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California Clean Energy Program Brings Millions in Investments; Energy Savings, Job Training and Transit to Riverside County

\$2 billion in funding statewide from California Climate Investments Program

PERRIS – Salvador Jimenez could not afford to install solar panels on his modest home in South Perris on his own. But today, a crew of job trainees led by nonprofit GRID Alternatives is installing a system for him using funding from the California Climate Investments Program, part of more than \$2 billion in funding statewide to improve public health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and expand the clean energy economy.

“Even though it makes sense to get free energy from the sun, we wouldn’t have been able to install these solar panels without financial support,” said Mr. Jimenez. “We’re grateful for this program and the money we save on electric bills will really make a difference for our family.”

State and local leaders gathered at the Jimenez home in Perris lauded the state program, which is also bringing expanded transportation options, energy efficiency upgrades and jobs to low-income and working-class homeowners in the Inland Empire.

“California’s climate policies are delivering results for communities right here in Riverside County,” said Assemblyman Jose Medina. “It’s vital that we continue to press forward on clean energy policies that save consumers money, combat climate change and create good jobs for Californians.”

The funding for today’s installation was generated by California’s AB 32 cap and trade program, whose proceeds are being invested in projects that reduce greenhouse gases that cause climate change. A significant portion of the funds from the program is targeted to communities like Perris that have been impacted by pollution and are home to economically disadvantaged residents. By law, a minimum of 25% of these climate investments must be targeted to disadvantaged communities.

“These investments have a triple benefit for the community,” said Bambi Tran, Regional Director of GRID Alternatives Inland Empire. “Clean energy, savings on utility bills for families, and hands-on job training in the solar industry, which is adding jobs at a rate of 20 percent a year.”

GRID Alternatives received Climate Investments funding through the California Department of Community Services and Development's (CSD) Low Income Weatherization Program to install solar panels on more than 1,600 homes in disadvantaged communities statewide. Job trainees completed the two-day installation on the Jimenez home today.

Perris also will benefit from more than half a million dollars in transit funding from Caltrans granted to the Riverside Transit Agency and the Riverside County Transportation Commission for the Perris Valley Line.

"Often times communities are tasked with having to take on the legislative challenges that have been imposed on local municipalities. But with California's Climate Investment Program, Sacramento is taking action on climate change and delivering real funding that is making a difference in our communities, bringing energy upgrades to local homeowners, and creating job training opportunities for our local workers," said Tonya Burke, Mayor Pro Tem of Perris. "This form of public/private partnerships only creates a win-win situation for the organization, the state, our city, and our residents."

The Riverside County Transportation Commission will receive \$129,859 for construction of the Perris Valley Line, the first extension of Metrolink service since 1994, when the Antelope Valley Line was built. The 24-mile Perris Valley Line will continue rail service from the downtown Riverside station to South Perris. The Riverside Transit Agency will receive \$460,410 to implement feeder bus service for seamless transfers between bus and rail service in the cities of Perris, Moreno Valley and Riverside.

In addition to energy efficiency upgrades for homeowners and transit, the California Climate Investments program is funding a wide range of projects such as clean vehicles, affordable housing and water conservation. More than \$800 million has already been allocated statewide with another \$2.2 billion to be spent before July 2016.

"These critical clean energy projects are not only good because they create local jobs and strengthen the economy, they are also first-hand evidence of the vital importance of ensuring that revenues generated through climate change policies go to the most impacted communities," said Arturo Carmona, Executive Director of Presente. "Working class neighborhoods, rural regions, and communities of color are all benefiting from these investments." Presente is the largest national Latino online organization dedicated to advancing Latino power and amplifying Latino voices around issues of justice and equity.

Today's event was organized by California Delivers, a coalition of hundreds of California businesses, public health professionals, workers, public officials, community and faith leaders, environmental groups, and individuals focused on protecting, implementing and extending the benefits of AB 32 beyond 2020. For more information, visit www.cadelivers.org.

GRID Alternatives is a nonprofit organization that makes renewable energy technology and job training accessible to low income communities. More than 21,000 people have received solar job training through GRID. www.gridalternatives.org

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