

Kern COG Quarterly

BETTER PLANNING. BETTER TRANSPORTATION.



**Kern Council
of Governments**

SPRING/SUMMER 2015

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Nearly \$285 million in transportation projects scheduled over the next year

Nearly \$285 million will be spent on major transportation projects in 2015-16, including \$194 million in Thomas Roads Improvement Program (TRIP) projects in Bakersfield, such as the State Route 58/Rosedale Highway widening and operational improvements to State Routes (SR) 58 and 99.

Kern COG's 2015 Federal Transportation Improvement Program identifies local, state and federally funded transportation projects for delivery this fiscal year and includes 75 projects for \$284,630,000 in five programming categories.



Bakersfield City Manager Alan Tandy speaks during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the last phase of the Westside Parkway, the city's newest freeway.

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A look at the Kern region and Bakersfield by the numbers

- **One million** – Kern's population is projected to pass 1 million in only five years, with 63 percent in metro Bakersfield.
- **Top 1,000** – Bakersfield is among the top 1,000 largest cities (ranked 842nd) in the world in 2015 (larger than the port city of Macau, China near Hong Kong).
- **Top 100** – The Bakersfield Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes all of Kern, is one on the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. (Ranked 62nd).
- **10 Miles** – Bakersfield is about 10 miles S.E. of the geographic population center of California, near Shafter, the point closest to everyone else in the state. Kern has a growing cluster of more than 40 trucking distribution centers, with locations optimized to serve northern and southern California markets and the I-5/I-15/I-40 corridors.
- **Ninth** – Bakersfield is the ninth largest city in California (larger than Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Riverside).
- **Eighth and seventh** – Kern is helping California advance from the eighth to the seventh largest economy in the world (passing Brazil).
- **Sixth** – Bakersfield is sixth in job growth for mid-sized U.S. cities.
- **Fifth** – Kern is the fifth best place in California to buy a home (average mortgage is \$825/mo.).
- **Top four** – Kern's federal representative, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, is one of the top four ranking members in Congress.
- **Top three** – Kern is consistently one of the top three oil- and ag-producing counties in the U.S.
- **Second** – Bakersfield has the second fastest millennial population growth (age 20-34) for U.S. cities, attracted by jobs in education, health care, energy, tech, logistics, ag, and manufacturing.
- **First** – Kern is first in renewable energy production in California, with 2.5 times the renewable energy production of the next largest county (Imperial), as of 2014.
- **Lowest** – Since 1982, the urban Bakersfield area has ranked lowest in traffic delays in the U.S.; however, over that same 30 years, the city's population has doubled and traffic delay has increased from 1 hour per commuter per year to 12 hours per year.



Survey: Kern residents generally happy with their communities

Kern County residents continue to have a generally favorable opinion of their communities, with 83 percent saying they are satisfied or very satisfied, according to Kern COG's ninth annual quality-of-life survey. Looking ahead to the next 20 years, 68 percent of residents think the quality of life in their city or town will be better or stay about the same.

The 1,200-person random telephone survey examined attitudes about community growth, transportation habits, housing, bike and pedestrian matters and other quality-of-life issues throughout Kern County. The demographics included 600 San Joaquin Valley residents from Arvin, Bakersfield, Shafter, Wasco, McFarland and Delano; and 200 responses each from residents in western Kern (Maricopa, Taft, McKittrick), eastern Kern (Mojave, California City, Ridgecrest) and the mountain communities of Tehachapi, Frazier Park and the Kern River Valley.

The biggest upside to living in Kern communities is the "small-town atmosphere" according to 43 percent of respondents, while air quality rated the

worst for Valley and West Kern residents (32 percent). In eastern Kern, citizens lament a lack of job opportunities.

The 2015 survey assessed 22 issues for improving quality of life in Kern County, including: economic vitality and equitable services; community assets and infrastructure; transportation choices; conserving undeveloped land and natural resources; providing a variety of housing choices and; services and public safety.

Forty-five percent of respondents live in a single-family home with a large yard, while 37 percent live in a single-family home with a small yard; 13 percent in an apartment; 4 percent in a townhouse or condominium, and; less than 1 percent live in a mixed use condominium. The majority of residents are most likely to consider single-family housing if they were to relocate within Kern County in the next 10 years.

Consistent with results gathered since 2007, slightly fewer than three out of four residents drive alone in their daily commute to work or school. Sixty-six percent of residents reported a commute

of 40 minutes or less in 2015, compared to 68 percent in 2014.

Thirty-two percent of respondents said they would continue driving alone regardless of any viable alternatives, compared to 30 percent in 2014 and down from 42 percent in 2013. Twenty-six percent also said they would car or vanpool if the option were available.

Godbe Research of San Mateo conducted the community survey over 11 days between March 13 and March 23 in both English and Spanish. Roughly 48 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino; 39 percent Caucasian; 5 percent African-American; 4 percent Asian and 4 percent other. About 16 percent of respondents fell into the 18 to 24 age bracket, 20 percent in the 25-34 age bracket, with 18 percent aged 35-44; 17 percent 45-54; 7 percent 55-59 and 21 percent over 60.

The complete survey, including appendices, is available by going to the following link: http://www.kerncog.org/images/docs/community_survey/community_survey_2015.pdf

Kern cities awarded \$8.2 million through state's Active Transportation Program for bike and ped projects

With a new, statewide emphasis on alternative transportation options such as walking, biking and public transit, cities in the Kern region have turned to competitive grant programs and even the private sector to expand their transportation networks beyond conventional streets and roads.

Cities in Kern were awarded \$8.2 million for 17 projects in 2014 as part of the state's new Active Transportation Program, with even more funding and projects in the running this year. In addition, California's new Cap-and-Trade Program brought in \$2.5 million for a senior hous-

ing project in downtown Bakersfield, as well as \$3 million for the public vanpool system CalVans, which also operates in several Kern cities.

With \$8 million in Proposition 1B bond funds from 2006 remaining for transit safety and security, indications are that Kern will be able to deliver bike, pedestrian and transit projects earlier than anticipated by Kern COG's long-range Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy, reducing air pollution and improving serious health-related concerns.

Meanwhile, Paramount Farms pitched in an unexpected \$15 million as part of its Central Valley Leadership Project to pay for more than seven miles of bicycle/pedestrian facilities, 700 trees and several park improvements in the remote farming community of Lost Hills near I-5 and State Route 46.

Designed and built by company engineers and contractors, the Lost Hills improvements have not only made the community more walkable but are also credited with helping to reduce crime rates.

2014 Regional Awards honor 13 for community service

More than 150 people joined Kern Council of Governments to honor 13 individuals, organizations and programs for making major contributions to the region's quality of life through innovative, cooperative efforts during the annual Regional Awards of Merit Program in March at Seven Oaks Country Club in Bakersfield.

Regional Awards of Merit recipients, as decided by a Kern COG Board subcommittee, are divided among nine broad categories and include:

Local Government:

- The City of Tehachapi for bringing the GranFondo road cycling expo and race to the Kern region.

Journalism:

- KGET News for devoting an entire newscast to the controversial Hydrogen Energy California project in western Kern.

Community Involvement:

- The Bakersfield Homeless Center and City of Bakersfield for its partnership to create employment opportunities for homeless individuals.
- The City of Ridgecrest for organizing the first Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival, which attracted 15,000 people to seven events over four days.

- RidgeProject – a volunteer-led, citywide initiative aimed at beautifying and improving Ridgecrest.

Ken Volpe Award for Environmental Resources and Conservation:

- Kern Transit for dramatically improving rural and intercity public transportation throughout Kern County.

Transportation:

- The City of Bakersfield for the Mohawk Street Extension Project north of Rosedale Highway to Siena Lane.

Richard A. Maxwell Public Safety:

- The Bakersfield Fire Department's Reserve Firefighters for their volunteer efforts to protect the community.

Innovation:

- The City of Bakersfield for its "Bakersfield Mobile" service request application.

Darrel Hildebrand Distinguished Leadership – Public Official:

- Richard Strickland, Kern County Director of Airports.

Darrel Hildebrand Distinguished Leadership – Elected Official:

- Paul Linder, former Councilmember, City of Taft and Kern COG Board Chairman.



Former Ridgecrest Mayor Dan Clark accepts Kern COG's Regional Award of Merit for the first-ever Petroglyph Festival.

Ronald E. Brummett Lifetime Achievement—Individual:

- David Cothrun, former president/superintendent of Taft College, for his community volunteerism.

Chairman's Award of Regional Cooperation:

- The City of Shafter for the Shafter Learning Center.

Kern COG celebrated 24 years of recognizing those programs and people in our region whose ideas and hard work have made life in Kern County better for us all.

Safety campaign reminds bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists to be alert and share the road

With one bicyclist and seven pedestrian fatalities in Bakersfield alone so far this year, a new Kern COG public service campaign aims to help reduce the number of roadway collisions by asking everyone to be more aware.

Billboards, bus wraps and movie ads at Maya Cinema this summer all implore the public to "See and Be Seen" while walking, riding or driving on the road.

More than 1,200 collisions between cars and bicyclists or pedestrians occurred in 2013, one major reason why so many people who live within three miles of their work choose not to ride bikes or walk, according to CommuteKern Rideshare Coordinator Susanne Campbell.

The campaign reminds drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians about the importance of sharing the road and following the safety laws through easy-to-read visual cues.

Kern COG is also working with the Bike and Pedestrian Coalition and Eye Street Productions to complete a safety video that can be used by schools and businesses alike.



FHWA, FTA praise Kern COG for "best practices"

Kern COG has been commended for demonstrating "best practices" in six of seven focus areas examined during its most recent certification review by the Federal Highway (FHWA) and Federal Transit (FTA) administrations.

While the final certification review won't be released until early August, the draft report specifically offers Kern COG praise for:

- innovative participation and consultation processes with its member jurisdictions, stakeholders and the public;
- the scope of its metropolitan planning processes, including its extensive traffic modeling program;
- the development and content of its Regional Transportation Plan;

- comprehensive planning agreements with other agencies;
- congestion management process in transportation management areas and;
- the development and content of its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Each of the seven focus areas considered falls under federal statute and are required to be periodically examined and recertified. Kern COG receives the bulk of its operational funding from FHWA and FTA; however, Caltrans also participates in the review process, which occurs every four years.

The federal review team was especially impressed by the agency's public involve-

ment process, which uses a combination of visual aids, low-tech games and web-based tools that allow the public to "spend" the budget contained in Kern COG's Regional Transportation Plan, a master plan for transportation that includes a 24-year planning horizon.

The games have been used during public workshops, speaking engagements and community festivals to help the public understand the transportation planning process and also to get input on where funding should be spent.

"You're doing things here that agencies five, six, seven times your size aren't doing," said lead FHWA reviewer Scott Carson.

Transportation Projects (Continued from page 1)

Projects include:

Project Description	Construction Investment	Delivery Status
SR 58 Rosedale Hwy Widening	\$12,000,000	under construction
SR 58 & 99 Beltway Operational Improvements	\$118,393,000	under construction
SR 178 Oak to M Street Widening	\$36,000,000	under design
SR 178 Widening Vineland to Miramonte	\$27,000,000	under construction

Federal earmarks to TRIP comprise 68 percent of the estimated \$285 million in construction expenditures for the 2015-16 federal fiscal year.

Federal and state programming categories allow for specially designated transportation projects. The categories include:

Program Name	Total Number of Projects	Total Value of Projects
Active Transportation Program	9 Projects	\$1, 388, 000
Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality	25 Projects	\$9, 901, 000
Regional Surface Transportation	14 Projects	\$10, 365, 000
State Highway Capacity	5 Projects	\$194,393, 000
State Highway Maintenance	22+ Projects	\$68, 583, 000
Total		\$284, 630, 000

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

Meanwhile, state sources, such as State Highway Maintenance, are eligible for projects that keep highway surfaces intact and improve operational improvements.