

**KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT VISIONING PROJECT
PLANNING DIRECTORS ROUNDTABLE FORUM #1 MINUTES**

**KERN COG CONFERENCE ROOM
1401 19TH STREET, THIRD FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA**

**FRIDAY
JULY 14, 2006
11:30 A.M.**

Mr. Ball called the meeting to order at approximately 11:45 a.m. A "sign-in" sheet was distributed.

I. ROLL CALL

Self-Introductions:

Bill Turpin	Kern LAFCO
Jake Sweeny	Shafter
Rick Iger	Kern Co Water Agency
Ron Hunsinger	BLM
Dave James	Tehachapi
Jim Movius	Bakersfield
Ted James	Kern County
Mike McCabe	Delano
Keith Woodcock	Wasco
Dennis McNamara	Wasco
Max Bacerra	Arvin
Enrique Ochoa	Arvin
James McRea	Ridgecrest
Chester Moland	GET

Staff:

Robert Ball	Kern COG
Raquel Pacheco	Kern COG
Linda Urata	Kern COG
Marilyn Beardslee	Kern COG
Darrel Hildebrand	Kern COG
Ron Brummett	Kern COG
Robert Phipps	Kern COG
Michael Heimer	Kern GOG

Others:

none

II. APPROVAL OF DISCUSSION SUMMARY: There was no prior discussion.

III. PAST ACTION ITEMS: There were no past actions.

IV. INTRODUCTION OF TOPICS:

Mr. Ball stated that one of the key things in the identification of modeling would be the development of sub-regional analysis areas. He discussed a map that was included in the agenda package of the roundtable committee. Mr. Ball indicated that he would like the maps to be self-determining. He offered the committee to recommend any changes to suggest. Mr. Ball stated that a second item that needs action is dealing with some of the input to the transportation model and what inputs are right for the community.

V. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mr. Ball stated that the Kern Regional Blueprint Program (KRBP) is part of an eight-valley grant comprised of eight San Joaquin Valley counties. A grant of \$5 million dollars was awarded for two years to do a blue print analysis. The regional blueprint a vision of an improved quality of life and coordinated planning. It is immigration, fueling station, land

use, environment resources, infrastructure into this comprehensive planning process and it focuses on widespread community involvement. Public participation and outreach is a large factor. Mr. Ball indicated that the blue print process is necessary because of the recent population growth. He discussed pending general plan amendments that have been approved. Once they are compiled there will be a lot of development activity that is being brought on by the recent growth spurt. Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is developing the blueprint, in addition with local stakeholders, and seven other San Joaquin Valley counties. The blueprint will focus on the communities in sub-regional areas. The blueprint process will proceed by having regular meetings comprised of member agencies, Kern COG staff, and stakeholders to determine issues and values of importance. He added that they would develop a base scenario in modeling that has some of the latest planning substance and some alternatives. The roundtable will conduct community workshops and determine a preferred scenario or blueprint for each region. Mr. Ball pointed out that this process is still in formulation and he welcomed the ideas and input of the roundtable.

A roundtable member asked Mr. Ball a question about any tension that may have been around regarding the distribution of grant money for the local governments to help develop programs that contribute to the blueprint. Mr. Ball stated that there was a discussion by the Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) Board and permission was granted to apply for the grant by the board. The grant was specifically used by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and has certain restrictions.

a. BLUEPRINT KEY APPROACH

Mr. Ball stated that one of the key approaches that the eight San Joaquin Valley COGs are pushing for is a “bottoms up” approach. This approach is a voluntary process that needs to start at the each individual local jurisdiction with land use authority. Each agency, within its community, needs to decide what they want the blueprint to be and what is their long-range vision. Mr. Ball discussed a chart that was included in the agenda package of the roundtable committee. He explained that in Governor Schwarzenegger’s bond package there is over \$400 million available for blueprint incentives, which may include infrastructure and funding for a region that has an adoptive blueprint that is promoting smart growth. Mr. Ball indicated that there is a growing hopefulness among state, federal, and local agencies that the blueprint can be used to streamline the environmental process. They would need upfront participation of the state and federal reviewing agencies on all the issues and developments of the regional vision in compliance with the blueprint. The goal is to get local governments to participate in the blueprint process. Mr. Ball stated that the next area would be to streamline the NEPA process, which can take up to six years or more. Federal agencies need to be involved to discuss constraints and what direction to go. There are benefits from the potential from eight counties doing environmental conservation banking. The benefit of the date counting is that a county has a much larger area of land to purchase for mitigation. He indicated this would bring down the land and subsequent mitigation cost for future mitigation. Mr. Ball stated there is \$730,000 available over two years in federal planning resources for the kern region out of \$5 million. He encouraged the roundtable members to look at their planned development schedules and see how the blueprint may fit into each cycle. There will be some visioning that can be included in the next 5-year data. Kern COG will work with each local community to bring the needed resources. Mr. Ball stated that blueprint process is not required and that it is a voluntary process.

Mr. Brummett indicated that he agreed with the analysis that the visioning leads to the planning process. He stated that Kern COG can support each local agency up to a certain point with the funding but there may be restrictions depending on how far they go into the planning process. The public outreach and visioning process can help up to a certain point along with the assistance of Kern COG. Mr. Brummett pointed out that if each agency is launching on a general plan updating process Kern COG wants to

coordinate with them. He stated that Kern COG needed to know everyone's schedule because the time allotted for the projects is on 24 months.

Mr. Hildebrand stated that there were at least six local agencies that were embarking on updates, including the Cities of Arvin, McFarland, Maricopa, Tehachapi, Ridgecrest, and Bakersfield. The extent that Kern COG can use the visioning or public participation process to satisfy each individual requirement, Kern COG would be willing to absorb the public participation costs into the blueprint project. He added that, he would envision seeing the participation sessions and workshops being joint workshops occurring at the same time and satisfying both requirements. Mr. Hildebrand stated that the current blueprint program has the first year funded and year two is in the state budget with every indication that that governor supports the entire process. Because of this, the project is put under a very tight time constraint with such an extensive review. A third year is being considered, which will increase the funding to \$7.5 million dollars between eight counties. A little of \$1 million will go to County of Kern. Kern COG will retain, under a sub-contract, a professional facilitator to help work with the meetings. Mr. Hildebrand encouraged the roundtable to assist in the recruitment of the facilitators.

A question was asked if the facilitation process going to be needs identification through community meetings. Mr. Hildebrand answered that Kern COG would be establishing a visioning process with a desired outcomes through the scenarios. The roundtable is needed to define performance measures, establishing goals, objectives, and principles related to long-range planning for the next 45 years.

Mr. Ball stated that potential long-term commitment needs to be an ongoing stated funding process. This is a chance to do some visioning throughout the eight county regions. He stated that there may be some downsides to the blueprint process and one of them is local governments must implement the blueprint to receive the potential \$400 million in funding. He added that it might be burdensome to local agencies and staff time with tedious information review, data, and meeting attendance. Kern COG is willing to work with each agency to help minimize some of the downsides. Mr. Ball stated that grant funding cannot be used for plan updates in the grant description but Kern COG will do what they can to offset some of the preparation costs. Significant numbers of Kern County's citizens prefer low-density development for single occupancy growth vehicles to the smart growth ideas. Kern COG would result in unforeseen political turmoil down the road in the process and he made the committee aware.

A question was asked, if there was a chance to have smart growth planning ideas implemented. Mr. Ball stated that the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) has been in the blueprint process for about three years and they have adopted the plan. While revisiting their Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and evaluating different transit moves, the result only show two thirds of the benefit of what they perfect idea rough planning that was done. He explained that on one hand, things might appear to make sense. On the other hand, once people are educated on the various constraint issues it became clear that something needed to be done.

A question was asked, how does the eight county process relate to the California Partnership to the San Joaquin Valley. Mr. Hildebrand explained that the California Partnership would be issuing, in draft form in September, a series of reports. They have sub-committees, land use, transportation, housing, and jobs that incorporate valley-wide principles. He explained that his concerns were the partnership not allowing the valley-wide process to get out ahead of the local. The principles will be recommended to feed into the process. Another thing that was found was there has been an over focus on the valley. Mr. Hildebrand supported the "bottoms up" approach and explained that the blueprint process needed to expand the perception of others that this is more than a valley floor situation. He explained that instead of looking at the valley from the air quality management model, they should be looking at the valley from an economic model. The partnership, because of its commission, is currently set to expire in October so they need

to have their reports ready. Mr. Hildebrand indicated that Kern COG provided some project and process definition but they didn't want to over define it prior to meeting with the blueprint roundtable members. They wanted the members to be involved in the definition of how the project should be organized and how the process should be conducted. While they have a project organization and participation plan, it was with the understanding that it would be subject to ongoing revision as determined by the project's execution itself and nothing is final.

VI. DRAFT PROJECT ORGANIZATION & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Mr. Ball stated that the draft Project Organization and Public Participation Plan went to the Kern COG Board and was adopted on May 18, 2006. The draft is open for modifications by the blueprint roundtable committee. The plan has the discussion of the blueprint process and Mr. Ball explained the "bottoms up" approach in detail from page 7 of the agenda packet. He also discussed page 9, which displayed the schedule of the process in detail with the members where they will be developing vision and values. There were nine steps to complete the process that are endorsed by the cities and county. Mr. Ball pointed out that a planner's roundtable, an economic development roundtable, and the stakeholder's group govern the blueprint process.

Mr. Hildebrand added that there would be a total of four working groups, which will include two stakeholder groups. The reason for two stakeholder groups is because there are so many of them. The idea is to allow the four working groups to go through a series of meetings coming up with a an initial definitions of a vision from all professional technical stand points, certain principles, goals and objectives. From this point they would have a working basis, along with the base case scenario that is billed out of the entire general plans. He stated they would go out into the public and do the initial visioning cycle within a series of public workshops. The four working groups would digest all of the public input that is brought back in the fall and consider four of five major future scenarios. Once the scenarios are done the committee would start a second series of community workshops and allow the public to interact with the scenarios. Mr. Hildebrand stated that the key would be to have the four working groups to establish some kind of base structure and organization to the plans and scenarios. Kern COG tends to have a governmental assembly, which will involve both private and public sectors and member agencies, and stakeholders on a countywide basis indicate their desire for the preferred route.

Mr. Ball instructed the blueprint members, as homework, to go over the Organizational Participation Plan (OPP) that is dealing with the public outreach process. He pointed out that another key component of the outreach process will be the website, which is located on www.kerncog.org. On the main page there is a link to the blueprint, where OPP is located. Blueprint members can go online and download the latest information to keep up to date.

Mr. Hildebrand stated that Kern COG would be conducting a countywide public opinion survey on a larger array of transportation planning issues. The Public Policy Institute for California just issued a valley-wide survey on various matters. Kern COG will conduct its own survey within the county and control the results to maintain statistical validity at the eight or nine sub-regional levels. He added that the statistical validity of the opinions expressed would be more informative.

VIII. PUBLIC OPINION ISSUES POLL

Mr. Ball discussed Attachment 2 in the agenda packet showing the results for Kern County of the public policy institute for California's poll. Kern County had over 230 responses. He discussed the results for Kern County and the entire eight county valley-wide percentages. Mr. Ball discussed this item in detail and there was a discussion between the committee members.

IX. GROWTH PRINCIPLES ADOPTED BY VALLEY COUNTIES AND CITIES

Mr. Ball asked the committee how they felt about doing a super analysis area to include Bakersfield, Shafter, and Wasco.

X. ACTION ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Everyone is to review the Kern Blueprint Organization and Citizens Participation Plan located at <http://www.kerncog.org/blueprint/background/background.htm>

Mr. Ball is to send out a revised version of the subregional map and request any final adjustments.

Mr. Hildebrand is to send out copies of the Draft RFP for the Public Outreach Consultant.

The next Kern Regional Blueprint Roundtable Forum would convene on Friday, July 28, 2006 11:30 a.m. in the Kern COG Board Room.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 p.m.