



May 15, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California 1021 O
Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly California
State Assembly

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President Pro-Tempore California
State Senate

The Honorable Jess Gabriel, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
California State Assembly

The Honorable Scott Wiener, Chair
Senate Budget Committee California
State Senate

Re: Opposition to Delta Conveyance Project Trailer Bill

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rivas, President Pro-Tempore McGuire, Assemblymember Gabriel, and Senator Wiener,

As representatives from the Delta Caucus and other impacted regions of California, we write in strong opposition to the trailer bill that is intended to speed the approvals and construction of the Delta Conveyance Project in the May revision, and **request this proposal be rejected.**

The Delta Counties Coalition, and a multitude of environmental organizations, continue to be deeply concerned about proposals that expedite the controversial and divisive Delta Tunnel project. If built, the tunnel would span three Delta counties (Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Contra Costa) and leave permanent scars across the region. Beyond this, the effects of construction and the water diversions would be felt throughout Northern California and the San Francisco Bay Area. The shortened process and weakened environmental review proposed in this trailer bill language seek to sweep aside the vast impact the project will have on the community and the environment, and the blank check to fund a project that will undoubtedly far exceed the current \$20 billion price tag – a price tag that has already ballooned in recent years – is irresponsible at a time when Californians are already struggling with the price of living. Further, the tunnel will not lead to additional water storage. A generous estimate suggests a 10-15% increase in water supplies as a result of reduced water loss and leakage. Other strategies like water efficiency, recycled water, groundwater storage and cleanup, and projects that produce new water sources could help create a sustainable water future for California at a fraction of the cost of this tunnel.

The trailer bill proposal in the May Revise, unrelated to state budgeting policy and inappropriately suggested for inclusion in a state spending plan, would actually change several, separate parts of state

law to benefit only a portion of California, to the detriment of Californians north of the Delta. First, the trailer bill proposes to remove critical environmental protections provided through the State Water Board's permitting process, by eliminating appropriate rules and procedures. Second, the trailer bill proposes to allow the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to issue an unlimited amount of bond debt to pay for the Delta Tunnel, to be repaid by participating public water agencies – meaning taxpayers will be footing the bill for this project no matter how expensive it becomes. This amounts to a blank check to the Administration for the ever-increasing cost of the Delta Tunnel. What's more, this section of the bill is necessary because the Administration has already lost a court case on this matter, with the courts determining DWR does not have the authority to issue debt for this project without a vote of the people. It is legally questionable whether the state can resolve this matter without going back to the public for a vote. Third, the proposed trailer bill undermines the ability of the five Delta counties to defend their communities, constituents and ecosystems in court by providing this 45-mile-long tunnel the same judicial streamlining authority provided to four-block NBA basketball arenas and NFL stadiums. Unlike these local sports arena projects that have the support of the local agency and the community, the Delta Tunnel is opposed by every city and county affected by it. And finally, this proposal empowers the project proponents to more easily and forcibly acquire land from Delta landowners without just compensation, furthering the harm to our communities' legacy farmers and ranchers. None of these provisions deserve support, and certainly not in a budget bill that runs on a truncated process with little time for public review, scrutiny and feedback.

Since 2009, the Legislature has consistently and deliberately rejected provisions that facilitate highly controversial and extraordinarily expensive isolated conveyance projects in the Delta (currently called the Delta Conveyance Project). Our coalition argues that the historic position of the Legislature should not change. Changing existing laws for the explicit benefit of this highly controversial project would pick "winners and losers" between those living within and near the Delta and those who primarily seek to export water from the Delta through a new conveyance system built in through the Delta instead of relying on the existing Delta levee system. Disadvantaged and culturally significant communities in the Delta would be gravely and permanently damaged, if not completely destroyed, should the project move forward. The inclusion of the Delta Tunnel in the May Revision is contrary to the policies the Legislature has espoused in recent years, and is a breach of trust and understanding that has existed for nearly a decade and a half.

The tunnel will not lead to additional water storage. And there is no limit on how much the public will have to pay for the project to be built. The state should abandon the tunnel project and instead pursue an aggressive sustainable water strategy across the state that relies on strengthening the existing Delta water system and expanding water efficiency, recycled water, groundwater storage and cleanup, and other less expensive new water sources. For these reasons, the Delta Caucus and undersigned members urge that the trailer bill to expedite the Delta Conveyance Project be immediately and permanently rejected by the Budget committees.

Sincerely,



Assemblymember Lori Wilson, AD-11
Co-Chair, Delta Caucus



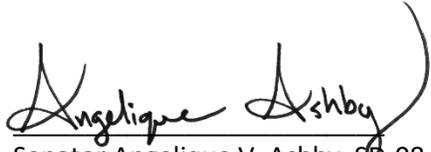
Senator Jerry McNerney, SD-05
Co-Chair, Delta Caucus



Assemblymember Heath Flora, AD-9
Co-Vice Chair, Delta Caucus



Senator Roger Niello, SD-06
Co-Vice Chair, Delta Caucus



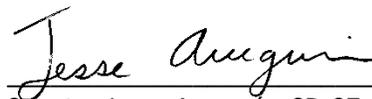
Senator Angelique V. Ashby, SD-08



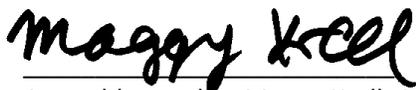
Assemblymember Rhodesia Ransom, AD-13



Assemblymember Aguiar Curry, AD-04



Senator Jesse Arreguin, SD-07



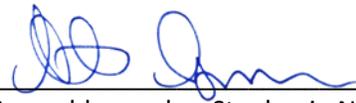
Assemblymember Maggy Krell, AD-06



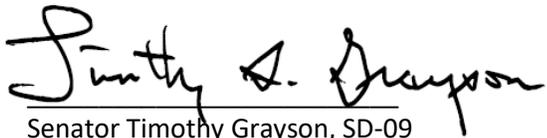
Senator Christopher Cabaldon, SD-03



Assemblymember Josh Hoover, AD-07



Assemblymember Stephanie Nguyen, AD-10



Senator Timothy Grayson, SD-09



Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, AD-16