

Corridor Preservation

It is important to identify and preserve transportation corridors needed to expand or enhance transportation for Kern County's future. Kern region's local governments will find it difficult to obtain optimal locations for these corridors unless efforts to preserve them are made early.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) report on corridor preservation states that early efforts provide the following benefits:

- prevent inconsistent development;
- minimize or avoid environmental, social and economic impacts;
- prevent loss of desirable corridor locations;
- allow for orderly assessment of impacts;
- permit orderly project development; and
- reduce costs.

Ideally, planners and policy-makers will begin preparing strategies for preserving corridors now as part of the long-range planning process. Planning prevents losing right-of-way that will become necessary for transportation beyond 2030. The County and cities can adopt a specific plan line to preserve open land in undeveloped and rural areas. More opportunities to capitalize on preservation are available in less urban areas, where local governments have an opportunity to obtain available land for new transportation facilities.

The first step to identify potential long-range corridors and determine that a need exists to preserve them. This will require intergovernmental coordination and should include a funding component. Next, criteria to evaluate and prioritize the selected corridors must be developed. Once a corridor is selected, environmental studies will be needed. Traditional preservation techniques include purchasing land and using government statutes to place a corridor alignment on a general plan land use and/or circulation map. Other state and federal funds can be used to assist in acquiring land for long-range corridors.

The following High Emphasis Interregional Routes are identified by Kern COG and Caltrans as high priority corridors. These corridors are also identified as future circulation needs in the respective city or county General Plan Circulation Elements.

Post-2030 Long Range Corridors	
Corridor	Source
Inter- Regional Corridors	
Route 46 (New Alignment through Wasco)	City of Wasco; Caltrans; Kern COG
Route 58 (New Alignment - Route 99 west to I-5)	Caltrans; Kern COG
Willow Springs Expressway	Rosamond TIF; Kern COG; Caltrans
Passenger Rail	
Link to Mammoth / Reno	Eastern Sierra Planning Partnership
Kern County	
Centennial Corridor (Routes 58 & 178)	City of Bakersfield; Kern County; Kern COG
South Beltway	City of Bakersfield; Kern County; Kern COG
West Beltway	City of Bakersfield; Kern County; Kern COG
East Beltway	City of Bakersfield; Kern County; Kern COG
Intermodal Corridors	
Route 58 (Bakersfield to Tehachapi)	Caltrans; Kern COG
UP/BNSF Rail Corridor (Bakersfield to Tehachapi)	Caltrans; Kern COG

High Speed Rail

California High Speed Rail Authority is proposing a high-speed train (HST) system for intercity travel between the major metropolitan centers of Sacramento and the Bay Area, through the San Joaquin Valley, to Los Angeles and San Diego. The HST system is projected to carry as many as 68 million passengers annually by 2020. The Authority adopted a final Business Plan in June 2000 that examined the economic viability of a train system capable of speeds in excess of 200 mph on a fully grade-separated track, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated control systems. Following adoption of the Business Plan, the Authority initiated an environmental review process as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which was released to the public in early 2004.

The purpose of the proposed HST system is to provide a reliable mode of travel, which links the major metropolitan areas of the state and delivers predictable and consistent travel times. Further objectives are: (1) to provide an interface with commercial airports, mass transit, and the highway network; (2) to relieve capacity constraints of the existing transportation system as intercity travel demand in California increases; (3) to construct the proposed HST system in a manner sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources. The system needs to be practicable and feasible as well as economically viable. The

system should maximize the use of existing transportation corridors and rights-of-way, be implemented in phases, and be completed by 2020.

The state's population is projected to increase by 31% by 2020, with the highest growth rate expected in the San Joaquin Valley and the greatest increase expected in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The need for improved intercity transportation is demonstrated by the insufficient capacity of the existing transportation system to meet current and expected future travel demand. The need is also reflected in poor air quality, impaired travel reliability, and increased travel congestion and longer travel times. The interstate highway system and commercial airports serving the intercity travel market are operating at or near capacity in major parts of the system. In order to meet travel demand and future growth over the next 20 years and beyond, highway and airport systems will require large public investment for maintenance and expansion.

Electrically powered, high-speed, steel-wheel-on-steel-rail technology is being considered for the proposed system that would serve the major metropolitan centers of California, extending from the Bay Area and Sacramento, through the San Joaquin Valley, to Los Angeles and San Diego. By 2020, the proposed service would include approximately 86 weekday trains in each direction to serve the intercity travel market, with 64 of the trains running between northern and southern California, and the remaining 22 trains serving shorter-distance markets. Most passenger service is assumed to run between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. The proposed system would be capable of speeds in excess of 200 mph, and the projected travel times would be designed to compete with air and auto travel. For example, the projected travel time by HST between San Francisco and Los Angeles would be just under 2 hours and 30 minutes, and between Los Angeles and San Diego, it would be just over one hour.

The cost to implement the HST system is estimated to range between \$33 billion and \$37 billion (at 2003 dollars), depending on the alignment and station options selected. The cost estimate includes right-of-way, track, guideway, tunneling, stations, and mitigation. The Authority has indicated that private funds would be sought for the train sets and operating costs.

High-speed rail would provide a new intercity, interregional, and regional passenger mode that would improve connectivity and accessibility to other transit modes and airports compared to the other alternatives. High speed rail over and above automobile and airline travel would improve the travel options available in the San Joaquin Valley and other areas of the state with limited bus, passenger rail, and air service for intercity trips.

High Speed Rail Terminal Impact Analysis

The High Speed Rail Terminal Impact Analysis was prepared to determine a community-preferred site for Bakersfield's future high speed rail station. Three

sites within metropolitan Bakersfield had been previously identified: Meadows Field vicinity, Golden State/"M" Street, and Truxtun/"S" Street

Kern COG commissioned this study to recommend a locally preferred station site to be forwarded to the California High Speed Rail Authority. This study was not intended to include final station design concepts or cite specific environmental impacts, but rather as a tool for CHRSRA to understand the Bakersfield community's concerns as well as to explain potential partnering opportunities.

The study evaluated the sites for the concerns regarding mobility, access and Intermodal connectivity, cost, user convenience, impact on built environment, air quality, economic development and environmental impacts.

A series of outreach meetings was undertaken in order to compile and understand various objectives and preferences for a station site.

On July 1, 2003, the Kern County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 2003-290 in support of the Truxtun Avenue terminal site. On July 9, 2003, the Bakersfield City Council voted to adopt Resolution 118-03 endorsing the Truxtun Avenue site as their preferred site. And on September 18, 2003, Kern Council of Governments adopted Resolution 03-23 to designate the Truxtun Avenue terminal site as "the preferred base system local alternative site for the Metropolitan Bakersfield high-speed rail terminal."

The Truxtun site is located within the vicinity of the current Amtrak station. It is west of Union Avenue and east of Chester Avenue along the BNSF corridor. The High Speed Rail Environmental Impact Report has identified the station site between S Street and Sonora Street as the most promising area, but has indicated a possible alternative with a north/south orientation along Union Avenue. The Truxtun Station is located within walking distance of the downtown area including two hotels, the convention center, many government office buildings and Bakersfield's new Ice Center and McMurtrey Aquatic Center.

Connections to other modal uses would be effortless. Amtrak and Greyhound connections have existing facilities at or near the Truxtun Station while Golden Empire Transit and Kern Regional Transit also have regular stops at the Amtrak station. This proximity would facilitate passenger transfer connections, sharing of the Amtrak feeder bus terminal and possibly even sharing of an expanded station.

Need for Constrained Project Development

Under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century and its successor, regional transportation plans must demonstrate all proposed projects are capable of being fully funded within the RTP's timeframe. This requirement has constrained regions to spotlight and prioritize high performing, cost-effective

projects. This approach enables the Kern region to focus on immediate transportation priorities.

If new funds are identified, then projects in the unconstrained Program of Projects (Table 4.2) can be amended into the constrained Program of Projects (Table 4.1) via the amendment process. Under this arrangement, decision-makers would have flexibility to consider new projects and to respond to funding opportunities that may present themselves in the future.

Unconstrained Projects/Unmet Transportation Needs

Beyond the Destination 2030 RTP, an estimated \$ 2.3 billion in unmet transportation needs within the Kern Region for capital improvements, operation and maintenance, remain unfunded because of lack of federal, state and local monies. Kern COG, in cooperation and coordination with its stakeholders, maintains a list of capital projects that are financially unconstrained (see Table 4.2). Conceivably, as the future funding picture changes, some of these projects could be advanced to the “constrained” status in future RTP updates.

TIFs, Bonds and Sales Tax

Kern County continues to experience strong growth, adding more traffic and taxing the capacities of the street and highway system. In an effort to expand needed transportation facilities before traffic congestion causes the roads system to fail, Kern COG has proposed that the cities and County of Kern implement a transportation impact fee (TIF) to pay for needed transportation facility improvements. Kern COG is developing a series of subregional traffic impact fee studies throughout the County, with the initial study focusing on southeast Kern (Tehachapi, California City, and Mojave). Kern COG anticipates completing the studies by mid-2006.

The focus of the needed transportation improvements is on regional roads of significance. At this time, only Bakersfield, Wasco and unincorporated Rosamond have adopted TIFs.

Adopting a new transportation impact fee will require working closely with both the local development community and the Kern community at large to gain acceptance to fund needed rights-of-way and widening improvements to transportation facilities that are deemed deficient.

Issuance of bonds to finance and deliver projects more rapidly is a common practice. Under a Federal Highway Administration program, Garvee Bonds are being considered for some of the larger corridor projects within the Kern region. The minimum covered for Garvee Bond projects is such that only the largest corridor projects would be eligible.

Bonding for projects from a sales tax measure is another strategy commonly used for finance “early delivery” of transportation projects. A countywide sales tax measure is being proposed that would allow many of the projects discussed in the Destination 2030 RTP to be constructed much sooner. A draft list of projects under consideration for funding by the one-half cent sales tax measure follows.

Transportation Projects Proposed by Countywide Sales Tax Measure (STM)

RTP projects that could be advanced by STM funding:

Financially Constrained

- Route 14 from Route 178 to Red Rock Canyon - widen to four lanes
- Route 46 from SLO County line to I-5 - widen to four lanes
- Route 46 from Route 99 to Wasco - widen to four lanes
- Route 58 at Dennison Road - construct interchange and bridge
- Route 99 at Olive Drive interchange - construct capacity-increasing improvements
- Route 178/24th Street at Oak Street - construct interchange
- Route 178 from Morning Drive to Rancheria Road - construct freeway
- Route 223 – from Comanche Road to Route 99 -widen to four lanes
- Seventh Standard Road from Route 43 to Route 99 - widen to four lanes
- Downtown Parkway in Bakersfield - construct local freeway
- Hageman Extension Knudsen Drive to Route 204 – construct four-lane extension

Financially Unconstrained

- Route 58 from I-5 to Route 99 - construct freeway/expressway
- Route 65 - widen various segments to four lanes
- Route 119 from I-5 to Tupman Road - widen to four lanes
- Red Apple Avenue from Tucker Road to Westwood Blvd - construct new two-lane road
- Wheeler Ridge Road from (Route 23 to I-5 - widen segments to four lanes

Non RTP Projects Proposed for STM funding

- Route 178 - 24th Street Improvements in Bakersfield)
- Route 202 from Woodford-Tehachapi Road to Old Town Road - widen to four lanes
- Route 395 South of South China Lake Blvd - construct passing lanes
- Route 14 – Extend K Street north to connect (Midland Trail)
- Kern Canyon Road – (old 178)
- North Gate Road from California City to North Edwards - construct two lane road
- Rosamond Blvd - grade separation over Union Pacific tracks
- Twenty Mule Team Road from California City to Route 58 - construct two lane road
- Lake Isabella - capacity increasing project
- Frazier Park - capacity increasing project

Air Quality Contingencies

Air quality uncertainties could play a critical role in future funding linkages. In areas such as San Joaquin Valley that may fail to attain federal clean air standards by the mandated deadlines, the federal Clean Air Act Amendments of

1990 (CAAA) can require withholding funding for capacity increasing transportation projects, including projects funded from non-federal sources. In the San Joaquin Valley, up to \$2 billion in transportation funds could be at stake. A variety of mechanisms in the CAAA can require withholding transportation funds, including highway sanctions, conformity lapses and conformity freezes.¹ Should one of these occur, Kern COG may be required to amend its TIP and RTP to fund additional projects that are proven to reduce emissions and/or improve safety. With federal highway sanctions, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would prepare a Federal Implementation Plan (FIP) that would reprogram TIP funding to projects that improve air quality and allow the region to demonstrate attainment of federal clean air standards.

Transit improvements, intermodal freight facilities, transportation related air quality control measures and safety projects can be exempt from federal highway sanctions, lapses and freezes. It is prudent to consider studying these types of projects as funding becomes available, to provide local policy makers with a complete range of options should funding interruptions become imminent. Many of these project types are already funded through a mix of resources. Every effort is made to attain federal standards by identifying and implementing cost-effective methods that reduce transportation related emissions from single occupancy vehicles.

Air Quality-Related Projects For Future Study

- MetroLink Commuter Rail (Rosamond to L.A.)
- Eastern Sierra Passenger Rail Corridor (Reno to L.A.)
- Major Transportation Investment Study (MTIS) long-range transit improvements - passenger light-rail (Metro Bakersfield) and passenger heavy-rail (connecting outlying valley communities)
- Bakersfield High Speed Rail Station - Airport Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Shuttle
- Shafter Intermodal Trade and Transportation Center (ITTC) expansion
- Shafter Airport/Union Pacific Intermodal Freight Facility expansion
- Laval Road Industrial Complex - new freight rail line and intermodal facility
- Freeway ramp metering
- High occupancy/zero-low emission vehicle (HOV/ZEV/LEV) lanes
- Toll lane/facility congestion pricing
- Paving and sweeping shoulders and dirt roads
- Alternative fuel fleets and infrastructure
- Incentives for increasing land use densities

Safety Projects For Future Study

- Route 58 from General Beale Road to Tehachapi Blvd offramp.- truck auxiliary lane
- I-5 from Route 99 split to Kings County line - truck auxiliary lane
- Network of dedicated truck lanes

¹ Highway sanctions, conformity lapses, and conformity freezes are mechanisms in the federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 that are triggered when a region fails to demonstrate attainment of federal clean air standards by required deadlines.

- Route 178 from Lake Isabella to Ridgecrest - realign and add passing lane

Valleywide Chapter

Included as an appendix, the Valleywide Regional Transportation Plan provides an interregional perspective for transportation planning throughout the San Joaquin Valley. It presents an overview of cross-jurisdictional issues facing the eight related counties and regional transportation planning agencies within central California.