



Western Riverside Council of Governments 2011 Legislative Platform

Adopted 12/6/10

INTRODUCTION

The Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) 2011/ 2012 Legislative Program is designed to provide guidance to WRCOG and member jurisdictions and agencies on legislation that focuses on issues of mutual concern. Positions, once adopted by the WRCOG Executive Committee, will be forwarded to Sacramento, Washington D.C., and interested parties as appropriate. By adopting this Program, the WRCOG Executive Committee provides guidance to WRCOG staff in expressing its member interests to State and Federal legislators.

WRCOG staff will be responsible for monitoring legislation that falls within the scope of the adopted Legislative Program. Staff will also provide information on the impacts of such legislation to member agencies through WRCOG's existing committee structure and will discuss a variety of legislative issues at its Legislative Discussion Group meetings.

If urgent action is needed, the WRCOG Executive Director and/or the WRCOG Executive Committee Chair may submit letters of support/opposition and/or undertake other tasks that may be necessary on legislative matters that are consistent with the areas identified in this Program. These actions will be reported at subsequent meetings of the WRCOG Technical Advisory and Executive Committees.

In the spring of 2010 WRCOG established seven (7) subcommittees to address issues identified as Agency priorities including economic development, education/higher education, energy and environment, healthcare, legislation, transportation, and water/waste water to understand WRCOG's role in addressing these issues at the subregional level. The following Legislative Platform addresses legislative actions in response to the direction provided by the subcommittee members.

General Advocacy and Legislative Priorities

The purpose of WRCOG is to unify Western Riverside County so that it can speak with a collective voice on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines. The intended goal of the Agency is to respect local control while providing regional perspective.

Working in coordination with member jurisdictions and water districts, WRCOG will pursue the following advocacy goals:

- Pursue State and federal funding to establish or enhance existing programs that promote sustainability and prosperity for Western Riverside County.
- Oppose legislation that seeks to limit local control, reduce funding opportunities to local jurisdictions, or increase fees and taxes on residents.
- Coordinate advocacy efforts to promote the interests of Western Riverside County to decision makers at all levels of government.

2011 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The following are the major areas of interest that WRCOG will focus its legislative review activities as part of this Program.

1. **State Budget:** Support legislative activities to initiate an extensive audit of state programs with the goal of establishing recommendations for the development and delivery of an on-time, balanced budget, that does not rely on undependable accounting mechanisms and funding shifts.
2. **SB 375 and AB 32 Funding:** Support legislation that provides funding to jurisdictions, metropolitan planning organizations and council of governments for activities related to SB 375 and AB 32 implementation.
3. **SB 375 Revisions:** Support the pursuit of a legislative fix for SB 375 that will allow additional time for jurisdictions to update their housing element and conduct the required zoning to avoid potential penalties.
4. **PACE Program Remedies:** Pursue legislation to ensure that the underwriting standards of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac facilitate the use of property assessed clean energy programs to finance the installation of renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements.
5. **NEV Implementation:** Work with the Legislature to introduce legislation that would allow for the development and implementation of Neighborhood Electric Vehicle Plans in jurisdictions throughout Western Riverside County.
6. **Education:** Support funding opportunities that would allow Western Riverside County to pursue the goal of creating an educational master plan to establish a “road-map” for creating a higher skilled, better educated workforce pool.
7. **Funding Equity:** Support legislation requiring geographic distribution to be an obligation when awarding statewide competitive funding opportunities.

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM COMPONENTS

1. Economic Development

Topics include: job growth, housing imbalance, tax incentives, and technology.

Western Riverside County is a subregion rich in diversity, resources, and labor. Establishing an identity for the subregion that will enhance a variety of opportunities is a key priority for WRCOG. WRCOG supports legislative proposals that enable and encourage businesses to grow and thrive within the subregion.

- Support legislation that encourages technology to assist jurisdictions, colleges and community colleges in attracting potential businesses and educating future workers (i.e., WiFi, DSL, fiber optics, etc.).
- Oppose legislation that would encourage or incentivize businesses to leave Western Riverside County.

- Support legislation that would encourage employers to open satellite facilities for residents that work outside of Western Riverside County.
- Support legislation that would incentivize employers to implement telecommuting and other transportation demand management strategies.
- Support legislation that increases tourism, expands marketability of the subregion, and provides opportunities to “brand” Western Riverside County as a destination location.
- Support legislation that would institute an equitable geographic distribution of state funding for the development of programs that will benefit the subregion.

2. Education/Higher Education

Topics include: curriculum development, access to higher education, public/private partnerships, and workforce training/retraining.

WRCOG supports legislative efforts that encourage the creation and implementation of an education master plan that will serve as a roadmap to increasing the educational opportunities for residents in Western Riverside County. An educated workforce will attract a broader level of employers which will provide additional opportunities for the economic success of the region. Expanding higher educational and vocational training opportunities available to residents in Western Riverside County is vital.

- Support legislation that will improve the quality of education for all students.
- Support legislation that encourages public/private partnerships to develop educational programs that will complement the growing business sectors within Western Riverside County.
- Support legislation that increases access to vocational programs for students who do not elect to pursue a higher degree.
- Support legislation that provides funding to retrain individuals to facilitate re-entrance in to the work force.
- Support legislation that promotes the inclusion of recycling and environmental awareness programs in K-12 curriculums.
- Support the development of curriculums geared towards preparing students for sustainable “green collar”/green technology jobs.

3. Energy and Environment

Topics include: energy, alternative energy, air quality, solid waste, and product stewardship.

The efficient use and conservation of natural resources and the advancement of alternative energy sources is important to the sustainability of Western Riverside County. Energy conservation and energy use efficiency can help residents, businesses, and jurisdictions save money, improve air quality, and protect the environment. WRCOG is committed to investing in and advancing innovative “green” technologies and engaging in alternative energy activities to extend the benefits of these actions throughout the subregion while meeting the demands of the growing population. Specifically, WRCOG supports the following legislative activities:

- Support legislation that removes barriers for and provides funding to implement PACE financing programs.
- Support legislation to provide or extend financial incentives for new and existing warehouses to install solar panels.

- Support legislation that provides incentives for businesses and local governments to voluntarily implement energy saving measures.
- Support legislation that establishes/preserves the role of local government in energy decisions, particularly for activities pertaining to electricity generation, supply, demand, and conservation to ensure adequate supply for, and reasonable costs to, residents and businesses.
- Support legislation that encourages the production and use of clean alternative energy sources.
- Support legislation aimed at the development of “green” technologies for energy production.
- Support legislation which would encourage railroad emission reductions and increased emissions monitoring methods.
- Support the continuation of air quality management at the air basin level rather than at the statewide or individual county level.
- Support legislation that permanently extends federal alternative fuel and vehicle tax credits and incentives.
- Support legislation that would assist or encourage the development of alternative fuel facilities throughout the State.
- Support legislation that encourages voluntary actions by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to provide for air quality management for goods movement projects.
- Support legislation that encourages the expansion of solid waste conversion technologies.
- Support legislation that increases markets for recyclable, or compostable materials.
- Support legislation that implements and funds programs to reduce litter and illegal dumping.
- Support the increase of fines and/or confiscation of vehicles for individuals and companies caught in the act of illegal dumping.
- Oppose waste management requirements that would put local jurisdictions at risk of not meeting AB 939 requirements, or create excessive costs absent funding.
- Support State loans, grants, and loan guarantees for businesses implementing source reduction programs and utilizing post consumer recycled materials in the manufacture of new products.
- Support legislation that encourages the proper disposal of hazardous waste.
- Support legislation that implements Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) principles aimed at removing the cost burden for disposal of these products from local jurisdictions and agencies.
- Support legislation that to establish and fund a Sustainability Center in western Riverside County.

4. Healthcare

Topics include: information sharing, care facility access and establishment, care provider training opportunities, and public health issues.

Access to activities that promote a healthy lifestyle and related information sharing are critical to advancing public health in Western Riverside County. In several categories, residents of Western Riverside County have demonstrated lower health levels than those prescribed in the national *Healthy People 2010* report developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010* is a statement of

national health objectives designed to identify the most significant preventable threats to health and to establish national goals to reduce these threats. WRCOG supports legislative activities that increase public and political awareness of the prevalence of health related conditions affecting children and adults in Western Riverside County, especially in areas where residents are affected in instances higher than the national average, and build a community network of support for the population addressing these issues.

- Support legislation that provides funding, pilot programs, and other assistance for the development of a Youth Master Plan that contains plans and programs for special needs children (ie. parks, recreational needs, and housing opportunities for children with special needs).
- Support legislation that facilitates regional collaboration in addressing health and healthcare problems.
- Support legislation that creates an information exchange or information network where residents can access available support services and data on specific issues.
- Support legislation that facilitates OSHPD and CEQA streamlining for efficient hospital construction.
- Oppose legislation that could potentially establish unnecessary barriers to the creation and construction of healthcare facilities.
- Support legislation that promotes the development of walkable communities.
- Support legislation and legislative actions aimed at increasing institutions that offer training and residency opportunities for healthcare professionals in-exchange for contractual service.
- Support legislation or legislative actions aimed at increasing the number of hospital beds in region.
- Support legislation that provides funding to address/increase level of physical activity among adults and children.
- Support legislation that provides funding and assistance on suicide prevention - as suicide attempts have been identified as the leading cause of nonfatal injury among adolescents in Riverside County (Maternal Child & Adolescent Health Report 2010, Riverside County Dept. of Public Health).
- Support legislation that increases local government authority to oversee location of community care facilities and transportation options to the care facilities.

5. Land Use/ Planning/ Community Development

Topics include: funding, RHNA, SB 375, local land use control, parks and community development.

Well designed land use and planning decisions are vital to the successful growth and development of the subregion. WRCOG supports legislative efforts that promote sustainable land use and development practices that maintain and/or increase local control.

- Support legislation that encourages the creation of jobs near housing to improve the jobs housing balance.
- Support legislation that will more equitably allocate affordable housing targets across the SCAG region by using regional, rather than county-level controls.

- Support legislation that provides ongoing State funding for mandated planning projects such as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, Sustainable Communities Strategies, and General Plan Housing Element updates.
- Oppose reform measures that penalize jurisdictions for non-compliance with state-mandated Housing Element update schedules.
- Oppose expanding State Department of Housing and Community Development's authority over local jurisdictions.
- Support legislation that would allow interested jurisdictions to assume responsibility of state parks within their jurisdiction.
- Support legislation that seeks to streamline environmental processing (CEQA and NEPA) for infrastructure projects (e.g. transportation, transit, utilities) necessary to mitigate the increased density allowances of SB 375.
- Support amendments to SB 375 that will extend the period of time that jurisdictions have to develop their housing element and conduct the required zoning updates following the release of the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- Support legislation for subregional agencies to develop and implement region-wide planning guidelines that would integrate land use, transportation, transit and economic development to create balanced and sustainable communities.
- Support legislation to create a permanent funding source for regional and local planning activities that address mandates such as AB 32 and SB 375.
- Support efforts that protect the rights of cities and counties to plan and govern their own communities, and oppose restrictions on local control of land use and development.

6. Local Government

Topics include: franchise negotiations, tax/service relationship, and funding.

WRCOG supports legislative initiatives that maintain existing and promote increased local jurisdictional control over pertinent regional issues. As local governments have a direct relationship to the residents and businesses they serve, WRCOG supports efforts to allow flexibility in the manner in which jurisdictions negotiate contracts, manage employees, and provide a variety of services.

- Oppose legislation that prevents a local government from entering into or negotiating a franchise agreement with a local service provider.
- Oppose legislation that reduces local revenue without allowing for reductions in service responsibility.
- Oppose legislation that calls for additional state and/ or federal mandates absent funding.
- Support a statutory or constitutional redistribution of property tax revenues that more equitably reflects local government responsibilities.
- Support legislation that requires additional transparency and communication in state and federal legislative and commission activities.
- Support legislative activities that require the governor and the legislature to pass an on-time budget that does not rely on borrowing or taking from local governments.

7. Public Safety

Topics include: access to timely public safety assistance, judgeships/ judicial process, group homes, and funding.

Western Riverside County hosts a diverse population with a wide variety of public service and judicial needs. To promote the safety and well being of all residents in the subregion, WRCOG supports legislative proposals that broaden access to timely public safety assistance and to the justice system. WRCOG supports the following initiatives:

- Support legislation and/or actions by the state government that would increase the number of judgeships and judicial officer positions to relieve local judges from over-burdened case loads, and to provide residents justice in a timely and efficient manner.
- Support legislation that creates funding mechanisms for local jurisdictions and regional agencies to develop and maintain critical data for health and safety services.
- Support legislation for local control over the placement of group homes containing six or fewer residents.
- Support legislation aimed at deterring vandalism and graffiti and also provides public safety officials with funding to expand and implement innovative programs aimed at curbing and rectifying such offenses.
- Oppose efforts to locate prisons or reclassify existing low risk detainment centers to higher risk offender rehabilitation centers that are near parks, schools or other locations where children and young adults congregate.

8. Transportation

Topics include: infrastructure funding and development, transit, goods movement, and non-motorized vehicle planning.

The subregion faces significant population growth in the near future and must expand the capacity and efficiency of its transportation network to accommodate this growth. Supporting legislative efforts to direct investment towards transportation infrastructure, not only for roads and highways, but for transit, goods movement, and non-motorized transportation is a high priority for WRCOG.

- Support legislation to improve access and funding to public transportation.
- Support legislation and funding mechanisms that support and encourage the use of transit and non-motorized transportation.
- Support legislation that enhances the safety of city streets and arterials for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic.
- Support legislation that will reduce traffic congestion and support regional transportation programs.
- Support legislation that provides funding for goods movement related projects and studies.
- Support legislation and funding opportunities for at-grade crossings.
- Support legislation to leverage a container fee on goods transported from the ports for the purpose of air quality and congestion mitigation related infrastructure projects.
- Support legislation that increases local flexibility in the allocation of transportation capital funds.

- Support legislation that provides additional funds for local and regional transportation projects, including public transit.
- Oppose legislation to eliminate or restrict the use of Riverside County State Improvement Transportation Funds, federal transportation funding, Measure A, or Gas Tax funding for local transportation projects.
- Support legislation that encourages the use of design-build methods to facilitate a faster, stream-lined approach to project delivery.
- Support legislation that gives priority to self-help and “super” self-help counties when allocating bond funding and other transportation funding mechanisms.
- Support legislation that enables jurisdictions in Western Riverside County to create and adopt a neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV) plan.

9. Water/ Wastewater

Topics include: water conservation, recycling, infrastructure development, financing opportunities, Delta management, and septic conversion support.

Increased conservation efforts, industry-wide water efficiency improvements, and an expanded use of recycled water are in part responsible for an increased awareness of the delicate relationship the subregion maintains with available water sources. WRCOG is committed to supporting continued conservation efforts that can reduce water use, strengthening and improving the Sacramento Delta levee and ecosystem, and the identification and construction of alternative means for conveying water to Southern California residents and businesses. These goals and other objectives will be addressed through the specific legislative priorities identified below.

- Support water conservation and measures that promote alternative water resource development such as recycled water, storm water reclamation and groundwater desalination.
- Oppose legislation that re-characterizes recycled water as waste as recycled water is a sought after commodity and this resource has the capability of off-setting the use of potable water.
- Support legislation that examines water use, not building size or acreage, when determining whether a water supply assessment is needed for commercial or industrial projects.
- Support legislation that examines a variety of water storage methods.
- Support legislation that provides funding to local governments for water quality and conservation related programs.
- Support legislation to improve the State’s water infrastructure and delivery mechanisms without causing excessive financial burdens or delivery delays to Southern California.
- Oppose legislation that shifts or re-aligns local ad valorem property tax revenues approved by local voters for vital water and wastewater infrastructure.