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April 28, 2026

The Honorable Dave Cortese
Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
State Capitol, Room 405
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1421 (Wilson), Road usage charge technical advisory committee – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Cortese,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our serious concerns with AB 1421 (Wilson), which would require the California Transportation Commission, in consultation with the California State Transportation Agency, to compile research and prepare recommendations related to the feasibility of a statewide road-user charge or vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) fee. The bill directs the resulting report to be submitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2027.

While AB 1421 does not directly impose a new tax, its formation of a state-level advisory body to study weight-per-mile and VMT-based fees clearly signals the State's intent to move toward revenue-generating mechanisms that will increase transportation costs for residents, commercial carriers, electric-vehicle owners, and local businesses. Once the State invests in a detailed research and stakeholder engagement process, the likelihood of adopting such a fee becomes not only plausible but highly probable. Even the act of initiating this analysis has created substantial uncertainty and concern among Kern County residents and businesses.

The bill further anticipates significant administrative and policy complexities like data collection, privacy safeguards, mileage-tracking systems, out-of-state vehicle considerations, and equitable cost modeling, all of which foreshadow future legislation that would require new fees to fund implementation and regulatory schemes. This represents a material burden on state agencies, local governments, and ultimately the taxpayers who would shoulder increased transportation costs and feel additional impacts as the overall cost of living in California continues to soar. Such a statewide fiscal shift would especially harm rural counties like Kern, where residents must regularly travel long distances for work, school, and essential services.

Kern County has firsthand experience with the unintended consequences of state-driven VMT policy shifts. Under SB 743 (Steinberg, 2013), CEQA's transition to VMT-based transportation analysis fundamentally increased the cost and complexity of approving new housing, commercial development, and

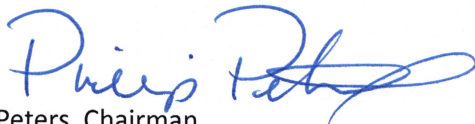
infrastructure. Despite our prior opposition and a formal request to delay implementation, SB 743 has contributed to higher development costs, reduced affordability, and increased barriers to economic growth. At the time, the California Building Industry Association estimated that each \$1,000 added to project costs priced 10,000 Californians out of homeownership, an impact that has only grown worse due to inflation and continued statewide housing shortages.

For rural communities across the Central Valley, these cost burdens are not theoretical; they are deeply felt realities. VMT-based mandates disproportionately affect areas where residents commute long distances and where economic opportunity depends on reliable, affordable mobility. A future weight-per-mile or road-user charge system would compound these challenges, raising the cost of living and undermining efforts to attract jobs, build housing, and sustain infrastructure.

Given this history, the creation of yet another state committee to evaluate road-user fees is a troubling indication that the State may once again pursue policies that disproportionately impact rural counties, increase costs for working families, and place additional pressure on local governments. Kern County steadfastly opposes AB 1421 because it initiates a process that will predictably lead to higher transportation costs and reduced economic competitiveness for our region.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors respectfully urges your Committee to **vote NO on AB 1421**.

Sincerely,



Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Transportation Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
California State Association of Counties
Rural County Representatives of California
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange