

Could So Cal Chargers Be Answer For San Diego?

By George Mullen

Fellow San Diegans, I would like to introduce a new and innovative concept for your consideration – the *So Cal Chargers*.

Most of us prefer the Chargers remain in San Diego with a stadium solution in hand. However, after 13 years without resolution, we need to find a viable alternative with compromise, collaboration and cooperation in mind. If we don't, we may one day soon wake-up to *U-T* headlines announcing the Los Angeles Chargers – a la Clippers 1984.

Problems often present opportunities and there is an extraordinary one here. Southern California is highly populated and comprised of dozens of cities that have grown together over the years. Effectively, the single-city NFL team has become too limiting for the breadth of the region, whereas, the California Angels' all-encompassing version too broad and undefined. *So Cal* is the perfect blend – edgy, catchy, descriptive and regionally defining. As such, the Chargers should immediately *rebrand and expand* as the *So Cal Chargers* – and become *the* team for all of Southern California.

Inclusivity trumps exclusivity every time.

Team headquarters, practice fields and four home-games per year to remain in San Diego; the other four home-games in Los Angeles at a stadium site yet to be determined.

Via this strategy, the Chargers outflank the competition from getting into L.A., while still maintaining their San Diego roots and headquarters. Their potential fan-base rises eightfold from 3 million (San Diego County) to over 25 million (23 million Southern Californians from San Luis Obispo to Mexican border plus 2.5 million in adjacent Tijuana / Rosarito / Mexicali). The Chargers become *the* team in the NFL's new #1 mega-media marketplace of 25 million people – leading to significant NFL and Chargers revenue via television, advertising, licensed-merchandising and sellout home games with only four in each city. The franchise value soars. (*New York drops to the #2 market with 15 million people and two teams.*)

The *So Cal Chargers* regional concept has precedent in the New England Patriots and Carolina Panthers. Likewise, having two home stadiums has precedent in the Jacksonville Jaguars multi-year agreement to play one of their regular season home-games per year at Wembley Stadium in London, England. Furthermore, no public vote is necessary to make this happen; no L.A. partner needed (only the rent of an L.A. stadium four Sundays per year); a new stadium is no longer critical to the Chargers business-model with vast revenue pick-up elsewhere; and the \$17.6 million termination fee for leaving Qualcomm is not activated.

The NFL wants a team in L.A., but it is a conundrum. You can't stop a billionaire from pulling the plug on a new expansion team if it is losing money. Likewise, allowing the Rams, Raiders or Chargers to relocate to L.A. is a zero-sum game – the NFL gains a team in L.A., but loses one in St. Louis, Oakland or San Diego. The nominal gain is not worth the risk of another L.A. retreat. The *So Cal Chargers*, on the other hand, provides the perfect solution – the Chargers were born in L.A. (1960), already have a significant L.A. fan-base, the approach grows the NFL pie by bringing in millions of Southern Californians who have never had a team, the critical L.A. market gets a team without sacrificing another city, and the NFL retains the option to approve a second L.A. team if the market proves itself viable.

The 32 NFL team-owners must approve a team move to L.A. by a two-thirds vote, and the relocating team must pay a \$250 million fee. However, in the unique situation of the *So Cal Chargers*, these requirements are not applicable. The Chargers are not relocating to L.A., they are simply *rebranding and expanding*.

With this approach all Southern California is activated, and the greatest of NFL rivalries is born – *So Cal Chargers vs. Nor Cal Raiders or 49ers*. The subsequent annual *NFL California Bowls* will be media and advertising frenzies.

Go *So Cal Chargers*!

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