

Kern COG Quarterly

BETTER PLANNING. BETTER TRANSPORTATION.



**Kern Council
of Governments**

WINTER 2016

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Nearly \$285 million set for transportation projects throughout Kern in 2015-16

Kern COG's short-term Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) reflects nearly \$285 million in programming across five funding categories on major transportation projects for 2015-16.

The estimated \$285 million in transportation programming includes \$194 million in Thomas Roads Improvement Program (TRIP) projects in Bakersfield, including the State Route 58/Rosedale Highway widening and operational improvements to State Routes 58 and 99.

Kern COG's 2015 FTIP, which identifies local, state and federally funded transportation projects over a five-year period, includes 75 projects totaling \$284,630,000 in five programming categories:



Traffic exits State Route 178 at the newly completed Morning Drive Interchange in Bakersfield.

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Kern region awarded Active Transportation Program funding

The Kern region has been awarded more than \$9.5 million for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure during the second round of California's Active Transportation Program (ATP). In addition to bicycle and pedestrian projects, ATP funds Safe-Routes-to-Schools programs and educational efforts to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety on a competitive basis.

Seven projects were selected in the Kern region from the 23 that were submitted. Six of the projects were funded through the state's share of the funding pool, with one project funded from the regional share.

More than 960 projects were submitted statewide. The applications are reviewed and ranked by experts chosen by the California Transportation Commission. The projects selected are:

1. **Mojave Pedestrian Improvement Project.** Submitted by the Kern County Roads Department, \$896,000 was granted to help fund the \$1.24 million project that will install sidewalks throughout the community. This project was the highest scoring in the ATP statewide competition with a score 99 of 100.
2. **Lamont Pedestrian Improvement Project.** Also submitted by the Kern County Roads Department, \$1.43 million was allocated toward the \$1.98 million total project to install sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements throughout Lamont.
3. **"A" Street Improvement Project.** The City of Bakersfield received \$1.05 million against a \$1.10 project to help fund pedestrian improvements along "A" Street in the Olean-der neighborhood.

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Environmental and Social Equity Roundtable kicks off 2018 RTP

Kern Council of Governments officially kicked off its 2018 Regional Transportation Plan on Dec. 16, 2015 with more than 20 non-profit and community representatives attending its first Environmental and Social Equity Roundtable meeting.

The Roundtable reviews the methodology Kern COG uses to designate environmental justice and Title VI areas in Kern County. Participants attended from various interest areas in the community, including: the Tejon Tribe; Lamont/Weedpatch Collaborative; North of the River Recreation and Park District; Kern County Department of Public Health; Caltrans; Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance; First 5 Kern; Bike Bakersfield; Garden Pathways; and the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment.

The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan will serve as a long-range, 20-

year master plan for federal and state transportation funding in Kern County. Federal regulations require the impacts of that funding to be analyzed relative to protected groups identified in the Civil Rights Act and environmental justice (EJ) executive orders, including low-income and minority populations. The regulations are intended to ensure no single population is experiencing all the benefits or burdens of government-built infrastructure, among other issues. EJ principles are to be considered throughout the planning and decision-making process. Procedures must provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement during the planning and development of programs, policies, and activities, including potential effects, alternatives and mitigation measures.

Federal review agencies recommended the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) EJSCREEN tool, which uses

mapping and screening to provide a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators. Users choose a geographic area for which the tool then provides demographic and environmental information. All of the EJSCREEN indicators are publicly available. Participants requested that Kern COG develop maps depicting how the new methodology compares with the previous methodology. In addition, participants requested that Kern COG develop maps that show the differences, if any, using the EJSCREEN tool versus the California CalEnviroScreen tool. CalEnviroScreen is a screening methodology that can be used to help identify California communities that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution.

A second meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2016, to enable participants to review the methodologies.

Shafter introduces electric transit bus service to Kern County

Using a combination of Proposition 1B Transit and State funds, the City of Shafter purchased four electric vans and four 220-volt, 70 amp charging stations to introduce electric buses to its public transit service.

Transit operators throughout Kern County have introduced alternative fuel buses using compressed natural gas (CNG) and clean diesel but Shafter is the first transit operator in Kern County to use buses powered only by electricity.

In the future, Shafter plans on purchasing and constructing overhead solar shelters to be as "green" as possible. Kern COG staff will closely track Shafter's success with their service change to encourage other rural local operators to consider going electric.



Kern COG announces 2015 Regional Award of Merit recipients

Kern Council of Governments will honor 18 individuals, organizations and programs for making major contributions to this area's quality of life through innovative, cooperative efforts during its annual Regional Awards of Merit Program on March 3, 2016.

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

Local Government:

- **1+1+2=Game Changer Program** (County of Kern, Bakersfield College and the Kern High School District) for crafting attainable and economically efficient pathways for student success.
- **West Side Cemetery District in Taft** for restoring and working to preserve the historical Midway Cemetery.
- **Kern County Water Agency's Improvement District No. 4** for its

45-minute video "Do the Water," aimed at educating the region's students on the drought crisis.

Community Involvement:

- **2015 Oildorado Executive Board** for its leadership, teamwork, collaboration and contributions to Taft and the County of Kern.
- **Building Healthy Communities South Kern** for working to improve community health and initiate policy and systemic change in education, the environment, recreation and health care access.
- **The Ford Theater** in Shafter for creating a one-of-a-kind community theater.
- **The Bakersfield College Environmental Horticulture Program's Garden Fest** for bringing students, small businesses and professionals together to promote sustainable and responsible

landscaping practices within the region.

Ken Volpe Award for Environmental Resources and Conservation:

- **James H. Gregory** for transforming an abandoned hotel into innovative and highly functional apartment grounds.
- **Airport Valet Express** for providing safe, reliable and environmentally friendly transportation to Kern County residents traveling to LAX.

Transportation:

- **The City of Ridgecrest** – Engineering Department for the West Ridgecrest Boulevard Reconstruction project.
- **Thomas Roads Improvement Program** for the State Route 178/Morning Drive Interchange project.

Richard A. Maxwell Public Safety:

- **Bakersfield Police Department** for reducing call response times and improving its community outreach.

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CommuteKern 2015 Rideshare Week

More than 1,200 participants pledged to rideshare at least one day a week to help save money, reduce traffic headaches and clean the air during Kern COG's annual Rideshare Week celebration in October.

Rideshare Week is a nationally celebrated event during the first full week in October designed to encourage commuters to try other modes of transportation besides driving solo.

In 2015, CommuteKern's Rideshare Week promoted sustainable transportation such as carpooling, vanpooling, riding the bus, bicycling, walking, brown bag lunches and telecommuting. Commuters who drive electric or hybrid vehicles were highlighted in appreciation of their efforts to reduce carbon emissions and help to save our air.

Staff worked with local media and businesses to help promote Rideshare Week activities and educate commuters about the great prizes they could win, such as a bicycle, an iPad, iPod shuffles, movie pass-

es and gift cards. Participation reflected a 15% increase in pledges from the previous year. Surveys have shown that approximately half of all participants continue to rideshare after their pledge has ended.

Rideshare Week sponsors included: the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District; Valley Clean Air Now; Snider's Cyclery; GET Bus; Kern Transit; Airport Valet Express; and Bike Bakersfield.

To help commuters get involved and have fun at the same time, Kern COG offered a variety of tools for employers and individuals. Marketing materials were distributed to more than 50 large businesses and agencies throughout the county and additional information and activities were available on the commutekern.org website.

In celebration of Transit Tuesday, staff from Kern COG, GET Bus and Kern Transit served coffee and snacks during the morning rush hours, and water and cookies in the afternoon to all bus commuters. CommuteKern also celebrated International Walk-to-School Day by



GET bus commuters enjoy snacks during Rideshare Week's Transit Tuesday.

recognizing students at Standard Middle School who walked to school that day.

Sharing the ride is a low-cost solution that will help meet the Kern region's mandate for clean air and growing transportation needs. Rideshare Week has also enabled CommuteKern to introduce commuters to commutekern.org, which offers a great deal of information and links to begin ridesharing as well as a FREE carpool matching service.

Transportation Projects (Continued from page 1)

<u>Program Name</u>	<u>Total Projects</u>	<u>Total Value</u>
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. The Active Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program and Regional Surface Transportation Program are generally delivered by local jurisdictions, while the state highway capacity and maintenance projects are generally delivered by Caltrans.

Major capital road improvements either under construction or already completed include:

<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Construction Investment</u>	<u>Delivery Status</u>	<u>Expected Completion</u>
SR 58 Rosedale Hwy widening	\$12,000,000	Under construction	Summer 2016
SR 58 & 99 Beltway operational improvements	\$118,393,000	Under construction	Summer 2017
SR 99 Hosking Road Interchange	\$31,000,000	Under construction	Spring 2016
SR 178 Widening Vineland to Miramonte	\$27,000,000	Under construction	Summer 2017
SR 178 Morning Drive Interchange	\$56,000,000	Completed	Fall 2015

A comprehensive status report on Projects of Regional Significance throughout Kern County may be downloaded at: http://www.kerncog.org/images/docs/progress_report_201510.pdf. The report is updated quarterly.

Transportation program funding (Continued from page 1)

- Kern Avenue Elementary School Safe-Routes-to-School Connectivity Project**
2. Approximately \$293,000 will pay for sidewalk improvements near Kern Avenue Elementary School in McFarland.
- Rail Corridor Project.** The City of Tehachapi received more than \$2 million to help fund the \$2.24 million project to improve pedestrian safety along the railroad corridor that divides the city by providing infrastructure that prevents unsafe crossing.
- Kern County Active Transportation Plan.** Kern COG received \$250,000 for a planning study to inventory existing Active Transportation facilities, identify deficiencies and develop a system for prioritizing and funding for new projects.
- The Kern River Parkway Bike Trail Western Extension Phase I project** – submitted by the County of Kern – will continue the popular Kern River bike path from Highway 43 and the Kern River to the Buena Vista Lake Recreation Area on an alignment parallel to the existing state highway. Kern COG awarded the \$4.34 million project \$3.54 million in regional ATP funding.

Regional Awards (Continued from page 3)

Innovation:

- Downtown Bakersfield Corporation for its collaborative efforts to ensure downtown Bakersfield is presented as “Safe, Secure and Welcoming!” to residents and tourists.

Darrel Hildebrand Distinguished Leadership – Public Official:

- Lorelei Oviatt**, Kern County Planning and Community Development Director.
- Bob Neath**, Engineering Manager with the Kern County Public Works Department.
- Jim Suver**, Ridgecrest Regional

Hospital CEO.

Ronald E. Brummett Lifetime Achievement — Individual:

- Dr. Ronald M. Kean**, Professor Emeritus of Music at Bakersfield College, for his continued dedication to the vibrancy of Kern County’s choral music legacy.

Chairman’s Award of Regional Cooperation:

- The Bob Parker Scout Lodge** in California City, a true community project with many volunteers contributing their time, labor and

materials over a five-year period.

Kern COG is celebrating 25 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.

The awards banquet will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 3, 2016 at Seven Oaks Country Club, 2000 Grand Lakes Ave in Bakersfield. Cost is \$45 per person, which includes a two-entree dinner buffet. Reservations are due by noon Tuesday, March 1 by calling (661) 861-2191 or emailing lcollins@kerncog.org. No money will be accepted at the door.