

# Kern COG Quarterly

BETTER PLANNING. BETTER TRANSPORTATION.



FALL/WINTER 2012

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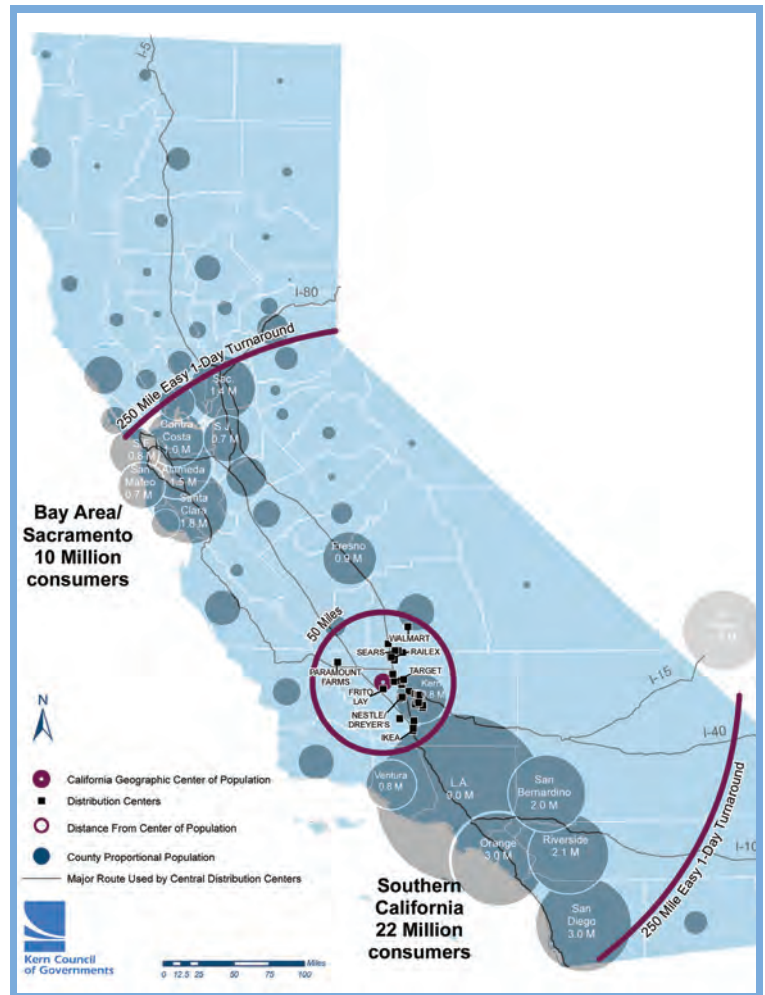
State Route 46 widening nears completion in Kern.

## Kern's freight cluster expands California's economy

A prominent location for agriculture, energy production and aerospace, Kern County is also home to a cluster of distribution centers for products and services to a rapidly growing 40 million West Coast consumers. In fact, Kern's manufacturing and employment base are increasing during a national recession. In 2012, Kern had the fastest employment growth in the nation, adding more than 5,000 jobs.

A recent Kern Council of Governments analysis of distribution centers discovered 40 production / distribution centers within 50 miles of central Kern County, which also happens to be California's population center, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

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## Westside Parkway nearing completion

Next spring, travelers are expected to get their first ride on the new Westside Parkway project in Bakersfield, from Truxtun Avenue just west of State Route 99 to Allen Road.

Construction began phases in 2009, after the California Transportation Commission (CTC) allocated \$131 million under the State Transportation Improvement Program to the City of Bakersfield.

Please see Westside Parkway page 4



# Rideshare Week 2012 increases numbers of pledges

Nearly 400 Kern County residents pledged to share a ride during CommuteKern's Rideshare Week 2012 in early October, boosting the program's online carpool matching database membership by 20%.

Commuters who pledged to rideshare during the week were eligible win a bicycle donated by Snider's Cyclery or cash gift cards and discount coupons courtesy of sponsors, including: Valley Clean Air Now, San Joaquin Valley Air District, Bakersfield Condors, GET Bus, and Kern Regional Transit. CommuteKern would like to congratulate our big prize winners for the week.

To help promote ridesharing, CommuteKern hosted several events during Rideshare Week, including:

**Footloose Monday:** Workers started the week off right by walking to lunch.

**Transit Tuesday:** Free coffee and donuts were shared with GET bus and Kern Regional Transit commuters at GET Bus' Bakersfield College Transit Center from

7-9 a.m. while water and cookies were distributed to commuters at GET's Downtown Transit Center from 3-5 p.m.

**Bicycle Wednesday:** CommuteKern joined Bike Bakersfield at the following schools celebrating International Walk or Bike to School Day:

- Standard Middle School
- Amy B. Seibert Elementary
- Pioneer School Elementary
- Bessie Owens Elementary
- Almondale Elementary

**Health Awareness Thursday:** CommuteKern participated in Chevron's Health and Wellness Fair.

**FanPool Friday:** Rideshare participants celebrated the Bakersfield Condors Hockey pre-season kick-off with a special "buy-one-get-one-free offer".

Visit [commutekern.org](http://commutekern.org) for free carpool matching and information regarding other transit opportunities.



# Kern Energy Watch presents the Ugly Sweater Challenge



This holiday season, take the Ugly Sweater Challenge. Don't be shy! Put your grandpa, siblings, parents, or even your pet in an ugly sweater and enter them into the challenge to win amazing prizes.

Kern Energy Watch invites Kern County residents 18 and older to win gift cards by participating in this year's Ugly Sweater Challenge. To enter you must take an original picture of you in your ugliest sweater. A photo submission does not have to be of one person. Categories are: Individual, Group, and Pets. The first place winners from each category will receive \$100 in gift cards from local businesses. Second place wins \$50 and third place

wins \$25 in gift cards. See challenge rules and registration information online at [kernenergywatch.com](http://kernenergywatch.com).

What better way to save money and energy at home than to put on a warm sweater, fuzzy socks, and turn down your thermostat? The Ugly Sweater Challenge reminds us of energy-efficient alternatives to increasing the thermostat at home. So, lower your thermostat by a couple of degree's, throw on an ugly sweater to keep warm, take a picture and upload it at [kernenergywatch.com](http://kernenergywatch.com).

Hurry! Voting starts on December 10th. That gift card will go a long way toward a decent sweater.

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# Long-range transportation plan outlines spending

You can help shape how more than \$5.3 billion in anticipated transportation and energy-efficiency projects will be developed over the next 28 years just by playing a free, web-based, interactive game at [directionsto2050.com](http://directionsto2050.com).

More than 70 major highway, road maintenance, public transit, rail, pedestrian and bicycle improvements are projected to be funded throughout Kern County over the next three decades. Kern COG's **Directions to 2050 Regional Transportation Plan** (RTP) details how our region will spend federal, state and utility transportation dollars over the long term.

Directions to 2050 will contain an ambitious program of roadway corridor, public transit, rail, bicycle and pedestrian improvements designed to keep the regional economy moving over the next 28 years. Ideas and input garnered during presentations, workshops and through an online game at [directionsto2050.com](http://directionsto2050.com) will

inform which policies, programs, and projects will be prioritized and when they will be implemented over the next three decades.



In March 2012, Kern COG began conducting community outreach meetings for the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Directions to 2050. Sixteen outreach meetings were held in communities throughout Kern County including: Arvin, Bakersfield (2), California City, Delano, McFarland, Ridgecrest, Shafter, Taft, Tehachapi, Wasco, Lamont, Greenfield, Rosamond,

Frazier Park and Lake Isabella.

Additionally, two stakeholder meetings representing business and industry interests and environmental and social equity interests were held to advise the process.

The outreach also included a website: [directionsto2050.com](http://directionsto2050.com) where people could provide input using the same activity as was presented at the community meetings. More than 4,700 people have provided input through the outreach process.

Using results of the outreach conducted from March through June, Kern COG developed a second round activity to gain input on where transportation dollars should be spent in the future. The activity was presented to the public at the Tehachapi Mountain Festival, the Kern County Fair and the Ridgecrest Desert Empire Fair. Kern COG staff will be presenting the activity to various community groups throughout Kern County through December 2012.

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## Kern COG working with military to preserve vital air space in region



Kern COG – working with the Kern County Planning Department and regional stakeholders – is considering planning strategies to protect flight operations in restricted airspace around the county's two military bases.

The Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) for military airspace in eastern Kern identified planning issues that have the potential to reduce or eliminate important flight operations around Edwards Air Force Base in the southeast and China Lake Naval Weapons Center near Ridgecrest.

Planning problems identified at the last JLUS meeting include:

- Shielding wind-turbine obstruction lights (visible to pilots but not to area residents and vehicle traffic).
- Developing a county/city property deed (deed clause

that would transfer every time affected property changes hands – without the need for controlling agency monitoring).

- Working with business and real estate developers to include references to military operating practices in land deeds.
- Assisting with on-base solar panel farms.
- Developing a night sky ordinance that limits lighted sources built underneath military airspace.
- Considering other recently completed joint land use studies that are already in the project-building stage to glean what worked.

Kern County Planning Director Loreli Oviatt will lead the JLUS implementation strategy meetings and Kern COG will monitor and assist its members as appropriate.



# Kern County transit services benefit from bond sales



Four cities, the County of Kern and Golden Empire Transit will share \$9.5 million for public transportation projects out of Proposition 1B bond funds sold earlier this year.

Arvin, California City, Ridgecrest, Wasco, Golden Empire Transit District and County of Kern will all receive money for projects such as: vehicle security

fences; park-and-ride lots; compressed natural gas buses and vans; new bus bench shelters; the expansion of a transit maintenance garage; and other important projects.

Kern COG has several other public transit projects on its list and will begin those projects upon future sales of State bonds. The project list extends out to 2016.

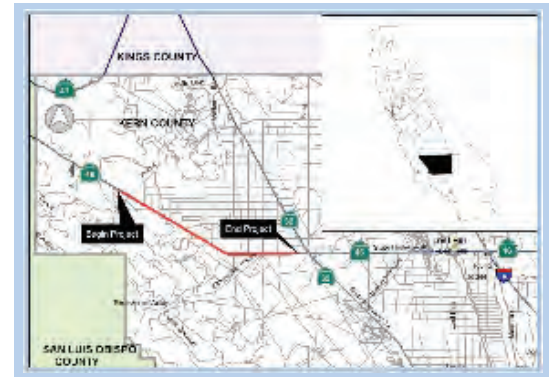
# State Route 46 widening nears completion in Kern

Two of three segments along Highway 46 from the Kern County line to just west of Interstate 5 that began widening construction in 2009-10 are now complete and open to the public.

The two-lane highway west of Interstate 5 in Kern County will be a four-lane divided highway once Segment 3 is completed. Segment 1 (7.7 miles in length) and segment 2

(7.3 miles) were opened in late 2011. Segment 3 is 12 miles long and scheduled for completion by September 2014 but could be delivered up to one year early, which would allow the traveling public to traverse the new 27-mile 4-lane highway as soon as the summer of 2013.

Construction bids for all segments have totaled nearly \$100 million in federal, state and local funds.



# Westside Parkway: Final phase to begin in spring 2013

*(continued from page 1)*

**PHASE 1** - The first phase of the project, the Mohawk Street Extension, connected Mohawk Street from Truxtun Avenue to Rosedale Highway. This phase included three bridges, decorative façades and lighting and new traffic signals. The Mohawk Street Extension opened nine months ahead of schedule on June 30, 2011.

**PHASE 2/3/5** - Construction is continuing on Phase 2, which continues from Mohawk Street to Allen Road. The contractor is paving the future freeway lanes and working on the bridges at Coffee Road, Calloway

Drive, Jewetta Avenue and at the Friant-Kern Canal.

**PHASE 4** - Work also continues on Phase 4, the Truxtun Tie-in. This phase completes the eastern end by constructing the on- and off-ramps between the freeway and Truxtun Avenue. This phase also includes three bridges and a third lane to Truxtun Avenue in both directions from the on- and off-ramps through the Empire Drive intersection.

**PHASE 6** - The contractor is also finishing work on the Allen Road

Bridge. Traffic is expected to move onto the bridge by the end of 2012. All phases under construction are expected to open in spring 2013.

The CTC recently allocated \$26 million for the final phase of the Westside Parkway, which will extend the freeway to Stockdale Highway and Heath Road. Construction is expected to start in the spring 2013, and wrap up in summer 2014.



# Freight: Catapillar, Dollar General newest in Kern region

(continued from page 1)

For those centers distributing products statewide, the southern San Joaquin Valley has the lowest transportation costs and carbon footprint of any place in California. This is because the population center has the location that is closest to every consumer in the state. Companies like Frito-Lay, Target, Sears, Walmart, IKEA, and Nestle's/Dryer's have benefitted from this fact for decades.

This year alone, Catapillar and Dollar General are constructing distribution facilities within the cluster. The location also provides for an easy, 250-mile, 1-day turnaround trip to the largest portion of California's population, including San Diego, Sacramento, the Bay Area and Las Vegas.

Several key transportation projects are already under way or at least partially funded that will benefit distribution to and from the southern San Joaquin Valley. They include: the Shafter Intermodal Rail Facility; Tehachapi Pass Rail Corridor Improvement Project (double-tracking); Centennial Corridor (Highway 58 connection between Highway 99 and I-5); and various improvements on other major freight movement routes throughout Kern.

These projects and others are expanding Kern's consumer base for goods and services, driving job growth in the production, service, and distribution sectors. While some of these projects are not yet fully funded, opportunities exist for local investment to improve our region's economy.

Investment in an inland port connection via rail to the ports of LA/Long Beach and Oakland would further improve distribution efficiency within California. The City of Shafter is developing the Shafter Intermodal Rail Facility (SIRF), which would bring in containerized freight via rail and then refill empty containers with products from the region to be shipped back to the ports. Shipping full containers in both directions will improve distribution efficiency, while

increasing the demand for products from Kern. The potential benefit to California's economy could be in the billions.

Investment in transportation – the distribution mechanism of the economy – has the dual benefit of expanding the consumer base while increasing the demand for production.

This same principle is being employed by China as it continues to build ever larger cargo container ships to reduce the cost of shipping per container. China knows that a more efficient distribution system will increase demand for its products, allowing it to increase both production and jobs.

Focused investment in a more efficient transportation / distribution system is the engine that will grow an economy, not only through construction but also through the long-term expansion of our region's consumer base and demand for products and services. Centrally locating production and distribu-

tion centers as close as possible to consumer markets, and reducing travel time and congestion to those markets, makes products and services more affordable and competitive, increasing demand.

As the regional transportation planning agency, Kern COG conducts studies to collect data, analyze current freight movements and better plan future transportation improvements to accommodate the need for an efficient goods movement system. They include: an examination of truck origins and destinations; rail operations inventories; at-risk rail segments; economic and air quality benefits of rail service; and a San Joaquin Valleywide goods movement plan.

All studies are available for download at: <http://kerncog.org/cms/publications/publications> under the sections Goods Movement, and Rail Studies. Kern COG is scheduled to update the long-range Regional Transportation Plan in Fall of 2013. Provide your input at: [www.directionsto2050.com](http://www.directionsto2050.com)

