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California State Senate

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BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE #4 ON
STATE ADMINISTRATION AND
GENERAL GOVERNMENT
CHAIR
MEMBER
AGRICULTURE
BUDGET
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
HOUSING
NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER
REVENUE AND TAXATION

SB 10 – Otay Mesa East Toll Facility Act: toll revenues: environmental mitigation.

For years, the communities of South San Diego County have endured the worst effects of transboundary pollution from Mexico. Ongoing trans-border flows have a severe impact on the economy and environment of the region, but most importantly, billions of gallons of raw sewage have created an untenable and serious public health threat to local communities. There is a growing body of evidence that shows dangerous water quality has caused tens of thousands of illnesses in the region. Emerging researches shows that the problem is even deeper. A team from San Diego State University and the University of California San Diego have found evidence of concerning levels of toxic gasses in air samples coming from the open sewer that the Tijuana River has become.

Key drivers of the pollution causing this crisis is a massive explosion of manufacturing across the border in Mexico. To accommodate the quickly growing trade in the US, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has begun a project to create a new land port of entry for the San Diego-Baja California Region. The Otay Mesa East Port of Entry (OME POE) would create a new four-lane toll road along State Route 11 and is a joint venture between SANDAG and Caltrans along with state and federal partners in the U.S. and Mexico.

The construction of an additional highway will likely lead to greater expansion and intensification of border activities, transportation, and construction, adding to the overburdened community forced to shoulder the environmental consequences of this cross-border traffic and the explosion of heavy manufacturing driven across the border.

SB 10 would expressly authorize funds from the new toll road to be used for water treatment, environmental mitigation, and restoration of the Tijuana River Valley. These funds could be allocated for the improvement of wastewater infrastructure and related projects to address the sewage crisis and benefit the residents of South San Diego County and adjacent areas.

By providing a portion of the proceeds made from this border crossing to help rectify the worsening crisis in the Tijuana River Valley, we can ensure that there is an ongoing revenue stream available to finally begin overdue environmental mitigation of cross-border trade and manufacturing.

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