

# In Fresno, de Leon Backtracks On Tumbleweed Comments

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Diana Aguilera



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Incoming State Senate President pro tem Kevin de Leon made his first official appearance in Fresno today just weeks after controversial comments about the San Joaquin Valley and high speed rail. FM89's Diana Aguilera reports.

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Kevin de Leon visited Fresno's Roosevelt High School today to learn how Fresno Unified plans to use about \$90 million dollars in state funding to retrofit aging campuses for energy efficiency.

But his remarks earlier this month to the Los Angeles Times where he described the San Joaquin Valley as "the middle of nowhere" and a place where "no one lives out there in the tumbleweeds," overshadowed his visit.

"I literally meant in between Fresno and Bakersfield. Because, you know the population is not very high. And I meant no disrespect to Fresno. I actually like Fresno a lot." -Kevin de Leon.

"It was an inartful comment and the funny thing about it was I literally meant in between Fresno and Bakersfield. Because, you know the population is not very high. And I meant no disrespect to Fresno. I actually like Fresno a lot," he says.

DeLeon's remarks to the Times came as he said construction on the rail line shouldn't start in the San Joaquin Valley but should begin in Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

Today he said he supports high speed rail in the Valley but he wants construction to start in all three places.

"I think that once people see what's happening in the Central Valley and what's happening on the bookends and it's happening simultaneously I think you could start moving people to actually visualize themselves the real possibilities of what can truly happen," de Leon says.

His visit came a day after construction crews began tearing down buildings in Fresno for the project.

"They've already demolished a couple buildings as we speak right now in Central Valley. I think it's positive, I think we should move forward with it."

This wasn't de Leon's first trip to the Valley. He says he's been to Fresno numerous times and plans on coming back frequently.