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KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS WINS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

BAKERSFIELD, CA — July 9, 2026 — The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) has been selected as the winner of the **2026 Outstanding Overall Achievement – Medium MPO Award** by the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). This national honor recognizes Kern COG's leadership, innovation, and holistic approach to regional transportation planning, sustainable community development, and infrastructure development across Kern County. Specifically, the award mentions the development of the "Greenpass Corridors" concept, essentially a truck bypass that spares rural communities from increasing truck traffic. This approach allows for more community-centric infrastructure to create more vibrant downtowns in communities like Shafter, Arvin, Lamont, and Delano.

The national award will be officially presented on **Thursday, September 17, 2026**, during the [2026 AMPO Annual Conference](#) held in Sacramento, California. The Conference brings together thousands of transportation professionals, elected officials, and federal policymakers from across the country to discuss the future of transit, safety, and infrastructure funding.

Each year, AMPO celebrates the country's top Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that go above and beyond federal requirements to advance regional mobility. The "Medium MPO" category recognizes mid-sized organizations serving populations between 200,000 and 1,000,000 that demonstrate excellence in community collaboration, long-range vision, and efficient use of public resources. Kern COG was selected by a committee of national peers for its outstanding implementation of regional projects and commitment to improving the quality of life for its 11 incorporated cities and rural communities.

"The award is recognition of all the hard work put in by Kern COG staff, and the common-sense public input from our communities," said Rob Ball, Deputy Director of Planning of Kern COG.

For more information on Kern COG's award, please visit <https://www.kerncog.org/kern-cog-news-events/>

About Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG)

The [Kern Council of Governments](#) is the designated regional planning agency, state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), and federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Kern County, California. Kern COG coordinates transportation investments, air quality strategies, and long-range infrastructure plans among its 11 member cities and the County of Kern to ensure continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive regional development.

About the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)

[The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations \(AMPO\)](#) is the national nonprofit membership organization for MPOs. Founded in 1994, it provides transportation professionals with federal policy analysis, technical assistance, research tools, and peer networking to advance regional mobility.

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GREENPASS CORRIDORS: KERN AREA REGIONAL GOODS-MOVEMENT OPERATIONS (KARGO) COMMUNITY PROSPERITY/PROTECTION STUDY

The Kern Area Regional Goods-movement Operations (KARGO) Community Prosperity/Protection Study (CPPS) was developed in response to increasing climate-related threats affecting one of California's most critical inland goods movement regions. Kern County serves as a major freight crossroads, connecting the Central Valley, Southern California, and statewide rail and highway networks. Its roadway and rail systems support agricultural exports, logistics and distribution, energy production, and long-haul freight movements that are essential to both the regional and state economies. However, these landside freight facilities are increasingly vulnerable to climate stressors, including extreme heat, wildfire, flooding, and landslides, which threaten infrastructure reliability, safety, and economic continuity. The economically disadvantaged Kern region needs more living wage jobs from growing logistics/automated manufacturing opportunities while reducing trucking impacts through the creation of a network of "Greenpass Corridors."

Led by the Kern Council of Governments (KernCOG), the KARGO CPPS represents the third major phase of the broader KARGO initiative, building upon earlier efforts focused on freight circulation, system performance, sustainability, and economic competitiveness. This study distinguishes itself by integrating climate science directly into goods movement planning and decision-making. Its primary objective is to identify the impacts of climate change on existing and planned freight infrastructure and translate those findings into implementable strategies that enhance system resilience. The study evaluates vulnerability across the county's multimodal freight network and disadvantaged communities, with a focus on critical corridors that support freight reliability, emergency response, and economic activity. The study included extensive public input on freight movement in the region. In response to that input the concept of truck bypasses around rural disadvantaged communities was developed into creating a network of Greenpass Corridors. These corridors divert growing truck traffic away from rural downtowns and sensitive receptors such as housing, schools and hospitals, while providing access to living wage jobs. The reduced trucking then allows for more bike/pedestrian friendly complete streets treatments in the rural downtowns. The Greenpass Corridors also provide a last mile networking connecting to existing and planned intermodal rail facilities. Encouraging diversion of trucking to rail, reducing emissions, road wear, and congestion while improving road safety. The study identified nine new potential intermodal rail facilities, one of which is currently under construction between Bakersfield and Shafter, CA.

A defining feature of the KARGO CPPS is its emphasis on actionable outcomes. Climate projections and hazard modeling were applied to assess exposure to environmental risks, while vulnerability analyses considered both the operational significance of freight assets and

community reliance on these systems. Public input further informed the identification of infrastructure that is essential to local functionality. This integrated approach enabled the study to rank and prioritize freight corridors and projects based on risk, resilience needs, and economic importance. Selected priority projects were advanced to approximately 30 percent conceptual design, incorporating climate considerations into engineering solutions. This level of development ensures that proposed improvements are not only technically sound but also positioned for near-term funding and implementation. These projects are being incorporated into the 2026 KernCOG Regional Transportation Plan update.

The study also introduces a robust economic framework that integrates lifecycle analysis and benefit-cost considerations into project prioritization. By evaluating long-term resilience benefits alongside capital investment needs, KARGO CPPS helps direct limited transportation resources toward projects that provide the greatest sustained value. This methodology represents a significant advancement over traditional planning approaches, offering a scalable and transferable model that can be adapted by other inland freight regions facing similar climate challenges.

The benefits of the study are substantial and far-reaching. By identifying vulnerabilities and advancing resilient infrastructure solutions, KARGO CPPS reduces the risk of freight disruptions caused by extreme weather events, thereby supporting supply chain continuity and economic stability. Improved reliability of roadway and rail corridors enhances emergency response capabilities and strengthens Kern County's role as a vital freight hub. At the same time, the study addresses community needs by improving safety and resilience for residents living near freight corridors and supporting more sustainable and equitable transportation outcomes.

The KARGO Community Prosperity/Protection Study exemplifies excellence in goods movement planning by delivering actionable, climate-resilient solutions for critical landside infrastructure. Its integration of climate science, engineering, economic analysis, and stakeholder input establishes a comprehensive and forward-thinking framework for addressing the challenges of climate change. By advancing project-ready concepts and prioritizing implementation, the study goes beyond traditional planning efforts to create tangible pathways for investment and delivery. Its collaborative, innovative approach and lasting regional impact make it a strong and deserving candidate for recognition as a leader in transportation planning and resilience.

During 2025, the study achieved key milestones, including completion of countywide climate projections and vulnerability assessments, identification and prioritization of critical roadway and rail corridors, and advancement of selected projects to approximately 30 percent conceptual design. Continued coordination with KernCOG and regional partners ensured that these efforts are well positioned for funding and implementation, reinforcing the study's role as a catalyst for resilient goods movement infrastructure in Central California.

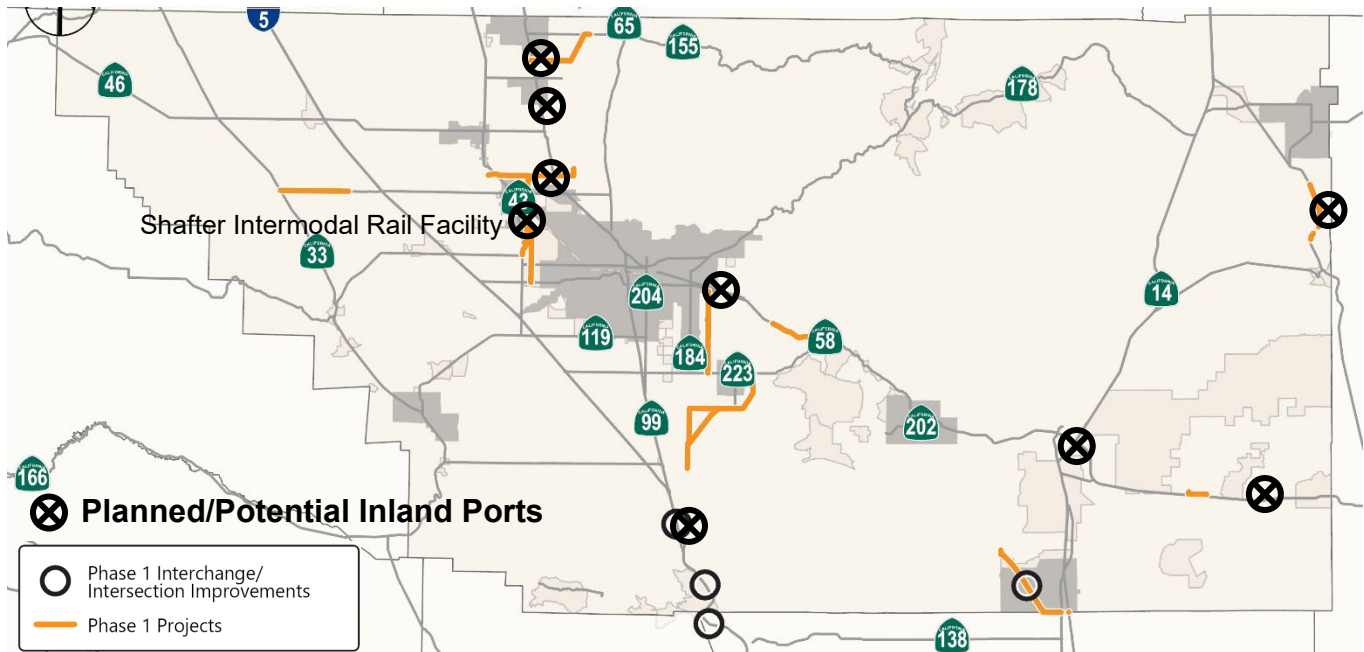
Greenpass Corridors: Kern Area Regional Goods-movement Operations (KARGO) Community Prosperity/Protection Study (CPPS)

Description: The study was funded by a Caltrans Climate Adaptation Planning grant program and focused on infrastructure resilience to extreme weather-related threats. It directly addresses those challenges while advancing significant environmental/economic co-benefits for communities throughout the region. Kern County stands to benefit greatly from expanded living-wage employment opportunities in logistics and automated manufacturing, while simultaneously reducing trucking impacts through the development of a network of “Greenpass Corridors.” This network provides for important connectivity to a network of nine planned/potential inland ports. The first of these ports is now under construction in 2026. Privately funded, this Shafter facility will be served by the BNSF mainline.

Route 58 Tehachapi Pass Corridor, October 2015 mudslide buried nearly 100 vehicles across a 39 football field stretch of highway closing this national highway freight network route for a week



Rural Greenpass Network Connecting to Potential inland Ports Throughout The County



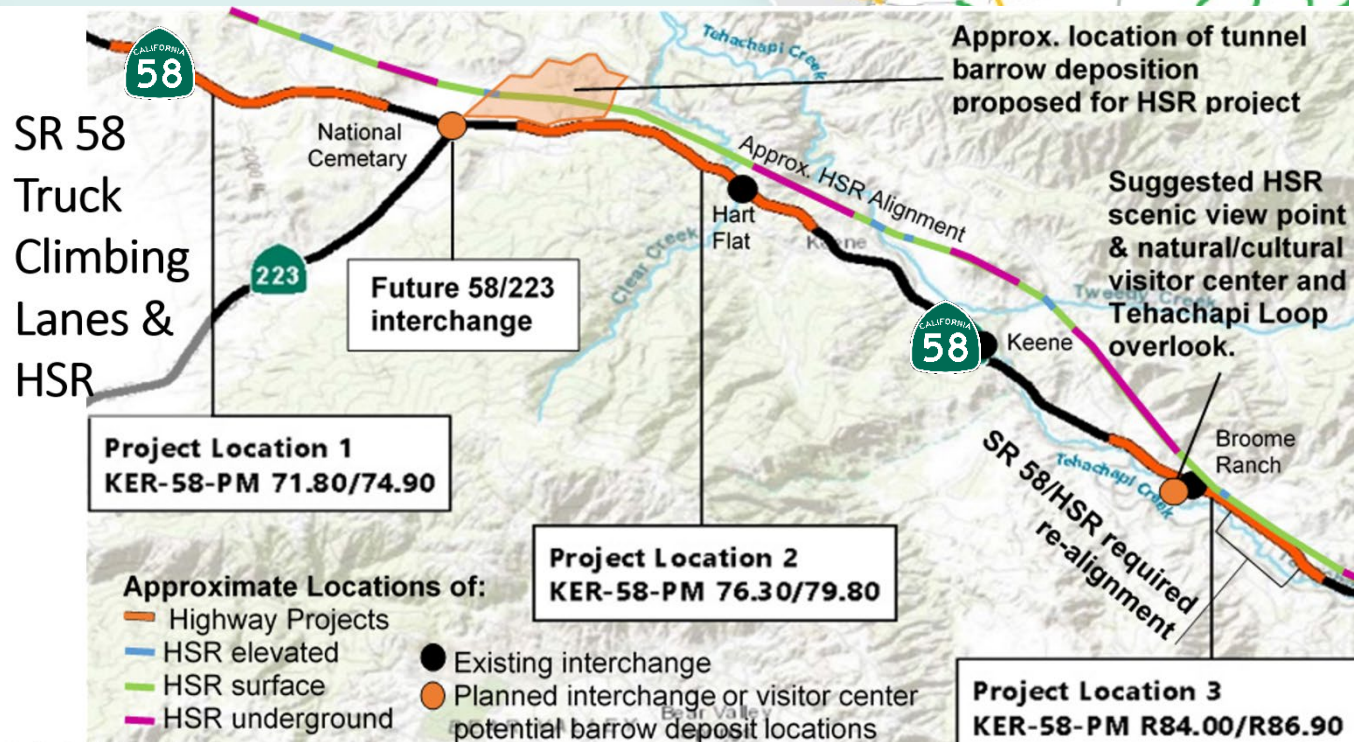
Shafter Intermodal Rail Facility BNSF/WLC Under Construction -



Truck Volumes on SR 58 over Tehachapi Pass are 25% Higher than I-80 Donner Pass and the SR 58 Corridor has 3 Planned Inland Ports in Shafter, Mojave, and Bartow



Source: FAF 2019



2026

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