

# **The State of Transportation in the Inland Empire:**

The impact of aging infrastructure and access to public transportation on the residents  
of California's 41<sup>st</sup> Congressional District



**Presented by**

**Congressman Mark Takano**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **The State of Transportation in the Inland Empire**

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## I. Overview

During the month of May, the Office of Congressman Mark Takano organized a transportation and infrastructure survey that was sent out to residents of California's 41<sup>st</sup> congressional district to better assess their transportation needs. In total, 548 residents from Moreno Valley, Riverside, Perris, and Jurupa Valley responded to the survey and indicated what they view as the most pressing transportation issue in the area.

- 70% of respondents were from Riverside, 21% were from Moreno Valley, 8% were from Perris, and 2% were from Jurupa Valley. (Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.)
- The top priority for Riverside, Moreno Valley, and Jurupa Valley was freeway maintenance, while the top priority for Perris was increased public transit.
- The top five issues across the 41<sup>st</sup> Congressional district were improving freeway maintenance and construction, increasing Metrolink services, expanding bus services, and adding more carpool lanes and improving bike paths.
- Other concerns included increased transit options for the disabled as well as pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- According to Transportation for America, by 2015 69% of seniors in the Riverside-San Bernardino metropolitan area will have poor access to public transit.
- The Brookings Institution published a report which stated that 81% of low income residents in the Riverside metro area live in the suburbs and can only reach 7% of low- and middle-skill jobs via public transportation.
- 32% of respondents said their total commute was longer than one hour.
- Over 50% said they find themselves in heavy traffic at least five times a week.
- Over 60% rated their commute as unsatisfactory or terrible.

## II. Introduction

The American Society of Civil Engineers released their 2013 Report Card on the status of America's infrastructure earlier this year, giving the nation's infrastructure an overall grade of a D plus.<sup>1</sup>

California's infrastructure is in trouble and in need of massive repairs over the next 20 years. According to the report, more than 7,000 bridges in the state are considered either structurally deficient, or functionally obsolete. There are 807 high hazard dams and 98 hazardous waste sites on the National Priorities List. Beyond this, 68% of the roads in California are in need of repair and driving on these roads costs motorists \$13.9 billion extra per year in vehicle repairs and operating costs. That is about \$586 per motorist that could go to daily necessities such as rent and groceries.

For the Inland Empire, the data is not much better. The 2010 report from the American Society of Civil Engineers for the Inland Empire, which was written by local engineers, grades the Inland Empire's transportation system at a D plus, and gives overall infrastructure for the area a C plus. Specifically in the field of transportation, the engineers note that "decision-makers continually strive to keep pace with deteriorating sections of highway with limited funds."<sup>2</sup> According to the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, from data gathered in 2011 on roadway congestion, residents of the Riverside and San Bernardino area experience more than 38 hours annually per person in traffic delays which cost an extra \$854 a year and waste 16 gallons of fuel per person.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the aging infrastructure, the lack of public transit in the Riverside-San Bernardino Metro area is a growing problem, especially for seniors and lower income households. According to a report from the Brookings Institution, "Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America," 81% of low-income residents of the Riverside metro area live in the suburbs and can reach less than 7% of low and middle income jobs via transit.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this new report and other infrastructure data about the Inland Empire, Representative Mark Takano sought to find which transportation issues impacted the residents of CD-41 the most. He wanted to know the transportation needs of his constituents, from which roads in the area needed to be repaired, to larger issues such as public transit use and highway maintenance. His office put together a survey and emailed it to constituents in addition to featuring it on his congressional website. The findings were then compiled and turned in to this report.

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<sup>1</sup> American Society of Civil Engineers, *2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure*, <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/a/#p/home> (June 6, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> American Society of Civil Engineers of the Inland Empire, *Infrastructure Report Card for the Inland Empire, 2010*: 1-2.

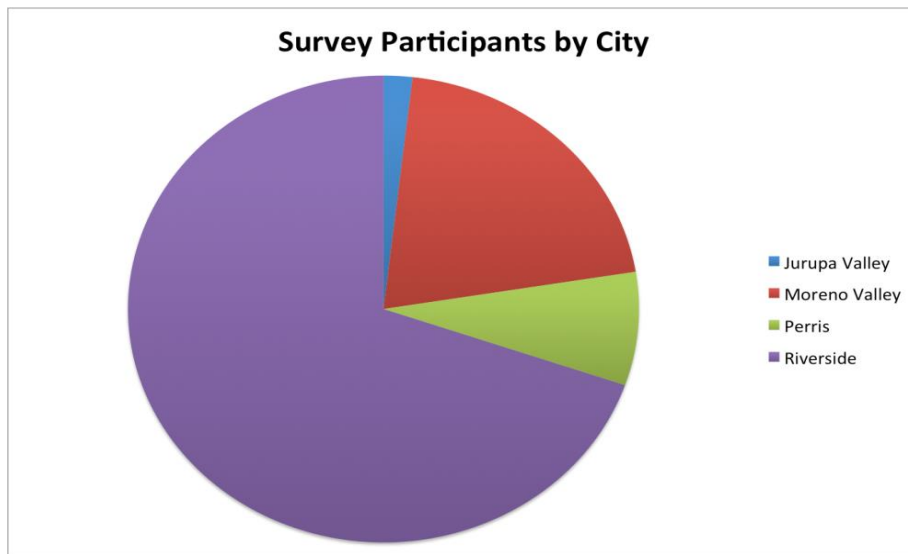
<sup>3</sup> University of Texas, A&M Transportation Institute, *Performance Measure Summary- Riverside-San Bernardino, CA*: 1-7.

<sup>4</sup> The Brookings Institution, *Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*: 19.

### III. The Survey and Methodology

The survey asked residents of CD-41, “What improvement or repair should be the main transportation priority for Riverside County?” Respondents were given the option to choose one category from the following list:

1. **Public Transportation**
2. **Roadway Maintenance and Improvements**
3. **Freeway Maintenance and Improvements**
4. **Bicycling and Walking**
5. **Bridge Maintenance and Improvements**
6. **Sidewalk, Gutter and Curb Repairs**
7. **Poor Signage**
8. **Traffic Signals**
9. **Other**



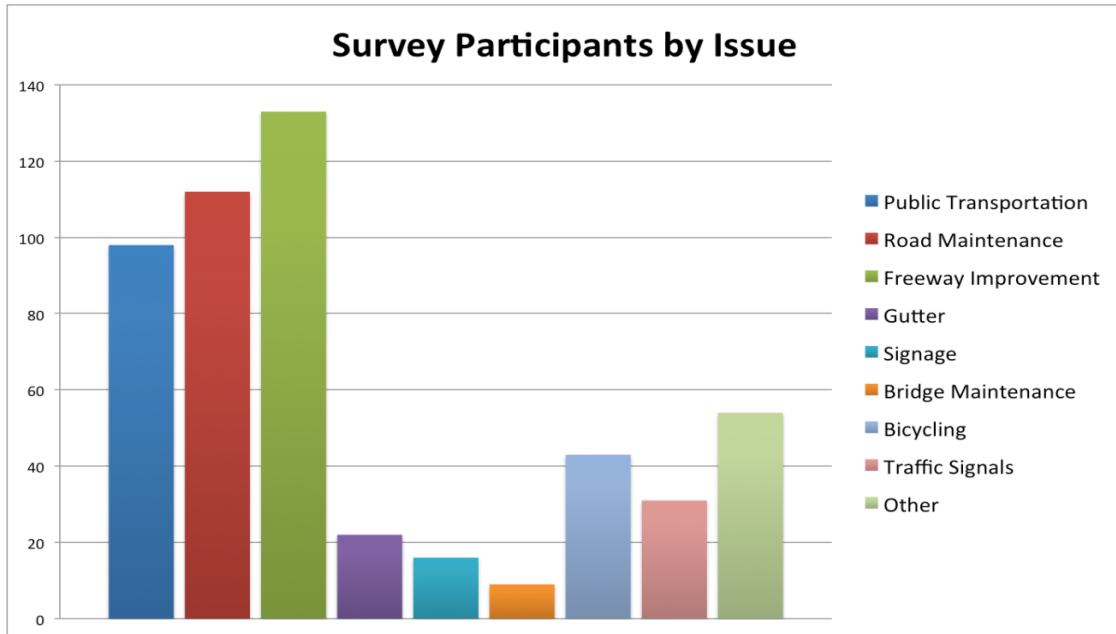
Once residents chose the one issue that was most important to them, they were asked to provide specific details. The survey also asked specific questions about constituents’ commute, including their method of commute, the length of their average commute, bus ridership, frequency of heavy traffic during their commute, and an overall opinion of commuting in the Inland Empire. These questions were optional. During the month of May, 548 residents in CD-41 responded to the survey and their responses were matched with information from the office’s database to correctly identify the respondent as a constituent and to prevent duplicates.

## IV. Findings

### Where are respondents from?

Of the 548 total respondents in the 41<sup>st</sup> District of California (CD-41), 69.7% (382) were from Riverside (pop. 310,651), 20.6% (113) were from Moreno Valley (pop. 197,838), and 7.8% (43) were from Perris (pop. 69,967), and 1.8% (10) were from Jurupa Valley (pop. 94,235).

### What issues were most important?



Of the 548 participants in CD-41, 94.5% (518) identified the following as their top priorities:

- 25% (133) freeway maintenance
- 21.6 % (112) roadway maintenance
- 18.9% (98) public transportation
- 10.4% (54) other
- 8.3% (43) bicycles and walking
- 5.9% (31) traffic signals
- 4.2% (22) sidewalks, gutter and curb repair
- 3% (16) signage
- 1.7% (9) bridge maintenance

**What issues were most important in each area?**

	Moreno Valley	Perris	Riverside	Jurupa Valley
Freeway Maintenance	33.6% (38)	18.6% (8)	22.7% (87)	40% (4)
Roadway Maintenance	23% (26)	23.2% (10)	19.8% (76)	20% (2)
Public Transportation	15.9% (18)	32.5% (14)	17.2% (66)	20% (2)
Other	9.7% (11)	2.3% (1)	10.7% (41)	10% (1)
Bicycles and Walking	4.4% (5)	6.9% (3)	9.1% (35)	
Traffic Signals	4.4% (5)	6.9% (3)	6.0% (23)	10% (1)
Sidewalks, Gutter and Curb Repair	1.7% (2)	0% (0)	5.2% (20)	
Signage	1.7% (2)	2.3% (1)	3.4% (13)	
Bridge Maintenance	0.8% (1)	2.3% (1)	1.8% (7)	

**What is the daily commute like in Riverside County? (Optional questions)**

**How do you generally commute to work?**

Of the 510 participants: 77.6% (396) responded that they drove, 14.9% (76) responded that they used another form of transportation in their daily commute to work, 2.7% (14) responded that they biked, 2.5% (13) responded that they took the bus, and 2.1% (11) responded that they walked.

**How long on average is your *total* (to work and back) commute?**

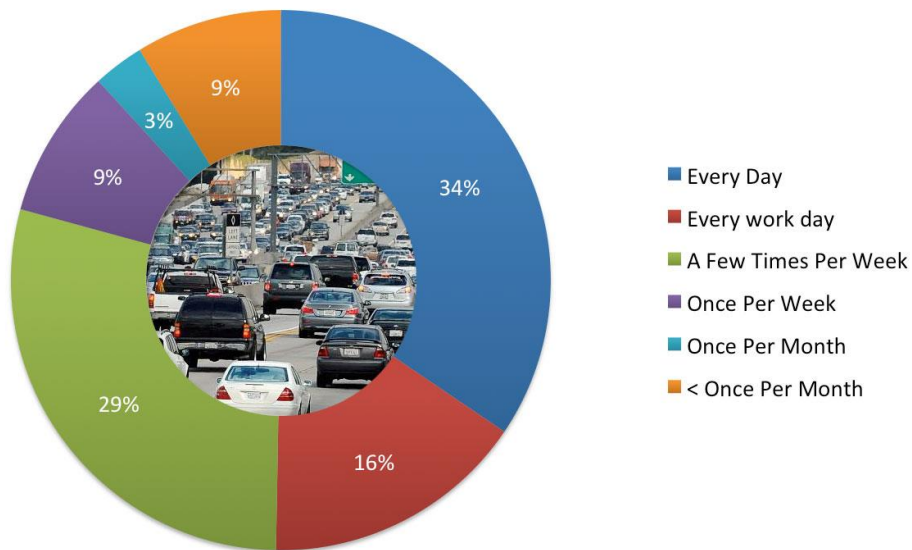
Of the 489 participants: 17.3% (85) responded that their commute was 10 minutes or less, 31.9% (156) responded that it was between 20 and 30 minutes, 19.0% (93) responded that it was between 40 and 60 minutes and 31.6% (155) responded that their commute was more than one hour.

**How often do you ride the bus?**

Of the 455 respondents: 89.2% (406) responded that they ride the bus less than once per month, 3.5% (16) responded that they ride the bus few times per week, 2.8% (13) people responded that they ride the bus every day, 1.9% (9) responded that they ride the bus once per week, 1.3% (6) responded that ride the bus every work day, and 1.0% (5) responded that they ride the bus once per month.



## “Heavy” Traffic Frequency



Data from survey of District 41 residents, including 382 from Riverside, 113 from Moreno Valley, 43 from Perris, and 10 from Jurupa Vallley.

### How often do you find yourself driving in “heavy” traffic?

Of the 525 participants who answered this question: 34.4% (181) responded that they found themselves in heavy traffic every day, 15.8% (83) responded every work day, 28.9% (152) responded a few times per week, 8.9% (47) responded once per week, 3.0% (16) responded once per month and 8.7% (46) responded less than once per month.

### How would you rate your options for commuting in the Inland Empire?

Of the 503 participants: 7.5% (38) people responded that their commute was great, 29.4% (148) responded that it was satisfactory, 50.8% (256) responded that it was unsatisfactory and 12.1% (61) responded that their daily commute was terrible.

## V. Top 5 Reported Transportation Issues in District 41

### 1. Improving highway maintenance and construction on I-215 and SR-91

The most frequently cited issue from the survey was highway maintenance and construction along SR-91 and I-215. Respondents wrote that it was slowing their commute and making it more difficult for them to get to work. One resident from Moreno Valley said that, “I-215 is an absolute disgrace. The I-215 from Moreno Valley to Temecula has been neglected for so long.” A resident from Riverside, directly cited the half an hour increase in commute time construction has caused by stating, “SR-91/I-215 construction has slowed the normal 15 minute commute down from 15 minutes to 45 minutes between Riverside and Colton.” A resident from Perris mentioned commute time as well saying, “[the] I-215-91-60 intersections are really bad. It takes about 35 minutes to get out of there.”

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*“The I-215 is an absolute disgrace. The I-215 from Moreno Valley to Temecula has been neglected for so long.” – Moreno Valley Resident*

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### 2. Expanding Metrolink services

One way to address the tiresome commute in the Inland Empire on the highways would be to expand Metrolink services in the area. Many people mentioned that they would like to make use of the Metrolink but find it hard to use and instead drive. One resident from Riverside wrote, “I think more people might use public transportation such as Metrolink if there were more options to get people to their actual worksite. Once you get to your destination, there's not an easy way to get to your actual worksite.” A resident from Moreno Valley wanted an extension of the Metrolink “from Perris to Moreno Valley to Riverside to Union Station [in] LA.” Directly addressing the Perris Valley Line expansion, a Riverside resident said, “[the] Perris Valley Line is a critical element to the County’s ability to address transportation issues now and into the future.” A Perris resident would like to see “train service from Perris to Downtown Riverside early enough to get to the San Bernardino train lines. [I] would then be able to use public transport to get to work instead of driving 45 [miles] each way to get to Rancho Cucamonga.” The overall sense from the survey was that residents in the Inland Empire would like to use public transportation in their work commute, but they are unable to use the Metrolink in an efficient way.

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*“[The] Perris Valley Line is a critical element to the County’s ability to address transportation issues now and into the future.” – Riverside Resident*

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### 3. Running buses longer and increasing bus frequency

Another barrier for residents in Riverside County in accessing public transportation is the lack of evening buses. They would also like to see buses run more frequently. A Riverside resident suggested, “Continuing bus service to the Metrolink station into the evening so that arriving passengers can get a bus to the downtown terminal. It would also be a major improvement to expand the Metrolink schedule to provide public transport to other parts of Southern California at additional times.” A Perris resident mentioned the lack of bus routes from Riverside to Perris, requesting that they would like to see, “More bus routes from Perris to Riverside and Moreno Valley. Usually you can get to Riverside fine, but getting back is the problem.” Another Riverside resident mentioned that improving public transportation infrastructure would encourage public transit use as the cost of driving continues to rise. Lastly, a Moreno Valley resident whose daughter finishes work at 10:30PM mentioned the need for buses to run longer into the evening so his daughter could use them in her daily commute.

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*“It would also be a major improvement to expand the Metrolink schedule to provide public transport to other parts of Southern California at additional times.” – Riverside Resident*

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### 4. Expanding Carpool lanes/widening freeways

For the Inland Empire residents who commute on the freeways, a common request was for additional car pool lanes on SR-60, SR-91 and I-215. Many mentioned that they would like to see car pool lanes opened up after rush hour for use on the freeway during the day similar to freeways in the Bay Area. One resident from Riverside would like to see SR-91 widened specifically from Magnolia Avenue to Main Street.

### 5. Increased Bicycle paths

Residents would like to see more bicycle paths throughout their neighborhoods and cities. They were most concerned about cyclist safety while in traffic due to the lack of bicycle lanes in the area. One Moreno Valley cyclist mentioned that due to construction on I-215 to Sycamore Canyon Road, it is even more dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians to travel than normal, especially without a designated bicycle path. A Riverside resident said, “Generally biking in this area is at your own peril.” Another Riverside resident felt that her biking commute could be improved if traffic lights could have sensors to detect cyclists without riders having to get off of their bicycles.

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*“Generally biking in this area is at your own peril.”- Riverside Resident*

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## **VI. Other Issues Highlighted in the Survey: Disabled Transportation Services and Safety**

Beyond the top five most frequently referenced issues in the survey, participants also raised points regarding the lack of transportation services for disabled residents and highlighted specific areas where pedestrian and driver safety could be improved.

### **1. Disabled Transportation Services**

A few participants brought up how the lack of public transportation in Riverside County, especially the infrequency of buses, makes it extremely difficult for disabled individuals to remain mobile. They asked to see disabled priority busing increased and for more wheelchair curbs to be installed.

### **2. Safety**

#### *Crosswalks*

Many participants recommended improving pedestrian safety by creating crosswalks in areas with heavy foot traffic and around schools.

#### *Unprotected left hand turns*

Another way to improve motorist safety would be to install protected left hand turn lights. Many cited particularly heavy traffic on Limonite Ave in Riverside and the need for left hand turn lights. Unprotected left hand turns are a common cause of accidents in the area. Protected left hand turn lights, especially in heavy traffic areas, are shown to improve safety, as well as lighten traffic on main roads.

#### *Intersections*

Participants specifically cited the need for traffic signals at multiple intersections throughout the area. Many wrote that the intersection of Murrieta Road and Nuevo Road in Perris needs a signal as it is currently a four way stop with heavy traffic and is hazardous to drivers.

#### *Speed bumps instead of stop signs*

Participants also noted that in many neighborhoods across the district, motorists either do not stop properly at stop signs, drive above the speed limit, or drive through stop signs altogether. A way to improve safety in neighborhoods and to slow down motorists would be to install speed bumps in these areas.

## VII. Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall, residents of Riverside County who answered the survey were most concerned about their commute and how it was impacted by the continuous construction on multiple freeways and the lack of a comprehensive public transportation system.

To add context to these responses, the City of Riverside recently released results from the “Community Quality of Life Survey 2013” which polled residents and workers in Riverside regarding their quality of life. The survey was done in partnership with The Institute of Applied Research (IAR) at California State University, San Bernardino, and residents participated over the telephone, online, and in written response to a set of questions concerning many aspects of life in Riverside. According to the survey, 17.8% (the top answer to this question) of respondents said that traffic was what they liked the least about living in Riverside.<sup>5</sup> Public transportation in Riverside received more of a mixed review. According to the survey, 37.6% of those who responded online rated public transportation as “fair” or “poor” compared to 25.4% of those polled over the phone. Of those questioned who were 65 and older, many respondents noted the need for better public transportation, especially for seniors.

Access to transportation for seniors was not highlighted as an issue by constituents in response to Rep. Takano’s survey. This is most likely due to the fact that the survey was not mailed out and could only be accessed electronically. However, 68 seniors did respond to this survey electronically. This specific issue will be addressed in a future report because lack of transit access for seniors is growing problem in the Riverside-San Bernardino Metro Area. According to “Aging in Place, Stuck without Options,” a report by Transportation for America that evaluated public transportation access for seniors in metropolitan areas, 69% of seniors living in the Riverside-San Bernardino area will have poor public transit access by the year 2015<sup>6</sup>. The report ranked the Riverside-San Bernardino region as the second least accessible, large metropolitan area for seniors in the country, behind only Atlanta, Georgia.

### **Problems identified in the survey that are being addressed:**

#### *Expanding SR-91*

Many residents mentioned their frustration with traffic on the SR-91 corridor, which is used by more than 280,000 vehicles per day.<sup>7</sup> While delays caused by construction will still continue, the good news is that the Department of Transportation recently granted a \$422 million TIFIA (Transportation Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act) loan to the Riverside County Transportation Commission for the SR-91 Corridor Improvement Project to build new lanes on the Riverside County side of the highway. This project will extend two SR-91 tolled express lanes and build one general purpose lane between Orange and Riverside counties.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Riverside, California, *Community Quality of Life Survey 2013*.

<sup>6</sup> Transportation for America, *Aging in Place: Stuck Without Options: 16-17*.

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Transportation, *U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx Announces \$421 Million Loan to Expand SR 91 in Southern California*, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/pressroom/fhwa1330.cfm> (July 3, 2013).

### *Metrolink Expansion- Perris Valley Line*

Respondents from across District 41, but especially those in Perris, mentioned the need for the Perris Valley Line. After months of litigation, the Perris Valley Line is set to begin construction in the fall of 2013.

### *Expanding Bus Services*

The Riverside Transit Agency's Short Range Transit Plan for 2014-2016 proposes some solutions to problems outlined in the survey which includes late night bus service for high-demand routes, closing transit gaps between regions and reinstating service on major holidays.<sup>8</sup> Beyond this short-term plan, RTA is currently conducting an in-depth comprehensive operational analysis study of the RTA bus system called the "RTA Forward 10-Year Transit Plan." This will help RTA address the changing transit needs of the Inland Empire by conducting extensive outreach to bus riders, the general public, community groups and other stakeholders.<sup>9</sup> To participate in their survey and for more information go to <http://www.riversidetransit.tmdinc.net/>.

### **How to Address the Transportation Needs of the Inland Empire**

At the beginning of September, Representative Takano will be touring different sites, including those mentioned by constituents in their responses, and meeting with community stakeholders to better understand the needs of his district and what he can do to further address pressing issues.

### *Public Transit Support*

We must continue to support funding for projects like the Perris Valley Line.

- In support of the Perris Valley Line, Rep. Takano wrote a letter to then-United States Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood asking him to protect the \$75 million Small Starts grant from the Federal Transit Agency for the Perris Valley Line Project while litigation continued.
- Rep. Takano also worked with other Members of Congress to send a letter to Secretary La Hood asking him to prevent the delay of \$5.7 billion worth of transportation projects due to new Buy America requirements on utility relocations. The Representatives successfully convinced the Department of Transportation to give California utility companies a transitional period to comply with the Buy America program, so the transportation projects could move forward. In the Inland Empire, this directly impacts the State Route 91 Corridor Improvement Project.

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<sup>8</sup> The Transit Coalition, *Going over RTA's 2014-2016 Short Range Transit Plan*, <http://ttcinlandempire.blogspot.com/2013/05/going-over-rtas-2014-2016-short-range.html> (July 4, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Riverside Transit Agency, *Forward 10 Year Transit Plan*, <http://www.riversidetransit.tmdinc.net/about.html>, (July 8, 2013).

- Rep. Takano will continue to work with the Riverside County Transportation Commission and the Riverside Transit Agency to do what he can to support expanding public transit options for residents in the Inland Empire.

### *Safe Streets Act*

The Safe Streets Act was recently introduced and would require states to adopt Complete Streets policies within two years for new federally funded projects or road improvements. Complete Streets policies take into account the needs of all roadway users, including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, the disabled, and the elderly when designing and implementing new transportation projects. This is especially important for the Riverside-San Bernardino area as more seniors “age in place.”

### *Ending the Sequester*

While the Highway Trust Fund is exempt from the across the board cuts due to sequestration, many other transportation programs are not. Many of the grant programs that fund and support new transportation projects across the country saw their funding cut. This includes programs like the New Starts grant program for fixed rail transit projects (the Perris Valley Line received a Small Starts grant from this fund) and TIGER grants that fund projects that have significant impact on the country, region or metropolitan, area. Amtrak also saw its funding cut significantly.

### *Infrastructure Bank*

Establishing a National Infrastructure Bank to leverage private dollars to make much needed investments in infrastructure projects across the country should be a priority. A National Infrastructure Bank would provide loans and loan guarantees to projects, issue bonds to help fund projects, and offer subsidies to help states to help cover the interest payment on project bonds. This would allow the United States to make investments in critical infrastructure projects without adding to the deficit.

### *Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)*

One way to address issues presented by aging infrastructure, without a huge price tag, is through the use Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology. ITS uses existing technologies to improve efficiency, prevent accidents, and decrease gridlock. Examples of Intelligent Transportation Systems include using ramp meters to improve highway flow, electronic fare payment systems to ease travel on public transit, and programs that update drivers about real-time roadway conditions.<sup>10</sup> When Congressman Takano returns to Washington, DC in September, he will introduce a bill that will establish a grant program to encourage states, municipalities, and transit agencies to implement and expand the use of Intelligent Transportation Systems technology.

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<sup>10</sup> Transportation for America, *The Most for Our Money*: 24-28.