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October 24, 2017

### **MERCED COUNTY ENTERS INTO AGREEMENT WITH PORT OF LOS ANGELES**

MERCED – The Merced County Board of Supervisors struck an agreement at today’s meeting that opens the door to significant investment and development in the Mid-California International Trade District located at Castle Commerce Center and Castle Airport.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously authorized the Chair of the Board to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the Port of Los Angeles – the Western Hemisphere’s largest port by container volume and cargo value.

The agreement formalizes the relationship between the two entities and initiates several actions, including the development of a joint Business Development Plan, an exporter outreach initiative in the Central Valley, and collaborating to share business intelligence and work on prospective deals.

The strategy is designed to turn Castle into a hub for manufacturers and provide the Port of L.A. a Central California focal point for goods movement. Castle and the Port of L.A. each have direct access to the BNSF Railway. Also beneficial for goods movement is Castle’s centralized location in the state, quick access to the freeway and airport capabilities.

“This is an unprecedented opportunity for Merced County,” said Daron McDaniel, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. “This is a long-term vision and another step in our continued effort to develop Castle, but if we can make it happen, it has the potential to bring substantial economic activity and jobs to this County.”

“We are honored and excited to enter into this agreement and strengthen our trade connection with Merced County, the Mid-California International Trade District and the greater Central Valley,” said Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka. “This MOA not only paves the way for collaboration, it will give Central Valley shippers more awareness, support and access to global markets through a broad network of high frequency shipping line services.”

“This agreement has the potential to expand local participation in the movement of goods not only statewide, but also nationally and globally,” said Mark Hendrickson, Merced County’s Director of Community and Economic Development. “We’re excited of the future prospects this action could bring.”

The Port views the Central Valley as being uniquely attractive for its business growth and supports the development of new logistics and manufacturing hubs in the region. The County is developing Castle as a site for industrial investment in a range of manufacturing and distribution sectors, including automotive, industrial machinery, specialty chemicals, commercial space systems, medical products and supplies, and food processing. County staff believes that developing a strong working relationship with the Port is critically important in spurring future development and investment at Castle.

Though this is the first of many steps to bring this project to fruition, the County believes that by formalizing this relationship with the Port, the County will be better positioned to advance its agenda of job creation, generating greater tax revenues, increasing the value of its asset, and minimizing overall risk to the County by securing private-sector investment.