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San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Appoints Najee Zarif as Director of Public Works

Stockton, CA – Yesterday, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the appointment of Najee Zarif as the County's next Director of Public Works, effective March 23, 2026, with a 5-0 vote.

Mr. Zarif currently serves as Deputy Director of Public Works – Engineering and brings more than 25 years of experience within the department. He is a registered Professional Civil Engineer with thirteen years of senior management experience in public infrastructure projects, transportation planning, and departmental operations.

"Najee Zarif has dedicated his career to making sure our public infrastructure meets the needs of every community in San Joaquin County," said Board Chair Paul Canepa. "We are confident in his leadership, his experience, and his commitment to getting results for the people we serve."

Throughout his career, Mr. Zarif has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service. He served as a Leadership Fellow in the San Joaquin County Trailblazers Program, completing rotations in the City of Stockton's Mayor's Office and with Caltrans District 10, where he assisted in launching the state's first Small Business Boot Camp. He also held leadership roles in Public Works, overseeing five service areas as Interim Business Administrator and managing a \$20M annual capital maintenance program as Engineering Services Manager.

"Najee Zarif has built his career around serving the residents of San Joaquin County," said Vice Chair Sonny Dhaliwal. "He brings a practical, data-driven approach to leadership focused on outcomes, and is deeply committed to developing our Public Works team while advancing the Board's vision and strategic priorities."

Mr. Zarif is active in professional organizations including the American Public Works Association, the County Engineers Association of California, the Statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan Steering Committee, and the San Joaquin Valley Road Commissioners, and serves on several statewide and regional transportation-related committees.

"I am deeply honored by the unanimous support of the Board of Supervisors and County Administrator and the trust the Board placed in me to lead the Department of Public Works," said incoming Public Works Director Najee Zarif. "San Joaquin County has been my professional home for 25 years, and I'm proud of the progress we've made together to strengthen our infrastructure and serve our communities. I look forward to building on that foundation with a continued focus on transparency, measurable outcomes, and strategic partnerships that deliver lasting results for the residents of San Joaquin County."

“It has been an honor to work alongside Najee for many years and to see his leadership, professionalism, and dedication to the residents of San Joaquin County firsthand,” said outgoing Public Works Director Fritz Buchman. “Najee’s deep understanding of our operations, his commitment to innovation, and his collaborative approach make him exceptionally well-suited to lead the department into its next chapter. I have every confidence that Public Works will continue to thrive under his direction.”

As Public Works Director, Mr. Zarif will also be eligible for appointment as County Road Commissioner following a public hearing. There is no fiscal impact on this action, as the current Public Works budget fully funds the Director position for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

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