

Kern COG Quarterly

BETTER PLANNING. BETTER TRANSPORTATION.

Free traveler information line launches

Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) has launched its free 511 Traveler Information Phone System. Kern 511 provides free, real-time traffic information, including updates on congestion, road construction, crashes, travel times and transit information on Interstate 5 and many other major roadways.

“We’re excited to launch this new free public service for Kern County residents and visitors,” said Executive Director Ahron Hakimi. “The 511 phone system is a valuable extension to the Kern County 511 Traveler Information System. With this new resource, motorists have multiple ways to access real-time traffic information. The system gives travelers advanced warning of road conditions and congestion and, in turn, increases safety on the roadways.”

Kern 511 offers two convenient ways for travelers to access free roadway information in both English and Spanish:

- Call 511 toll free from any landline or mobile phone. Standard mobile phone minutes and roaming charges may apply.
- Visit Kern511.com, which features live traffic camera feeds and an interactive map showing travel times, congestion, road construction and electronic message signs.

By calling 511 from any landline or



Kern 511 provides free and real-time traffic information.

mobile phone, callers will receive traffic information in addition to free transfers to neighboring 511 systems, area airports, transit agencies and the National Weather Service. Kern 511 also is updated with public safety alerts, including AMBER and Silver alerts.

With any web-enabled device, motorists can visit Kern511.com/mobile for traffic updates. The mobile version of the website offers the same functionality as Kern511.com, including an interactive map, links to resources and more.

Kern COG encourages drivers to “Know Before You Go” by using the Kern 511 system before taking to the roadway, have a passenger check while on the road or pull over to a safe location to avoid distracted driving. ■



SPRING/SUMMER 2013

Inside...

2

Local elected officials weigh in on transportation plan.

Transit plan examines needs of elderly, disabled, and low-income.

3

Environmental justice concerns a top priority for planners.

Success stories highlighted from the Kern region.



Construction updates

Work on regional road projects continues at a rapid pace

Transportation construction in the Kern region remains at a 40-year high in 2013 with several projects recently completed, almost finished or just starting construction. Many of these are state highway improvements designed for safety and traffic capacity. These projects were funded with local, state and federal revenue sources.

Please see Regional projects, page 4



Local elected officials weigh in on transportation plan

Kern COG continues to ask the public to help prioritize long-term transportation and energy-related strategies through a series of workshops and events supporting its 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), "Directions to 2050."

Portions of the draft RTP – a master plan for transportation in the Kern region covering local roads, highways, freeways, commuter and freight rail, aviation, pedestrian, bicycle and public buses over the next 30 years – will now go before city councils and the Kern County Board of Supervisors for input from local elected officials.

The RTP anticipates more than \$3 billion in funding for regional transportation projects but must also show how better transportation planning will help reduce air pollution by 10 percent before 2050.

Throughout 2012, Kern COG hosted public workshops and spoke to more than 5,000 residents about their transportation preferences at venues including: the Kern County Fair, Desert Empire Fair in Ridgecrest, chambers of commerce meetings, service clubs, schools, health collaboratives and others.

Anyone wanting to comment on the Regional Transportation Plan or participate in the priority-setting activity can log onto www.directionsto2050.com where the same information is available online.

Kern COG will also discuss transportation planning and projects at a variety of festivals throughout the region. A schedule of outreach activities through June (see above). ■

MEETING SCHEDULE

April 13

Maricopa Gusher Days
Maricopa City Park, 799 Stanislaus St.

April 26

Arvin Wildflower Festival
Smotherman Park, 890 Walnut Drive

May 1

RTP Meeting
Ridgecrest City Council, 6:00 p.m.

May 4

California City Desert Tortoise Days
Central Park, Conklin and Heather Streets

May 7

RTP Meeting
Arvin City Council, 6:00 p.m.

May 9

RTP Meeting
McFarland City Council, 6:00 p.m.

May 15

RTP Meeting
Bakersfield City Council, 5:15 p.m.

May 21

RTP Meeting
Board of Supervisors, 2:00 p.m.

May 21

RTP Meeting
California City City Council, 6:00 p.m.

June 3

RTP Meeting
Delano City Council, 5:30 p.m.

June 4

RTP Meeting
Shafter City Council, 7:00 p.m.

June 17

RTP Meeting
Tehachapi City Council, 6:00 p.m.

June 18

RTP Meeting
Taft City Council, 7:00 p.m.

June 25

RTP Meeting
Maricopa City Council, 6:00 p.m.

July 2

RTP Meeting
GET Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

Transit plan examines needs of elderly, low-income

Kern COG is asking the public's help to update a six-year-old transit plan by identifying any unmet public or social service transportation needs for elderly, disabled or low-income residents.

Before urban and rural public transit operators – such as city dial-a-ride services or Golden Empire Transit – can qualify for federal and state funds for new vans and buses, they must

quote the county's Consolidated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) to demonstrate that any identified needs have been addressed.

The region's most recent CHSTP was completed in 2007 and may not reflect changes made in social services transportation modes.

Please see Transportation plan, page 4

Environmental justice concerns a top priority for planners

Potential environmental hazards, social vulnerability and health were among the top environmental justice criteria selected as standards against which to measure a \$3.1 billion program of transportation projects in Kern COG's 2014 Regional Transportation Plan.

As part of its 2014 RTP process, Kern COG hosted three Environment and Social Equity Committee meetings where participants discussed what criteria should be used to identify geographic, environmental justice areas within the Kern region, and also suggested best practices for Kern COG's Environmental Justice Area Analysis. The group was made up of stakeholders from environmental organizations and social service providers.

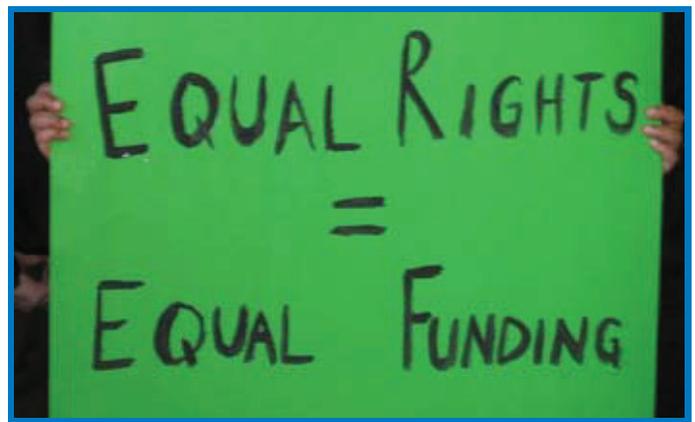
Environmental justice is a concept borne of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Fundamentally, it prohibits any single population group, such as the poor or minority neighborhoods, from consistently bearing the burden of governmental activity.

For transportation planners, the law means that projects intended to benefit the public have to be weighed in terms of

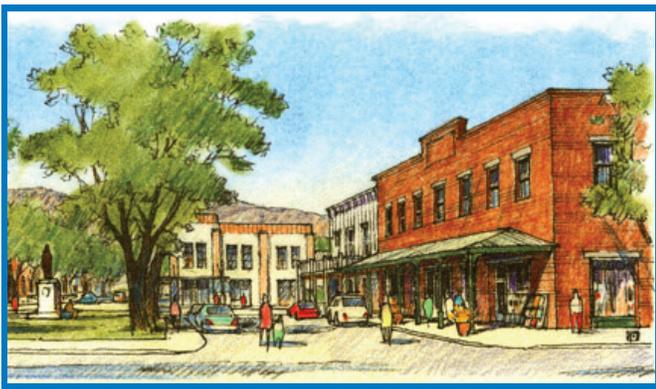
who they benefit most, and how. Funding must be spread equitably across transportation modes to ensure, for example, those who don't own a vehicle can benefit as much or more than those who have cars.

Committee members asked Kern COG to rely on a 2010 University of California (UC) Davis method to identify environmental justice areas in the region. The UC Davis method included specific indexes that assessed cumulative environmental hazards, social vulnerability, and health in EJ areas.

The results from the performance measures will be used in the modeling of the land-use planning scenarios and for the Regional Transportation Plan. ■



Success stories highlighted from the Kern region



Artist rendering of the Tehachapi plan

Tehachapi's latest General Plan update and a transportation impact fee in Bakersfield are two examples of how local governments are working toward more sustainable development and reducing air pollution.

Kern COG has included these examples and many others in its 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, a master plan for all forms of transportation over the next 25 years.

City of Tehachapi General Plan – In January 2012, the City of Tehachapi adopted its 2035 General Plan Update, which emphasizes mixed-use development and walkable neighborhoods. The updated General Plan will maintain a compact urban form by classifying all areas outside the city limits and within its sphere of influence area as open space.

Metro Bakersfield Transportation Impact Fee Core Area – Land-use policies that reward developers for concentrating their projects within the urban core are the basis of the Metro Bakersfield Transportation Impact Fee Core Area. Bakersfield officials developed the core area as a way to reduce permitting fees and promote infill and mixed-use development while discouraging sprawl and providing closer access to quality transit. ■

Regional projects: Plans in the works for the upcoming year

(continued from page 1)

State Route 14 Red Rock Canyon Bridge Replacement

Located on Route 14 approximately 24 miles north of Mojave, this project will protect against future scour damage by replacing the existing bridge and armor the channel with concrete rock slope protection. The \$10 million job will begin construction in summer 2013.

State Route 46 Widening – Segments 1, 2 and 3

Three segments of State Route 46 in Kern County totaling 27 miles and widened from two to four lanes are now open to the public. The new four-lane divided expressway starts from the San Luis Obispo County line and ends at Brown Material Road. Project costs totaled more than \$200 million.

State Route 99 Widening

Construction began in March on State Route 99 in Bakersfield from Highway 119 to the Wilson Road overcrossing, adding a 12-foot lane and 10-foot inside shoulders to the existing highway in each direction and separated by a concrete median barrier. The \$31 million project is scheduled to open by 2014.



Construction continues on the west side parkway east bound ramp at the Truxtun Extension.

On the other end of Bakersfield a widening project from State Route 204 to the Beardsley Canal will also add a 12-foot lane and 10-foot inside shoulder plus auxiliary lanes in each direction. Building is scheduled to start in April on the \$12 million project.

Westside Parkway – Update

The Westside Parkway – Bakersfield’s new eight-mile, east-west freeway – extends from Truxtun Avenue just west of State Route 99 to Stockdale Highway just east of Heath Road. Phases 2 through 5, from the Truxtun extension to Allen Road, are expected to open this summer, include freeway bridges at Coffee Road, Calloway Drive, Jewetta Avenue and the Friant-Kern Canal.

The Parkway’s final phase, which extends the freeway from Allen Road to Stockdale Highway and Heath Road began construction in March and will be completed by mid-2014. ■

Transportation plan: Unmet transit needs addressed

(continued from page 2)

Unmet needs may include housing developments or businesses that are not being served by public transportation; bus shelters for hot days; or additional service along an already busy route. For an unmet need to be considered reasonable to meet, it must conform to existing financial criteria established for the transportation provider. The criteria depends on the request.

The CHSTP determines how best to meet those needs and also anticipate future needs by discussing strategies on the most efficient ways to finance urban and rural

public transit and social services transportation without duplicating services.

Public outreach efforts throughout the region began in March. Stakeholder meetings will be held in April and the project will be finalized in July 2013. Once completed, the updated CHSTP should provide a competitive advantage in the grant application process to countywide public and social services transportation operators. ■