).



# MAIN SESSION

## A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE



California's strengths are as numerous as they are diverse. This makes our agencies well adapted to developing and more importantly, delivering creative solutions for the equally diverse challenges faced by the San Joaquin Valley.

From Atwater to Woodlake, our communities must continuously reimagine and rebuild to respond to rapidly changing environmental and economical conditions. While we may not share the same approaches or the same perspectives, we do share the same larger vision: a safer, healthier, and more prosperous future for our residents.

Join us for a message from the Governor's Office, presented by Central CA Director of External Affairs Abigail Solis, to hear about the productive partnership between San Joaquin Valley agencies and the State of California and its accomplishments in areas of safety, community development, and more.

# MAIN SESSION

## NAVIGATING EQUITY IN TRANSPORTATION



William Walker  
Chair of the California  
Interagency Equity  
Advisory Committee

No doubt, the San Joaquin Valley region has unique transportation needs. Fairness in mobility can be challenging to navigate. William Walker will be helping us to tackle equity efforts in transportation. Listen in as he draws from his experience as chair of the Interagency Transportation Equity Advisory Committee which is designed to elevate diverse and historically marginalized voices to advise Caltrans, CalSTA, and the CTC on how to achieve meaningful outcomes in transportation equity, environmental justice, and equitable economic opportunities, especially as related to transportation planning and programming.

### VIP Post Conference Mixer

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Advancing women  
Advancing transportation  
> Central California

Join us for a fun night of  
Speed Networking



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Connect with others who attended the conference  
and grow your professional network.

Tuesday 4/30/24

6:00pm - 8:00pm

Downtown Visalia, CA

Free Admission\* with your Conference Registration

Interested in attending? Sign up by visiting the WTS booth!

\*Must be registered to attend this VIP mixer.



# MAIN SESSION

## VALLEY ELECTED OFFICIALS



Rudy Mendoza  
Mayor  
City of Woodlake



Doug Verboon  
Supervisor  
County of Kings



Robert Poythress  
Supervisor  
County of Madera

Valley Elected Officials, representing the various cities and counties within the San Joaquin Valley, will come together to provide their unique insights, priorities, and experiences in working to collectively better the lives of the communities in the Central Valley. Hear their thoughts and ideas regarding finishing Highway 99, improving regional transportation and housing, and reconnecting communities. Learn from Elected Officials directly what the future of the San Joaquin Valley looks like and how you can be involved.





## Breakout Session

# A VISION FOR RAIL & TRANSIT

**MODERATOR:** Planning for Connectivity and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Around Future Kings-Tulare, Fresno, and Madera High Speed Rail Stations.



**Dan Leavitt**  
Manager of Regional Initiatives  
Rail Commission

Join San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA)/Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) for a panel discussion on ambitious plans for transit oriented development and transit/passenger rail expansion in the south central valley region centered around HSR accessibility.

## PANELISTS:



**Derek Winning**  
Principal Planner  
TCAG



**Jason Waters**  
Deputy City Manager  
City of Hanford



**Paul Herman**  
Principal Regional Planner  
Fresno Council of Governments



**Matt Treber**  
Madera Station  
Strategic Plan





## Breakout Session

# RTP 2026 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**MODERATOR:** The San Joaquin Valley (SJV) features many unique regional qualities that create a significant need for transportation facilities and services. The SJV consistently tops the nation for agricultural production – an industry that relies heavily on ability to move goods to market. The SJV has healthy tourism. However, the region, like other rural and semi-rural parts of the state, faces distinct challenges. Rural Californians are much more dependent on cars. For older residents, scarce public transit impedes access to health care and other services. Students in rural areas experience numerous challenges, including high rates of absenteeism and homelessness. All these challenges and opportunities weigh on the Regional Transportation Plan update now getting underway.



Dennis Townsend  
Supervisor  
County of Tulare

## PANELISTS:



Eric VonBerg  
Supervising Planner  
Rincon Consultants Inc.



Jim Damkowitch  
Managing Director  
DKS

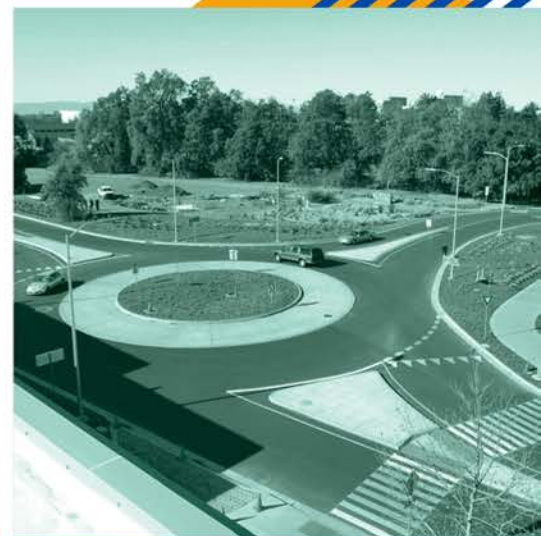


Michael Schmitt  
Senior Leader & Project Manager  
Kimley Horn





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US FORWARD.





## Breakout Session

# LET'S TALK GRANTS

### MODERATOR:



**Jill Mohler**

Director of Client Services  
B&A Grant Services & Software

Securing funding plays a pivotal role in enhancing transportation infrastructure, connectivity, and mobility. As costs for transportation infrastructure skyrocket, the reliance on local tax dollars and formula funding alone is becoming less reliable. Now more than ever, grants are becoming a more significant part of the overall funding plan for transportation projects in the San Joaquin Valley. A successful grant application begins long before the fingers hit the keyboard. In this session, we will explore the intricacies of applying for and securing grant funding. Panelists will also talk about their personal experiences with grant writing and share their insight and success stories.

### PANELISTS:



**Benjamin Giuliani**  
Executive Officer  
Tulare County LAFCO



**Braden Duran**  
Regional Planning (South)  
CA Department of Transportation



**Nayan Amin**  
TE, President  
TJKM Transportation Consultants



# MAIN SESSION

## CTC COMMISSIONERS: A VISION FOR CALIFORNIA



**Darnell Grisby**  
Senior Fellow,  
Beneficial State Foundation



**Jay Bradshaw**  
Executive Officer  
Carpenters Union



**Lee Ann Eager**  
President/CEO  
Fresno County Economic  
Development Corporation



Balancing the accessibility, financial, environmental, equity, and safety aspects of transportation policy is a multifaceted challenge. Achieving a harmonious balance among these dimensions in an ever-changing political landscape requires collaboration, data-driven policies, and a commitment to equity. This session will provide valuable insights on these challenging topics by three esteemed members of the California Transportation Commission.



# MAIN SESSION

## RICHARD “BUDDY” JONES, SR.



**Artist, African Drummer,  
Business Owner, Community Advocate**

Buddy Jones has been dubbed “The Renaissance Man” by those who have known and learned from him. Not only is he a skilled artist and community advocate, but he is also a sportsman, elite rock climber, and a successful business owner. He has been a pillar in the communities of Tulare County for decades.

Buddy Jones is a member of several community associations and has been recognized numerous times for his work. Some of the organizations he supports are the Boys and Girls Club of Tulare County, Tulare County Alliance of African American Women, the Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce, Positive Black Men’s Association, and his own organizations, Buddy Jones & Friends and We Art. He is a recipient of the Ruthie D. Gale Excellence in Achievement Award, the Marjorie Brandon Award, and has received recognition from Paul Harris Fellows. Get ready to learn how to “get on the same beat” with Buddy.



**Thank you TCAG  
for hosting a path to the  
San Joaquin Valley vision!**



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- ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS
- PUBLIC OUTREACH



**We look forward to hearing from you soon!**

# MAIN SESSION

## VALLEY ELECTED OFFICIALS



Vito Chiesa  
Supervisor  
Stanislaus County

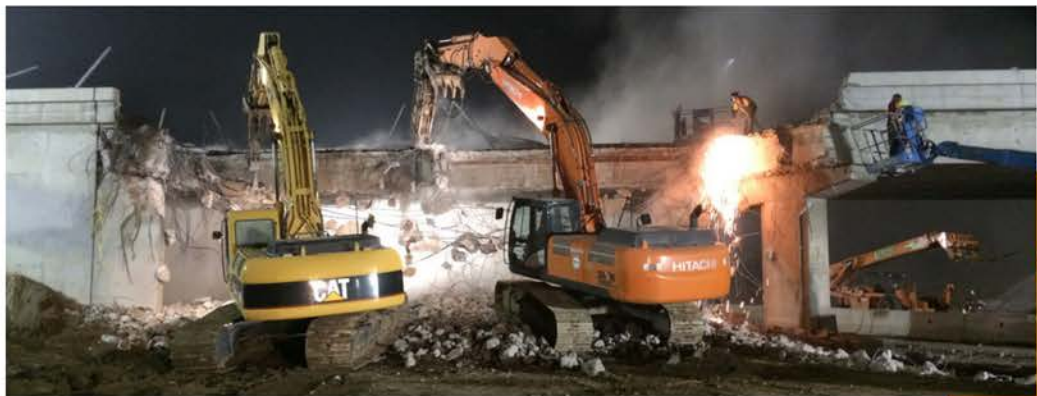


Daron McDaniel  
Supervisor  
County of Merced



Dan Wright  
Councilmember  
City of Stockton

Valley Elected Officials, representing the various cities and counties within the San Joaquin Valley, will come together to provide their unique insights, priorities, and experiences in working to collectively better the lives of the communities in the Central Valley. Hear their thoughts and ideas regarding finishing Highway 99, improving regional transportation and housing, and reconnecting communities. Learn from Elected Officials directly what the future of the San Joaquin Valley looks like and how you can be involved.







## Breakout Session

# OUR PARTNERS IN THE VALLEY

### MODERATOR:



Martha A. Flores  
Mayor  
City of Porterville

Join us to explore the significance of collaborating with our partners in the Central Valley. Discover strategies for optimizing cooperation with Union Pacific and Southern California Edison. The rail industry plays a crucial role in our local economy, facilitating the movement of agricultural products across the state and nation. Similarly, energy is fundamental to powering our modern society. Energy and transportation sectors face numerous challenges.

### PANELISTS:



Brian Thoburn,  
Government Relations Manager  
Southern CA Edison



Peggy Ygbuhay,  
Senior Director of Public Affairs  
Union Pacific Railroad





## Breakout Session

# HOUSING ELEMENTS AND PROHOUSING DESIGNATIONS: TIPS, TALES AND TRIUMPHS

### MODERATOR:



Rudy Mendoza  
Mayor  
City of Woodlake

With housing elements past due and deadlines for funding programs looming, please join the California Department of Housing and Community Development, City of Lodi and Self Help Enterprises to talk about challenges and opportunities to comply with housing elements requirements and achieve a prohousing housing designation to be more competitive for some funding programs. HCD will discuss some lessons learned from many recent reviews of housing elements in the San Joaquin Valley and key components of the new prohousing regulations. Lodi will discuss the success of its housing element and the process in achieving housing element certification – the first in the San Joaquin Valley. Self Help Enterprises will discuss strategies and benefits of the prohousing designation program in your communities. This session will present helpful and practical information to support San Joaquin Valley communities with their housing goals.

### PANELISTS:



Paul McDougall,  
CA HCD



Jed Hackett,  
CA HCD



Cynthia Marsh,  
Planner Division Manager  
City of Lodi



Tom Collishaw,  
CEO,  
Self-Help Enterprises









## Breakout Session

# THE ROAD TO YES FOR AGRICULTURE AND AIR QUALITY

**MODERATOR:** Can one of the world's most productive agricultural areas also be the best environmental stewards? We say yes! Come hear what is being done to produce the cleanest agricultural products in the world right here in the San Joaquin Valley. Learn more about the latest advances, technologies, and practices being implemented to reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality. Explore with the panelists prospects for immediate and long term solutions.



Robert Poythress  
Supervisor  
Madera County

## PANELISTS:



Doug Verboon,  
Supervisor  
County of Kings



Michael Boccadoro  
Executive Director  
Dairy Cares



# MAIN SESSION

## THOUGHTS FROM DC



Erich Zimmermann is Executive Director of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC). He is an enthusiastic and tireless supporter of regions and regional planning as solutions to many of the nation's challenges. Erich has been with NARC for more than a decade, serving previously as the organization's Director of Transportation Programs and Deputy Executive Director. Erich has more than twenty years of experience working in Washington, DC in non-profit management, federal policy analysis, and issue advocacy.



Erich has extensive experience in many aspects of federal policy, is a successful collaborator, and has a proven record of success in issue advocacy. Prior to his time at NARC, he spent ten years with a small nonpartisan budget watchdog organization, focusing on transportation, appropriations, and spending policies. Erich is a proud resident of the District of Columbia where he has spent most of the past thirty years. He lives in the Brookland neighborhood with his spouse, two young boys, and one very large Bernese Mountain Dog. Erich has a B.A. in Political Communication from The George Washington University and a M.S. in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana and in 2023 completed his Master Certificate in High Performance Leadership through the Professional Development Academy.



# THANK YOU NOTE: THEODORE SMALLEY



Thank you for attending the 2024 San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Conference in the bustling downtown area in the City of Visalia. Your presence and participation have made this conference a success. It is inspiring and encouraging to see professionals from many different areas – transportation, housing, government agencies and elected officials, non-profits, and more – come together to exchange ideas, to network, and to learn from each other.

We hope you found the sessions to be informative and engaging, while being thought-provoking about the future of the Central Valley. We would like to thank all of the amazing speakers, panelists, and moderators for sharing their insights and guiding the discussions.

We also would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to our esteemed partners: the San Joaquin Valley Policy Council, the American Planning Association (APA) Central Section, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) and California Department of Housing and Community Development (HDC) for their invaluable support and dedication in ensuring a successful 2024 Policy Conference. We thank the many organizations that sponsored this year including 4Creeks, Mark Thomas, and Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS). This would not have been possible without every organization's generosity.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank the amazing staff at TCAG who has spent endless hours preparing for the Policy Conference. Your hard work and commitment do not go unnoticed or unappreciated.

Thank you once again for your invaluable participation and making the 2024 Policy Conference an exciting opportunity for all. We continue to look forward to working together to better the San Joaquin Valley.

**Ted Smalley,**  
**Executive Director TCAG**



# SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY BLUEPRINT AWARDS

*Awards will be presented on May 1st at the San Joaquin Valley Annual Policy Conference hosted by the Tulare County Association of Governments.*

## Award Categories

### **Development Projects**

On the ground, existing projects that exemplify the Blueprint principles:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Downtown Revitalization
- Transportation Enhancement
- Historic Revitalization



### **Planning Project or Program**

Recognition of sustainable and innovative planning projects or programs.

### **Darrel Hildebrand Blueprint Leadership Award**

Awarded to an individual who has shown enthusiasm and tenacity in promoting the Blueprint principles.

### **Jenny Kenoyer Outstanding Elected Official**

Awarded to an elected official who demonstrates great leadership and advocacy for promoting Blueprint principles.



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