

Swearengin, Arambula make pitch for more cap-and-trade dollars

By John Ellis

Fresno Bee, Wed., May 4, 2016

With newly minted Democratic Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula by her side and Republican Jim Patterson sitting on the committee, Mayor Ashley Swearengin on Wednesday made her case to state legislators that economically disadvantaged Fresno does not get enough cap-and-trade money from the state.

The cap-and-trade program is part of Assembly Bill 32, the state's 2006 emissions-reducing law. An estimated \$2 billion annually is generated by companies that pay for pollution credits under the state's greenhouse gas reduction program.

Swearengin and Arambula, who last month was elected to fill the remaining seven months of former Assemblyman Henry Perea's term, told an Assembly budget committee that Fresno has only received \$9 million from that pot of money.

They are hoping for more. Considerably more.

The Valley deserves our fair share of these funds.

Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula, D-Kingsburg

Swearengin and Arambula asked for \$375 million – \$75 million annually for five years – that would be used for public infrastructure programs in Fresno.

"The Valley deserves our fair share of these funds," Arambula said.

In doing so, both cited data from the California Environmental Protection Agency that showed Arambula's 31st Assembly District – which includes much of south and west Fresno – was the state's most disadvantaged community with challenges including poverty, poor air quality and polluted water.

Cap-and-trade money, Swearengin said, is supposed to be targeted to disadvantaged communities.

"We'd like to see the dollars flow for the next five years," she said. "We were setting that conversation up."

The hope is getting money in the upcoming budget, which will be approved in mid-June, or possibly later in the summer when cap-and-trade funds are awarded.

Swearengin said the money would be spent mostly in the downtown area and largely on transit, including a multimodal transportation center. Money would also go to open space, road improvements and the push to create an additional 1,200 housing units downtown.

The big push is to have infrastructure improvements around the city's proposed high-speed rail station.

All projects, Swearengin said, would be consistent with the city's recently updated General Plan and the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan. She hopes to list specific projects over the next several months.

"We congratulated ourselves on the policy," Swearengin said, "but we need significant infrastructure dollars to implement this."

Highway 99 gets charging stations

By John Lindt

Visalia Delta Times, Thursday, May 5, 2016

Electric car charging stations are in the works along both Highway 99 and Interstate 5, including the south Valley by the end of next year.

The California Energy Commission has approved nearly \$9 million in grants for the installation of fast chargers along major state freeways and highways to allow electric vehicle drivers to travel from San Diego to the Oregon border without worrying about running out of energy.

In the Valley, EV Connect was funded along Highway 99 from Wheeler Ridge north. Another firm, Charge Point, has been selected to build along Interstate 5.

Along Hwy. 99, the preliminary plan calls for charging stations in Selma at the Home Depot, in Visalia at Staples at Caldwell Avenue and Mooney Boulevard, in Delano at Home Depot and two sites in Bakersfield at the Flying J and a nearby hotel.

Along Interstate 5, stations are funded at the Grapevine, at the Buttonwillow exit, at Harris Ranch and Highway 198, Santa Nella and Lathrop.

Statewide, the stations will offer fast chargers at 41 sites along major routes on Interstate 5, Highway 99 and Highway 101. Fast chargers allow vehicles to fully charge in 20 to 30 minutes. Additionally, 40 sites will have one Level 2 charger, which charges electric vehicles in about four to six hours.

Plug-in hybrids and electric cars, such as Tesla and Leaf models, can use the public chargers with an adapter.

California has a fleet of about 200,000 electric vehicles sold since 2011. State officials hope continued incentives to buy electric cars, longer life batteries and the construction of more charging stations will convince more consumers to buy these clean-air vehicles.

The state gives permission for single-occupant vehicles with a Clean Air Vehicle Sticker to use carpool lanes, as well as rebates of up to \$5,000 for new zero emission or plug-in hybrid light-duty vehicles.

The trend of electric vehicles getting bigger batteries and thus longer ranges continues with the recent announcement that the 2017 BMW i3 will come with a 33-kWh battery good for 114 miles of driving.