



County Executive
David Villanueva

Governmental Relations and
Legislative Officer
Elisia De Bord

County of Sacramento

Board of Supervisors
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September 23, 2024

The Honorable Ami Bera
United States House of Representatives
172 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request for Support on Amendments to HR 9531, *the Farm to Market Road Improvement Act*

Dear Representative Bera:

On behalf of Sacramento County, I write to bring your attention to HR 9531, *the Farm to Market Road Improvement Act*, and to respectfully request your support to advocate for amendments to make Sacramento County eligible for the bill's provisions.

HR 9531 seeks to make certain counties eligible for funding under the rural surface transportation grant program. Currently, the bill requires counties to meet both of the following criteria to qualify: an annual gross agricultural production value of at least \$1 billion and agricultural production of at least \$500,000 per square mile. Unfortunately, these criteria exclude Sacramento County, which has an annual agricultural production value of approximately \$602 million and agricultural production per square mile of \$605,779.90.

To address this exclusion, we propose a simple yet impactful change: amending the bill's criteria by replacing the "and" with "or" between the two eligibility requirements. This modification will enable counties to qualify if they meet either an annual gross agricultural production value of \$1 billion or \$500,000 per square mile of agricultural production. By making this adjustment, Sacramento County would immediately qualify under the bill.

We think this change is justified for the following reasons:

- **Broader Inclusion:** Changing the criteria would make the bill more inclusive, supporting counties with high agricultural density even if their total production value falls below \$1 billion.
- **Alignment with Legislative Intent:** This amendment preserves the spirit of HR 9531, which aims to support rural transportation improvements in highly productive agricultural areas, ensuring that counties that contribute significantly per square mile are not excluded.
- **Minimal Impact on Program Scope:** This change is modest, expanding eligibility without overwhelming the program with additional applicants, thereby preserving the bill's focus and integrity.

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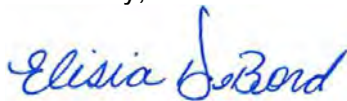
Our understanding is that Rep. Valadao's office is seeking input and is open to amendments. His office conveyed to our staff that the current draft bill is intended to generate discussion about the issue and seek suggestions for improvements. While the change we identified above would address Sacramento County's concerns, there are other options that could have the same result and that may be more acceptable, including the following:

- Lowering the Gross Production Value Requirement: Another potential amendment could involve reducing the \$1 billion threshold to \$600 million, which would directly address eligibility issues for Sacramento and similar counties.
- Exemptions for High Agricultural Freight Volume: Creating exemptions for counties with significant agricultural freight volumes or road repair costs tied to agricultural traffic could provide a targeted solution while maintaining the core eligibility criteria.

The County respectfully request your assistance in working with Representative Valadao and your other colleagues to seek amendments to HR 9531 that would make Sacramento County eligible. Changing the eligibility criteria from "and" to "or" would effectively address our concerns and align the bill's provisions with its intended purpose, ensuring that counties like ours are not inadvertently excluded from vital funding opportunities.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support of Sacramento County's needs. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Elisia De Bord

Governmental Relations and Legislative Officer

cc: Sacramento County Delegation
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
Roger Gwinn, The Ferguson Group