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SURVEY REVEALS NEW INFORMATION ABOUT TRUCKS ON INTERSTATE 5

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More than 83 percent of all big rigs traveling along Interstate 5/State Route 99 between Lebec and Kettleman City began their trips within California and are more likely to be carrying food than any other commodity, according to a new Kern COG study examining truck origins and destinations within our region.

The results were a mild surprise to transportation planners who assumed more of the trips were ending outside of the state, according to Kern COG Executive Director Ron Brummett. He added the number of trucks whose trips began and ended within the Valley also did not meet expectations.

Working with Caltrans and Fresno and Tulare County officials, Kern COG commissioned the \$170,000 study to gain a statistically valid picture of truck traffic that will inform I-5/SR-99 projects already under way, along with future planning efforts in the San Joaquin Valley.

KOA Corporation conducted more than 7,300 truck intercept surveys at northbound and southbound rest-stops in Kettleman City, Tipton, and Lebec during fall 2008 and spring 2009 to determine variation in truck travel patterns, among other information.

KOA Corporation compiled the survey findings and reported on the results at the September 2009 Kern COG Board meeting. Some of the findings include:

- Interstate 5 experiences little seasonal variation in the number of trucks that travel on it.
- 70 percent of trucks surveyed were based within California. Of these, 47 percent were based in the San Joaquin Valley and 34 percent in Southern California.
- More than 83 percent of trucks traveling northbound and southbound on I-5/SR-99 began their trips from within California.
- Of the northbound trips, 49.7 percent originated from Southern California followed by 29.8 percent from the San Joaquin Valley region.
- The southbound numbers demonstrated an even higher concentration of trips emanating from within the Valley at 59.2 percent. Another 12.7 percent began in the Bay Area, and 8.3 percent from the Greater Sacramento region.

- A majority (56.9 percent) of trucks traveling southbound I-5/SR-99 were destined for Southern California, with 23.5 percent bound for a San Joaquin Valley destination.
- The most common commodities hauled in both directions were food or kindred products such as beer and frozen goods. The next most common commodity was miscellaneous freight such as dry goods, office supplies, and goods from Walmart and Target distribution centers.

The study provides landmark data about freight movement that transportation planners have wanted for years. With heavy-duty trucks accounting for more than 30 percent of all traffic on Interstate 5 in Kern, the need for reliable data on which to base future projects has been a growing concern.

“The information we’re getting from this study and others will help us understand the larger transportation picture,” Brummett said. “Trucks today make up such a large percentage of overall traffic that we have to look at any potential alternatives for goods movement, such as rail or additional truck lanes.”

The report is Kern COG’s second truck origins and destinations study. A third study is planned for more rural routes in Kern County including SR-223, SR-166, SR-119, SR-46 and SR-65.