

Regular Council Meeting

September 14, 2023

FRESNO CITY COUNCIL



Public Comment Packet

ITEM(S)

Unscheduled Communication

Contents of Supplement: Public Comment Emails

RECEIVED
2023 SEP 20 P 3:39
CITY OF FRESNO
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

Supplemental Information:

Any agenda related public documents received and distributed to a majority of the City Council after the Agenda Packet is printed are included in Supplemental Packets. Supplemental Packets are produced as needed. The Supplemental Packet is available for public inspection in the City Clerk's Office, 2600 Fresno Street, during normal business hours (main location pursuant to the Brown Act, G.C. 54957.5(2)). In addition, Supplemental Packets are available for public review at the City Council meeting in the City Council Chambers, 2600 Fresno Street. Supplemental Packets are also available on-line on the City Clerk's website.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

The meeting room is accessible to the physically disabled, and the services of a translator can be made available. Requests for additional accommodations for the disabled, sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, or translators should be made one week prior to the meeting. Please call City Clerk's Office at 621-7650. Please keep the doorways, aisles and wheelchair seating areas open and accessible. If you need assistance with seating because of a disability, please see Security.

Mary Quinn

From: Clerk
Sent: Monday, August 28, 2023 2:14 PM
To: Clerk Agendas
Cc: Clerk
Subject: FW: SUPPORT: Caltrans Interchange Access Agreement Amendment
Attachments: 8.28.23 - SUPPORT - HWY 99 Interchange Access Agreement.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Ben Granholm <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, August 28, 2023 12:21 PM
To: Clerk [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: SUPPORT: Caltrans Interchange Access Agreement Amendment

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments

Good morning Clerk Stermer,

INVEST Fresno and the organizations listed in the attached letter are writing today in strong support for the proposed amendment to the Caltrans Interchange Access Agreement, which is scheduled for consideration by the City Council at an upcoming meeting and is a critical component of the South Fresno State Route 99 Corridor Project.

Highway 99 plays a pivotal role as a major transportation corridor for residents and businesses in Fresno. Continued investment in Fresno's infrastructure improves our community, encourages economic development, and ensures that Fresno can continue to thrive for generations to come.

We appreciate your time and consideration and respectfully urge the Council to approve the proposed amendment to the Interchange Access Agreement.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any thoughts or questions you may have.

Sincerely,

--

Ben Granholm
Interim Executive Director
INVEST Fresno
www.INVESTFresnoCA.com



August 28, 2023

Tyler Maxwell, President
 Fresno City Council
 2600 Fresno Street
 Room 3065
 Fresno, CA 93721

Submitted Electronically

RE: Caltrans Interchange Access Agreement Amendment – South Fresno State Route 99 Corridor Project

Dear Council President Maxwell and Council Members,

INVEST Fresno and the organizations listed are writing today in strong support for the Caltrans Interchange Access Agreement, which is a critical component of the South Fresno State Route 99 Corridor Project.

Highway 99 plays a pivotal role as a major transportation corridor for residents and businesses in Fresno. Two interchanges, vital to Fresno’s economy and the region, have not been updated since first constructed in 1965. Reconstructing and expanding these nearly 60-year-old interchanges will have positive impacts on the entire city including, but not limited to:

- Reduce traffic congestion along a main arterial of Highway 99.
- Facilitate a smoother flow of traffic through the interchanges.
- Lessen near-term vehicle emissions.
- Reduce traffic accidents and collisions.
- Include wider shoulders to accommodate bicycles.
- Build sidewalks, curbs, gutters, lighting and signalization, and stormwater system.

Continued investment in Fresno’s infrastructure improves our community, encourages economic development, and ensures that Fresno can continue to thrive for generations to come.

We appreciate your time and consideration and respectfully urge the Council to adopt the revised Interchange Access Agreement. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact Ben Granholm at info@INVESTFresnoCA.com. We look forward to working with you and staff to help keep Fresno’s economy moving.

Sincerely,



Ben Granholm
INVEST Fresno

A-Plus Signs
Betts Company
Cedar Avenue Recycling & Transfer Station
Central Valley Business Federation
Central Valley Training Center, Inc.
Don Pickett & Associates
Fowler Packing
Fresno Chamber of Commerce

Fulton
HCI Systems, Inc.
Newmark Pearson Commercial
North Pointe Business Park
PARC Environmental
Pickett Solar
Precision Civil Engineering, Inc.
Producers Dairy
VEI Logistics

cc: Mayor Jerry Dyer
Fresno City Council

From: [Clerk](#)
To: [Clerk Agendas](#)
Cc: [Clerk](#)
Subject: FW: SEDA/EIR - Public Comment/Oppose
Date: Monday, August 28, 2023 8:25:05 AM
Attachments: [Oppose City of Fresno Annexation 07.24.2023.docx](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 27, 2023 3:43 PM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: SEDA/EIR - Public Comment/Oppose

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments

Please see my attached public comment for the item related to the EIR report that will go before City Counsel as it relates to SEDA. As I mention, please let me know if there are any costs associated with information requested in my letter BEFORE you provide so I may approve charges.

Thank you.

Natalie Ortiz

August 24, 2023

[REDACTED], Planner
City of Fresno, City Clerk
Fresno City Council, Chairman and Council Members
2600 Fresno Street, Third Floor
Fresno, CA 93721

OPPOSE LETTER – EIR AND EDA/PROPOSED LAND USE/ANNEXATION/ BY THE CITY OF FRESNO

Dear Chairman, Council Members, City Clerk, and Ms. Asadoorian:

Please accept this letter as our **opposition** to the City of Fresno’s EIR report and the SEDA development, annexation, proposed land use and the map thereto, which is an item that is expected to go before the City Council in or about October 2023.

Our specific property/land sits next to what is known as the Briggs Canal. It is our understanding that water in the Briggs comes from the Kings River. This water is what irrigates properties for the food that you and I to eat and serves a greater purpose. It is serviced and maintained by Fresno Irrigation District (FID). The District’s web page, under About Us, states as follows: The FID is a leader in California water, serving over 200,000 acres of prime agricultural farmland ... Farmland sitting next to or that abuts a water structure such as ours is rare in Fresno County and not easily attainable. With our property adjacent to Briggs, it is irrecoverable and we would suffer a great loss. Therefore, we oppose the redevelopment and conversion of prime farmland to serve a purpose as Flexible Research and Development, which by the City’s definition means no residential uses will not be allowed. That would therefore leave eminent domain which the City has stated would not be used however if I do not sell and my neighbor does not sell then there is no other recourse but for the city to use eminent domain. We have all seen what has occurred with the Reedley lab and as stated by many of you councilmembers the public is placed at risk and so many other factors such as disease, groundwater contamination were common concerns. If we in this area “Flexible Research and Development” please explain with specificity what occurs to the property/land/farm owners the process and procedures and confirm if our property will be taken from us through eminent domain?

The City’s project and plan area consists of Prime Farmland. We own 2.49 acres of farmland in the proposed SEDA plan area. We house two tractors, chickens, apricot trees, as well as house pets on our land. We are current fosters for the county animal shelter and we are able to assist with fostering of

more than one animal primarily due to the land we have. We work our land like most, if not all of the residents in this project area. Removing farmers who grow their own food; and/or who commercially feed this Community, County and State is reckless and negligent so that the City can expand. The City's proposed land use map reflects for our parcel "Flexible Research & Development." You want to take irrecoverable prime farmland for Flexible Research & Development when you can place Flexible Research & Development in the vacant Orchard Supply building (vacant for more than 5 years). Does that mean a lab such as that most recently found in Reedley, CA will go here. What does "Mixed Residential" mean on the City's map? I specifically asked if that meant low income housing, please explain. Again, there are so many other vacant buildings within the City of Fresno that would allow you to do this that we do not need to remove, redevelop and destroy Prime Farmland or Farmland in general.

We have been told on numerous occasions that we would not be required to hook up to City services (water, sewage). We believe that to be incorrect. We were told that the City would not require us to; if not the City then who? If I am the only house that does not hook up, will I be forced to hook up? What will the cost be? Is there the potential for placement of a lien on my home due to the cost of these services? Please also confirm with past projects in this area or within the City (i.e. the area in and around north Jensen and Fowler to Kings Canyon etc.) how that land development was handled and if the landowners that were pre-existing were required to hook up to City of Fresno services (water/sewage). If so, what were the services, what was the process, the cost, who was responsible to pay those charges or for those services; how many complaints did you receive from the landowners verbal and in writing, what was the remedy of said complaints; and if any of these homes resulted in liens being placed on landowners property/homes. Please also provide on current and past projects when property owners choose to stay and not sell, the city is therefore developed around their property, how many wells have gone dry due to the new development? Does this map become the zoning map for this area?

Property owners were also told by the City representatives that eminent domain is not allowed or can or will not be used on property owners and their land located on the Land Use Map for this project, please confirm if this is an accurate statement? When I spoke to Jennifer Clark at the last in-person Drop In meeting she stated that should one homeowner decide not to sell or annex, they (property owner) will not be forced to annex; however, later she stated that they (City) cannot have one house one way while the rest of the area is annexed. Please clarify this statement by Ms. Clark. How will her stated change occur if one home cannot be different from the rest? Please explain who will impose and force the annexation of the land/property owners unwilling and opposing to said annexation? Please explain the process and the impacts to the landowners as well as the changes to zoning affecting the homeowner who did not willingly annex their land. Will I still be able to farm with all these houses around me?

As you know, there is vacant land and buildings in or around Kings Canyon and Clovis Avenue; you have the Orchard Supply building that currently sits empty littered with homeless people. You have vacant land and buildings all throughout the City of Fresno and other cities within Fresno County and your plan is to destroy the Prime farmland of the SEPO (Fresno Southeast Property Owners). Destroy our farmland to build more homes, which thus creates more traffic, more congestion, more land and air pollution, more crime, and homelessness. With the Briggs Canal, if that waterway remains, with the increase in population and homelessness, our canals will turn into bathing facilities and used as restrooms. Please ask your homeless task force if that is a possibility that the homeless population uses waterways as bathing facilities and toilets? If this water is intended to feed the community, is it possible

for fecal matter, urine and other forms of illness to be in said water. Furthermore, take a drive around the City of Fresno, look at their canals and waterways, you currently have homelessness on your canal banks, tents, littered with trash (e.g. McKinley and Chestnut; in front of the Social Services building Phillip and Kings Canyon, the canal located east of Clovis Avenue--north of Kings Canyon by Orchard Supply). The City is unable to handle the demands of the current crisis and you want to spread it out. Your intent is to make a 15 minute city. We have seen the destruction of Paradise, Maui, when you began to impact the rural areas which are not intended to be within the city limits. We have water issues, we were just in a drought and there is no guarantee that we will be blessed with rain in the future. How will you control air pollution? Where will you get water from? How will you get the needed money to build the infrastructure for this plan?

The City of Fresno needs a boundary, do not grow it out here destroying the aesthetic rural southeast farmland.

The EIR REPORT:

Paragraph 1.2.1 lists the potential significant environmental issues that require further analysis. Therefore, this is incomplete. In light of this statement, we oppose this EIR and request that you vote to deny/oppose/reject.

Paragraph located on PDF page number 762 titled (Wild-2) ... Pollutant Concentrations from Wildfire impacts under this topic would be less than significant and there is no substantial change. However, we disagree and oppose that statement in that the City has a wide-ranging homeless population. What factors were considered as it relates to the ongoing homeless population within city limits when addressing this issue? We see many fires started due to homelessness. City streets are littered with trash, drugs and/or paraphernalia, and the homeless population utilizing fire in order to cook or stay warm during the winter months. Therefore, we disagree with this report and believe further studies should be done. As a reminder and as stated in paragraph 3.19.7, you would be converting prime ag land to residential and mixed-use land uses. Significant and unavoidable.

Chapter 4 Other CEQA Considerations – Bulletpoint AG-1 (... Conversion of Farmland to Non-ag Uses) states 2,475 acres of land designated as Prime Farmland, 1,352 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, approximately 1,189 acres of land designated as Farmland of Local Importance, and 1,725 acres of land designated as Unique Farmland “**scattered**” **throughout the plan area**. The impact is significant. Based on this information contained in the EIR, we oppose and request that you vote to reject/deny/oppose and that this plan does not move forward. We further request that all maps be amended to identify the land properly in full transparency. Significant and unavoidable.

Bullet Ag-2 (... Conflict with Existing Zoning or Williamson Act Contract) – This paragraph states in part that according to the Williamson Act Property map, the majority of the Williamson Act properties within the SOI and City are located within the Plan Area. It further states that there is a significant impact on existing Williamson Act Contract land. Ultimately, you are still converting Williamson Act land to non-ag land. For this reason, we strongly oppose and request that you vote to oppose and/or deny on this basis. We further request that all maps be amended to identify the land properly in full transparency. Significant and unavoidable.

Bullet Cumulative Ag Resources and Forestry Resources Impacts states and acknowledges that there is a loss of Prime Farmland within the plan area. Under your plan, you destroy existing Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland and small farms to build or develop community farming and small farms. The EIR states that it will be a significant impact on Ag zoning and the Williams Act Contracts and there would be land use changes resulting in the conversion of farmland to non-ag uses and is unavoidable. We were told by the City at Drop-In meeting #1 on July 24 2023 that we would not be rezoned should property owners choose not to sell. However, Jennifer Clark at the last in person drop-in meeting stated that we cannot have just one home not similarly zoned or annexed; therefore, please confirm what occurs based on Clark's statement. Rezoning would only occur if a neighbor complained, which thus alters my land use. The City's statement clearly is misleading and misrepresents what is occurring. I believe the impacts would be more than significant in that you are displacing property owners who are generational farmers, and farmers of their own land; how many of us current property owners would be physically displaced, and harmed financially. Based on this information we request that you strongly oppose and/or deny based on this statement.

Impact Air-1 paragraph states this projects exceeds the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District another significant and unavoidable impact. Based on this paragraph we request you vote to oppose and/or deny based on this paragraph. Please note that we asked at the drop-in meetings why the Air Pollution District was not a part of these meetings to share in on the added pollution due to this development.

Air-3 states that since it cannot be foreseen the amount of construction occurring nor the exact location it cannot be determined if the emissions could be adequately controlled or reduced. Based on this statement, we believe the study is not complete as it must be looked at, precise and discussed. We are opposed based on this statement and request that you vote to oppose/deny.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions cumulative impacts are significant and unavoidable. Based on this statement we oppose and request that you vote to oppose/deny.

Impact NOI-1 – This statement states that impacts are significant and unavoidable. It also states that they are unable to quantify therefore there is no true, accurate impact identified and said report is incomplete. Based on this statement we oppose and request that you vote to oppose/deny. The Cumulative Noise impact is again noted as significant and unavoidable.

Exhibit 5-2 of the EIR shows just under 2,500 acres of Prime Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide and Local Importance, Unique Farmland of Importance, etc.

The EIR Table 5-1 under paragraph 5.7 states there is no location in the City where 45,000 homes (yes the Plan calls for 45,000) could be constructed while avoiding environmental impacts to ag land. Ag land would be impacted regardless. However, the land is not your basic ag land, it is Prime Farmland, it is land that sits next to the Briggs Irrigation Ditch which is rare, it's farmland with statewide and local importance, it's my backyard, small farming, however, we the property owners choose to define it, its our land that you want to dismantle, convert, and take so that you can build 45,000 homes, parks, and research and development.

The Orchard Supply Building on Clovis and Kings Canyon has sat empty for a number of years, that can be your research and development. You want to take our farmland, our livelihood, what feeds our

families, our communities, for a bike trail, a park, a residential development to teach people to have a garden (who will teach them there is no guarantee that they will use it for such) all the while destroying the Prime Farmland we landowners have created destroying our way of life and country life. You will add 45,000 homes during a recession, a time when most cannot afford, thereby creating more empty houses. You want to disrupt our way of life and destroy the farmland that we have just to build more homes that most cannot afford. You want to help this community have your builders or developers lower the prices of their homes to sell those existing homes already built. Convert some of these developments/homes already in progress into mixed residential. Ag land should be the last thing we convert, land that currently feeds us. That salad you had for lunch, fruit, etc. came from one of us most likely.

We oppose the alternatives set forth in the EIR due to the type of land we are looking at as referred to in this report: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide and Local Importance, Unique Farmland. Based on the impacts as listed above and based on viable alternatives, we request that you deny/oppose the EIR. Furthermore, we oppose as this EIR shows that the plan is fiscally irresponsible and environmentally irresponsible. Finally, we request that the SEDA Plan be opposed and denied. If you review the Level of Significance as outlined in the EIR, we have listed below just a few that are classified as Significant and Unavoidable; therefore, for these reasons request you oppose and deny the City's Plan and find another area or location in the City of Fresno for said projects. The impacts are significant and unavoidable.

Finally, we were informed and received in the mail, on July 21, 2023, the City's flyer for the "Drop-In" meeting; the first meeting set for July 24, 2023, hosted by the City of Fresno. As you can see from the dates, this was three days before the first scheduled meeting. As I verbally stated and inquired about with the City during the July 24th meeting, what is the meaning of a Drop-in meeting? Who decided to title this meeting as a Drop-In? To title it as such, is misleading and misrepresenting the intent of the City and purposes of said meeting. This title lacks transparency and is intended to misstate and mislead the purpose of an extremely important topic of discussion. It does little to ensure community/public attendance, involvement, participation and is a sure way to prevent and limit public input. This is an extremely important meeting that impacts the community of southeast Fresno, specifically the Fresno Southeast Property Owners (SEPO) and therefore, I believe was titled as such to limit the number of attendees and silence the opposition. Furthermore, Sontaya Rose from the Mayor's office was in attendance and can confirm as well as other City representatives, the location picked for the first important meeting on July 24th lacked the capacity to hold the number of attendees, safely and comfortably, and posed a safety hazard in that it was about 105 degrees outside and there was no working AC inside said building thereby making it 110 degrees most likely inside with all the people in the building. As I stated on that date, I believe that was a safety hazard and put citizens at risk and compromised their health and well-being. Not one representative spoke to that and acknowledged that the first meeting should be rescheduled or some other remedy. The temperature inside the building added to the frustration felt by most of the members of the community. As I stated, this meeting labeled by the City is misleading, and a calculated manner in which to misrepresent, misstate, and divert the public's attention to what it is in actuality and that is to take and change or convert land from the property owners. Should the meeting have been labeled annexation, eminent domain, town hall, any one of those trigger words the public at large would have a true understanding of what is occurring in the southeast area of Fresno and would understand the true discussions and importance of what is happening thereby enhancing attendance and opposition. Furthermore, I see no link for those to participate virtually due to a disability, medical necessity or some other personal reason. It was stated that the City would have one day assigned to a webinar. As you know, the topics of discussion can be

convoluted and we the community would need time to research the Q&A dialogue that is provided to us therefore one day for those unable to physically attend is not enough. The public should not be limited to one day; we should all be afforded the same the ability to attend all meetings. Quite frankly, the information changes so frequently it would be in the best interest of the public to attend all meetings. As such, in this regard, **we strongly oppose**. Furthermore, the meeting by the City on 7/24/23 was very unorganized and lacked structure and foundation as to the discussions and topics and the City ran out of comment cards in English—the space allowed for comments was minimal on such an important topic of discussion.

I would also like to know why no representative of the County was in attendance at these meetings? A representative of the City was asked about annexing property and the City representative responded with the City would not annex. Please confirm the process for annexation and if not the City of Fresno, then please confirm the responsible agency. Please provide details on what grounds for annexation, the criteria or guidelines that must be met to annex property/land? If this response requires information from the County, I would ask that you direct City representatives to coordinate their response and work with the County of Fresno or any other agencies involved to get said information. I believe the City of Fresno when asked these types of questions it is their responsibility to answer in detail and they are required to be fully transparent and should be able to intelligently communicate if not their agency the appropriate agency involved and that would handle. To leave the response as simple as it's not the City, is vague and intended to mislead the public. The City knows the answer to the question and to not provide a full response is intentional. It may not be the City's responsibility to annex but if they know that it is the responsibility of another agency they should state as such.

I believe the SEDA homeowners/property owners have a right to know the following information. If there are costs associated with any of these requests, please confirm the amount or charges, in writing, prior to providing said information.

- Please provide the number of EIR's that are submitted to the City of Fresno per calendar year; and how many are rejected or voted as unapproved; how many are submitted to LAFCo per calendar year, voted as unapproved or rejected and the bases/reason for said vote.
- On April 25, 2023, an item went to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, Agenda Item #8 regarding a variance application that falls within SEDA. During Mr. Assemi's comments to the Board, he referred to having received a timeline from the Mayor on the project. Please confirm what that timeline was and if a copy can be provided electronically to the property owners should they wish to received; and please explain why a developer would have that information but not the property owners who would be negatively impacted by SEDA? When was the timeline (Assemi refers to in his comments) provided to him by the Mayor? When was this timeline provide to the property owners (SEPO) who will be impacted? If it has not been provided to the property owners, why? My household has not received a timeline from the Mayor nor was one provided to property owners at any drop-in meeting and to my knowledge a timeline has not been provided to property owners in any meeting thus far by the City of Fresno. Please confirm how many variances in the SEDA project area have gone through the process, what that process is, including how many have gone to the County of Fresno Board of Supervisors for vote and the vote result from the start of the project(s)/plan to present?
- Please identify the land parcels, land and farmland in the SEDA project area that have been purchased by developers, date of purchase, names of builders, corporations, school district, water districts, and any other business organization, corporation or entity from the start of SEDA

to present that have purchased. Please include the names, cross-streets, parcel numbers and any other identify factors of the land pending a sale, owned, purchased or sold.

- Please provide the information on when the property sold or was purchased and include land, property that is pending sale/purchase.
- Please provide the members of our community, SEPO (Southeast Property Owners), with information on how much farmland/land is currently owned in Fresno County, CA by Darrius Assemi and/or Granville Homes and any other developers, builders or business organizations.

If this type of development continues, the lack of farmland to our community as well as the substantial loss of prime farmland is irrecoverable and factor in good farmland with irrigation resources such as ours, it is irrecoverable. Therefore, **we strongly oppose** the EIR and the SEDA development and ask that you deny and reject both in order to protect and preserve our homes and land.

The City of Fresno needs a boundary, do not grow it out here destroying the aesthetic rural southeast farmland.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

 Family