

Kern COG Quarterly

BETTER PLANNING. BETTER TRANSPORTATION.



**Kern Council
of Governments**

SPRING 2017

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California's SB 1 expected to bring \$40 million annually to Kern region

The Kern region will receive approximately \$40 million annually for road repairs, public transit operations and other transportation improvements after the California Legislature narrowly passed Senate Bill (SB) 1 on April 6.

The new legislation generates \$5.2 billion annually for transportation from an additional \$.12-cent-per-gallon gas tax; a \$.20-cent-per-gallon diesel tax; a 4 percent increase in sales tax on diesel and; a vehicle registration fee increase based on the a vehicle's individual value, ranging from \$25 for those cars and truck worth \$5,000 to \$200 for cars worth \$100,000 or more.

The law, which marks the first time the Legislature has raised the gas tax about 25 years, also requires the state to repay loans taken from the highway account sooner and creates a "lockbox" to ensure that funds are not diverted to other purposes.

Road maintenance in unincorporated Kern County will increase by \$219 million over a 10-year period, while the region's 11 cities will split approximately \$132 million for projects like road resurfacing, fixing potholes and cracks. Local transit agencies will reap \$4.3 million for operations.

A city or county that meets or exceeds good pavement condition criteria is allowed to spends its share of funds on other transportation priorities, creating

an incentive for local agencies to get their roads in top condition as soon as possible.

Statewide transit assistance funding is increasing by 150 percent. If local transit can be operated 100% with federal and state transit assistance funds, even more local money may be free to maintain roads.

Finally, SB 1 set aside \$200 million annually for counties that have adopted a local, "self-help" transportation measure, which would equate to \$5 million more annually for Kern, if it had such a measure.

NEW CITY STREETS AND ROAD INVESTMENTS (IN MILLIONS)	
Estimated amounts based on historical data	
Arvin	\$4.80
California City	\$3.23
Bakersfield	\$86.75
Delano	\$12.14
Maricopa	\$0.26
McFarland	\$3.35
Ridgecrest	\$6.42
Shafter	\$4.13
Taft	\$2.15
Tehachapi	\$3.30
Wasco	\$6.06
Total	132.59

2018 Intelligent Transportation Systems Plan designed to capitalize on roadway system efficiencies

Kern COG will produce a 2018 Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) plan to anticipate how electronic, computer and communication technology in vehicles and roadways will increase safety, reduce congestion, improve traffic flow, minimize environmental impact, increase energy efficiency and promote economic productivity for a healthier economy within the regional transportation network. Automated vehicle location systems for buses, changeable message signs, the Bakersfield Traffic Operations Center, a regionwide travel information system (Kern 511), freeway ramp meters and emergency vehicle traffic signal pre-emption technology are all examples of ITS projects undertaken in the Kern region.

Kern COG held three ITS Stakeholder Workshops in February to build a vision for the 2018 ITS Plan and its: goals and objectives; needs assessment; and inventory.

Forty-three representatives with the cities of Arvin, Bakersfield, California City, Delano, McFarland, Ridgecrest, Shafter, Taft, Tehachapi, Wasco joined BARC, Caltrans Districts 6 & 9, Community Action Partnership of Kern, County of Kern, CTSA, Golden Empire Transit District and Hall Ambulance to offer input on the plan, which is a critical component in addressing the region's transportation needs.

As travel demand on the freeways and local streets increases, engineers will need to improve the system through better management

of existing capacity, which is the reason local investments in ITS projects continue to grow. The ITS Plan will ensure that these investments address the region's needs and bring maximum benefit to travelers.

The 2018 ITS Plan development process will:

- Review ITS deployments and technological advancements since 1997
- Address current regional needs and priorities
- Develop a vision and plan for Kern COG stakeholders that is consistent with current federal requirements for regional ITS architectures and that guides ITS investments and integration for the next 20 years.

Kern COG offers "mini-grants" for public workshops

Kern COG has partnered with the local non-profit community to help ensure diverse and extensive public input on its long-range transportation planning efforts by offering "mini-grants" of up to \$4,000 each to help run public workshops.

So far, eight non-profit organizations (NPOs) have received approval to host workshops for the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan, which considers which transportation projects should be funded through 2040. The NPOs will provide the venues, marketing, food, child care and other amenities to boost attendance. Workshops are scheduled for April, May and June 2017.

Awardees include:

- California State University Bakersfield/Office of the President
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce
- Bike Bakersfield
- A. Philip Randolph Community Development Corporation
- Kern County Black Chamber of Commerce
- United Way of Kern County
- Greater Tehachapi Economic Development Council

Kern COG will use the workshops as an opportunity to familiarize the public and stakeholders with complex transportation financing issues and to seek opinions on the best ways to use the gas tax funding returned to the Kern region for local streets and roads, highways and freeways, public transportation and other, related services.

"We think this will be a great way not only to reach more people regarding our transportation needs but also to help our community partners at the same time," said Kern COG Executive Director Ahron Hakimi.

The NPOs are transportation stakeholders that were chosen based on the interests of their membership and the ability to draw those members to comment on regional planning efforts.

Kern COG will also staff a booth at eight different community fairs and festivals throughout 2017, including the Arvin Wildflower Festival, Desert Tortoise Days in California City and the Kern County Fair to offer Kern residents the chance to discuss what transportation improvements they'd like to see in the future.

160 attendees honor 2016 Regional Award recipients

Nearly 160 guests joined Kern Council of Governments at Seven Oaks Country Club in Bakersfield to celebrate 16 individuals, organizations and programs for making major contributions to this area's quality of life during its annual Regional Awards of Merit Program on March 3.

Regional Awards of Merit recipients, as decided by a Kern COG Board ad-hoc committee, are divided among nine broad categories and included:

Local Government:

- **Pet Adoption Program** (City of Bakersfield, County of Kern, Bakersfield SPCA and Critters Without Litters) for working together to reduce animal euthanasia and to find loving homes for pets in Kern County shelters.
- **Dennis McNamara, Maria Lara and the McFarland City Council** for orchestrating a series of renovations to McFarland's downtown shopping area and revitalizing the area culturally and economically.

Community Involvement:

- **Luda Fishman, Sophia Felix and Ray Scott** for representing Keep Bakersfield Beautiful at the state and national levels and for striving to continually better Kern County and the quality of life for all its residents.
- **Kern County Sheriff's Department** for implementing campaigns such as "Tarp Your Trash" and supervising inmate work crews to assist Caltrans in beautifying the community.

Ken Volpe Award for Environmental Resources and Conservation:

- **City of Tehachapi Public Works and Utilities Department** for investing in public outreach, education and enforcement and advocating for policy shifts to curb wasted water during the drought.
- **City of Bakersfield's Kit Fox Habitat Program** for protecting endangered San Joaquin kit fox habitats.

Transportation:

- **Minerva Rodriguez of Caltrans, District 6** for orchestrating several Thomas Roads Improvement Projects throughout Kern County.

Richard A. Maxwell Public Safety:

- **Delano Police Department** for its School Resource Officers who keep Delano youth safe at school.

Darrel Hildebrand Distinguished Leadership – Public Official:

- **Russell Judd**, Chief Executive Officer of Kern Medical for his work to financially resuscitate the ailing hospital.

Darrel Hildebrand Distinguished Leadership – Private Citizen or Group:

- **PG&E of Bakersfield and Kern County** for its overall commitment to provide energy for Californians in a safe, efficient and responsible manner.

Ronald E. Brummett Lifetime Achievement — Private Citizen:

- **Stephen W. Schilling** of Clinica Sierra Vista for his work to establish and operate the successful medical clinic for vulnerable Kern residents.
- **Fred and Barbara Holmes**, for their quiet philanthropy within the Taft community and Kern County at large.

Ronald E. Brummett Lifetime Achievement — Elected Official:

- **Grace Vallejo**, for her extensive body of work as a City of Delano planning commissioner, city councilwoman and mayor.
- **Harold Hanson**, for his support of the Thomas Roads Improvement Projects as a Bakersfield city councilmember.

Ronald E. Brummett Lifetime Achievement — Public Official:

- **John Nilon**, Kern County Administrative Officer.

Chairman's Award of Regional Cooperation:

- **City of Bakersfield, County of Kern Voiced Coalition and Golden Empire Transit** for its program to upgrade bus stops throughout Bakersfield.



City of Delano Councilwoman Grace Vallejo, left, talks to a contractor working on a Sonic Drive-In restaurant. She was one of 21 Regional Award of Merit recipients for 2016.

Two more TRIP projects set for completion by spring

Two more Thomas Roads Improvement Program (TRIP) projects are expected to wrap up this spring, bringing the total to seven completed projects so far, with still more on the way.

The Southbound State Route 99 Auxiliary Lane/Rosedale Highway Off-ramp Improvements Project is expected to be completed by the end of March, followed by the State Route 178 Widening Project in May. Construction for the Beltway Operational Improvements Project, which includes various improvements along State Routes 58 and 99, is expected to continue through early 2018.

Work on the Southbound State Route 99 Auxiliary Lane/Rosedale Highway Off-ramp Improvements Project began in early 2016 to add an auxiliary lane on southbound State Route 99, from Gilmore Avenue to Rosedale Highway, and widen the off-ramp from two lanes to four lanes at Rosedale Highway – providing two turn lanes in each direction.

The State Route 178 Widening Project is the third TRIP project to be constructed along this corridor in northeast Bakersfield. It widens the highway to provide six lanes between Canteria Drive and Masterson Street, and four lanes from Masterson Street to Miramonte Drive.

The project also makes improvements to the State Route 184, Masterson Street, Alfred Harrell Highway and Miramonte intersections at State Route 178. Previous projects include the State Route 178 Fairfax Road Interchange and the State Route

178 Morning Drive Interchange. Together, these three projects improve circulation along six miles of the highway.

TRIP's remaining work on this corridor – the 24th Street Improvement Project – is now moving forward to improve traffic flow along the corridor's central section, along with better access in and out of downtown. Demolition of City-owned houses began in February and is expected to be completed by late spring, while sound wall construction adjacent to the residences along the north side of 24th Street could begin in the summer.

Demolition activities are also under way along the future Centennial Corridor alignment, with 85 percent of the City-owned structures already removed.

The TRIP team is gearing up to start construction on Centennial's first phase. The Kern River Bridge Improvements include two new bridges, widening two existing bridges, and making various improvements to the existing Westside Parkway.

The City accepted construction bids in February, but due to heavy winter rains and high water flows in the Kern River, construction is expected to begin in summer 2017.

The City also plans to begin work this year on sewer and utility relocations as well as sound wall, screen wall and cul-de-sac installations on various streets adjacent to the future transportation corridor between California Avenue and Real Road.

Air emission goals get a boost from Bakersfield's downtown renaissance

This image shows the line going out the door at one of the hottest new hangouts in Downtown Bakersfield.

Recently visited by the Food Network's Alton Brown, Café Smitten is adjacent to 44 new market rate townhomes called 17th Place (seen in the background).

Complete with bike racks and outdoor dining the Café is at the center of an expanding renaissance happening in central Bakersfield.

Housing market demand appears

to be accelerating for more compact development in this area connecting the Mill Creek district with the Arts district.

Since 1990, 651 units have been constructed in Central Bakersfield, of which two-thirds have been built in the past nine years, with more than 100 built in 2016.

This type of housing promotes greater transportation choices such as walking & biking that not only benefit personal health, but air quality as well.



Photo courtesy www.magphotography.net
Beautiful Spring Day/Clear Sky near 18th & O Streets in Central Bakersfield

\$277 million for transportation projects on tap for 2022

The Kern region anticipates \$277 million in transportation spending over the next five years, including \$194 million to the Thomas Roads Improvement Program (TRIP) in Bakersfield for such projects as the State Route 58/Rosedale Highway widening and operational improvements to State Routes 58 and 99.

Kern COG's 2015 Federal Transportation Improvement Program identifies more than 75 local, state and federally funded transportation projects across five categories:

Program Name	Total Number of Projects	Total Value of Projects
Active Transportation Program	7 Projects	\$4,879,000
Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality	8 Projects	\$15,358,133
Regional Surface Transportation	20 Projects	\$11,956,629
State Highway Capacity	4 Projects	\$86,579,000
State Highway Maintenance	18+ Projects	\$53,213,000
Total	57+ Projects	\$277,271,841

Active Transportation Program projects improve safety and connectivity for pedestrian and bicycle access. Regional Surface Transportation Program dollars finance street and road rehabilitation, reconstruction and maintenance throughout the region. Eligible Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program projects must reduce congestion, pollution and improve safety.

The Active Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation /Air Quality Program and Regional Surface Transportation Program are generally delivered by local jurisdictions. Twenty-two of the 35 local projects totaling \$14 million will receive funding earlier than expected. The status of several regionally significance projects are provided below:

Project Description	Construction Investment	Delivery Status	Expected Completion
SR 58 Rosedale Hwy widening	\$12,000,000	Completed	Summer 2016
SR 99 Hosking Road Interchange	\$31,000,000	Completed	Spring 2016
SR 58 & 99 Beltway operational improvements	\$118,393,000	under construction	Summer 2017
SR 178 Widening Vineland to Miramonte	\$27,000,000	under construction	Summer 2017

A comprehensive status report on Projects of Regional Significance throughout Kern County may be downloaded at: http://www.kerncog.org/images/docs/progress_report_2017_01.pdf.



Despite demolitions for new freeway, net housing growth in Bakersfield/Shafter is up 30 percent

Despite the current oil recession and new freeway construction, at least two of Kern's communities are seeing home building accelerate.

Serving the same housing market, Bakersfield and Shafter added 1,522 homes in 2016, 347 more houses than the prior year for an increase of 30 percent. The growth demonstrates the resiliency of Kern's diversifying economy.



Bakersfield Centennial Freeway Properties Acquired

The City of Bakersfield built 1,499 homes and saw 151 demolitions, for a net increase of 1,348 homes, up 19 percent from the prior year. To date, all homes acquired in the path of the new Centennial Freeway were purchased from willing sellers. In addition, Bakersfield added two downtown housing developments near Mill Creek, totaling 107 new multi-family units. Shafter's new Gossamer Grove development saw the majority of 174 housing units built. That was 131 more than the year prior, for a 305 percent increase.

Reasons Kern continues to expect strong growth

- 1) **Ownership** – In 2017, Bakersfield ranked third in the nation for home ownership after Sioux Falls, SD, and Elk Grove (home of Apple) near Sacramento, CA.
- 2) **Most affordable** - The Bakersfield Metropolitan Area has the lowest price housing of any large metro area in the state.
- 3) **Oil prices rising** - the price of oil is already nearly double what it was at the beginning of 2016.
- 4) **Energy/Logistics Hub** - Kern is at the heart of a rapidly growing renewable energy and logistics hub for the State of California.
- 5) **Water = \$\$\$** - A wet year can add \$4 billion to the state economy because of increased agricultural production, and Kern is one of the largest ag counties in the State.
- 6) **Diverse economy** - Kern was one of the first regions in the state to recover from the Great Recession because of its diverse economy, which includes military operations and prisons, both of which are expected to see increases under the new federal administration.

	Shafter		Bakersfield		Total	
2015	43	4%	1,132	96%	1,175	100%
2016	174	11%	1,348	89%	1,522	100%
Net Change	131	305%	216	19%	347	30%

Net Change in Housing 2015-2016

Source: Cities of Bakersfield and Shafter Planning Departments. Demolitions have already been subtracted for each jurisdiction. New housing in unincorporated areas not included.