

Policy Brief

California State University, Los Angeles

BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE: CALIFORNIA'S SOCIAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Governor Schwarzenegger's fight against global warming has drawn enormous attention to an environmental cause largely abandoned by the federal government. Beginning with his Executive Order issued June 1, 2005, which set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in California, the Governor's promise to "make California No.1 in the fight against global warming" is becoming a reality. In July 2006, he signed an agreement with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to collaborate on new technology research and market-based mechanisms in an effort to control climate change. Most recently, in September 2006, the Governor signed Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, introduced by Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez and Assemblymember Fran Pavley. This pioneering legislation incorporates regulatory and market mechanisms that will reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020.

Governor Schwarzenegger's effort to reduce greenhouse gases is a noble attempt to preserve our environmental heritage in California, while bringing our state into accord with the global community's environmental standards. If successful, Governor Schwarzenegger can add the Global Warming Solutions Act to his growing legacy for California. Largely responsible for spearheading the infrastructure bond package approved in November, the Governor's bipartisan spirit and strong leadership skills appear inexhaustible. As we begin to reinvest and rebuild California's

physical infrastructure, the possibility exists under Governor Schwarzenegger's leadership, to unfold an agenda that is truly sustainable—environmentally, socially, and economically.

Frequently omitted from the recent public discourse on infrastructure are the reasons why infrastructure investment in California came to an abrupt halt in the 1970s. In addition to multiple economic and political factors in the late 1960s, environmental concerns and regulations brought an end to the infrastructure building era led by Pat Brown. Our waning collective memory may partly explain the current lack of public dialogue on new ways to prevent the environmental degradation and excessive growth associated with massive construction endeavors. Another likely barrier to genuine public discussion is the immense political will and leadership necessary to prioritize sustainability amid demand for economic growth.

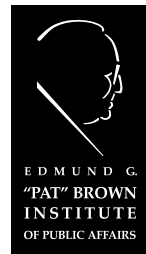
Even now, all eyes are still focused on the Governor's promise of 750,000 new jobs over the next 10 years—not the environmental implications of the \$42 billion in infrastructure bonds or if these jobs will pay living wages. Though California is desperately in need of infrastructure repair and expansion, as evidenced by the findings of numerous reports and studies, it would be a tragedy if these improvements came at great expense to the social and natural environments. At the Pat Brown Institute's 2006 Annual Califor-

Continued on next page

“Governor Schwarzenegger has made bold strides to preserve and improve the State's natural environment.”

The
Public Policy Education Program
is supported by a grant from
the James Irvine foundation
Expanding Opportunity for the People of California

5151 State University Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90032
323.343.3770
323.343.3774



Continued from page 1

nia Policy Issues Conference, titled “Elections 2006: Implications for Civic Engagement and Infrastructure Development in California,” Ms. Elise Buik from the United Way of Greater Los Angeles delivered the morning keynote presentation, which advocated for the deployment of the physical infrastructure bond package to coincide with reinvestment in the social infrastructure. Without adequate educational and skill training opportunities, she argued, the California Dream cannot be realized for millions of Californians. This first round of infrastructure investment in California has the potential to go beyond building new structures while it builds new green industries and career opportunities. This policy brief outlines some of the ways in which social and environmental goals could be incorporated into infrastructure investment in California.

Building Our Future: Social Capital

Due to new advances in technology since the Pat Brown era, infrastructure building, economic expansion, and environmental conservation do not have to be mutually exclusive. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the Workforce Investment Board recently commissioned an investigation into the City’s capacity to expand its “green” industry and technology sectors. The final report produced by the Economic Roundtable (January 2006), titled “Jobs in L.A.’s Green Technology Sector,” inventoried Los Angeles’ existing green goods and services and identified those industries with potential for growth and job creation. The report argued that expansion of green industry in Los Angeles has great benefits for the City’s overall economy, including numerous employment opportunities with living wages, expanded educational and vocational career paths, economic “ripple effects,” and more. Many of the green industries identified in the report as having great growth potential could also contribute to the rebuilding of California’s infrastructure: water and sewage systems, construction, nondurable manufacturing (petroleum product recycling, cleaning compound manufacturing), durable manufacturing (HVAC and electrical equipment), durable goods wholesale, professional services (legal services, architecture, and engineering), waste collection, remediation, and management.

The green industry occupations studied in Los Angeles by the Economic Roundtable have a number of desirable characteristics that can build social capital while they simultaneously contribute to building the physical infrastructure. The report found that several of the green industry construction occupations (accounting for 25 percent of the jobs in green technology industries) have considerable wage increase opportunities between the typical entry-level and overall occupational average. Additionally, a cluster of green technology occupations was found to pay living wages and have

low skill requirements. The report also concluded that the green technology occupations in Los Angeles require diverse and distinct skill sets, creating a multitude of employment opportunities. Finally, the ethnic distribution of Los Angeles residents in green technology occupations was found to parallel that of the overall labor force. The expansion of the green industry presents considerable opportunity to connect skill training and educational opportunities to careers in a growing industry with significant career advancement. By interconnecting the infrastructure bond package to the expansion of the green industry in California, investment will be made in both the physical and social infrastructure of our State while simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Green Infrastructure

As different agencies move forward with the implementation of the California Global Warming Solutions Act, an opportunity exists to explore ways the infrastructure bond deployment can bring the State closer to the designated emissions cap of the new law.

Recent legislation signed by Governor Schwarzenegger (in addition to the campaign against global warming) demonstrates his ability to intertwine both economic growth and environmental preservation, including the Hydrogen Highway, the Million Solar Roofs Plan, and investment in innovative technological research. His recent announcement that he will propose nearly \$95 million in the state budget for the creation of the Governor’s Research and Innovation Initiative, which includes funding for solar technologies and alternative fuels, exemplifies this commitment to make California a global leader in both these capacities.

If some of these new technologies (e.g., solar, alternative fuels) were designed with infrastructure investment needs in mind, they might provide an immediate contribution to greenhouse gas reduction while also protecting communities in close proximity to the building of new roads, homes, levees, and schools. Issues of environmental justice are of critical concern because many communities may face worsening environmental conditions during the infrastructure repair and rebuilding. Those communities who are already disproportionately affected by industrial pollution in California may need to bear additional burdens when increased manufacturing is needed for construction efforts. In the same way that the California Global Warming Solutions Act mandates the formation of a Global Warming Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, the infrastructure bond spending should also proceed with the consideration of a similar advisory group.

In addition to greenhouse gas reduction, the repair and improvement to California’s physical infrastructure provides the opportunity

for the encouragement of new environmentally benign methods and technologies, such as deconstruction techniques; waste reduction, reuse, and recycling; sustainable building materials; and sustainable water management. Governor Schwarzenegger has already led this effort through Executive Order S-20-04, also known as the “Green Building Initiative.” By adhering to the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, the Executive Order and accompanying Green Building Action Plan mandate that state-owned buildings reduce energy use by 20 percent by 2015 (from a 2003 baseline).

By adopting the nationally recognized LEED standards for all new and renovated state-owned buildings, the Governor has prioritized sustainable building design, construction, and operation. Governor Schwarzenegger has also publicly praised organizations, such as the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), for leadership in greenhouse gas reduction. Caltrans was a recent recipient of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) innovation award for the agency’s use of waste products in construction. The Los Angeles Community College District, also an EPA award recipient and exemplar of green planning, has integrated the LEED standards into their modernization project and master plan. The District’s comprehensive adoption of these sustainable design and building principles and the size of the project have boosted the entire green building industry in California, including the demand for LEED-accredited professionals. Government sponsored competitions and incentives, such as awards and public recognition, can be expanded and directed toward the public and private sectors responsible for building our housing, roads, levees, and schools.

Concluding Remarks

Governor Schwarzenegger has made bold strides to preserve and improve the State’s natural environment. We commend his efforts to date and suggest some policy recommendations to ensure that California’s infrastructure is built in ways that are environmentally and socially sustainable. As the infrastructure bond package is deployed, it should accomplish the following:

- Integrate the California Global Warming Solutions Act
 - Prioritize California-based green technology and construction companies for Government contracts
 - Research the predicted greenhouse gas pollution that infrastructure rebuilding will incur over the next 10 years
 - Extend government incentives to use LEED standards to private industry
- Build social capital
 - Promote educational and skill-training opportunities within the green technology and building industries
 - Link training and education institutions to the green industry sector
- Ensure environmental justice/equity
 - Form an Environmental Justice Advisory Committee to advise the deployment of the infrastructure bond package
 - Ensure that input on social justice issues is obtained from local communities affected by infrastructure building

As attention to the previous items increases, and for the first time, it may be possible under the Governor’s leadership for California to rebuild, improve, and expand our infrastructure—sustainably.