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**To:** [clerkoftheboard@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:clerkoftheboard@tularecounty.ca.gov); [Larry Micari](#); [Pete Vander Poel](#); [Jocelyn J. Bautista](#); [Clerk of the Board](#); [Amy Shuklian](#); [Eddie Valero](#); [dtownsend@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:dtownsend@tularecounty.ca.gov); [Emma De La Rosa](#)  
**Subject:** Comment for Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2024/25 Recommended Budget  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 7:47:44 AM  
**Attachments:** [Tulare County Budget FY 24-25 Comment Letter .pdf](#)

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Hello,

Please accept the document attached as a formal comment for the Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2024/25 Recommended Budget.

Thank you!

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Sincerely,

**Ashley Vega**

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September 16, 2024

Tulare County Board of Supervisors  
Visalia Board Chambers  
2800 W. Burrell Avenue  
Visalia, CA 93291

*Sent via email:  
clerkoftheboard@tularecounty.ca.gov*

**Re: Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Final Budget Hearings**

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (“LCJA”) works closely alongside various low-income communities of color throughout Tulare County, such as Tooleville, Matheny Tract, and Pixley. These communities face multiple challenges, including a lack of emergency preparedness/climate adaptation, access to safe and reliable drinking water, clean air, adequate transportation infrastructure, green space, and wastewater infrastructure. As Tulare County continues to grow in population and economic volume, we ask County staff and Supervisors to consider investing in disadvantaged communities to ensure equitable opportunities and quality of life. LCJA and residents thank County staff for meeting with residents to hear their budget priorities and County Administrative Officer (CAO) Jason Britt for meeting with us to clarify the budget process. Residents of Tooleville and Pixley are pleased to see commitments to their communities, such as the inclusion of Morgan and Alfred streets in the County Transportation Improvement Plan and the revitalization of Pixley Park. To address ongoing and immediate needs in disadvantaged communities, LCJA recommends Tulare County consider the following projects for the midyear budget and the next fiscal year (2025/26) budget, along with recommendations to enhance the civic engagement of the budget process.

**The County should invest in road rehabilitation in disadvantaged communities impacted by heavy-duty truck traffic.**

Roads within Matheny Tract are in grave condition due to heavy-duty semi-trucks and agricultural machinery entering community roads. Current industry and future industrial growth near Matheny Tract will continue to deteriorate Matheny Tract’s roads, including S Pratt Street, Paige Ave, Addie Ave, and I Street. Residents thank the County for sharing plans to repair I Streets. However, the County hasn’t relayed plans to repair roads within the community, such as Wade Ave, Beacon Ave, and Luton St., which are in dire need of maintenance after continuous neglect. We urge the County to allocate funds to repave roads, perform regular maintenance, and incorporate street lights to allow residents to walk around their community safely.



In Tooleville, there is an overwhelming demand for an additional lane along Spruce Road to allow residents to turn into their community safely. The two-street community connects to a heavily trafficked Spruce Road, where numerous accidents have occurred as semi-trucks block the view of cars merging onto Spruce Road, and cars often pass by at high speeds. Tooleville residents ask that funds from this fiscal year's budget be allocated to address such hazards. This two-street community is completely isolated and dark, making it dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians. The community's isolation also makes accessing basic necessities without a car challenging. Residents describe taking long, dangerous walks along Spruce Road to the nearest bus stop, often bearing extreme heat or other weather conditions. To address transportation barriers, residents request an accessible bus stop near their community. Nevertheless, the community of Tooleville is excited to see their community on the list of future projects for lane widening and repavement. Thank you to Supervisor Micari for upholding his commitment to investing in the community and continuing engagement with residents.

Finally, residents of Pixley have also shared the need for road safety improvements, increased lighting, and sidewalks. Specifically, residents request a speed bump on E Court Ave., in front of the middle school, to slow traffic and improve safety for school children.

### **The County should invest in a Community Space for Matheny Tract and Pixley.**

Residents in Matheny Tract are enclosed by industrial land use and agriculture. For decades, residents have advocated for a park, green space, a community garden, or any community facility that offers clean air and a space for youth activities. Residents of Matheny and Tooleville are forced to commute to nearby towns to access recreational areas or use nearby fields to exercise despite the risks of pesticide exposure and other pollution. According to the California Healthy Places Index, Tract 31, which includes Matheny Tract, ranked at .0278% in park access, while in comparison, the County ranked at 59.7%<sup>1</sup>. We urge the County to implement a green space or community center.

Pixley residents lack accessibility to indoor recreational/community centers. Residents are forced to travel to Earlimart to use the senior center facilities and Delano to access medical facilities. While residents are pleased to see and celebrate the upgrades of Pixley Park, air quality concerns make outdoor spaces less accessible. According to CalEnviroScreen, Pixley ranks in the 96th percentile of the canoverall pollution burden. To facilitate a safe and accessible community space, Pixley residents request a community center for the youth or seniors.

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<sup>1</sup> California Healthy Places Index <https://map.healthyplacesindex.org/?redirect=false>



**The County should conduct a Participatory Budgeting Process.**

Tulare County only has one budget hearing on Tuesday, September 17. A single hearing at 9 AM during the weekday is inaccessible for working, low-income residents who predominantly live in disadvantaged communities. The current process does not allow the public to engage meaningfully in the budget. The County must implement a participatory budget process with several budget hearings held during different times of day, including Spanish interpretation, to maximize the potential for civic engagement.

Again, Leadership Counsel urges Tulare County to consider the above-stated budget priorities for the next fiscal year (2025-2026) Budget. We thank Supervisor Micari and CAO Jason Britt for your availability and time to meet and discuss the budget process with us. LCJA looks forward to further collaboration with the County and welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with staff to help develop programs and projects to address community concerns and needs.

Respectfully,

/s/

Ashley Vega

Policy Advocate, Tulare County

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

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