

**AGENDA
KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026
6:30 P.M.**

PRIMARY MEETING LOCATION

**Kern Council of Governments
Board Room
1401 19th Street, Suite 300
Bakersfield, CA 93301**

**SECONDARY MEETING LOCATION
TELECONFERENCING AVAILABLE**

**Ridgecrest City Hall
Conference Room B
100 W. California Avenue
Ridgecrest, CA 93555**

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DISCLAIMER: This agenda includes the proposed actions and activities, with respect to each agenda item, as of the date of posting. As such, it does not preclude the Committee from taking other actions on items on the agenda, which are different or in addition to those recommended.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

II. MOMENT OF SILENCE, REFLECTION, OR PRAYER:

III. ROLL CALL:

Congestion Management Agency Ex-Officio Members:

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS: This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons to address the Committee on any matter not on this agenda but under the jurisdiction of the Committee. Committee members may respond briefly to statements made or questions posed. They may ask a question for clarification; make a referral to staff for factual information or request staff to report back to the Committee at a later meeting. **SPEAKERS ARE LIMITED TO TWO MINUTES. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS FOR THE RECORD PRIOR TO MAKING A PRESENTATION.**

Disabled individuals who need special assistance to attend or participate in a meeting of the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee may request assistance at 1401 19th Street, Suite 300, Bakersfield CA 93301 or by calling (661) 635-2900. Every effort will be made to reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities by making meeting material available in alternative formats. Requests for assistance should be made at least three (3) working days in advance whenever possible.

- V. CONSENT AGENDA/OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:** All items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine and non-controversial by Kern COG staff and will be approved by one motion if no member of the Council or public wishes to comment or ask questions. If comment or discussion is desired by anyone, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and will be considered in the listed sequence with an opportunity for any member of the public to address the Council concerning the item before action is taken. **ROLL CALL VOTE.**

- A. APPROVAL OF DISCUSSION SUMMARY:** Minutes from meeting of August 20, 2026.
ROLL CALL VOTE.

- B. TRANSPORTATION & REGIONAL ACTIVE CONNECTIVITY IN KERN 2028 (Invina - Jayasiri)**

Comment: Kern COG was awarded a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to update its 2018 Active Transportation Plan. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee has reviewed this item.

Action: Information.

- C. UPDATE: SB 375 AND ADOPTION TIMELINE FOR THE 2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY (Raymond)**

Comment: An update on the activity related to Senate Bill (SB) 375 and the adoption timeline for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). This item was reviewed by the Regional Planning Advisory Committee.

Action: Information.

- D. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GRANTS/COG ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AND FEEDBACK MONITORING DATA – EMAIL REQUESTS DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026 (Romero Valdivia)**

Comment: The 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) includes a strategy to provide sub regional feedback on SB 375 travel reduction goals and provide technical assistance and grant writing assistance to help sub areas of the County that need it most. This is an annual process reviewed by the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) and Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC).

Action: Information and feedback: Member agency technical assistance requests are due to Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri at RInvina@kerncog.org by October 2, 2026.

E. CIRCULATION UPDATES: TRUCK ROUTES (Davisson)

Comment: In response to state requirements that all cities and counties adopt truck routes, Kern COG examined truck routing throughout the Kern region. The KARGO studies provide a regional framework of solutions to this issue. This item was reviewed by both Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) and Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC).

Action: Information.

***** END CONSENT AGENDA – ROLL CALL VOTE *****

VI. FY 2026-27 TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT ACT ARTICLE 3 PROGRAM OF BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PROJECTS (Enriquez)

Comment: Kern Council of Governments, acting in the capacity as the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency, administers funding for the Transportation Development Act (TDA) Article 3 Program. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee has reviewed this item.

Action: Adopt the fiscal year 2026-27 Transportation Development Act Article 3 Program of Projects. ROLL CALL VOTE.

VII. FINAL 2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN/SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY; FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT; FINAL 2027 FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM; CORRESPONDING FINAL AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS (Raymond)

Comment: The 4-year public involvement process gathered input from over 10,000 residents for the long- and near-term federal transportation planning documents. The process concluded on July 2, 2026, with the closure of a 55-day public review period for the Draft 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS); 30-day review period for the Draft 2027 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), and corresponding Draft Air Quality Conformity Analysis (Conformity); and a 45 day review for the associated Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). All draft documents with responses to comments are available online at <https://www.kerncog.org/2026-rtp/>. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), the Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) and the Kern COG Environmental Attorney have reviewed these documents.

Action: 1) Authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution No. 26-32 for: (a) certification of the Final PEIR for the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan, (b) adoption of the CEQA Findings of Fact; (c) adoption of the Statement of Overriding Considerations; and (d) adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring Program.

2) Authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution No. 26-33 adopting the 2027 Federal Transportation Improvement Program, 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and Corresponding Conformity Analysis.
ROLL CALL VOTE.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER'S MEETING REPORTS: (None)

IX. CALTRANS REPORT:

- District 6 Capital Projects.
- District 9 Capital Projects.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

XI. MEMBER STATEMENTS: On their own initiative, Council members may make a brief announcement or a brief report on their own activities. In addition, Council members may ask a question of staff or the public for clarification on any matter, provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information, or request staff to report back to the Council at a later meeting concerning any matter. Furthermore, the Council, or any member thereof, may take action to direct staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda.

XII. ADJOURNMENT- NEXT MEETING – The next scheduled meeting will be held on October 15, 2026.

**KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Meeting of August 20, 2026

KERN COG BOARD ROOM
1401 19TH STREET, THIRD FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

THURSDAY
August 20, 2026
6:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Smith at 6:30 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE:

II. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

III. ROLL CALL:

Members Present: B. Smith, P. Smith, C. Parlier, D. Couch, M. Hawkins, S. Gorman, M. Perez, G. Reyna, D. Noerr

Congestion Management Agency Ex-Officio Members: M. Warney, C. Parra, N. Peacock, B. Duran

Members Absent: O. Calderon, C. Morse, B. Osorio, P. Espinoza

Others: Jason Miao (D6), Norm Witt (online)

Staff: R. Invina-Jayasiri, C. Valle, R. Ball, B. Raymond, R. Pacheco, I. Enriquez, S. Brar, B. Van Wyk (KC Counsel), J. Schlosser, S. Sanchez, M. Heimer, M. Saberon Ybarra, A. Banuelos, J. Leon, V. Romero Valdivia, E. Flickinger

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS: This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons to address the Council on any matter not on this agenda but under the jurisdiction of the Council. Council members may respond briefly to statements made or questions posed. They may ask a question for clarification; make a referral to staff for factual information or request staff to report back to the Council at a later meeting. **SPEAKERS ARE LIMITED TO TWO MINUTES. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS FOR THE RECORD PRIOR TO MAKING A PRESENTATION.**

Chairman Smith asked if there were any comments. There were none.

V. CONSENT AGENDA/OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT: All items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine and non-controversial by Kern COG staff and will be approved by one motion if no member of the Council or public wishes to comment or ask questions. If comment or discussion is desired by anyone, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and will be considered in the listed sequence with an opportunity for any member of the public to address the Council concerning the item before action is taken. **ROLL CALL VOTE.**

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 18, 2026

B. MOBILITY INNOVATIONS AND INCENTIVES PROGRAM – STATUS REPORT

Action: Information.

C. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GRANTS/COG ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AND FEEDBACK MONITORING DATA – EMAIL REQUESTS DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026

Action: Information and feedback: Member agency technical assistance requests are due to Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri at rinvina@kerncog.org by October 2, 2026.

D. 2027 CYCLE 8 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM – STATEWIDE CALL FOR PROJECTS UPDATE

Action: Information.

E. FEDERAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE (PM3) TARGETS FOR TRAVEL TIME, DELAY, AND VEHICLE OCCUPANCY

Action: Information.

F. PROJECT ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Action: Information.

G. UPDATE: SB 375 AND ADOPTION TIMELINE FOR THE 2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGIES

Action: Information.

**H. FY 2021-22 TDA STREET AND ROADS CLAIM – CITY OF MCFARLAND
FY 2022-23 TDA PUBLIC TRANSIT CLAIM – CITY OF MCFARLAND
FY 2024-25 TDA PUBLIC TRANSIT CLAIM – CITY OF SHAFTER
FY 2024-25 TDA STREET AND ROADS CLAIM – CITY OF SHAFTER
FY 2024-25 TDA STREET AND ROADS CLAIM – CITY OF DELANO**

Action: Adopt Resolution No. 26-27 TDA Streets & Roads claim for FY 2021-22 for City of McFarland for \$2,687,827.

Adopt Resolution No. 26-28 TDA Public Transit claim for FY 2022-23 for City of McFarland for \$43,429.

Adopt Resolution No. 26-29 TDA Public Transit claim for FY 2024-25 for City of Shafter for \$325,201.

Adopt Resolution No. 26-30 TDA Streets & Roads claim for FY 2024-25 for City of Shafter for \$1,387,390.

Adopt Resolution No. 26-31 TDA Streets & Roads claim for FY 2024-25 for City of Delano for \$2,984,420.

***** END CONSENT CALENDAR – ROLL CALL VOTE *****

NO PUBLIC COMMENTS WERE MADE NOR WAS THERE A COMMITTEE MEMBER WISHING TO PULL ANY ITEM OFF OF CONSENT. COMMITTEE MEMBER D.Couch MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS A THROUGH H, SECOND BY COMMITTEE MEMBER C. Parra, MOTION CARRIED WITH A UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.

VI. FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2026 FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION SECTION 5311 PROGRAM OF PROJECTS

Action: Adopt the FY 2026 FTA Section 5311 Program of Projects. ROLL CALL VOTE.

M. Warney motioned to approve and D. Couch second. Motion carried with a unanimous Roll Call Vote.

VII. KERN COG SENTATE BILL NO. 1 TRANSIT – CALTRANS STATE OF GOOD REPAIR TRANSIT FY 2026-27 PROGRAM OF PROJECTS

Action: Adopt the fiscal year 2026-27 SGR Program of Projects and authorize the Chair and Executive Director to sign Resolution No. 26-25 ROLL CALL VOTE.

G. Reyna motioned to approve and D. Couch second. Motion carried with a unanimous Roll Call Vote.

VIII. HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP) CYCLE 13 – CALL FOR PROJECTS

Action: Information.

IX. BOARD MEMBER'S MEETING REPORTS: (None)

X. CALTRANS REPORT:

- District 6 Capital Projects. (Reported)
- District 9 Capital Projects. (Reported)

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

1. Projects:
 - a. SR 99 and SR 58 missing connectors – 7th Movement set to open by year end.
 - b. 7th Standard/SR 43
 - c. Truck Climbing Lanes on SR 58 Phases I & II.
 - d. Cal City Blvd./SR 58 safety project.
 - e. Cherry Avenue Grade Separation – Federal-State Partnership - \$43 million.
 - f. Kratzmeyer/Olive Grade Separation – RCE Application in.
 - g. Renfro Grade Separation – RCE Application in.
 - h. West Urban Corridor Alignment.
 - i. Delano High Street BUILD Grant.
 - j. SR-58-I-40 BUILD Planning Grant.
 - k. Congressional Appropriation Support.
2. Meetings:
 - a. Kern Transportation Foundation – Save the Date – March 11
 - b. CTC in San Diego set for 8/20-21
 - c. Update meeting with D9 on 8/11
3. Caltrans D9
4. Caltrans D6
5. High Speed Rail
 - a. Staff meetings between Shafter and HSR as well as between Bakersfield and HSR.

b. HSR Board Meeting on 8/19 - Update

6. Highlight Contingency List Approvals.

XII. MEMBER STATEMENTS: On their own initiative, Council members may make a brief announcement or a brief report on their own activities. In addition, Council members may ask a question of staff or the public for clarification on any matter, provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information, or request staff to report back to the Council at a later meeting concerning any matter. Furthermore, the Council, or any member thereof, may take action to direct staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT- NEXT MEETING – The next meeting scheduled will be held on September 17, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted

Jay Schlosser, Executive Director

ATTEST:

Bob Smith, Chairman

DATE: 09.17.2026



V.B. TPPC

September 17, 2026

TO: Transportation Planning Policy Committee

FROM: Jay Schlosser, Executive Director

By: Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri, Regional Planner

SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Policy Committee Consent Agenda Item: V.B.

TRANSPORTATION & REGIONAL ACTIVE CONNECTIVITY IN KERN 2028

DESCRIPTION:

Kern COG was awarded a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to update its 2018 Active Transportation Plan. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee has reviewed this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Transportation & Regional Active Connectivity in Kern 2028 (TRACK 2028) will update Kern COG's regional active transportation plan to provide safer, more connected, and more equitable walking and biking options. The plan will align recent local and regional bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts, establish priority projects, and offer tools to support effective implementation and funding.

Major outcomes include: 1) enhanced public engagement; 2) improved resiliency, safety and public health; 3) expanded economic benefit of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to key destinations and recreational/tourism assets such as the Kern River Canyon <https://www.kerngatewaytrail.com/>; and, 4) build on existing strategies to reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled through increased use of non-fossil-fuel travel modes.

Kern COG, in partnership with the Kern River Parkway Foundation and local agencies, will lead a comprehensive outreach process to ensure participation from rural, underserved, and tribal communities. A consultant will prepare the draft and final plan, which will be reviewed by stakeholders and adopted by the Kern COG Board. The updated project list will feed into the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan and enhance eligibility for Active Transportation Program, TDA Article 3, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, and other state and federal funding sources.

The Attachment is the scope of work that was submitted for the Caltrans grant. The consultant procurement process is expected to begin in December 2026 with the Final plan update concluding by November 2028.

ACTION: Information.

ATTACHMENT: TRACK 2028 Scope of Work

TRACK 2028 - SCOPE OF WORK

Update to the 2018 Kern COG Active Transportation Plan

Project Information	
Grant Category	Sustainable Communities Competitive
Grant Fiscal Year	FY 2026-27 (3 years to expend grant)
Project Title	Transportation & Regional Active Connectivity in Kern 2028 (TRACK 2028)
Organization (Legal name)	Kern Council of Governments

Disclaimer

Agency commits to the Scope of Work below. Any changes will need to be approved by Caltrans prior to initiating any Scope of Work change or amendment.

Introduction

The Transportation & Regional Active Connectivity in Kern 2028 (TRACK 2028) is needed to provide safer, more connected, and more equitable walking and biking options that support healthier and more economically resilient communities. This project will leverage recent bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts across Kern County and its cities, that have identified new needs, resulting in an inconsistent, out-of-date regional active transportation plan projects list. The update will summarize the planning process, identify priority improvements and supply tools to help Kern COG, local jurisdictions, and community partners implement projects and effectively program funding. Major outcomes include: 1) enhanced public engagement; 2) improved resiliency, safety and public health; 3) expanded economic benefit of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to key destinations and recreational/tourism assets such as the Kern River Canyon <https://www.kerngatewaytrail.com/>; and, 4) build on existing strategies to reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled through increased use of non-fossil-fuel travel modes.

Project Stakeholders

Kern COG, in consultation with the sub-applicant Kern River Parkway Foundation (KRPFF) will use a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process to select the consulting team. The winning consulting team will perform the non-administrative tasks. The outreach task will conform to Kern COG's latest adopted public outreach policy (<https://www.kerncog.org/policies/>). The consulting team will develop an outreach plan that leverages the RTP outreach process and use recommended best practices from Caltrans and other stakeholders. The consultant will hold a stakeholder kick-off workshop that will go over the project objectives and outreach process and take input on the outreach plan and amend it as appropriate. We anticipate, the outreach will include an initial survey and/or interview process using the RTP contact database of more than 1,000 stakeholders, including contacts for staff from the municipalities, the County, transit agencies, and representatives of bicycle/pedestrian advocates, schools, public health/safety, equity and environmental groups. The kick-off will be followed by a minimum of two public workshop/events to gain general public input on the project lists. The consultant will develop reports for existing conditions, outreach, analysis, draft and final plans. The public environmental review of the plan update will be performed when the projects are incorporated into the 2030 RTP. The results of the public outreach will be summarized in the plan and included for consideration by the Kern COG Technical Advisory Committee and the Transportation Planning Policy Committee which will adopt the plan and the 2030 RTP.

Overall Project Objectives

The proposed Plan update will leveraged the Kern COG RTP best practice outreach process to garner stakeholder input, build upon recent bike/ped planning efforts, and position Kern to maximize funding for bike/ped related grant funding through the establishment of an updated list of projects that can help to make Kern County a better place for people to walk and bike. The Plan will encourage safer, healthier communities by developing comprehensive, more resilient, bicycle and pedestrian network that provide safe and comfortable access to local parks, schools, workplaces, retail, transit, and other essential destinations. Major outcomes include: 1) enhanced public engagement; 2) improved resiliency, safety and public health; 3) expanded economic benefit of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to key destinations and recreational/tourism assets such as the Kern River Canyon; and, 4) build on existing strategies to reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled through increased use of non-fossil-fuel travel modes.

Summary of Project Tasks

Task A: Project Administration

This is an Administrative Task that shall only be charged against by the Grantee for the Administration of this grant project. Budget for this task (grant award and local match) cannot exceed 5% of the grant award amount.

Grantee will manage and administer the grant project according to the Grant Application Guidelines, Regional Planning Handbook, and the executed grant contract between Caltrans and the grantee.

Upon notice of the project award, Kern COG staff will contact District 6&9 staff to arrange a project kick-off meeting. Kick-off meeting with Caltrans - Meeting Notes, quarterly invoices and progress reports, DBE reporting (federal Grants only).

Task Deliverables
1. Submittal of quarterly progress reports and invoices 2. Project Kick-off meeting.

Task B: Consultant Procurement

Grantee will procure a consultant, in a competitive RFP process consistent with state and federal requirements, Local Assistance Procedures Manual for procuring non-Architectural and Engineering consultants, the Grant Application Guide, Regional Planning Handbook, and the executed grant contract between Caltrans and the grantee.

A draft consultant contract to prepare the Plan will be submitted to Caltrans staff for review and approval. Kick-off meeting notes and subsequent comments from Caltrans staff regarding the COG's consultant procurement policy and consultant contract will be included.

Task Deliverables
1. Approved RFP process and document 2. Draft Consultant contract. 3. Final Consultant contract. 4. Kick-off meeting agenda and notes

Task 1: Existing Conditions

The Consultant use various methods including stakeholder interviews throughout the Kern Region (including municipals, the County of Kern) to record current facilities and needs. The results will be entered into the Analysis section of the Plan. The consultant shall update the current plan list as follows:

1. Projects Spreadsheet Status Updates, GIS Map/database, sub region listing: Inventory/map of all projects in the plan including attributes: Project name, limits, lengths, status, jurisdiction, sub region, updated rough cost estimate based on project length and average cost for facility type, Projects that are funded, and high priority projects for each jurisdiction. The consultant shall be provided the existing spreadsheet and maps for the current plan.
2. Regulations/funding source update to be included in existing conditions report
3. Existing conditions report to include potential weather resiliency projects/alternate routes/strategies especially for class I facilities
4. Kern River Canyon Gateway Trail Plan phasing/connectivity mapping/project costs <https://www.kerngatewaytrail.com/> . The plan will look at issues such as public safety, increased emergency response costs, public access on/near private property owner support, homelessness camping, tribal concerns, etc.
5. Summary presentation of existing conditions/Gateway Trail Plan

Task Deliverables
1. Projects Spreadsheet Inventory Status/Cost Updates, GIS Map/database, sub-region listing
2. Statutory Regulations and Funding Sources
3. Existing Conditions/resiliency report
4. Gateway trail plan report
5. Summary Presentation of Existing Conditions

Task 2: Analysis/Ranking

The Consultant will use the data from the existing conditions and compare the results with the previous Plan to determine how successful the previous Plan. The analysis shall provide:

1. A near-, mid- and long-term project ranking lists.
2. The analysis section will summarize the success of the previous plan and identify potential areas of improvement, lessons learned.
 - a. The analysis will include a discussion of weather resiliency strategies and projects.
 - b. The analysis will include identification of gaps and potential gap closure projects especially in rural areas.
 - c. Crash analysis and other data – Consultant will provide collision locations; primary collision factors; violation category; movement before collision; time categories (typical times, school arrival/dismissal); demographics of persons involved in collision (age, gender, etc.); and other data that may be used in ranking projects.
 - d. Summary of public outreach input that needs to be addressed in the Plan Update
 - e. Draft and Final Analysis Report
3. The analysis will include a section on the Kern River Canyon Gateway Trail project and how to better connect this recreational facility to the 30+mile Kern River Bike Path. A phased plan shall be developed for both the proposed recreational trail system with biking and parking access. Summary of public outreach input that needs to be addressed by the Plan

Task Deliverables
1. Ranked Project Lists
2. Active Transportation Plan Update Draft/Final Analysis Reports
3. Kern Gateway Trail Connectivity Draft/Final Breakout Section of Analysis Reports

Task 3: Public Outreach

Using Kern COG's approved public outreach policy, Kern COG, KRPF, and the Consultant will schedule workshops and events to inform the public of the project, solicit input from the public and stakeholders, to update the plan. The outreach will use best practices and the input from stakeholder groups in the project kick-off workshop. The outreach shall leverage the Kern COG RTP Outreach which includes annual 1,200 person statistically valid phone survey. This process has garnered input from over 8,000 residents countywide over the past 3.5 years. Invited stakeholders shall include: staff from the municipalities, the County, transit agencies, and representatives of bicycle/pedestrian advocates, schools, public health/safety, equity and environmental groups and interested members of the public, including residents of under resourced and underserved communities and Native American Tribes.

The public outreach report shall be included in the Analysis Reports and updated in the Draft and Final reports. The Consultant shall budget for a minimum of 1 stakeholder kick-off meeting and 2 general public workshops of which at least 1 will be focused on the Kern Gateway Trail project. Additional, workshops may be budgeted. Workshops will be both in-person and virtual. Workshops should include:

- a. PowerPoint presentations
- b. Sign-in sheets
- c. Community Surveys
- d. Website announcements
- e. Conceptual drawings
- f. Receipts for light snacks
- g. Promotional outreach
- h. Other tools and methods using best practices and leveraging the RTP outreach process.

Task Deliverables
1. One Kick-off Stakeholder Workshop 2. A minimum of Two General Public Engagement Workshops 3. A minimum of Two Kern COG Technical Advisory Committee regular meetings and Two Transportation Planning Policy Committee regular meetings 4. Public Outreach Report

Task 4: Draft and Final Plan

Using all the previously completed data and public input, the Consultant will prepare a draft Plan for review and comments from all participating parties including the Project Steering Committee, stakeholders, and public. The Final Plan will be prepared by the consultant and the PSC, Kern COG staff will present the Final Plan to the Kern COG Board for acceptance and circulation among the impacted communities. Once adopted by the Kern COG Board, the Final Plan will be uploaded to Kern COG's website as a public document, circulated to interested parties, and implemented as funds become available.

Task Deliverables
1. Draft Plan 2. 30-day Public Comment period and Public Hearing on Draft Plan 3. Draft Plan comments and recommendation summary 4. Final Plan acceptance by resolution of the Kern COG Board.



V.C.
TPPC

September 17, 2026

TO: Transportation Planning Policy Committee

FROM: Jay Schlosser, Executive Director

By: Rob Ball, Deputy Director/Planning Director
Ben Raymond, Regional Planner

SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Policy Committee Meeting Consent Agenda Item: V.C.

UPDATE: SB 375 AND ADOPTION TIMELINE FOR THE 2026 REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

DESCRIPTION:

An update on the activity related to Senate Bill (SB) 375 and the adoption timeline for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). This item was reviewed by the Regional Planning Advisory Committee.

DISCUSSION:

This discussion provides an update on the activity related to the RTP and the SB 375 Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The report is updated regularly with the most recent developments listed first.

September 17, 2026 – Kern COG Board scheduled to adopt the 2026 RTP/SCS and associated documents.

September 2nd, 2026 – A staff report summarizing the comments received on the Draft 2026 RTP/SCS and its associated documents, along with staff responses, was presented to RPAC and TTAC.

July-August 2026 – The public engagement process is complete and the public review period for the Draft 2026 RTP/SCS closed July 2, 2026. Kern COG received more than 30 written comment submissions, in the form of letters and emails, on the Draft 2026 RTP/SCS and associated documents.

June 2026 – Continuing presentations on Draft 2026 RTP/SCS in Arvin/Lamont, Bakersfield, Mojave, and Tehachapi; presentation also at the Kern County Board Supervisors Meeting and at the Kern COG Board Meeting.

May 2026 – Provided presentations on Draft 2026 RTP/SCS in Arvin, California City, Delano, Maricopa, McFarland, Ridgecrest, Rosamond, Shafter, Taft, and at the GET Board Meeting.

April 7, 2026 – Coordination call with California Air Resource Board staff (CARB) to further discuss the Technical Methodology submitted by Kern COG in February.

March 23, 2026 – Kern COG staff had a coordination call with CARB staff to discuss the Technical Methodology submitted by Kern COG in February. Very limited clarifications were addressed

February 27, 2026 – Submitted the 2026 Kern SCS Technical Methodology Version 2 to the California Air Resources Board (ARB).

December 10, 2025 – Received revised modeling protocol from the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to account for impact of the revocation of the ARB waiver for setting more stringent emissions than the rest of the nation.

November 13, 2025 – Concluded the 4-year outreach process engaging over 10,000 participants on the 2026 RTP SCS via statically valid phone/text surveys, fairs/festivals, workshops and more.

October 10 – November 13, 2025 – Completed 7 stakeholder outreach events on the RTP SCS engaging 300 participants. The effort garnered input from 7 stakeholder groups in the communities of Bakersfield, Taft, Delano, Ridgecrest, Arvin, Rosedale, and Wasco. The stakeholder groups included Bike Bakersfield, Taft Chamber of Commerce, Center for Race Poverty and the Environment, AkaMya Indian Culture Group, FARO Church/Arvin HS Students, Riverlakes Farmers Market, and Wasco Youth Police Activities League.

September 17-28, 2025 – Received input from over 1000 people at the Kern County Fair booth on the development pattern scenarios for the 2026 RTP.

August 6, 2025 – Kern Regional Transportation Modeling Committee met to review Kern Travel Model validation and documentation for the 2026 RTP/SCS. Information is posted on Kern COG website under RPAC agendas.

May 21st – June 4th, 2025 – Kern COG hosted four hybrid (in-person/online) community workshops and three online workshops collecting input on the KARGO Community Prosperity/Protection Study and Freight related projects for the RTP/SCS. Workshops were held in Arvin, California City, Keene, and Shafter.

May 13, 2025 – CARB formally adopted their determination that Kern COG's 2022 RTP/SCS, when implemented, would achieve the SB 375 Target Reductions by 2035. In June 2023, Kern COG received an email from CARB to notify that the 2022 SCS was "officially approved."

April 23, 2025 – SB 375 Target Setting Update – Kern COG staff is participating in a workshop hosted by ARB for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to discuss SB 375 Target Updates and other SB 375 program-related items.

April 17, 2025 – Kern COG Annual Statistically Valid Community Survey was conducted in January. Survey results have been compiled and presented to the Kern COG board at the April Board Meeting. Results of the Annual Community Survey are available on Kern COG's website.

September 18th – 29th, 2024 – Kern COG collected input for 2026 RTP/SCS and collected input on transportation issues in the community at the Kern COG booth during the Kern County Fair.

July 24th – August 2nd, 2024 – Kern COG hosted four community workshops collecting input on the KARGO Community Prosperity/Protection Study and Freight related projects for the RTP/SCS. Workshops were held in Greater Arvin area (at the Tejon Indian Tribe Community Center), Delano, Rosamond, and Tehachapi.

June 28, 2024 – Kern COG submitted to the ARB the Kern COG 2026 SCS Technical Methodology and responses to their draft comments on the 2022 SCS. ARB staff responded that their final comments on the 2022 SCS are moving up their management reviews. As of July 22, the final comments have yet to be provided.

May 20, 2024 – Kern COG hosted an outreach roundtable for the Kern Area Regional Goods-movement Operations (KARGO) Study, which will feed into the 2026 RTP and include additional outreach events to collect input on the study and development of the 2026 RTP. Community based organizations and local/state agencies provided feedback on the outreach plan.

May 3, 2024 – Golden Empire Transit (GET) hosted a workshop on the Metro Bakersfield Moves – Long-Range Transit Plan (LRTP). The LRTP is a key input in the development of the 2026 RTP. During the outreach process for the LRTP, surveys collected public input for both the LRTP and the RTP.

April 18, 2024 – The Kern COG Board adopted the 2024-2050 Regional Growth Forecast. The Regional Growth Forecast establishes population forecasts for the horizon of the 2026 RTP.

February 20, 2024 – ARB provided another email re-confirming that they officially accept Kern COG's 2022 SCS, and provided a draft of 11 recommendations for the 2026 SCS. No estimate on when their final acceptance letter will be submitted.

January 9, 2024 and November 2, 2023 – ARB provided an email update on the status of Kern COG's promised 2022 RTP/SCS acceptance letter. A key upper management review person is not available this month pushing the issuance of the final letter into 2024, 7-months after ARB indicated acceptance of Kern COG's SCS in their June 13th email.

August 10, 2023 - At the quarterly SJV Inter-Agency Consultation meeting, ARB staff announced that the SCSs for Kern, Stanislaus, and Tulare COGs have been approved and will receive official documentation in September. Fresno and San Joaquin COGs have completed their reviews and

are in the process of making some required board actions before they can receive their official approval. Kings, Madera, and Merced are still under review by ARB staff.

July 26, 2023 – 2026 RTP/SCS Roundtable Meeting was held for environmental, equity, business & industry groups on the public outreach process at Kern COG and included 14 representatives from the Delores Huerta Foundation, Central California Asthma Collaborative, Sierra Club, Home Builders Association, Golden Empire Transit, Caltrans, County Public Works, and staff from the cities of McFarland, Taft, and Wasco.

June 15, 2023 – Kern COG Board approved the 2023 Public Involvement Procedures document after a 45-day public review. The document is online at <https://www.kerncog.org/policies/>.

June 13, 2023 – ARB staff emailed Kern COG and the California Transportation Commission that “the SCS is officially approved.” However, the final acceptance letter is still working its way through upper management reviews and will take several weeks before it is issued.

May 19, 2023 – ARB staff acknowledged receipt of the requested transmittal letter signed by the Kern COG Chair, and associated TPPC staff report. ARB staff indicated they would provide a status update by May 31, and try to meet Kern COG’s request for an expedited review by June 8, but that they could not commit to any date earlier than June 27.

May 5, 2023 - Kern COG submitted a draft Kern COG TPPC staff report and transmittal letter to ARB with a request for the Kern COG Chair to sign. Approved by the Board on May 18, 2023, the letter documents technical changes that do not affect the adopted RTP/SCS text or conclusions and includes updates from the November 2022 SCS technical data submittal per ARB guidelines.

May 1, 2023 – Kern COG circulated the draft Public Involvement Procedure for a 45-day public review ending June 15. The Executive Director and other San Joaquin Valley COG directors also met with ARB’s SJV representative, where staff indicated Kern was close to an acceptance finding for its SCS.

April 26, 2023 – Kern COG submitted to ARB a cover letter and revised technical methodology data submittal with all the requested updates since the November data submittal. ARB requested that it be approved by the Kern COG Board and have Kern COG’s chair’s signature.

April 17, 2023 – Kern COG web conferenced with ARB staff for the 14th time in 3 years to discuss the 2022 SCS technical methodology. ARB is required to provide their findings and recommendations 2 months after the submitted package from Nov. 29, 2022, is found complete.

February 17, March 29, April 7, April 14, 2023 – Kern COG web conferenced with ARB to further refine SCS modeling methodology and in February provided draft comments on the 2022 SCS.

January 20, 2023 – ARB responded to Kern COGs SCS technical methodology submittal from November 29, 2022 with questions. A meeting was held on January 24, 2023, to clarify questions.

December 16, 2022 – The 2022 RTP/Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) short range transportation program air quality conformity was federally approved.

November 29, 2022 – Kern COG submitted the technical methodology data package to the ARB.

July 21, 2022 - the Kern COG Board adopted the 2022 RTP/SCS and associated documents. The documents are available on the Kern COG website at <https://www.kerncog.org/category/docs/rtp/>.

Table 1 – 2018 & 2022 SB 375 Targets for the Kern Region

Per Capita GHG Reduction Target/	2020	2035
2022 RTP/SCS demonstration (July 21, 2022) w/ required off-model adjustments (2020 is pre-COVID)	-10.9%	-15.1%
2018 RTP/SCS demonstration (August 15, 2018)	-12.5%	-12.7%
Targets for 2022 RTP/SCS (set March 22, 2018, by ARB, effective October 1, 2018)	- 9%	-15%

March 22, 2018 - ARB adopted new SB375 Targets for the third cycle RTP/SCS to be effective October 1, 2018. Next ARB target setting will be during the 2022-2026 window.

Preliminary Timeline 2026 RTP/SCS

- ~~June 2023 – Update Public Involvement Procedure~~
- ~~July 2023 – Stakeholder roundtable process to vet outreach and performance measures~~
- ~~April 2024 – Regional Growth Forecast Update~~
- ~~June 11, 2024, Bakersfield Downtown Transit Ctr. – LRT Plan Update walk-up event~~
- ~~July-August 2024 KARGO Study RTP/SCS Freight Outreach Events~~
- ~~April 2025 – Annual Statistically Valid Community Phone Surveys~~
- ~~May 2025 – KARGO Study RTP/SCS Freight Outreach Events~~
- ~~August 6, 2025 – Transportation Modeling Committee Special Meeting~~
- ~~August 23-24, 2025 – 2026 RTP/SCS Outreach at Tehachapi Mountain Festival~~
- ~~August 29, 2025 – Mini-Grants Applications Due~~
- ~~September 17-28, 2025 – 2026 RTP/SCS Outreach at Kern County Fair~~
- ~~September each year – Technical Assistance Requests to Kern COG Due~~
- ~~October 18, 2025 – 2026 RTP/SCS Outreach at Oildorado Days in Taft~~
- ~~Fall 2025 – Mini-Grant Stakeholder Hosted RTP/SCS Workshops (see attached flyer)~~
- ~~Fall 2023 to Fall 2025 – Fairs/Festivals/Farmer's Market Outreach~~
- ~~Spring 2023 to Spring 2026 – RTP/SCS Public Outreach Process~~
- ~~Spring 2023 to Spring 2026 – Annual Statistically Valid Community Phone Surveys~~
- ~~May 8 to July 2, 2026 – 55-day public review process for RTP/SCS, congestion management plan, environmental document, air quality conformity, federal transportation improvement program.~~
- ~~September 2nd, 2026 – Staff report summarizing the comments and responses on the Draft 2026 RTP/SCS and its associated documents was be presented to RPAC and TTAC.~~
- September 17, 2026 – Kern COG Board scheduled to adopt the 2026 RTP/SCS and associated documents.

Preliminary Timeline 2030 RTP/SCS

- September 23rd – Oct 4th , 2026 – RTP/SCS Outreach at Kern County Fair.
- Summer 2027 – Update Public Involvement Policies and Procedures
- Spring 2027 to Spring 2030 – RTP/SCS Public Outreach Process
- Summer 2030 – Kern COG Board Scheduled to adopt the 2030 RTP/SCS

ACTION: Information.

September 17, 2026

TO: Transportation Planning Policy Committee

FROM: Jay Schlosser, Executive Director

By: Rob Ball, Deputy Director/Planning Director
Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri, Regional Planner
Victoria Romero Valdivia, Regional Planner
Vincent Liu, Regional Planner

SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Policy Committee Meeting Consent Agenda Item: V.D.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GRANTS/COG ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AND
FEEDBACK MONITORING DATA – **EMAIL REQUESTS DUE FRIDAY OCTOBER 2,
2026**

DESCRIPTION:

The 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) includes a strategy to provide sub regional feedback on SB 375 travel reduction goals and provide technical assistance and grant writing assistance to help sub areas of the County that need it most. This is an annual process reviewed by the TTAC and RPAC.

DISCUSSION:

A 2-part strategy was proposed in the 2014 RTP/SCS, and continued in subsequent cycles, to help our member agencies voluntarily monitor their progress toward the region's air emission goals. The strategy also helps member agencies develop projects that will better compete for funding under policies that emphasize sustainability. Kern COG provides monitoring data along with technical assistance and grant writing assistance. The data provides sub-regional monitoring feedback and helps prioritize assistance using the regional travel model as part of this process.

COG Technical Assistance

The 2014 RTP was the first to contain an SCS as required by the state Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375). Kern COG began work with member agencies on developing more sustainable projects and strategies immediately after the adoption of the 2008 Kern Regional Blueprint.

Since 2009, Kern COG has awarded over \$500,000 in technical assistance grants and/or staff time support to provide member agencies with resources to identify and implement projects that would further the goals of the 2008 Kern Regional Blueprint and now the SCS. Available funding for Kern COG technical assistance grants, and staff time support to assist member agencies in applying for the numerous grant resources vary from year to year based on need and resource

availability. This program has helped fund:

- In kind staff-time match for sustainable community planning grants for modeling/public outreach
- Regional travel demand modeling and GIS mapping support
- community bike and complete street plans
- community visioning/design workshops
- 2D/3D community visualizations
- transportation impact fee programs
- general plan circulation element updates
- Early transportation project development planning studies

Member Agencies Email Sustainable Community Planning/Project Development Ideas to Kern COG by Friday, October 2, 2026

Under this Kern COG local government assistance program, staff can recommend technical assistance resources be prioritized for agencies with the greatest potential need (see monitoring section below). Requests may be made by email and should include a brief preliminary scope and budget regarding the planning level work needed. Agencies are encouraged to contact COG staff for assistance in developing the request for sustainable community strategy implementation and planning funds. Staff will provide assistance to member agencies in deciding which grant resources (see attachment 1) are most appropriate and effective. Please contact Rob Ball - 661-635-2902, rball@kerncog.org or Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri - 661-635-2908, rinvina@kerncog.org

Member Agencies Provided with Free Access to GrantFinder.com

Kern COG has secured GrantFinder software licenses on behalf of its member agencies, and local public transit agencies for the period ending May 31, 2027, which is renewed annually. GrantFinder (<http://grantfinder.com>) is a real-time database of federal, state, and private grant opportunities tailored to municipalities and nonprofits. The program allows users to tailor their grant searches to their needs. To receive access, the member agency may designate up to two users. GrantFinder training is available by request; Program contact: Irene Enriquez ienriquez@kerncog.org.

Prioritized Funding Policy for More Sustainable Projects

In November 2012 and most recently updated in April 2021, the Kern COG Board adopted the new project delivery policies and procedure (<https://www.kerncog.org/policies/>) to assist the region in promoting projects that better match the goals of the RTP/SCS. Dependent on the funding category, the procedure provides points for ranking projects for future funding. Up to half of the points go to projects that promote more sustainable/livable communities and lower air emissions. Since this policy and procedure update, Kern COG has funded park & ride facilities in California City and South Bakersfield, the Golden Empire Transit District has implemented a new/more convenient bus rapid transit, express bus and On Demand micro-transit network, and the City of Tehachapi has adopted the first city-wide “form-based-code” General Plan in California. These types of projects are proliferating in the region in part because Kern COG adopted project delivery policies.

Monitoring Data Feedback

The table in Attachment 2 shows the latest modeling of auto Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per person (household population + employment by place of work) from the most recently adopted RTP. The total shows a 3.1 percent decrease in VMT between 2024 and 2049. All regions show

lower VMT per capita household population + employment by 2049 compared to 2024. The following region has seen an increase in VMT compared to the prior 2022 RTP: Greater Taft.

This technical and grant writing assistance program RTP strategy will continue to be funded as planning funds and grants are available. Subject to the Board's direction, Kern COG resources may be prioritized to communities that may be showing difficulty in making progress towards reducing emissions and passenger vehicle travel. Grants and incentives are subject to state and federal funding requirements.

ACTION: Information and feedback: Member agency technical assistance requests are due to Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri at RInvina@kerncog.org by October 2, 2026.

Attachments: Attachment 1 – Kern Sustainable Community Grant Resources – July 2026
Attachment 2 – 2026 RTP/SCS Change in Daily Auto Miles Traveled
Attachment 3 – Kern Sub Area Index and Vehicle Miles Traveled Maps

Attachment 1

Kern Sustainable Community Grant Resources (Updated July 2026)

Program	Program Description	Resource and Contact
Kern Council of Governments	Technical Assistance Program: Requests may be made by email and should include a draft scope, budget and timeline regarding the planning need. Agencies are encouraged to contact Kern COG staff for assistance in developing the request for planning resources and strategizing which sources are most appropriate. Awards are subject to available funding, need, and past geographic distribution of past awards. The awards will be used in developing the programming for next fiscal year's Kern COG Overall Work Program. Past awards have included: - Travel modeling and GIS mapping support technical support - In-kind staff time in data collection/outreach to help match a sustainable planning grant - Grant writing assistance - Community bike and complete street plans - Community visioning/design workshops - Transportation impact fee programs - General plan circulation element updates - Transportation project development planning studies To support grant applications Kern COG posts regional plans, resources and toolkits on the Kern COG website www.kerncog.org. For example: - Draft 2026 Regional Transportation Plan Chapter 4 – Sustainable Communities Strategy provides projects and strategies for implementing Kern region's efforts to reduce GHG emissions from passenger vehicles. - 2025 Electric Vehicle Charging Station (EVCS) Blueprint Update – Kern COG, its member agencies, and the Kern County community can take advantage of the numerous local, state, and federal funding opportunities for EV Chargin Stations. - Kern COG EV Charging Station Installation Resource List - 2023 Kern Medium-Duty and Heavy-Duty Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Blueprint features five high-impact sites which may serve as examples to follow. The five sites may be eligible for a new CEC funding. Check CEC website for funding opportunities.	Email Request to Rob Ball rball@kerncog.org or Rochelle Invina-Jayasiri rinvina@kerncog.org Due by Friday, October 2, 2026

	- 2018 Kern Regional Active Transportation Plan provides eligible bike and pedestrian projects for all jurisdictions in Kern. - 2020 Kern County Rural Alternative Transportation Plan provides transit ZEV projects for all outlying jurisdictions in Kern.	
San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Grants and Incentive Programs for Public Agencies	- AB 836 Clean Air Centers Pilot Program The Clean Air Centers Pilot Program provides funding to create Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations and establish a network of publicly accessible facilities with high-efficiency air filtration systems for valley residents who may not otherwise have access to clean air during wildfire events. - Alternate Fuel Mechanic Training Provides funds for mechanic education or training in alternative-fuel vehicles and infrastructure. - Bike Paths: Bikeway Incentive Program Provides funds to establish bicycle infrastructure such as Class I (Bicycle Path Construction), Class II (Bicycle Lane Striping), or Class III (Bicycle Route) projects. - Clean Alternatives to Fireworks Pilot Incentive Program Provides incentives for clean, non-firework alternatives in lieu of a portion or all of large-scale public fireworks displays celebrating the Fourth of July or New Year's Eve, or other celebratory public gatherings. - Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicle Program Provides monetary incentives to replace Class 6-7 on-road diesel and non-diesel Internal Combustion (IC) engine-powered trucks with zero-emission trucks. - Clean Vehicle Fueling Infrastructure Program Provides funds on a first-come, first-served basis for new stations, conversion of an existing fueling station, and expansion of stations for hydrogen fuel and electric battery charging stations for heavy-duty vehicles. - Charge Up! Electric Vehicle Charger Incentive Program Provides funds for public agencies, businesses, and property owners of multi-unit dwellings to purchase and install electric vehicle chargers for public use. - Emergency Vehicle Replacement Program Provides funds on a first-come, first-served basis to replace existing in-use emergency vehicles with new reduced-emission vehicles. - E-Mobility Commerce Provides funds to develop or expand electronic telecommunication services.	Grants Valley Air District - Some applications accepted year-round. Highlighted: Programs Currently Accepting Applications

	- Locomotive Program Provides incentive funds for the replacement of old high-polluting locomotives to new Tier 4 units. Alternative switcher locomotives include genset locomotives (multi-engine switcher) and electric-hybrid locomotives. - Plug in Electric Vehicle Resources Center Provides information about plug-in electric vehicles including available incentive funding, charging infrastructure and locations, and the District's activities to increase and sustain electric vehicles in the Valley. - Public Benefit Grants Program Provides funds to purchase new, alternative-fuel vehicles and infrastructure and develop advanced transit and transportation systems. - Public Transportation Subsidy and Park & Ride Lots Provides funds to subsidize transportation passes for bus, shuttle and commuter rail services. Funds are also available for the construction of park and ride lots. - Zero-Emission Landscaping Equipment Voucher Program Provides incentives for the replacement of landscape maintenance equipment to lawn care providers. - Zero-Emission School Bus Replacement Incentive Program Provides monetary incentives to replace existing yellow school buses that transport public school children to and from school with zero-emission school buses in disadvantaged or low-income communities.	
Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District	- Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Rebate Program Apply within 30 days of purchasing a new, eligible ZEV. Up to \$4,000 funding available for purchase of a Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) with EPA Smog Score of 10. - DMV Grant Program Acceptable program projects (\$50k max. per project) include Paving Dirt Roads to reduce fugitive dust emissions caused by vehicle travel, Installation of EV Charging Station or CNG refilling stations, Alternative Fuel Mechanics Training, Public Education Courses, and Innovative Vehicle-Related Emission Reduction Proposals. Applications open annually in the fall. Check Eastern Kern APCD's website in late 2026 for the next round of funding.	Eastern Kern APCD Grants Contact: 661-862-5250 Some grant funds are distributed annually.

Kern County Air Pollution Mitigation Fund	For projects designed to reduce particulate or ozone air pollution in Kern. Administered by the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment and Sierra Club. Applications may be active in 2027. Maximum funding requests vary by cycle.	KC Air Pollution Mitigation Fund
Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants FY 2027-2028	The Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program includes Sustainable Communities Grants , Climate Adaptation Planning Grant , Strategic Partnerships Grants - Call for applications open in August 2026 and grant application deadline in October 2026. Applicants are encouraged to visit the California Grants Portal and subscribe to receive notifications about State funding opportunities.	Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants Caltrans
Caltrans Transportation Planning Resources	Website links to Upcoming Events; Major Outreach and Engagement; Key Transportation Plans; Tools and Analysis; Resources for Districts and Regional and Local Partners	Division of Transportation Planning Caltrans
Caltrans Active Transportation Program (ATP)	California Transportation Commission (CTC) ATP Cycle 8 Call for Projects opened March 19-20 and closed on June 22, 2026. - For MPO-directed funding, the Kern COG process follows the statewide application process, using that process to score projects for Kern COG consideration. Kern COG announces the ATP Cycle funding to its member agencies via email and in technical advisory committee meetings.	Active Transportation Program (ATP) Caltrans
California Dept. of Housing and Community Development (HCD)	The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has a list of housing programs that currently have funding available: - CalHome Program , Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) , Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG) , Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) Program , Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) Program	Grants & Funding California Department of Housing and Community Development
California Dept. of Housing and Community Development	AHSC Program makes it easier for Californians to drive less by making sure housing, jobs, and key destinations are accessible by walking, biking, and transit. (Cont. nextpage)	California Department of Housing and

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)	AHSC Round 10 is processing on schedule. NOFA released in March 2026 with applications due on May 4, 2026.	Community Development AHSC
Strategic Growth Council (SGC)	SGC's grant programs promote sustainability, health, and equity across California. Find funding for affordable housing, transit-oriented development, open space conservation, and climate change resilience. Currently accepting applications.	Strategic Growth Council Grant Programs
California Natural Resources Agency	The California Natural Resources Agency Bonds and Grant unit administers various programs. They offer listserv registration for some program notifications. For instance, the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program is an annual program (no solicitation for 2026) offering grants to local, state and federal governmental agencies and to nonprofit organizations for projects to mitigate the environmental impacts caused by new or modified public transportation facilities.	CA Natural Resources Grant Programs
California Air Resources Board (CARB)	Air Quality Incentive Programs. Visit the website for eligibility requirements and due dates. - Community Planning and Capacity Building program supports transportation equity in disadvantaged and low-income communities with a focus on focus on early-stage planning and readiness activities. <i>Application period closed on February 10, 2026.</i>	Incentives California Air Resources Board
California Energy Commission (CEC)	The CEC offers a variety of funding opportunities to advance the state's transition to clean energy and transportation through technological innovation and efficiency. CALeVIP's Fast Charge California Project is launching two new project windows in October 2026 and February 2027. Get ready to apply for DC fast charger funding! - Fast Charge California Project Window 2 (October 7, 2026 – January 14, 2027) - Fast Charge California Project Window 3 (February 24, 2027 – May 27, 2027)	CEC Funding Opportunities
US Dept. of Energy	CA Incentives for Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Alternative Fuels Data Center - Find transportation data and information about alternative fuels and advanced vehicles in California, including laws and incentives, fueling stations, and fuel prices.	Alternative Fuels Data Center California Laws and Incentives

US Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Railroad Administration	Federal Railroad Administration – Grants & Loans - To develop safety improvements and encourage the expansion and upgrade of passenger and freight rail infrastructure and services, FRA supports the nation's rail network through a variety of competitive and dedicated grant programs.	US DOT Railroad Grant Program
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Competitive Grant Funding List: - ADCMS - Advanced Digital Construction Management Systems: A program to promote, implement, deploy, demonstrate, showcase, support and document the application of advanced digital construction management systems, practices, performances, and benefits. - AID - Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration Program: Provides grants to support the pilot/demonstration of innovations on projects, in areas such as planning, financing, operations, pavements, structures, materials, environment, and construction. - Advanced Transportation Technologies and Innovative Mobility Deployment (also known as Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program): Provides grants to deploy, install, and operate advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, mobility, efficiency, system performance, intermodal connectivity, and infrastructure return on investment. - Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program: Funding beyond FY23 is subject to the availability appropriations; the program provides grants to construct safe and connected active transportation facilities in an active transportation network or active transportation spine and to develop plans for active transportation networks and active transportation spines. - Bridge Investment Program: Provides grants for projects to improve the condition of bridges and culverts and the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of people and freight over bridges. - BUILD - Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Grant Program: Provides grants for surface transportation infrastructure projects that will have a significant local or regional impact (aka Local and Regional Project Assistance). - Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grants Program (Community Charging): Provides grants for projects to develop electric vehicle charging and hydrogen, propane, and natural gas fueling infrastructure access along alternative fuel corridors throughout the	US DOT Grants Competitive Grant Funding List

	country, including in rural areas, low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, and communities with a low ratio of private parking spaces to households or a high ratio of multiunit dwellings to single family homes. - Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grants Program (Corridor Charging): Deploys publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure and hydrogen, propane, and natural gas fueling infrastructure along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors. - Congestion Relief Program: Provides grants to advance innovative, integrated, and multimodal solutions to reduce congestion and the related economic and environmental costs in the most congested metropolitan areas with an urbanized area population of at least 1 million. - INFRA - Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects: Provides grants for multimodal freight and highway projects of national or regional significance. - MEGA - National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program: Provides grants to surface transportation infrastructure that are too large or complex for traditional funding programs that will have a significant national or regional impact. - Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP): Provides grants to Tribes and Federal land management agencies to complete projects that will provide substantial benefits to their communities or parklands. - PROTECT: Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation Grants: Provides grants for activities that enable communities to address vulnerabilities to current and future weather events, natural disasters, and changing conditions, including sea level rise, and plan transportation improvements and emergency response strategies to address those vulnerabilities. - Reduction of Truck Emissions at Port Facilities Grant Program (RTEPF): Studies and provides grants to reduce idling at port facilities, including through the electrification of port operations. - Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A): Provides grants to support local initiatives to prevent transportation-related death and serious injury on roads and streets (commonly referred to as “Vision Zero” or “Toward Zero Deaths” initiatives). <i>The FY 2026 NOFO for this program closed on May 26, 2026.</i> - Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program: Provides grants to support projects that seek to reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions, and in carrying out that purpose, improve habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.	
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California Grants Portal	The California Grants Portal (a project by the California State Library) is your one destination to find all grants and loans offered on a competitive or first-come basis by California state agencies.	CA Grants Portal
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Note that the above listing of programs is not comprehensive and are subject to change. The listing is intended as an example resource guide of programs that can help implement the Kern region's Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Attachment 2 – How Sub Areas of Kern County are Doing on Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled

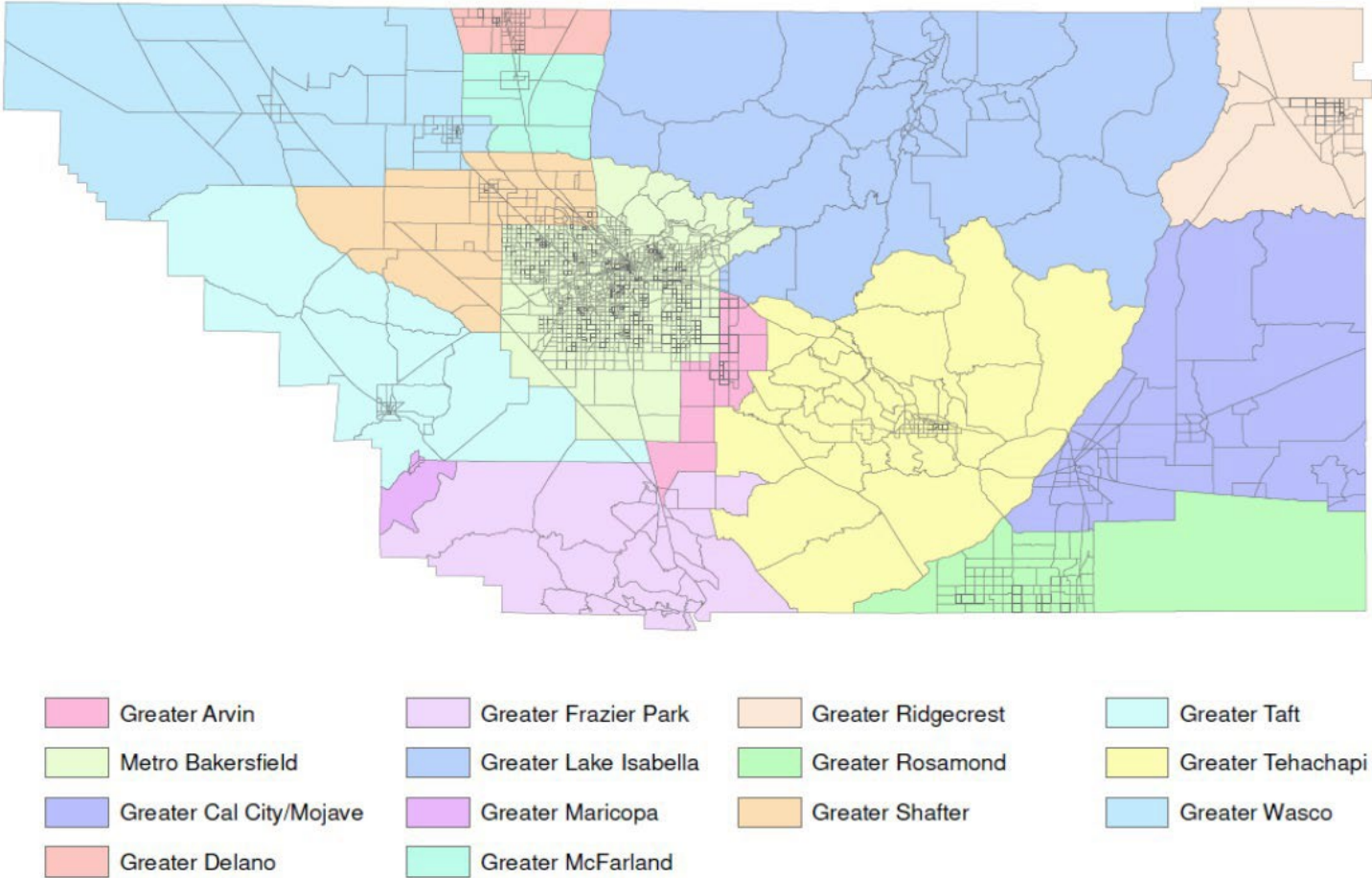
2022 RTP Change in Daily Auto Miles Traveled Compared to the Old Plan

Data Source: 2026 RTP Modeling		RSA Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)			Persons = Hhold. Pop. + Empls. (by place of work)			VMT Per Person (pop. + emps.)			% Change from Base 2024		Progress
Regional Statistical Areas (RSA)		2024	2049 Old Plan	2049 Plan	2024	2049 Old Plan	2049 Plan	2024	2049 Old Plan	2049 Plan	2024 & 2049 Old Plan	2024 & 2049 Plan	Compar- ed to Old Plan
		(miles x 1,000)			(persons)			(miles/person)			(percent)		
1	Greater Taft	1,098	1,206	1,185	27,769	31,786	30,185	39.53	37.93	39.27	-4.1%	-0.7%	3.4%
2	Greater McFarland	875	981	1,074	19,018	21,701	24,373	46.00	45.22	44.08	-1.7%	-4.2%	-2.5%
3	Greater Wasco	1,503	1,643	1,558	39,123	46,682	45,221	38.41	35.20	34.44	-8.4%	-10.3%	-2.0%
4	Greater Tehachapi	1,276	1,437	1,357	41,812	47,322	46,301	30.51	30.36	29.32	-0.5%	-3.9%	-3.4%
5	Greater Bakersfield	13,711	15,120	14,730	822,222	912,274	912,203	16.68	16.57	16.15	-0.6%	-3.2%	-2.6%
6	Greater Cal City/Mojave	1,182	1,470	1,145	26,711	35,160	28,451	44.26	41.80	40.24	-5.6%	-9.1%	-3.5%
7	Greater Lake Isabella	738	717	673	20,492	21,298	20,098	36.04	33.66	33.51	-6.6%	-7.0%	-0.4%
8	Greater Ridgecrest	1,197	1,246	1,183	48,540	52,196	51,537	24.66	23.88	22.95	-3.2%	-7.0%	-3.8%
9	Greater Frazier Park	1,051	2,682	2,692	18,820	57,727	60,323	55.84	46.46	44.63	-16.8%	-20.1%	-3.3%
10	Greater Shafter	2,064	2,701	2,676	49,165	70,034	74,963	41.97	38.56	35.70	-8.1%	-14.9%	-6.8%
11	Greater Arvin	782	876	881	23,391	25,844	26,806	33.41	33.88	32.85	1.4%	-1.7%	-3.1%
12	Greater Delano	1,882	2,033	2,036	53,533	56,031	58,535	35.15	36.29	34.77	3.2%	-1.1%	-4.3%
13	Greater Maricopa	49	47	45	1,548	1,519	1,496	31.65	30.77	30.15	-2.8%	-4.7%	-2.0%
14	Greater Rosamond	1,875	2,064	1,946	37,153	42,524	41,606	50.47	48.54	46.76	-3.8%	-7.4%	-3.5%
Countywide total/average		29,282	34,222	33,182	1,229,296	1,422,099	1,422,100	23.82	24.06	23.33	1.0%	-2.0%	-3.1%
Gateways		29,570	32,762	32,451									
All Travel		58,852	66,984	65,632									

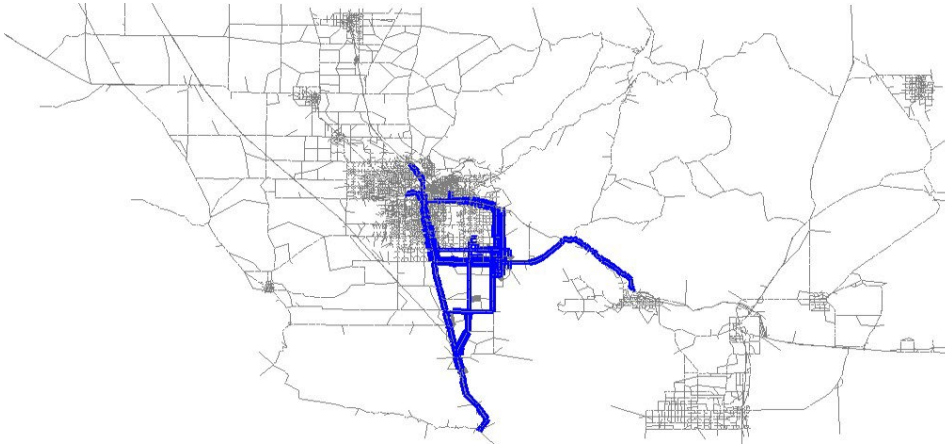
Attachment 3 – Map of Sub Areas

Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) by Regional Statistical Areas (RSAs)

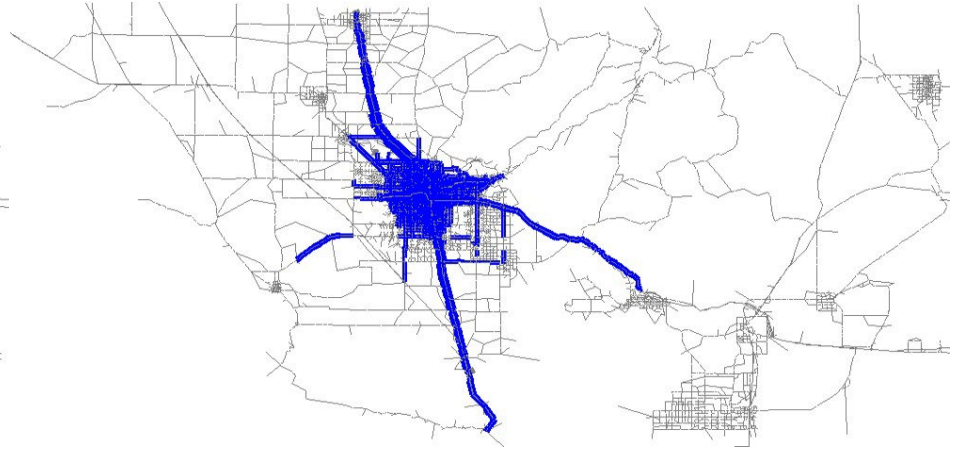
Kern Sub Areas



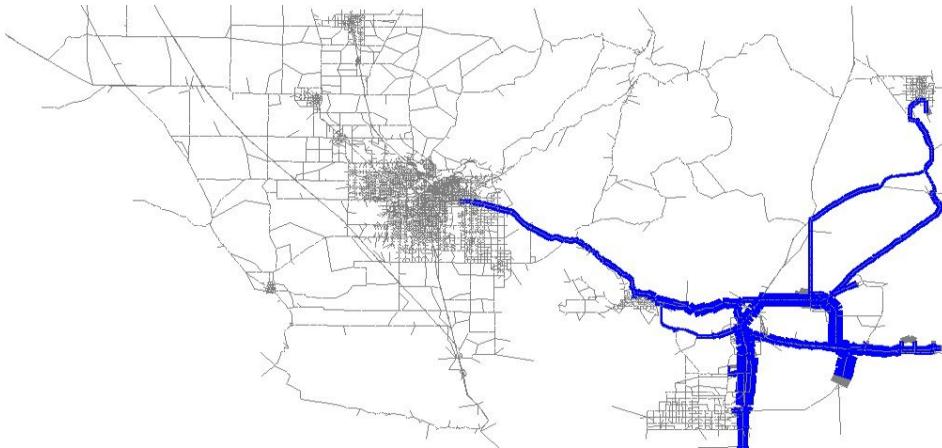
Greater Arvin



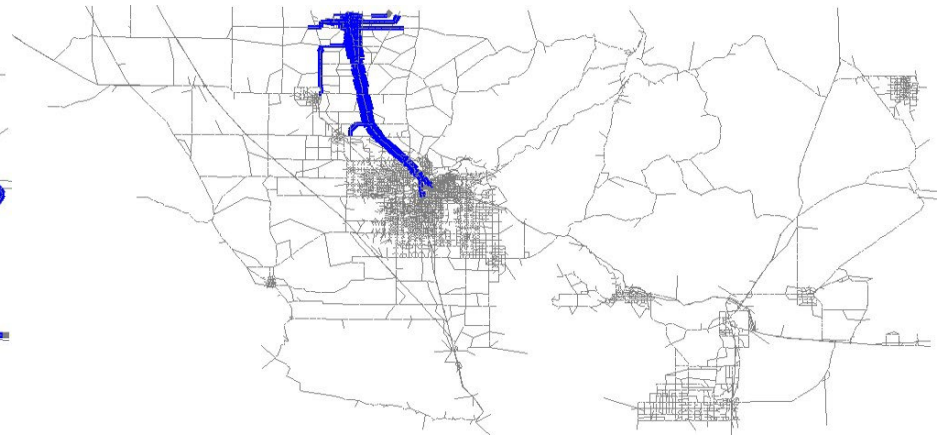
Greater Bakersfield



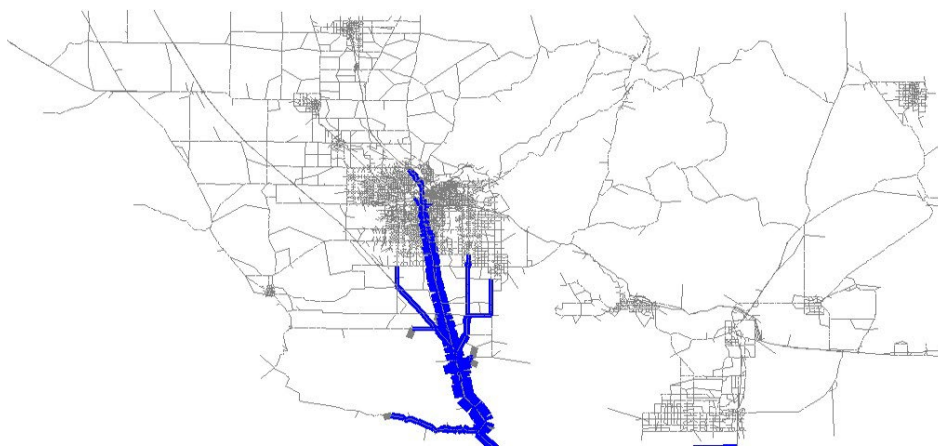
Greater California City / Mojave



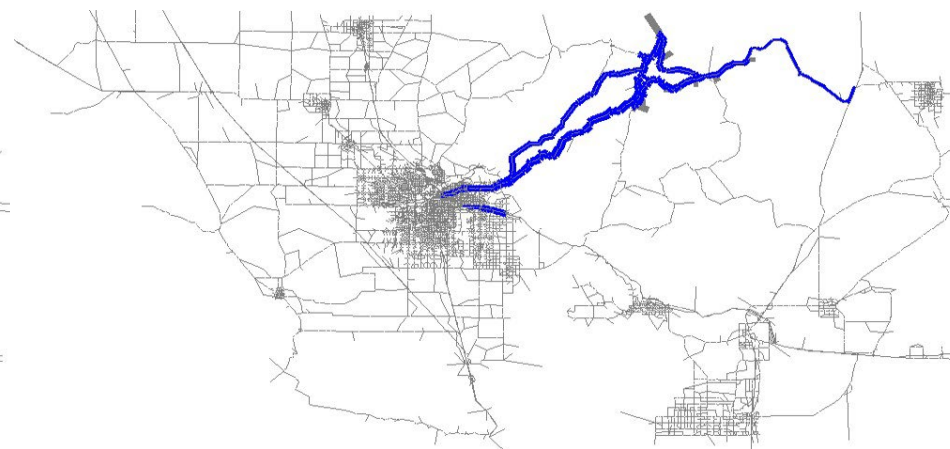
Greater Delano



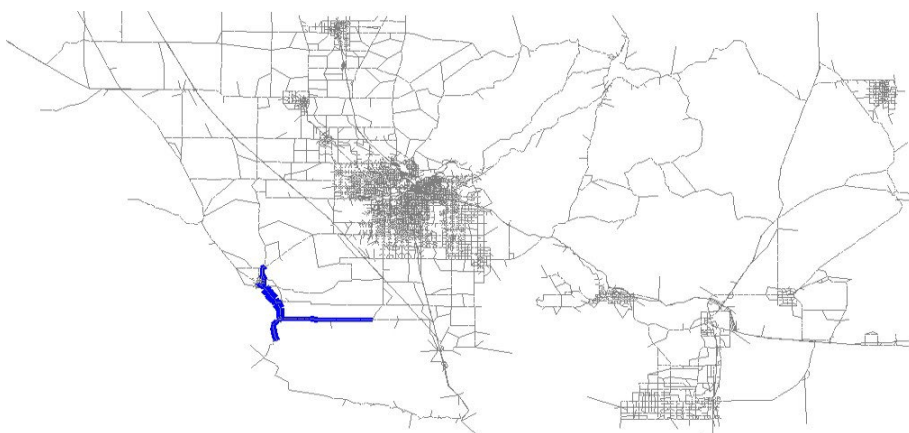
Greater Frasier Park



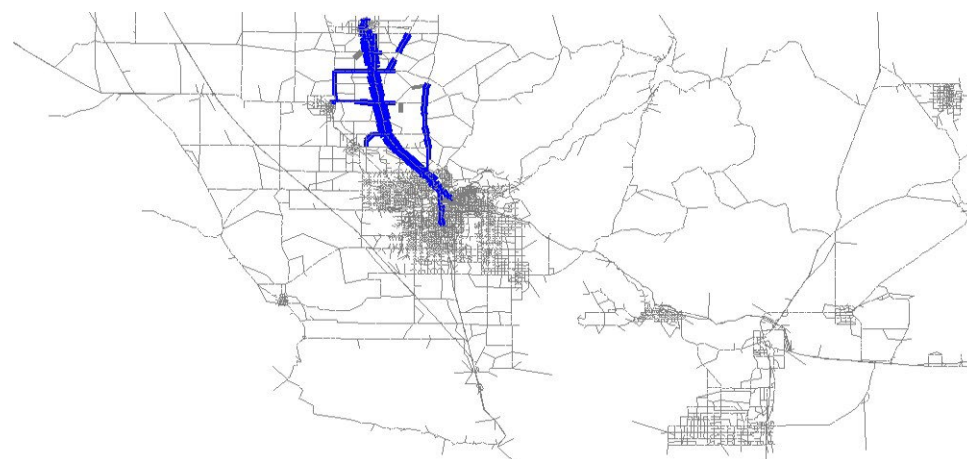
Greater Lake Isabella



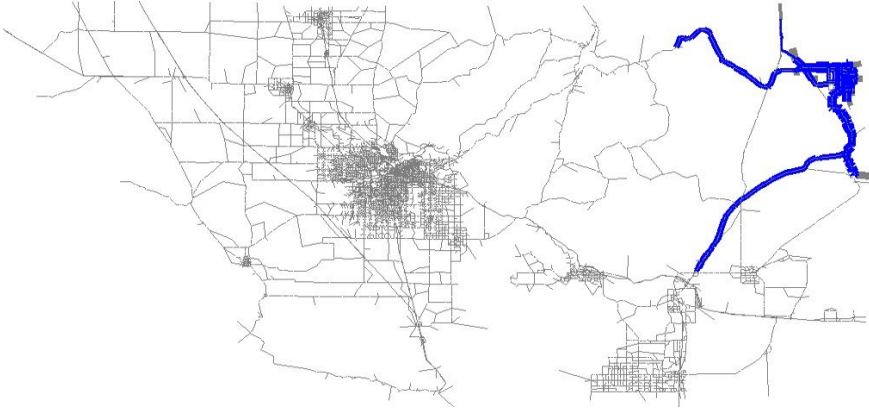
Greater Maricopa



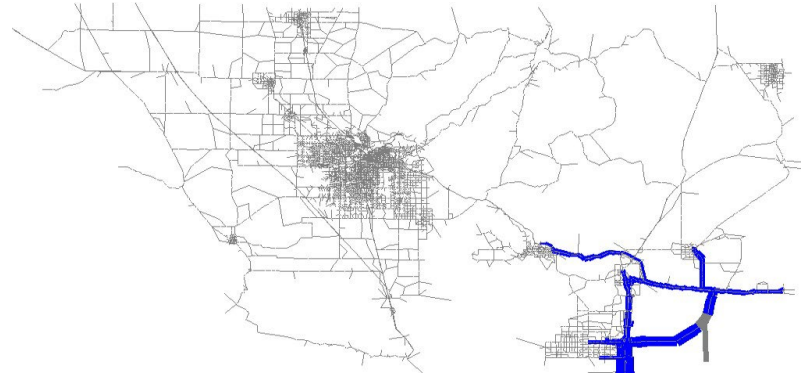
Greater McFarland



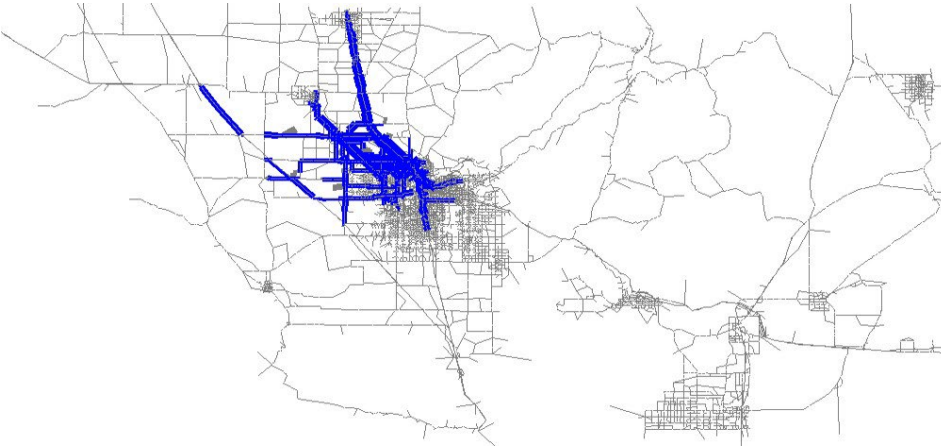
Greater Ridgecrest



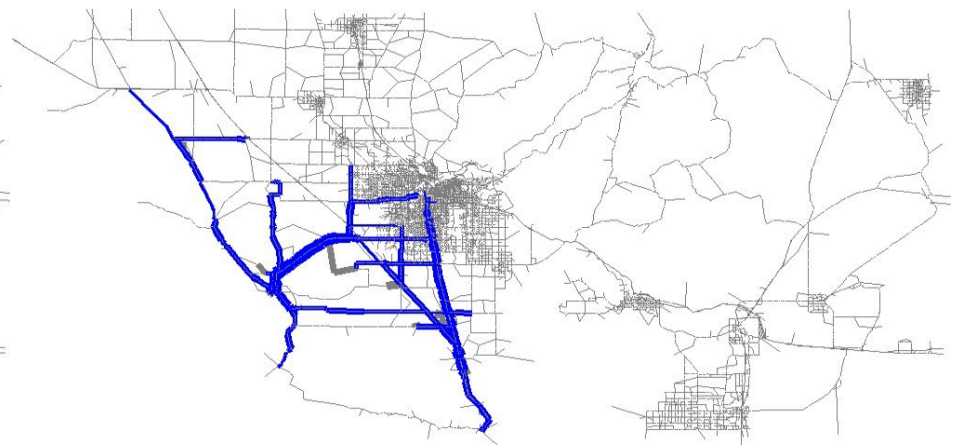
Greater Rosamond



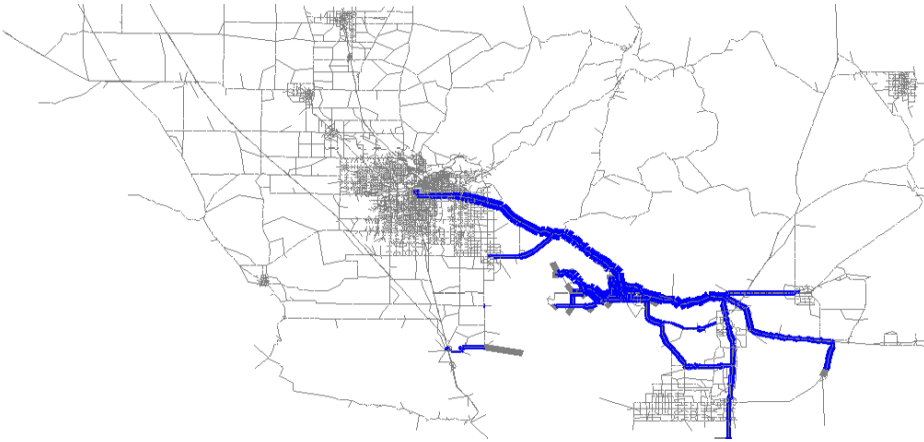
Greater Shafter



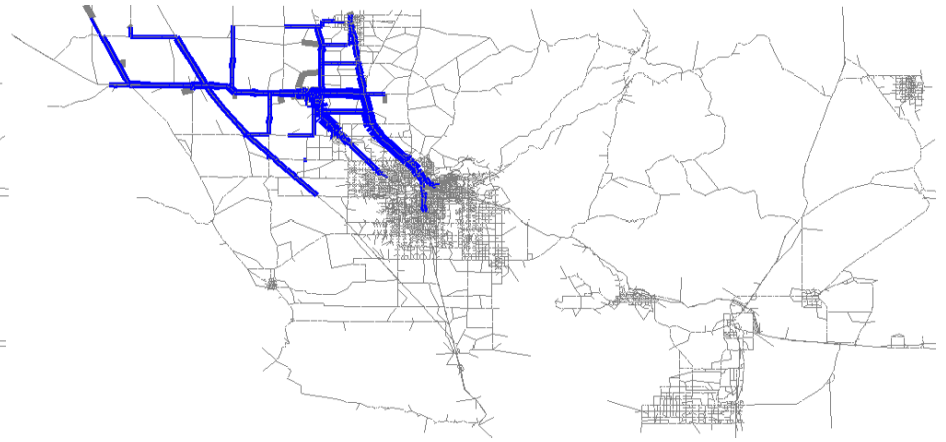
Greater Taft



Greater Tehachapi



Greater Wasco



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V.E.
TPPC

September 3, 2026

TO: Transportation Planning Policy Committee

FROM: Jay Schlosser, Executive Director

By: Karl Davisson, Regional Planner

SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Policy Committee Item: V.E.

CIRCULATION UPDATES: TRUCK ROUTES

DESCRIPTION:

In response to state requirements that all cities and counties adopt truck routes, Kern COG examined truck routing throughout the Kern region. The KARGO studies provide a regional framework of solutions to this issue. This item was reviewed by both Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) and Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC).

DISCUSSION:

In 2024, the State Legislature enacted AB-98, which requires all cities and counties in California to update the circulation element of their general plans to include designated truck routes. The purpose of AB-98 is to improve goods-movement efficiency, reduce conflicts between heavy-duty trucks and local traffic, and provide greater statewide consistency in how truck routes are planned and managed. The statutory deadline for compliance is January 1, 2028.

Following the passage of AB-98, the Legislature adopted SB-415 as a clean-up bill to address implementation challenges identified by local jurisdictions. SB-415 provides an alternative compliance path by allowing cities and counties to designate truck routes through the adoption of a local ordinance rather than a full general plan amendment. This streamlined process is available to most jurisdictions statewide, including all jurisdictions within the Kern region. SB-415 also revised the compliance timelines based on population thresholds. Cities with populations over 50,000 and counties with populations over 100,000 must comply by January 1, 2028, while cities with populations under 50,000 have until January 1, 2030.

Regional Studies

To assist local jurisdictions in meeting state requirements, Kern COG recently completed the KARGO studies—a set of three comprehensive analyses focused in part on goods movement and heavy-duty truck routing throughout the Kern region. These studies evaluated regional freight flows, identified areas with recurring truck-routing conflicts, and presented a menu of strategies to improve safety, mobility, and efficiency. The studies also emphasize coordination across

jurisdictional boundaries, recognizing that truck movements typically span multiple cities and unincorporated areas.

Collectively, the KARGO studies offer a data-driven regional framework that member agencies can use when developing or updating their truck-route systems. KARGO Phase 2 specifically includes recommended designation criteria and other elements that can directly support compliance with AB-98 and SB-415. The KARGO studies can be found at <http://www.kerncog.org/KARGO>.

Policy Direction

In acknowledgment of the value of the KARGO studies, the Kern COG Board adopted Resolution 26-23, encouraging member agencies to utilize the findings and recommendations as a resource during their truck-route planning efforts. The resolution is intended to promote consistency across the region and ensure that local actions align with regional mobility and goods-movement goals.

Next Steps

Agencies preparing to meet the AB-98 and SB-415 requirements may consider the following actions:

- Reviewing existing circulation elements and truck-route ordinances for compliance gaps.
- Evaluating truck-movement patterns using the KARGO study data and maps.
- Coordinating with adjacent jurisdictions to avoid conflicting or disconnected route designations.
- Developing or updating truck-route ordinances using the guidance contained in the studies.
- Preparing public outreach materials to inform residents, businesses, and freight stakeholders of proposed route changes.

- 1) Per SB-415, jurisdictions with populations greater than 50,000 must update their circulation elements by January 1, 2028. Jurisdictions with populations less than 50,000 must update their circulation elements by January 1, 2030.
- 2) Per Kern COG Board Resolution 26-23, jurisdictions should consider the KARGO study's mapped truck routes and circulation plans when updating local circulation elements.

These steps will assist jurisdictions in meeting state-mandated deadlines while ensuring consistency with regional transportation goals.

ACTION: Information Only.

Attachments:

1. Resolution 26-23
2. KARGO Phase 2 maps (6) of suggested truck routes and circulation changes.

BEFORE THE KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF KERN

Resolution No. 26-23

In the matter of:

RESOLUTION OF THE KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BOARD RECEIVING AND FILING THE KARGO COMMUNITY PROSPERITY AND PROTECTION STUDY (PHASE III), AND ENCOURAGING MEMBER JURISDICTIONS TO INCORPORATE ITS FINDINGS INTO LOCAL GENERAL PLANS AND CIRCULATION ELEMENTS

WHEREAS, the Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is the regional transportation planning agency responsible for coordinating transportation planning and policy across Kern County; and

WHEREAS, Kern COG has led the Kern Area Regional Goods-Movement Operations (KARGO) initiative to assess and plan for the continued growth of goods movement industries while addressing transportation safety, infrastructure resilience, and community impacts; and

WHEREAS, the KARGO initiative includes multiple phases, including:

- Phase I: Integrated Circulation Study
- Phase II: Sustainability Study
- Phase III: Community Prosperity and Protection Study is also known as KARGO C-CAMS; and

WHEREAS, the Community Prosperity and Protection Study is funded by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) through its Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program, which supports planning efforts to improve transportation system resilience, enhance safety, address climate-related vulnerabilities, and advance projects that promote economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and equitable outcomes for communities; and

WHEREAS, the Phase III Community Prosperity and Protection Study evaluates transportation conditions, climate vulnerabilities, economic trends, and community concerns to identify transportation strategies and prioritized improvements that:

- Improve goods movement efficiency
- Enhance system resiliency
- Support economic development
- Reduce impacts on local and disadvantaged communities; and

WHEREAS, the Study identifies and prioritizes regional transportation investments, including safety goods movement corridors, Green-Pass truck routing networks, and multimodal improvements intended to improve freight mobility and reduce conflicts within communities; and

WHEREAS, the Study includes supporting maps, technical analysis, and implementation strategies that provide a regional framework for transportation improvements and truck route planning across Kern County; and

WHEREAS, the Study is intended to serve as a long-term planning and implementation framework to guide future transportation investments and coordination among Kern COG, local jurisdictions, and partner agencies; and

WHEREAS, State legislation, including Senate Bill 415 (SB 415), requires local jurisdictions to adopt or update designated truck routes within their circulation elements by January 2028; and

WHEREAS, the KARGO Phase II and Phase III studies provide the technical basis, recommended networks, and supporting maps that can assist local jurisdictions in complying with these statutory requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Study's findings provide a defensible, Countywide framework that supports coordination of truck route planning and regional goods movement improvements; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

The Kern Council of Governments Board hereby:

1. Receives and files the KARGO Community Prosperity and Protection Study (Phase III), including all supporting technical analyses, maps, and implementation strategies.
2. Recognizes the Study as a regional planning framework that supports coordinated goods movement, transportation resiliency, economic development, and community protection throughout Kern County.
3. Encourages all member jurisdictions to review and consider the Study's findings, recommendations, and maps when updating local planning documents, including:
 - General Plans
 - Circulation Elements
 - Truck Route Networks
4. Encourages jurisdictions to incorporate the Study's recommended truck routes and network improvements, as appropriate, to support compliance with State requirements under SB 415, including adoption of designated truck routes by January 2028.
5. Supports the use of Study findings and maps as a technical and policy foundation for:
 - Establishing or modifying truck routes
 - Improving regional freight mobility

- Reducing truck impacts on local communities
 - Advancing safety and resiliency improvements
6. Affirms that the Study provides a coordinated regional basis for future transportation planning, funding, and project development efforts, including those led by Kern COG and partner agencies.

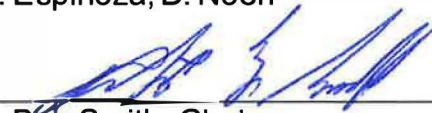
ADOPTED, SIGNED, AND APPROVED THIS 18th Day of June 2026.

AYES: B. Smith, M. Hawkins, B. Osorio, S. Gorman, P. Smith, G. Reyna, D. Couch, C. Parlier,
C. Parra, M. Warney, P. Vallejo, A. Williams

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: O. Calderon, C. Morse, S. Ayon, P. Espinoza, D. Noerr



Bob Smith, Chairman
Kern Council of Governments

ATTEST:

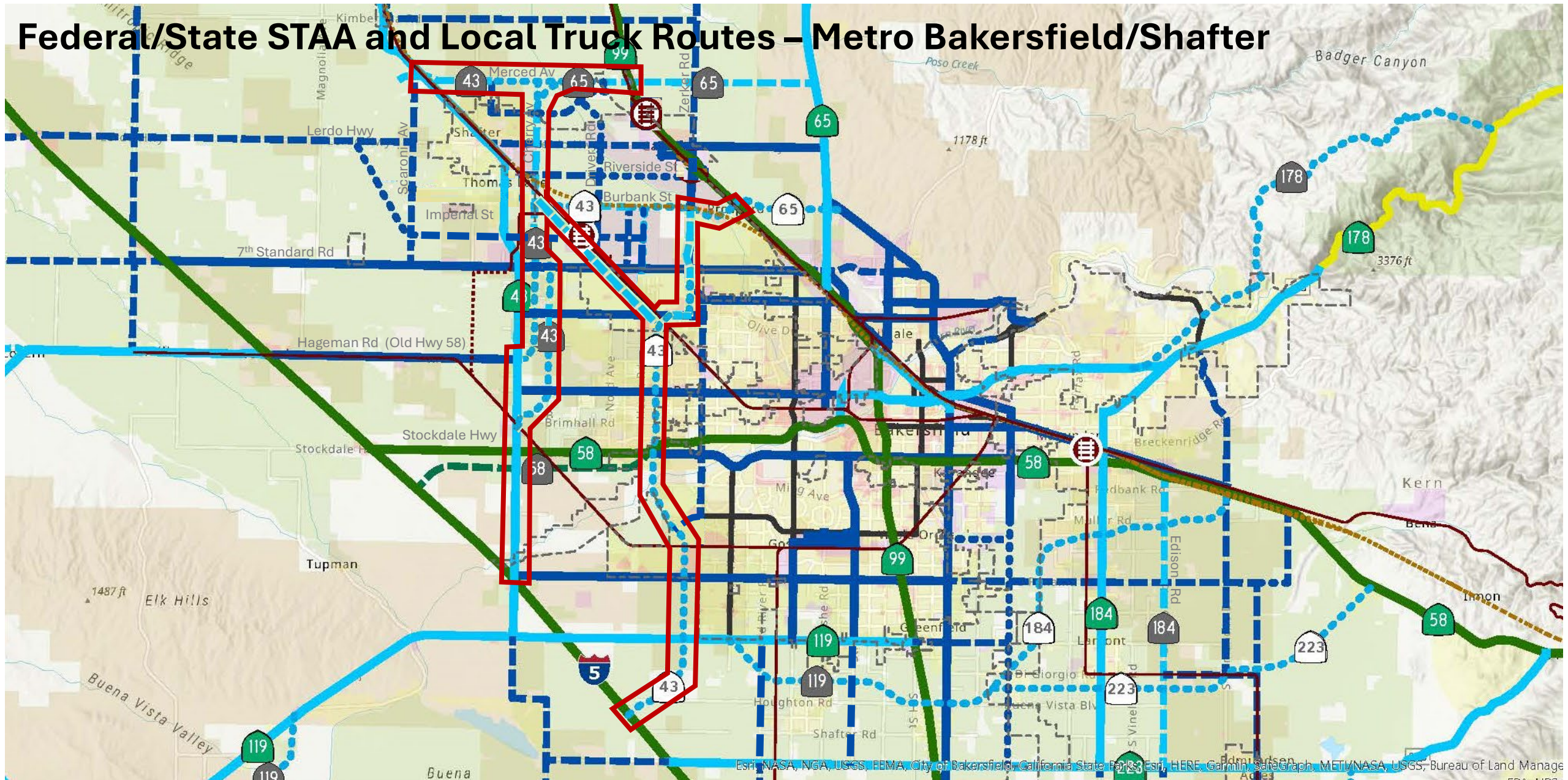
I hereby certify that the forgoing is a true resolution of the Kern Council of Governments duly adopted at a regularly scheduled meeting on the 18th day of June 2026.



John Sciosser
Executive Director
Kern Council of Governments

Date: June 18, 2026

Federal/State STAA and Local Truck Routes – Metro Bakersfield/Shafter



W Urban Corridor Greenpass Alignments

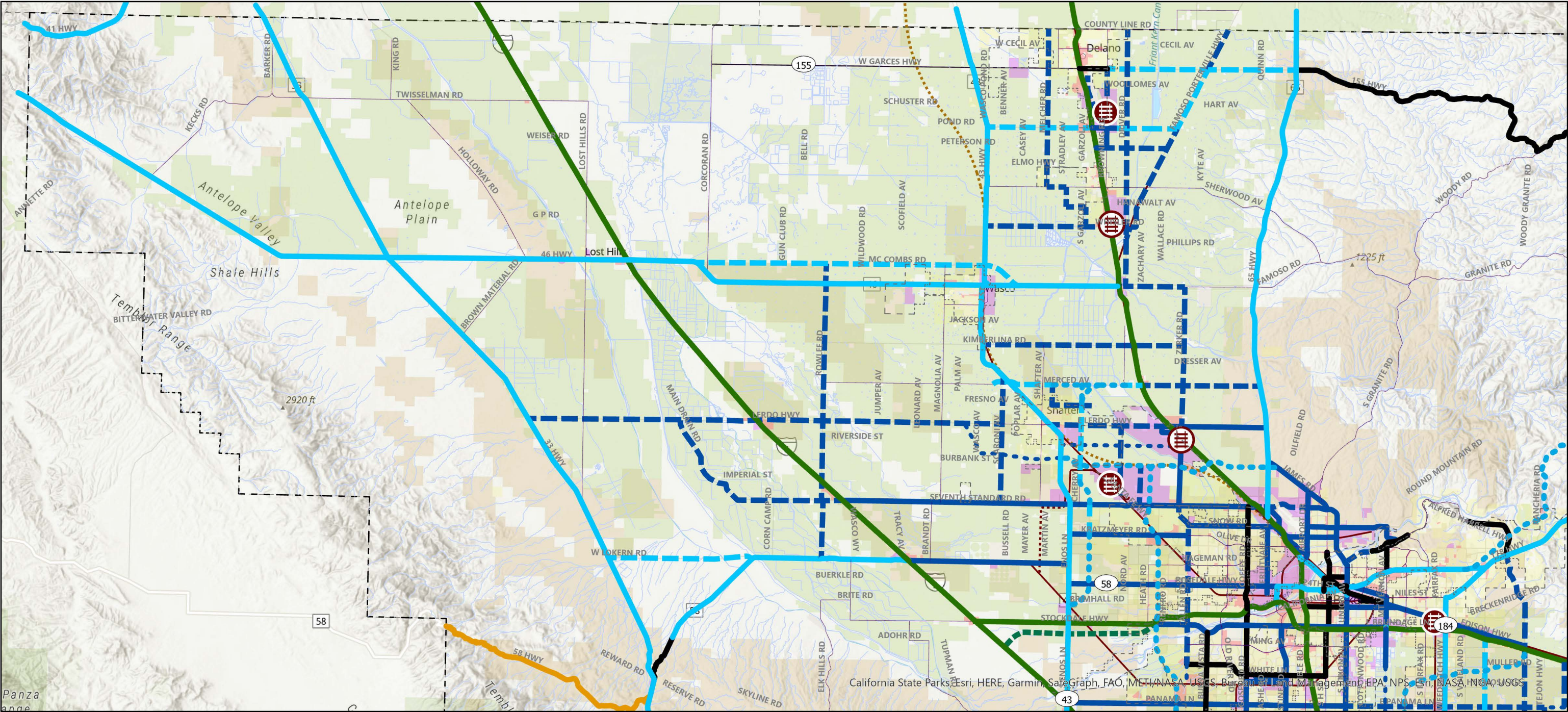
DRAFT 10-21-25

6 Miles



Existing	Candidate	Future		Legal Routes	Potential Highway Phases	Rail	Intermodal Freight Hub	Combined General Plan Land
			National Network (STAA)	65' CA Legal Route	Existing	Existing Rail	Existing	Residential
			State Terminal Access (STAA)	65' CA Legal *KPRA Advisory	Phase 1	Future Rail	Potential	Commercial
			Local (STAA)	Other Major Local Arterials	Phase 2	High Speed Rail Alignment		Agriculture Production
								Oil Production

T-2 NW Kern - Truck Routes Suggested Updates

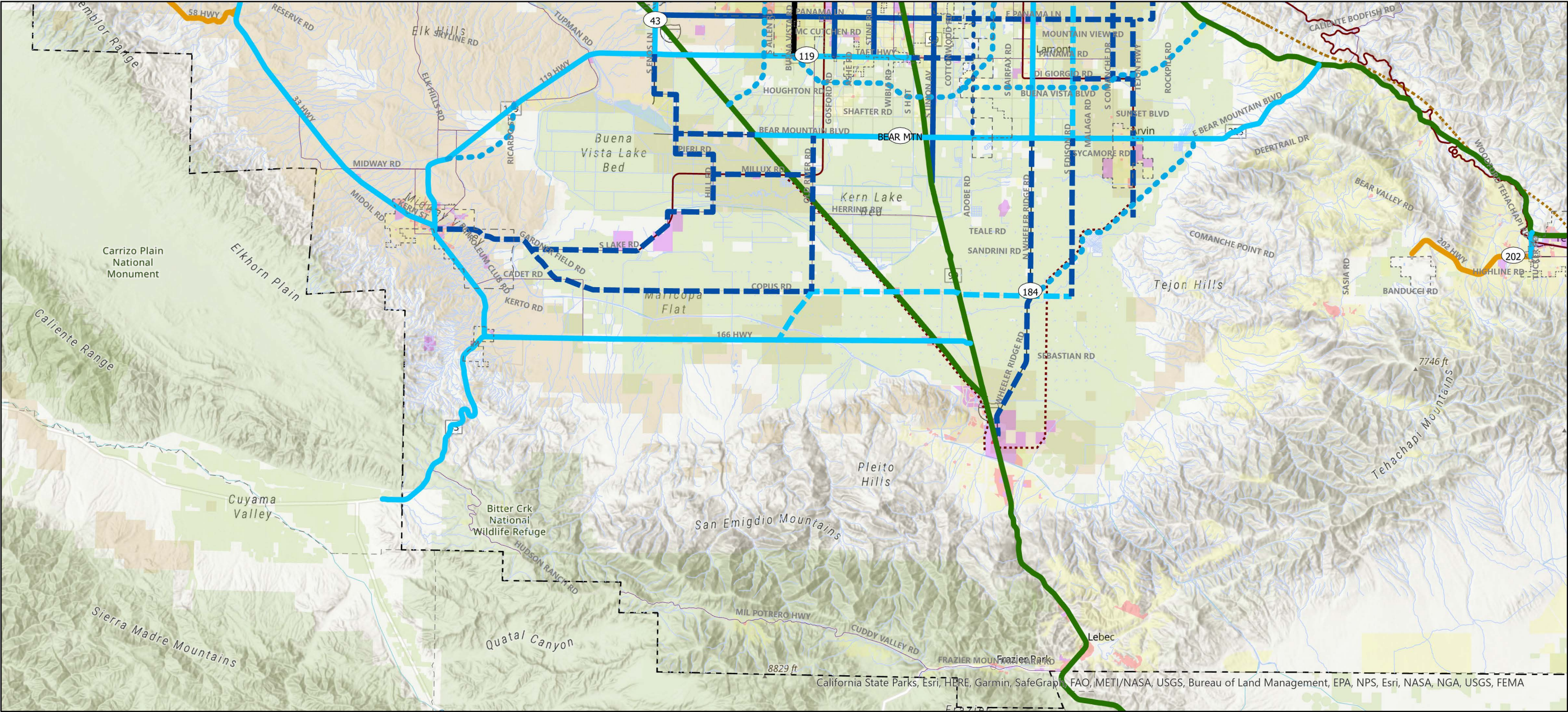


9 Miles



Existing	Candidate	Future				Intermodal Freight Hub	Combined General Plan Land Use		
			National Network (STAA)		65' CA Legal Route		Existing		Residential
			State Terminal Access (STAA)		65' CA Legal *KPRA Advisory		Potential		Commercial
			Local (STAA)		Other Major Local Arterials		High Speed Rail Alignment		Industrial
					Other Roads				Agriculture Production
									Oil Production

T-3 SW Kern - Truck Routes Suggested Updates

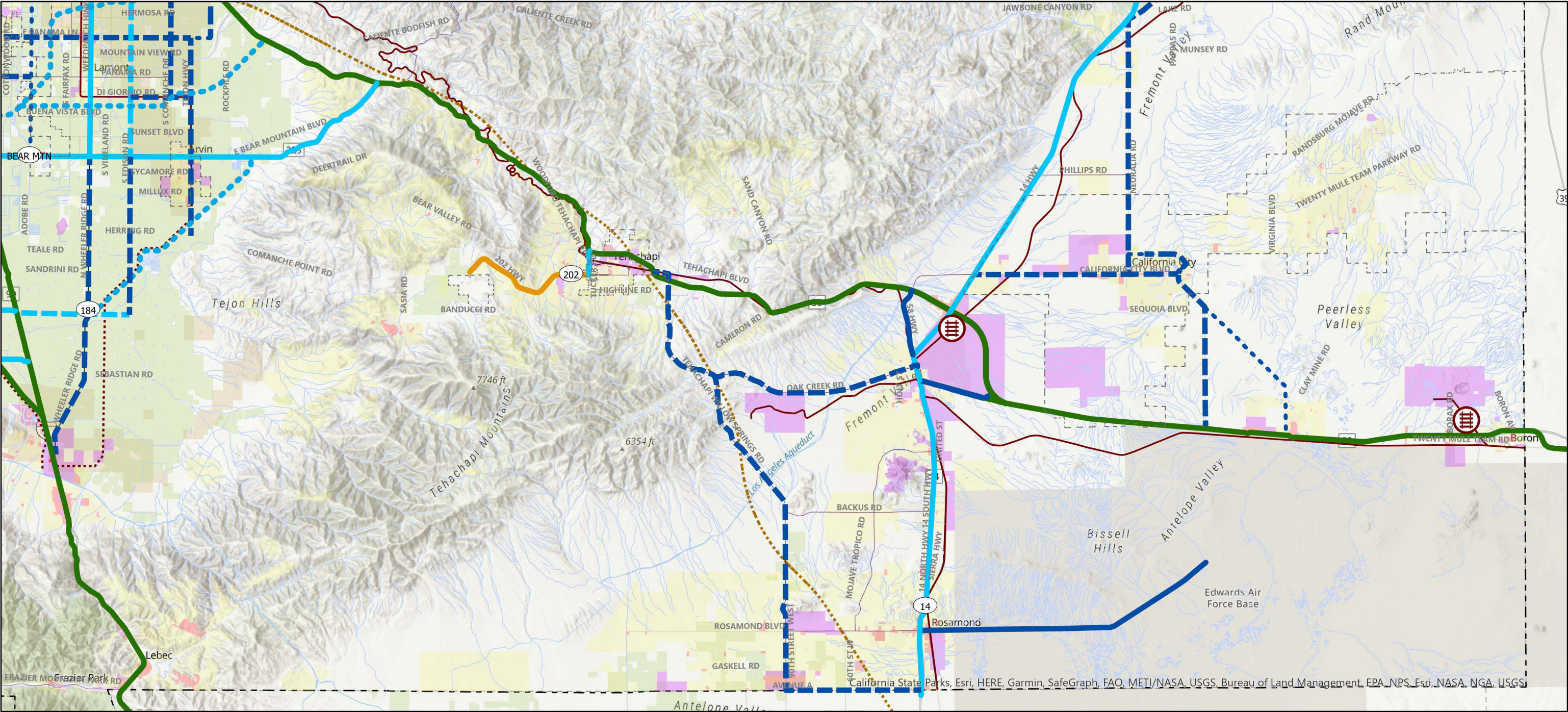


9 Miles



Existing	Candidate	Future				Intermodal Freight Hub	Combined General Plan Land Use		
			National Network (STAA)		65' CA Legal Route		Existing Rail		Residential
			State Terminal Access (STAA)		65' CA Legal *KPRA Advisory		Future Rail		Commercial
			Local (STAA)		Other Major Local Arterials		High Speed Rail Alignment		Industrial
					Other Roads		Existing		Agriculture Production
							Potential		Oil Production

T-4 SE Kern - Truck Routes Suggested Updates



9 Miles



Existing Candidate Future

- Existing: Solid green line
- Candidate: Dashed green line
- Future: Dotted green line

- National Network (STAA)
- State Terminal Access (STAA)
- Local (STAA)

- 65' CA Legal Route
- 65' CA Legal *KPRA Advisory
- Other Major Local Arterials
- Other Roads

- Existing Rail
- Future Rail
- High Speed Rail Alignment

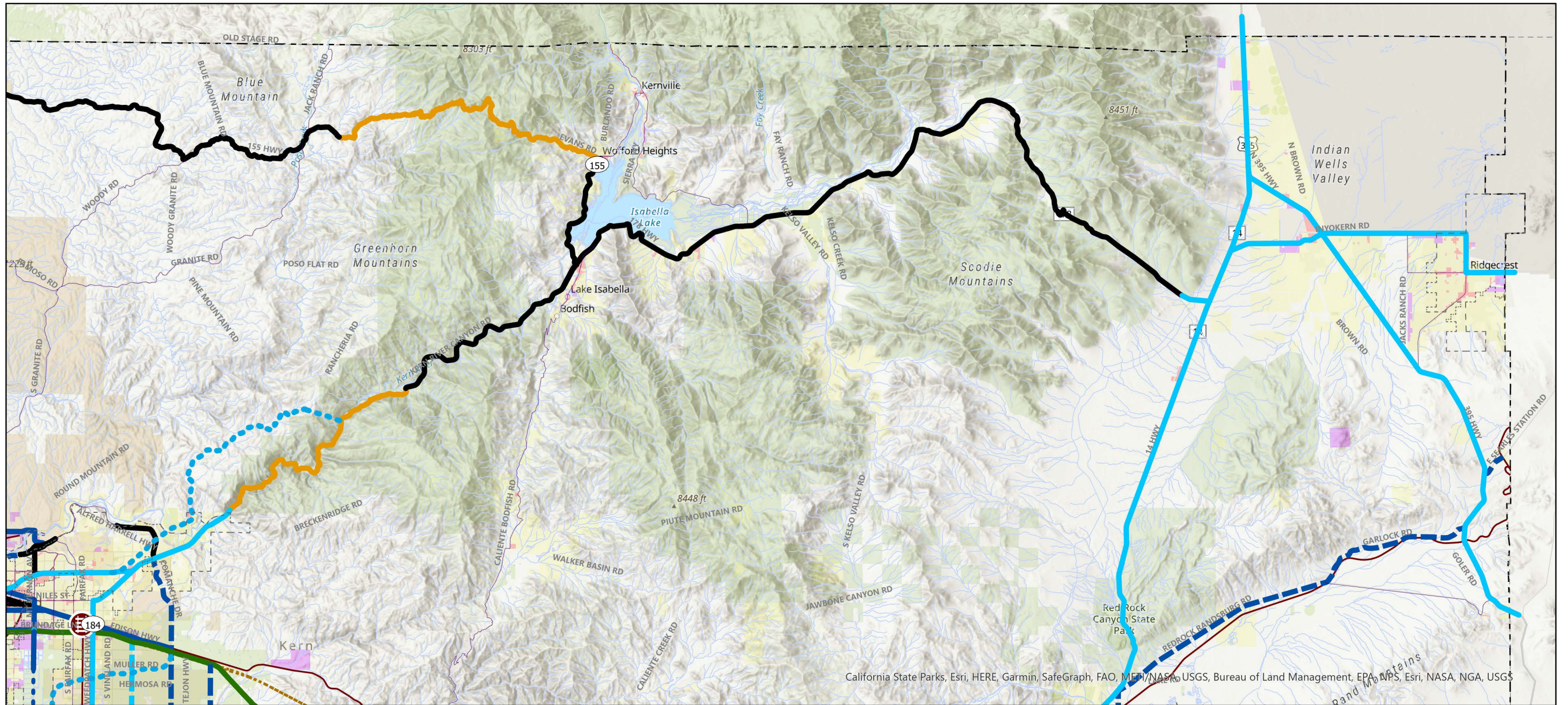
Intermodal Freight Hub

- Existing: Circle with cross symbol
- Potential: Circle with cross symbol

Combined General Plan Land Use

- Residential: Yellow square
- Commercial: Pink square
- Industrial: Purple square
- Agriculture Production: Light green square
- Oil Production: Tan square

T-5 NE Kern - Truck Routes Suggested Updates



9 Miles



Existing	Candidate	Future
1. Existing 2. Existing 3. Existing 4. Existing 5. Existing 6. Existing 7. Existing 8. Existing 9. Existing 10. Existing 11. Existing 12. Existing 13. Existing 14. Existing 15. Existing 16. Existing 17. Existing 18. Existing 19. Existing 20. Existing 21. Existing 22. Existing 23. Existing 24. Existing 25. Existing 26. Existing 27. Existing 28. Existing 29. Existing 30. Existing 31. Existing 32. Existing 33. Existing 34. Existing 35. Existing 36. Existing 37. Existing 38. Existing 39. Existing 40. Existing 41. Existing 42. Existing 43. Existing 44. Existing 45. Existing 46. Existing 47. Existing 48. Existing 49. Existing 50. Existing 51. Existing 52. Existing 53. Existing 54. Existing 55. Existing 56. Existing 57. Existing 58. Existing 59. Existing 60. Existing 61. Existing 62. Existing 63. Existing 64. Existing 65. Existing 66. Existing 67. Existing 68. Existing 69. Existing 70. Existing 71. Existing 72. Existing 73. Existing 74. Existing 75. Existing 76. Existing 77. Existing 78. Existing 79. Existing 80. Existing 81. Existing 82. Existing 83. Existing 84. Existing 85. Existing 86. Existing 87. Existing 88. Existing 89. Existing 90. Existing 91. Existing 92. Existing 93. Existing 94. Existing 95. Existing 96. Existing 97. Existing 98. Existing 99. Existing 100. Existing	1. Candidate 2. Candidate 3. Candidate 4. Candidate 5. Candidate 6. Candidate 7. Candidate 8. Candidate 9. Candidate 10. Candidate 11. Candidate 12. Candidate 13. Candidate 14. Candidate 15. Candidate 16. Candidate 17. Candidate 18. Candidate 19. Candidate 20. Candidate 21. Candidate 22. Candidate 23. Candidate 24. Candidate 25. Candidate 26. Candidate 27. Candidate 28. Candidate 29. Candidate 30. Candidate 31. Candidate 32. Candidate 33. Candidate 34. Candidate 35. Candidate 36. Candidate 37. Candidate 38. Candidate 39. Candidate 40. Candidate 41. Candidate 42. Candidate 43. Candidate 44. Candidate 45. Candidate 46. Candidate 47. Candidate 48. Candidate 49. Candidate 50. Candidate 51. Candidate 52. Candidate 53. Candidate 54. Candidate 55. Candidate 56. Candidate 57. Candidate 58. Candidate 59. Candidate 60. Candidate 61. Candidate 62. Candidate 63. Candidate 64. Candidate 65. Candidate 66. Candidate 67. Candidate 68. Candidate 69. Candidate 70. Candidate 71. Candidate 72. Candidate 73. Candidate 74. Candidate 75. Candidate 76. Candidate 77. Candidate 78. Candidate 79. Candidate 80. Candidate 81. Candidate 82. Candidate 83. Candidate 84. Candidate 85. Candidate 86. Candidate 87. Candidate 88. Candidate 89. Candidate 90. Candidate 91. Candidate 92. Candidate 93. Candidate 94. Candidate 95. Candidate 96. Candidate 97. Candidate 98. Candidate 99. Candidate 100. Candidate	1. Future 2. Future 3. Future 4. Future 5. Future 6. Future 7. Future 8. Future 9. Future 10. Future 11. Future 12. Future 13. Future 14. Future 15. Future 16. Future 17. Future 18. Future 19. Future 20. Future 21. Future 22. Future 23. Future 24. Future 25. Future 26. Future 27. Future 28. Future 29. Future 30. Future 31. Future 32. Future 33. Future 34. Future 35. Future 36. Future 37. Future 38. Future 39. Future 40. Future 41. Future 42. Future 43. Future 44. Future 45. Future 46. Future 47. Future 48. Future 49. Future 50. Future 51. Future 52. Future 53. Future 54. Future 55. Future 56. Future 57. Future 58. Future 59. Future 60. Future 61. Future 62. Future 63. Future 64. Future 65. Future 66. Future 67. Future 68. Future 69. Future 70. Future 71.

National Network (STAA)

■
■ ■ ■ ■
■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
 State Terminal Access (STAA)

Local (STAA)

— 65' CA Legal Route

65' CA Legal *KPRA Advisory

— Other Major Local Arterials

Other Roads

— Existing Rail

Future Rail

High Speed Rail Alignment

Intermodal Freight Hub

 Existing Potential

Combined General Plan Land Use

 Residential

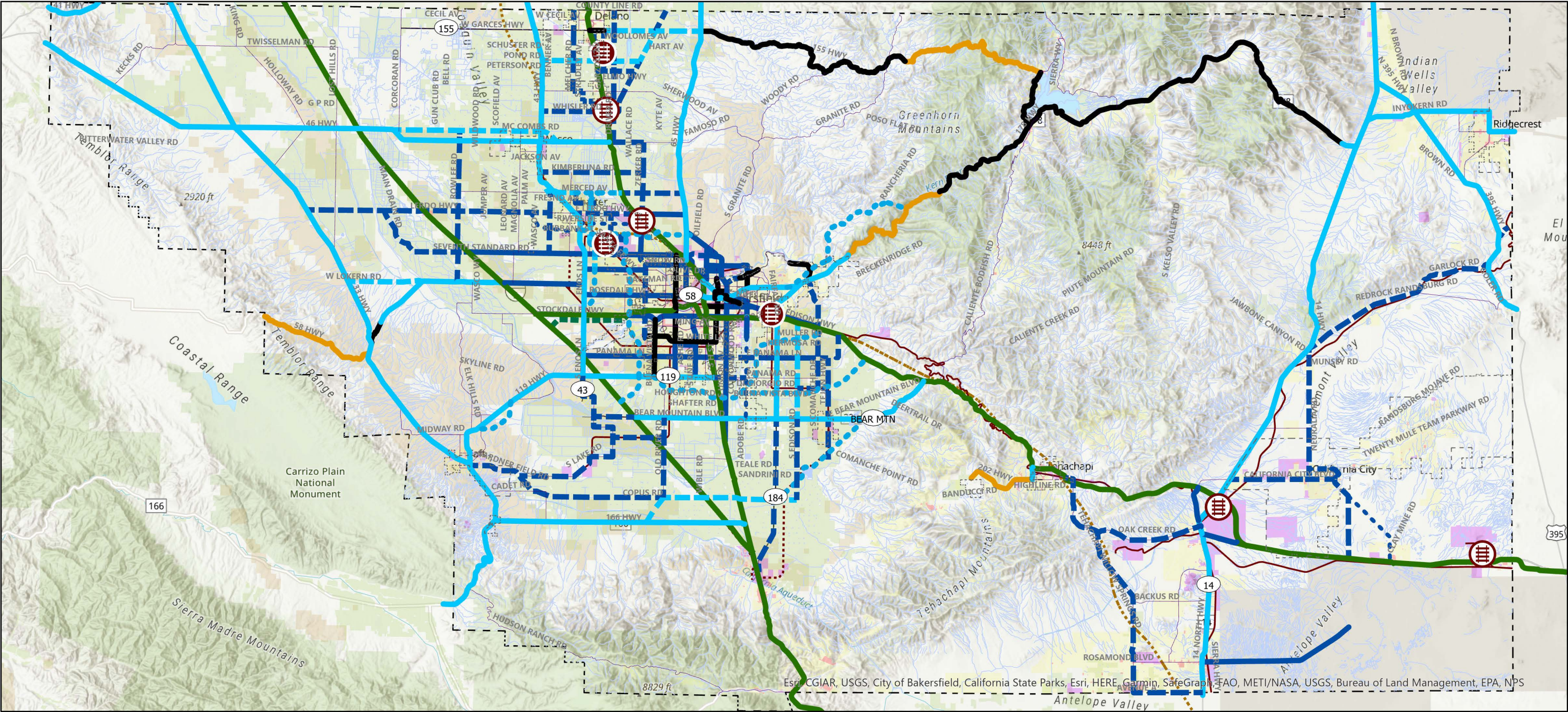
Commercial

Industrial

Agriculture Production

Oil Production

T-6 Kern Region - Truck Routes Suggested Updates



17 Miles



Existing Candidate Future

- National Network (STAA)
- State Terminal Access (STAA)
- Local (STAA)

- 65' CA Legal Route
- 65' CA Legal *KPRA Advisory
- Other Major Local Arterials
- Other Roads

Intermodal Freight Hub

- Existing
- Potential

Combined General Plan Land Use

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agriculture Production
- Oil Production

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VI TPPC

September 17, 2026

TO: Transportation Planning Policy Committee

FROM: Jay Schlosser
Executive Director

By: Irene Enriquez, Regional Planner

SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Policy Committee Agenda Item: VI.

FY 2026-27 TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT ACT ARTICLE 3 PROGRAM OF
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PROJECTS

DESCRIPTION:

Kern Council of Governments, acting in the capacity as the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency, administers funding for the Transportation Development Act (TDA) Article 3 Program. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee has reviewed this item.

DISCUSSION:

Article 3 funds are used to pay for bicycle and pedestrian safety programs, bicycle parking facilities, and bicycle and pedestrian travel facilities. Approximately \$2,673,688.78 is available for distribution in this funding cycle.

Standardized criteria guide project prioritization. Bicycle parking and bicycle safety programs have the highest priority. Remaining funds are allocated, 70% to bicycle travel facilities and 30% pedestrian travel facilities. No single claimant may receive more than 40% of the annual allocation (\$1,069,475.51). Kern COG staff reviewed all applications and confirmed the scoring.

Kern COG received thirteen claims totaling \$1,895,510. Attachment A shows the projects recommended for funding. The City of Arvin submitted two claims requesting funding for engineering and design only projects. Both projects are recommended for funding but will only be eligible for reimbursement once the City of Arvin has secured an E-76 for construction. After allocation of all projects, \$778,178.78 remain unallocated and will be held in the TDA Article 3 reserve for 2027-28 call for projects.

ACTION: Adopt the fiscal year 2026-27 Transportation Development Act Article 3 Program of Projects.
ROLL CALL VOTE.

Attachments: Attachment A: Fiscal year 2026-27 TDA Article 3 Program of Projects

FY 26-27 TDA Article 3 Program of Projects

Funds Available

\$2,673,688.78

1 st PRIORITY PROJECTS – Bike Facilities and Safety Programs			
Jurisdiction	Project	Cost	Fund Expiration Date
Arvin	Bike Racks	\$3,000	6/30/2029
Wasco	Bike Racks	\$3,000	6/30/2029
Arvin	Bike Safety	\$2,000	6/30/2029
McFarland	Bike Safety	\$2,000	6/30/2028
Taft	Bike Safety	\$2,000	6/30/2029
Wasco	Bike Safety	\$2,000	6/30/2028
Total 1st Priority Projects		\$14,000	

Remaining Funds

\$2,659,689

2nd PRIORITY PROJECTS – Pedestrian Facility Projects			
Arvin	Dual purpose class I bike and ped path	\$300,000	6/30/2029
Total 2nd Priority Projects		\$300,000	

Remaining Funds

\$2,359,689

3 rd PRIORITY PROJECTS – Pedestrian Facility Projects			
Arvin	Design-4th St. between A St. & Derby St.	\$83,401	6/30/2029
Arvin	Design- Arvin Ave. from B St. to C St.	\$54,186	6/30/2029
Wasco	Construct new sidewalks 2nd, 3rd, & 4th St. between Palm Ave and Poplar Ave.	\$268,923	6/30/2029
McFarland	Infill sidewalk various locations	\$478,600	6/30/2029
Taft	Reconstruct non-ADA compliant sidewalks, driveways and curb ramps 5th St. from Alley South of Center St. to North St.	\$348,700	6/30/2029
California City	Reconstruct new sidewalk, curb and gutter, ADA curb ramps and realted pedestrian improvements on Redwood Blvd. from Conklin Blvd. to 98th St.	\$347,700	6/30/2029
Total 3rd Priority Projects		\$1,581,510	

Grand total of FY
2026-27 TDA-3
Project Requests

\$1,895,510

Remaining Funds

\$778,178.78



VII TPPC

September 17, 2026

TO: Transportation Planning Policy Committee (TPPC)

FROM: Jay Schlosser, Executive Director

By: Rob Ball, Deputy Director/Planning Director
Ben Raymond, Regional Planner
Ceasar Valle, Regional Planner
Vincent Liu, Regional Planner

SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Policy Committee Agenda Item: VII.

FINAL 2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN/SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY; FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT; FINAL 2027 FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM; CORRESPONDING FINAL AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

DESCRIPTION:

The 4-year public involvement process gathered input from over 10,000 residents for the long- and near-term federal transportation planning documents. The process concluded on July 2, 2026, with the closure of a 55-day public review period for the Draft 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS); 30-day review period for the Draft 2027 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), and corresponding Draft Air Quality Conformity Analysis (Conformity); and a 45 day review for the associated Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). All draft documents with responses to comments are available online at <https://www.kerncog.org/2026-rtp/>. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), the Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) and the Kern COG Environmental Attorney have reviewed these documents.

DISCUSSION:

What is the RTP and SCS? The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a statutorily required, fiscally constrained, long-range planning document updated every four years that establishes Kern COG's transportation policies, investment priorities, and implementation framework through 2049. The RTP integrates transportation strategies with forecasted land use and demographic conditions to identify regional needs and develop a financially constrained program of improvements consistent with available revenues, while meeting federal and state requirements

for transportation planning, air quality conformity, environmental justice, public participation, performance management, and the SB 375 Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The SCS identifies a forecasted development pattern designed to achieve regional greenhouse gas reduction targets through coordination with local jurisdictions, agencies, and the public; however, it does not supersede local land use authority. The forecasted development pattern reflects local general plans, zoning, growth forecasts, and agency input, while recognizing that actual development decisions will continue to be made by local jurisdictions and may differ from RTP assumptions.

What is the FTIP? A Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) is a federally required, financially constrained program that identifies transportation projects and investments to be implemented over at least a four-year period using federal, state, and local transportation funds. Developed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in cooperation with state and local agencies, the FTIP demonstrates that proposed projects are consistent with the RTP and meet federal planning, air quality conformity, and performance requirements. The FTIP serves as the primary programming document that allows transportation projects to receive federal funding and move forward toward implementation.

What is Conformity? A Federal Clean Air Act Conformity document demonstrates that a region's transportation plans, programs, and projects are consistent with federal air quality standards and will not delay progress toward achieving or maintaining those standards. Required under the Clean Air Act, transportation conformity analysis uses regional emissions modeling to verify that the RTP and FTIP conform with approved air quality plans and emission budgets established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Approval of the conformity determination by federal agencies is required before federally funded transportation projects can proceed in areas that do not meet federal air quality standards.

What is the EIR? A California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is an environmental review document that evaluates the potential environmental effects of a proposed project and identifies feasible measures to avoid, reduce, or mitigate significant impacts. An EIR provides decision-makers and the public with detailed information regarding project alternatives, environmental consequences, mitigation measures, and areas of potential concern before a project is approved. For long-range planning documents such as an RTP, a Program EIR or PEIR evaluates the broader environmental effects of implementing the plan and provides a framework for subsequent project-level environmental review which may also require an EIR.

Report Outline

- A. Public Involvement/Performance Based Process**
- B. Workshopped Scenarios and EIR Alternatives**
- C. Performance Measures and Indicators**
- D. Summary of Changes Compared to Previous Plan**
- E. Summary of Comments, Responses and Refinements**
- F. Next Steps/Recommendation**

A. Public Involvement/Performance Based Process

Summary of RTP outreach process and performance measures: State and federal regulations have steadily placed greater emphasis on performance measures and public outreach

in the regional transportation planning process. Since 2001 Kern COG has taken these regulations seriously, developing, adapting, and implementing an integrated performance measure process that tracks measures for system level, smart mobility framework, and health equity, for predominantly minority and/ or low-income areas. In addition, Kern COG's decision makers are able to balance the feedback from performance measures with an extensive public outreach process. The 4-year 2026 RTP public outreach process was able to successfully gather input from 10,500 participants –over 1% of our region's population – a similar level of participation compared to prior RTP outreach processes. The Public Outreach process is summarized in Appendix C to the 2026 RTP, also available at: <https://www.kerncog.org/rtp-outreach-results/>. The Integrated Performance Measure Analysis is Appendix D to the 2026 RTP.

Public Involvement Policy evaluation results: The Kern COG Board as part of the adopted 2023 Public Involvement Policy (<https://www.kerncog.org/policies/>) adopted quantifiable indicators for evaluating public involvement. Five performance indicator categories -- Accessibility, Reach, Diversity, Impact and Satisfaction – are identified in the document. All performance indicators have been met as indicated by a check mark.

Accessibility Indicators:

- ✓ Meetings are held throughout the county (over 100 meetings and outreach event held throughout the county)
- ✓ 100 percent of meetings are reasonably accessible by transit (100%)
- ✓ All meetings are accessible under Americans with Disability Act requirements (100%)
- ✓ Meetings are linguistically accessible to 100 percent of participants with three working days' advance request for translation. (Meeting announcements will offer translation services with advance notice to participants speaking any language with available professional translation services.) (100%)

Reach indicators

- ✓ Number of comments logged into comment tracking and response system (200+)
- ✓ Number of individuals actively participating in the outreach program (10,000+)
- ✓ Number of visits to the specific section of the Kern COG website (600+)
- ✓ Number of newspaper articles, radio & television interviews mentioning the plan/program (3)

Diversity indicators

- ✓ Demographic of targeted workshop/charrette/meeting roughly mirror the demographics of the Kern region (varies by event location/host organization)
- ✓ Percentage of targeted organizations and groups participating in at least one workshop/charrette/meeting (100%)
- ✓ Participants represent a cross-section of people of various interests, places of residence and primary modes of travel. (varies by event location/host organization)

Impact Indicators

- ✓ 100 percent of written comments received are logged into a comment tracking system, analyzed, summarized and communicated in time for consideration by staff and the policy board. (100%)

- ✓ 100 percent of significant written comments are acknowledged so that the person making them knows whether his or her comment is reflected in the outcome of a policy board action, or, conversely, why the policy board acted differently. (100%)

Participant Satisfaction (This information would be obtained via an online and written survey available on the Kern COG web site, and at each workshop/charrette/public meeting involving the plan or program in question.)

- ✓ Accessibility to meeting locations.
- ✓ Materials presented in appropriate languages for targeted audiences. (Spanish speakers appreciated provided Spanish materials and translation services.)
- ✓ Adequate notice of the meetings provided.
- ✓ Sufficient opportunity to comment. (Interactive voting was used and participants were given the opportunity to make written and oral comments.)
- ✓ Educational value of presentations and materials. (Positive comments were received.)
- ✓ Understanding of other perspectives and priorities.
- ✓ Clear information at an appropriate level of detail.
- ✓ Clear understanding of items that are established policy versus those that are open to public influence.
- ✓ Quality of the discussion.
- ✓ Responsiveness to comments received.

Based on the above analysis, the RTP fully met or exceeded all the 2023 Public Involvement Policy evaluation indicators. The policy monitoring, performance measures, and outreach processes are key elements of Kern COG's regional transportation planning process, which has been recognized at regional, state and national levels as a best practice in transportation planning.

Recognition of Kern COG Planning Process: The Kern RTP and regional planning process has long been recognized as an exemplary best practice through awards, and the state RTP guidelines. In 2026, Kern COG has been recognized for its transportation planning efforts from the national Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) for outstanding overall achievement; the California Transportation Foundation (CTF) for freight planning; and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) transportation project excellence in goods movement. These awards highlighted the work of the Kern Area Regional Goods-movement Operations (KARGO) study, one of several special emphasis outreach areas for the 2026 RTP. In 2024, Kern COG was noted as a good example for our Public Involvement Procedure/Public Participation Plan, and RTP's Integrated Performance Measure Process. In 2022, Kern COG was recognized as 1st Runner-up by the Caltrans Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) special recognition competition the RTP's Integrated Performance Measure Process. In addition, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) 2017 RTP guidelines listed Kern COG

Kern RTP Process Recognized as a Best Planning Practice:

- 2026** – ASCE regional award, Excellence in goods movement transportation
- 2026** – AMPO National Award Outstanding Achievement: Freight
- 2026** – CTF State Award – 1st Runner-Up for freight planning
- 2024** – CTC Guidelines Highlighted Example
- 2021** – LTAP SMART Transformation Award 1st Runner-Up
- 2017** – CTC Guidelines Best Practice
- 2010** – CTC Guidelines Best Practice

as the only Medium/Small Metropolitan Planning Organization cited as an “Exemplary Planning Practice” for its Public Education/Outreach program. In the 2010 RTP Guidelines adopted by the CTC, Kern COG’s Integrated Performance Measure process was the only one in the state identified as a “Best Practice” for environmental justice analysis. The performance measures are used to compare scenarios and alternatives in both the workshops and the EIR.

B. Workshopped Scenarios and EIR Alternatives

The distinction between public workshop scenarios and CEQA alternatives: California SB 375 requires that the SCS demonstrate through modeling how the region can meet state greenhouse gas reduction targets through integrated land use and transportation scenarios. This quantitative modeling of projects undertaken for the financially constrained 2026 RTP does not model all the projects listed or discussed in the strategic plan because funding for many of these projects is speculative and implementation of these projects is not yet reasonably foreseeable. As part of the development of the RTP, Kern COG identifies scenarios to better understand development and transportation options. Similarly, CEQA requires a reasonable range of alternatives to a proposed plan that could feasibly avoid or reduce significant environmental impacts.

To better differentiate the use of each model run, Kern COG has made the following distinction between the use of the terms “alternative” and “scenario.” An alternative refers to modeling, assumptions and output that is intended to be included in the CEQA document for the RTP in order to provide a reasonable range of development patterns and transportation options and reduce environmental impacts where feasible. As the RTP/SCS has evolved over the years development patterns have become increasingly sustainable (i.e. local land use plans have been approved that generally reduce traffic and air quality impacts where possible). With these changes, the options available to Kern COG to improve upon these patterns have narrowed. A scenario describes modeling results intended to generate feedback from the public in a public workshop. Feedback on scenarios is used to inform the development of assumptions for the CEQA required alternatives.

Summary of three SCS scenarios used in public workshops: Consistent with prior RTP/SCS processes, and to meet the requirements of SB 375, Kern COG developed and workshopped 3 scenarios that varied in the amount of infill, compact development, and transit/bike/pedestrian infrastructure. Scenario 1 was the least compact while Scenario 3 was the most compact land use scenario. The results were similar to prior years with the weighted average of participants falling closest to Scenario 2. By weighting and averaging the responses, the resulting preferred scenario provides a level of infill, compact development, and mix of strategies that represent all the responses received at over a dozen public workshops spread throughout the county. The public input received from over 1,000 residents at the Kern County Fair re-enforced the preferred plan alternative which is similar yet a little more aggressive in GHG reduction strategies than prior RTPs.

Summary of the EIR alternatives required by CEQA: Next, alternatives were developed for inclusion in the environmental document to the RTP to meet CEQA requirements. Currently there is the Plan alternative based on Scenario 2, and three other alternatives to the Plan alternative. They have been named the No Project, Old Plan, and Countywide Infill alternatives.

The RTP/SCS alternatives use Kern COG's latest transportation model improvements completed in November 2025, and the Regional Growth Forecast adopted in April 2024. The distribution of the growth forecast by Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) and Regional Statical Area (RSA) subregion was presented to the RPAC in April 2025. The RSA totals were used to generate forecasts of socioeconomic data by jurisdiction and include future annexation assumptions. These control totals are used across all scenarios and alternatives consistent with RHNA. Full model documentation and a peer review report are available at: <http://www.kerncog.org/category/data-center/transportation-modeling/>.

The Plan and three primary alternatives are designed to provide a range of reasonable alternatives to the plan in accordance with CEQA regulations.

The Plan: The Plan alternative is a balanced reflection of the input received during the 4-year public involvement process. The following bullets highlight some of the plan assumptions:

- **Maintenance Investment:** Increased to fully maintain transportation infrastructure.
- **Telecommute Strategy:** Kern COG continues to use its CommuteKern program to encourage commuters and employers to expand telecommuting as a long-term strategy to reduce congestion and vehicle miles traveled. While telecommuting peaked in early pandemic-era, recent data indicate that approximately 40% of Kern County commuters would like to telecommute at least part of the week. Kern COG has increased resources for the CommuteKern program to strengthen employer outreach, commuter education, and supportive workplace policies to expand telecommuting participation across the region.
- **Transit/Bike/Walk Investment:** Transit investment is based on the 2025 Golden Empire Transit (GET) Long Range Transit Plan, the 2012 Kern Commuter Rail Study, and includes an expanded Bus Rapid Transit system for Metro Bakersfield and extends Metrolink commuter rail service from Lancaster to Rosamond in East Kern as well as High-Speed Rail stops in Bakersfield and Palmdale. Transit ridership is anticipated to increase with the use of on-demand micro-transit, shared mobility and autonomous vehicles to increase first/last mile connectivity. Additional bike and pedestrian improvements identified by the Kern County Active Transportation Plan would enhance transportation in revitalized areas. This alternative continues the rideshare program and adds the new 511 travel information system.
- **Housing Choices:** 30-40% of new housing growth characterized by multi-family, attached and small lot single family development less than ~6,000 square feet located predominately in Metropolitan Bakersfield consistent with the RTP/SCS and public input.
- **Revitalization:** Focus infill on vacant lots in Metropolitan Bakersfield and at the transit-oriented development (TOD)/infill sites identified in the GET Long Range Transit Plan, and the Bakersfield Downtown Station Area Vision Plan and consistent with the local General Plans.
- **Land Use Forecast:** This RTP/SCS utilizes the new 2024-2050 Growth Forecast adopted by the Kern COG board in April 2024. The distribution in Metropolitan Bakersfield has been revised to assume all vacant lots in developed areas are filled, consistent with the existing General Plan as well as some revitalization around TOD/infill sites and downtown. This alternative uses Uplan land use model software developed by UC Davis to re-distribute the growth from areas with the lowest level of economic attractions in Metro Bakersfield to the infill areas.
- **Highway Investment:** Transportation investments would continue to alleviate the most critical roadway bottlenecks while investing in operational improvements, improved truck flows, safety and demand management strategies such as promote of vanpool programs.

The No Project Alternative: The No Project alternative is required by Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines and assumes that the proposed project would not be implemented. The No Project alternative allows decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. However, “no project” does not necessarily mean that development will be prohibited. The No Project alternative includes “what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and infrastructure that would be completed in the first 5 years of the Plan that is nearing or under construction. This alternative is consistent with the alternative in the 2022 RTP/SCS EIR.

The Old Plan Alternative: The Old Plan alternative is an update of the adopted 2022 RTP/SCS reflecting the most recent growth distribution and transportation planning decisions and assumptions. This Old Plan alternative does not include the updated development pattern strategies included within the 2026 Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) but includes all of the projects in the 2022 RTP/SCS. The growth scenario for the Old Plan is a combination of local input and existing General Plan and land use data provided by local jurisdictions during the 2022 RTP/SCS and Kern Regional Blueprint process which represented a significant change from previous development patterns. This alternative is consistent with the alternative in the 2022 RTP/SCS EIR.

The Countywide Infill Alternative: The Countywide Infill alternative would result in a more aggressive development pattern than the 2026 RTP Plan. Under the Infill alternative, new growth would be focused in the 2024 existing urban/built-up areas countywide. The housing mix in this alternative would average about two-thirds medium or high density. This alternative is consistent with the infill alternative in the 2022 RTP/SCS EIR.

C. Performance Measures and Indicators

The outputs generated by the transportation model are used to produce performance measures for the scenarios and alternatives. These measures such as Vehicle Miles Travels (VMT) are used to evaluate the efficiency of the transportation system. Indicators are produced mainly from the outputs generated by the land use model. Indicators such as land consumption are used to evaluate the impacts and benefits a future land use pattern may have. Indicators are also used to evaluate the co-benefits such as public health and are included in RTP Appendix D. The results of the measures indicate that the Plan will not negatively impact the predominantly minority and/or low-income communities at a rate greater than the County as a whole.

ARB has established percentage change in CO₂ per capita as a key measure to determine that the SCS (RTP Chapter 4) if implemented is projected to meet the SB 375 reduction targets of 9% by 2020 and 15% by 2035. The prior SCSs resulted in better CO₂ per capita reductions of 10.7% per capita by 2020 and this plan achieves the target of 15% by 2035.

D. Summary of Changes Compared to Previous Plan

The Draft 2026 RTP is very similar to the adopted 2022 RTP. Following is a list of substantive changes found in the 2026 RTP.

- The 2026 Plan horizon was extended from 2046 to 2049, however it still covers over 20 years of growth.

- The Plan uses a significantly lower revised growth forecast adopted by the Kern COG Board in 2024.
- The Plan includes several policy updates based on public input from groups such as the Tejon Indian Tribe a representative from which now serves on the RTP/SCS oversight committee.
- The Plan incorporates recommendations of the Safe Routes for Cyclists community outreach and education program.
- The Plan is consistent with the extensive public feedback and transit priorities highlighted in the 2025 GET Long-range Transit plan, increasing the existing fleet of 14 hydrogen buses.
- The Plan incorporates updates to local General Plan land use assumptions.
- The Plan assumes new funding from sources such as the latest federal transportation spending bill and new grant programs, Safe Streets and Roads for All, state Cap & Invest programs, and other new and/or potential sources. If some of these sources are repealed or not fully realized, certain types of projects could slip depending on which are not fully funded.
- The Plan has the advantage of an improved Travel Model with observed base year data and assumptions updated from 2020 to 2023. Over 700 annually surveyed traffic count locations were used to ground truth the model.
- The Plan benefits from two additional federal performance measures to provide better accountability. The award-winning integrated performance measure process also provides an analysis of impacts on predominantly minority and/or low-income areas.

E. Summary of Comments, Responses & Refinements

RTP Comments: Kern COG received 30 comment submission, 20 were written comment emails/letters from local residents, a comment from the City of Delano, and 7 comment letters from: Kern Community College District, Leadership Council for Justice & Accountability, California Department of Transportation, Center on Race Poverty & the Environment, Mojave Air & Space Port, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and California High Speed Rail Authority. Additionally, Kern COG received verbal public comments during the June 18th 2026 Public Hearing from Leadership Council for Justice & Accountability and 5 residents.

- 1) **Local residents written comments:** focused on transportation needs and improvements in the Rosamond and Mojave areas, including roadway safety and maintenance, traffic operations, pedestrian facilities, access to SR 14 and SR 58, railroad crossings and grade separation, emergency access, and regional connectivity.
Summary Response: Kern COG provided detailed responses addressing the specific transportation needs identified by residents and identified related projects and strategies included in the 2026 RTP. Responses also clarified the role of Kern COG and other responsible agencies, the funding and implementation status of projects, and Kern COG's continued coordination with local and state agencies to pursue transportation improvements and funding opportunities.
- 2) **The City of Delano:** requested a correction to a project title.
Summary Response: Kern COG made the requested correction.
- 3) **Kern Community College District:** commented on two additional success stories to add to Appendix E of the RTP.
Summary Response: Kern COG will consider the additional success stories for future amendments or updates to the RTP.
- 4) **Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability (LCJA) written comments:** related to the RTP focused on active transportation, pedestrian safety, environmental justice, community

engagement, and transportation infrastructure needs in disadvantaged communities, particularly Fuller Acres, Unidos por el Agua, Shirley Lane, and Doney Street. Comments also addressed safety and potential projects along SR 184, freight movement and the KARGO projects, air quality and public health impacts. Comments related to the PEIR are addressed in the PEIR section.

Summary Response: Kern COG provided detailed responses addressing the identified transportation and environmental justice concerns, including existing and planned pedestrian, bicycle, safety, and roadway improvements and applicable RTP policies. Kern COG affirmed its commitment to Title VI, environmental justice, public engagement, and multimodal transportation goals; identified funding and projects in the RTP that could address several of the requested improvements; clarified that certain projects remain conceptual and subject to further planning; and committed to continued coordination and meetings with LCJA, local agencies, and Caltrans to advance appropriate solutions.

- 5) **California Department of Transportation:** comments related to the RTP focused on suggest changes and clarifications to further demonstrate consistency with state policies and statutes. Comments related to conformity analysis are addressed in the conformity analysis section.

Summary Response: Kern COG has provided clarifications and edits to demonstrate consistency with state policies and statutes.

- 6) **Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment:** comments related to the RTP focused on freight and goods movement, including the potential effects of intermodal facilities, inland ports and expanding warehousing, truck and rail electrification, local infrastructure investments in environmental justice communities, emergency preparedness, flood and extreme-heat resilience, warehouse-related road fees. Comments related to the PEIR are summarized in the PEIR section above and full responses in the Final PEIR document.

Summary Response: Kern COG provided detailed responses addressing the commenter's concerns, expanded policies and incorporated additional information and revisions into the RTP to address the comments. The responses also clarified the assumptions used in the RTP's freight modeling and identified existing and planned policies, programs, and projects intended to address transportation, environmental, and community impacts.

- 7) **Mojave Air & Space Port:** comments related to the RTP emphasized the facility's national significance as a commercial spaceport and aerospace test center, and requested stronger recognition of its role as an industrial employment hub and logistics asset in eastern Kern County. They also urged continued prioritization of access improvements, freight mobility, resilient infrastructure, emerging aviation technologies, and ongoing coordination with aerospace and industrial stakeholders. Comments related to the PEIR are addressed in the PEIR section.

Summary Response: Kern COG updated the RTP to incorporate expanded recognition of Mojave Air & Space Port's aerospace, industrial, and transportation roles, adding new text in multiple sections to address MASP's requests. The responses also reaffirm continued prioritization of access, freight mobility, resiliency, and stakeholder coordination consistent with RTP/SCS policies.

- 8) **San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District:** focused on reducing VMT, advancing clean-air design in new development, applying best practices for freight facility siting, evaluating truck routing to protect nearby communities, and ensuring compliance with Rule 9510 for major projects. The District emphasized strategies that lower emissions from passenger travel, heavy-duty trucks, and freight operations while improving community health protections.

Summary Response: Kern COG noted that the RTP already incorporates VMT-reduction strategies, clean truck technology policies, freight best-practice references, truck-routing protections, and expanded discussion of Rule 9510 requirements. Additional clarifying text and footnotes were added to strengthen alignment with District recommendations and ensure these strategies are reflected in future planning and project-level coordination.

- 9) **California High-Speed Rail Authority:** comments emphasized that statewide high-speed rail will expand access to jobs and housing, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support Kern COG's long-range planning goals. They also highlighted ongoing evaluation of Bakersfield station options, support for multimodal access improvements at SR 204, and concerns about growth assumptions related to future highway projects.

Summary Response: Kern COG affirmed that high-speed rail's mobility and sustainability benefits align with the RTP/SCS and updated the RTP to reflect ongoing station planning, interim concepts, and multimodal access coordination. Kern COG also clarified regional growth assumptions, corrected project timing, and explained that the SR 204 improvements are designed as managed lanes to support reliable bus and HSR station access.

- 10) **Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability (LCJA) public hearing comments:** focused on advocating for residents from Fuller Acres and Shirley Lane communities requested that the RTP include new complete streets projects and near-term pedestrian safety improvements along Weedpatch Highway and within their neighborhoods, citing dangerous walking conditions, past fatalities, and lack of basic infrastructure such as sidewalks, speed control, and safe routes to school and transit. They emphasized that these projects align with existing RTP safety and equity policies and urged Kern COG, Kern County, and Caltrans to incorporate them into the final plan.

Summary Response: Kern COG noted that several of the requested projects are eligible for RSTP funding but must be prioritized and applied for by the local jurisdictions, as RSTP funds are limited and programmed in grouped categories within the RTP. Kern COG also referenced responses to LCJA's written RTP comments.

- 11) **Local Residents public hearing comments:** described long-standing safety hazards caused by the absence of sidewalks, drainage, lighting, signage, and safe crossings, noting frequent near-misses, past fatalities, and dangerous conditions for children, elderly residents, and people with disabilities. They urged Kern COG to include complete-streets projects, pedestrian infrastructure, and basic safety improvements in the RTP to address decades of unmet needs in the disadvantaged communities of Fuller Acres and along the Weedpatch Highway corridor.

Summary Response: Kern COG referenced prior responses to LCJA's similar written comments advocating for these residents and their communities. Kern COG also noted that many of the proposed improvements fall under local-jurisdiction responsibility and funding programs such as the RSTP. Kern COG is forwarding signage-related requests to Kern County and Caltrans and reiterated that project prioritization and applications for available funding must be initiated by the responsible local agencies.

FTIP Comments: Comments were received from California Department of Transportation Office of Federal Programming and Data Management email dated 6/25/26 with 26 comments and from District 6 Office of Asset and Program Management email dated 7/16/26 with 4 comments on the FTIP. The Draft Final 2027 FTIP is available at: www.kerncog.org/2027-ftip/

- 1) **California Department of Transportation, Office of Federal Programming** provided 26 comments on additional information they would like Kern COG to provide.

Summary Response: *Provided clarifying edits and verifications requested regarding 16 projects in the FTIP.*

- 2) **California Department of Transportation, District 6 Office of Asset and Program Management** provided 4 comments on additional information they would like Kern COG to provide.

Summary Response: *Provided clarifying edits and verifications requested regarding 4 projects in the FTIP.*

Conformity Comments: Comments were received from California Department of Transportation Air Quality Conformity Branch email dated 6/25/26 with 7 comments on the federal air quality Conformity document; and a letter from the Center on Race Poverty & the Environment with one comment on the federal air quality Conformity document.

- 1) **California Department of Transportation, Air Quality Conformity Branch** provided 7 comments on suggested edits and clarifications.

Summary Response: *Provided requested text updates and clarifications.*

- 2) **Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment:** comment

RTP PEIR Comments: Five comment letters were received relating to the Draft 2026 RTP Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The PEIR comment letters were from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, Mojave Air & Space Port, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, and Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability. A summary of the comments and responses is provided below. Full responses and the bracketed comment letters are provided in the Final PEIR.

- 1) **California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)** comments focused on biological resources and requested revisions/additional guidance regarding special-status wildlife and plants, species status information, biological surveys, nesting birds, wildlife movement and habitat connectivity, infrastructure and wildlife-crossing design, compensatory mitigation, CNDDDB information, cumulative biological impacts, and lake and streambed alteration.

Summary Response: *The suggested revisions were incorporated into the Final PEIR and mitigation measure BIO-12 was revised in response to this letter.*

- 2) **San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District** comments focused on air quality and strategies for project-level implementation. The Air District provided information and recommendations on VMT-reduction strategies, freight facility design, construction and operational emissions, health risk assessments and screening, coordination with the District, Voluntary Emission Reduction Agreements, truck routing, and applicable District incentive programs, permitting requirements, and rules.

Summary Response: *The Final EIR was updated to include additional information on the rules and links to resources and factsheets were also added. Several mitigation measures were revised to include references to the air district's suggested measures.*

- 3) **Mojave Air & Space Port** comments included aviation hazards and airport land use compatibility, including FAA Part 77, the State Aeronautics Act, airport compatibility planning, potential hazards to airport operations, and consistency with the Kern County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). The commenter also recommended mitigation related to airport hazards and land use compatibility.

Summary Response: *The suggested mitigation measures were included in the Final PEIR. Clarifications related to ALUCPs were also added to the Final PEIR.*

- 4) **Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment** comments primarily related to the PEIR's air quality and health-effects analysis, including emissions methodology and assumptions, particulate matter and diesel emissions, toxic air contaminants, health impacts, climate change effects on TACs, transportation refrigeration units, cumulative impacts, and impacts associated with freight development. The letter also requested additional information on reasonably foreseeable projects and requested additional mitigation for freight-related impacts.

Summary Response: *Kern COG prepared a detailed response to this letter. Many of the issues were related to the RTP and are addressed in the RTP response to comments. For the issues related to the PEIR, Kern COG prepared a detailed Master Response that clarified Kern COG's modeling methodology and assumptions. Details on the land use, transportation and emissions model were provided. An additional health study was summarized and added to the Final EIR and details related to how Kern COG determines which projects are reasonably foreseeable were also addressed in the responses.*

- 5) **Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability** comments related to the PEIR raised concerns regarding future projects relying on or tiering from the programmatic PEIR and emphasized the need for project-specific environmental review and mitigation of localized impacts, particularly impacts affecting communities near goods-movement and transportation projects.

Summary Response: *The response clarified tiering under CEQA.*

Refinements: Since the release of the draft documents, Kern COG has made several refinements to the document that do not affect the analysis or conclusions in the PEIR. Some of the refinements were initiated by staff to correct typographical and other errors. The comment-initiated refinements are summarized above and detailed as applicable in Appendix H of the draft Final 2026 RTP, in the Final PEIR, the Final 2027 FTIP and Final Conformity Analysis, available at www.kerncog.org/2026-rtp.

F. Next Steps & Recommendations

- **September 17, 2026** – Transportation Planning Policy Committee (TPPC) Board Considers Adoption of the 2026 RTP/SCS, PEIR, 2027 FTIP and Conformity documents
- December/Jan 2026 - ARB Determines if an Alternative Planning Strategy is Required
- **December 2026** – FHWA/EPA approves Conformity, FHWA/FTA approves FTIP
- **2027** – Kern COG updates its Public Information Policies & Procedures and the Regional Growth Forecast
- **2030** – Kern COG considers adoption of the 2030 RTP/SCS

Recommendation: The development and performance of the 2026 RTP/SCS, PEIR, 2027 FTIP, and Conformity documents, including public outreach, meet federal, state and Kern COG requirements. The Final PEIR was developed with expert consulting services including a CEQA attorney. The resulting planning documents balance extensive, bottom-up public input with an award-winning, measured, performance-based approach, providing an effective Plan and vision that advances the goals of the Kern COG Board, while facilitating project delivery. Kern COG's Transportation Technical Advisory Committee recommended adoption of the final documents at their September 2nd meeting, motioned by member from City of Wasco and seconded by member

from Golden Empire Transit, and unanimously carried by all members present including members from the City of Arvin, City of Bakersfield, City of Delano, City of McFarland, City of Ridgecrest, City of Shafter, City of Tehachapi, City of Wasco, County of Kern, Golden Empire Transit, and Caltrans District 6. Similarly, Kern COG's Regional Planning Advisory Committee recommended approval of the final documents at their September 2nd meeting, motioned by member from City of Bakersfield and seconded by member from Tejon Indian Tribe, and unanimously carried by all members present including members from the City of Arvin, City of Delano, City of McFarland, City of Ridgecrest, City of Shafter, City of Taft, City of Tehachapi, City of Wasco, Golden Empire Transit, and Caltrans District 6. Staff recommend approval of this action item.

Attachments:

- A) RTP Executive Summary
- B) Resolution No. 26-32
- C) Resolution No. 26-33

ACTION:

- 1) Authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution No. 26-32 for: (a) certification of the Final PEIR for the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan, (b) adoption of the CEQA Findings of Fact; (c) adoption of the Statement of Overriding Considerations; and (d) adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring Program.
 - 2) Authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution No. 26-33 adopting the 2027 Federal Transportation Improvement Program, 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and Corresponding Conformity Analysis.
- ROLL CALL VOTE.

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DRAFT – May 2026

Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy Executive Summary



2025 Outsiders Kindergarten Transportation Parade – Bakersfield CA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABSTRACT

This Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) establishes a comprehensive, multimodal vision for a safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation system serving the Kern, one-county region over a 20-plus year planning horizon. Prepared in accordance with the most recent guidelines adopted by the California Transportation Commission, the RTP identifies current and future transportation needs, system deficiencies, and constraints while advancing strategies to improve mobility for people and goods. The plan integrates land use, environmental stewardship, and transportation investment decisions to support regional and statewide goals, including economic vitality, public health, system resilience, and climate change mitigation. This comprehensive document incorporates required sections on Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), Congestion Management Program (CMP), growth forecasts, policies, financing, performance measures, public outreach and numerous other requirements. As a long-range policy document, the RTP communicates a grassroots vision providing a foundation for programming and funding decisions.

Consistent with state and federal requirements, the RTP presents a coordinated and balanced approach to transportation planning across all modes, including highways, transit, rail, aviation, goods movement, bicycle, and pedestrian systems. The plan is both action-oriented and fiscally informed, addressing near-term

(0–5 year) and long-term (15–20+ year) implementation horizons while maintaining internal consistency between policy priorities and financial constraints. Core elements of the RTP include identification of regional transportation issues, quantification of needs, and development of policies and strategies that guide decision-making and investment. These elements are designed to ensure a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process that aligns regional priorities with statewide objectives and supports delivery of implementable transportation projects.

The RTP also reflects an inclusive and performance-based planning framework that incorporates stakeholder engagement, environmental considerations, and evolving mobility trends. Emphasis is placed on enhancing system safety, improving accessibility for disadvantaged communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing transportation system efficiency and reliability. Through collaboration with local jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, tribal governments, and direct outreach to the public which has garnered input from over 10,500 residents, the RTP advances a grassroots, shared vision for a resilient and integrated transportation network. This approach ensures that transportation investments are responsive to regional needs while contributing to broader state and federal policy goals and regulatory requirements.

INTRODUCTION

Kern COG was established in 1970 with a joint powers agreement (JPA) between the eleven cities and the county of Kern, creating a governing body made up of elected representatives from each municipality and two of the County Supervisors. It is a federally designated

The Kern region's air monitoring system has demonstrated an 80% improvement in NOx emissions since 1980... In addition, the Kern region has outperformed the 2020 state greenhouse gas (GHG) target, and this plan shows we are on track to achieve the 2035 GHG target... for passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and a state designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA). The JPA and these designations formally establish Kern COG's role in transportation planning. Preparing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is one of Kern COG's primary federal and state roles. The RTP is a 24-year blueprint that establishes a set of regional transportation

goals, policies, and actions intended to guide development of the planned multimodal transportation systems in Kern. It has been developed through a federally required continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process, and provides effective coordination between local, regional, state and federal agencies on a 4-year update cycle.

Major Issues

This continuous plan development process greatly advances the goals from prior cycles. For example, adopted concurrently with the RTP is the federal air quality conformity analysis demonstrating attainment of federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The Kern region's air monitoring system has demonstrated an 80% improvement in NOx emissions since 1980, advancing federal conformity goals. NOx emissions are precursor gases in the formation of Ozone and Particulate Matter, health-based criteria pollutants.

In addition, the Kern region has outperformed the 2020 state greenhouse gas (GHG) target required by Senate Bill

Figure ES-1: 1st in U.S. All Electric Off-Grid Solar Truck Stop on SR 65 in Bakersfield, 50 Spaces – World's Largest Off-Grid EV Solar Charging Facility with 168 Spaces on SR 46 near Lost Hills



(SB) 375, and this plan shows we are on track to achieve the 2035 GHG target set by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) for passenger vehicles/light-duty trucks. The region's targets were set at 9 percent per capita reduction by 2020, and the 15 percent per capita by 2035 as compared to 2005. These targets are discussed in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

...goals for greater housing choices reflect low-income housing need while supporting directed transit planning and investment

found in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

Continued progress toward the state target and federal air conformity budgets will not be easy. For both conformity and the SCS, the simple reductions have been achieved and the region needs to fully implement the remaining strategies and measures identified in this plan such as zero emission charging infrastructure (See **Figure ES-1**) if these air emission goals are to be met.

The SB 375 SCS law also provides for closer integration of the RTP/SCS with the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) plan.

Developed on an 8-year cycle, RHNA goals for greater housing choices reflect low-income housing need while supporting directed transit planning and investment. Kern COG closely coordinated the RHNA and RTP/SCS development process using the same oversight committee for both. Local jurisdictions use the RHNA goal to identify locations to provide sufficient housing for all economic segments of the population and ensure that the state's housing goals are met. These goals also include efforts to provide more compact/affordable housing choices that support RTP/SCS investment in transit (See **Figure ES-2**).

In addition to coordination with air quality and housing goals, Kern COG addresses environmental issues in a Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR), prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), for the RTP. Individual transportation projects are preliminarily identified in the RTP; however, the Program EIR analyzes potential environmental impacts from a regional perspective, providing opportunities for streamlining the analysis required in project specific environmental documents.

Figure ES-2: Central Bakersfield Core Area Incentives Have Resulted in 1,300 Units in 10 years Supporting Transit Investment Along Planned Bus Rapid transit/Future Light Rail Corridors



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Listening to the Citizens and Stakeholders

Our region's continuous public participation process encourages participation at every stage of the planning process, and all meetings are actively promoted and open to the public. Community engagement and outreach are fundamental to the development of this

By nature, this plan represents the region's mutual vision for its future and was developed using grassroots, bottom-up approach, garnering input from over 10,500 residents at over 50 events, public meetings and surveys (online/ phone/text) with Spanish translation, across the region over the past 4 years

RTP/SCS. By nature, this plan represents the region's mutual vision for its future and was developed using a grassroots, bottom-up approach, garnering input from over 10,500 residents at over 50 events, public meetings and surveys (online/phone/text) with Spanish translation, across the region over the past 4 years. The community engagement process gathered residents'

input on their priorities for the region's long-term future, while balancing survey responses with more informed, yet perhaps less representative, responses at public events. The outreach featured four statically valid 1,200-person phone/text surveys with oversampling in disadvantaged communities. The outreach process extended from January 2023 through June 2026. The program provided numerous opportunities for community members, and local stakeholders, and local agencies to participate, including public workshops, community events, interactive and educational booths at festivals and fairs, online via the project website (www.kerncog.org/2026-rtp), statistically valid phone/text surveys, and presentations to various community groups (See **Figure ES-3**).

What we heard was that most residents want to maintain, fix and finish what we have. A discussion of Kern COG's extensive public participation activities is found in Chapter 4 of the RTP, and a Summary of Findings is documented in **Appendix C** of the RTP.

Figure ES-3: Over 10,500 Residents Participated in Over 50 Public Outreach Events and Surveys, Such as Events at an Arvin Church, Taft Festival and Wasco Police Activities League



OUR VISION: Maintain, Fix and Finish What We Have

In response to the extensive grassroots public input, the Kern COG RTP process has placed an emphasis on achieving air emission, safety, and economic goals while maintaining, fixing and finishing our transportation system. The intent of the SCS chapter 4 is to achieve the state's

The safe, secure, and efficient transportation systems will provide improved access to opportunities, such as education, jobs and healthcare.

emission reduction targets for automobiles and light trucks. The SCS will also provide opportunities for a stronger economy, healthier environment, and safer quality of life for all of Kern's diverse communities.

This RTP/SCS seeks to: improve economic vitality, air quality, community health, mobility and safety, while promoting the conservation of natural resources and undeveloped land, regional access to community services, increase energy independence, and increase opportunities to help shape our community's future.

Kern County is unlike any other region in California. Kern's large size and diverse valley, desert and mountain environs are dominated by agriculture, oil production, renewable energy, aerospace, military, recreation, transportation linkages and other activities that warrant unique and different approaches to address RTP/SCS goals. These economic pursuits are the basis for dispersed rural centers and strategic locations for developments within the county that are unlike other areas of the state. Accordingly, unique strategies are needed to support Kern's equity, economic, and environmental transportation goals. This uniqueness is reflected in the General Plans and programs of Kern County's local governments and the RTP/SCS.

This RTP/SCS supports an improved quality of life for our residents by providing more choices for where they will live, work, and play, and how they will move around. The safe, secure, and efficient transportation systems will provide improved access to opportunities, such as education, jobs and healthcare. Promoting bike and ped safety is one of many strategies being employed to achieve our vision (See **Figures ES-4 & -5**).

Figure ES-4: Active Transportation Program - Portable Mock City Bike Safety Training Kit



CHALLENGES/SOLUTIONS

Solutions for the Economy and Air Quality - Kern County continues to suffer from unemployment rates that are nearly double State average. In 2020, Kern County sank to the 2nd worst poverty rate after tiny Del Norte County at the northwest corner of the state, while the rest of the state has been recovering from the great recession

...every \$1 billion spent on roadway infrastructure creates 13,000 job years

and pandemic, state policies to combat climate change have slowed Kern's recovery. Those policies have curtailed groundwater pumping for agriculture, and new investment in oil production, two of Kern's primary economic sectors.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that every \$1 billion spent on roadway infrastructure creates 13,000 job years while transit creates 40,000 job years of employment. This value is generated by direct construction, indirect construction suppliers and induced jobs in retail, services and other sectors that benefit from more efficient goods movement

(<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/otps/pubs/i/mpacts/>). The induced jobs make up about 1/3rd of the total jobs. The plan's \$14 billion (see Chapter 5, Table 5-1), 24-year investment plan is projected to add 64,740 5-year job positions, increasing Kern's economic base, adding capacity to re-invest in an ever more efficient/cleaner transportation system, triggering an upward economic spiral for future generations.

Since the 1990s, the Kern region has achieved consistent improvements in the number of days exceeding federal standards for ozone and particulate matter, generally defined as "fine dust". In 2012, Kern demonstrated attainment of the 1-hour ozone standard and has made significant progress on the 8-hour ozone and PM2.5 standards. Advancing emission reduction strategies helps our region to make significant progress toward both federal and state air emission goals. Strategies such as improving transit, bike, walk, and housing options. For example, bike and ped projects are fully funded (see **Figure ES-4 & -5**).

Figure ES-5: 90% of Project Mileage in 30-Year Bike & Pedestrian Complete Streets Plan Delivered in Just 15 Years



Financial Challenges - Of all the challenges facing us today, there is none more critical than funding. With the projected growth in population, employment and demand for travel, the costs of our multimodal transportation system surpass projected revenues available from our historic transportation

... federal gas tax revenues have failed to keep up with inflation. Additionally, the increase in the number of electric and hybrid vehicles that pay significantly less gas tax per mile...

funding source – the gas tax. Maintaining the local transportation infrastructure is of critical importance for the entire region and was ranked as the highest priority based on public outreach. Funding from the federal gas tax has traditionally been used to support the maintenance of these facilities. Over time, however, federal gas tax revenues have failed to keep up with inflation. Additionally, the increase in the number of electric and hybrid vehicles that pay significantly less gas tax per mile traveled only exacerbates the problem. In 2005, Former Congressman Bill Thomas secured \$720M in federal appropriations

which leveraged additional state and federal grant funding totaling over \$1B in transportation infrastructure expenditures in Kern. However, these funds are now nearly expended and there are no new funding sources identified to replace these one-time funds (see **Figure ES-6**).

The 2017 state gas tax increase known as SB 1, is a temporary solution to this problem. When adopted in 2017, estimates were that by 2030 the tax on gasoline will diminish to the point that another transportation funding source will be needed because of the number of electric cars on the road. In addition, the tax increase was estimated to only bring in half what was needed to bring our roadways up to good condition and being just enough to keep the road system from getting any worse. Thanks to the gas tax increase and heroic efforts of local jurisdictions and Caltrans, Kern continues to see the road pavement condition index hover between 63 and 65 out of 100. A long-term, funding solution is needed.

Most regions in the state have taken the maintenance and improvement of their transportation systems into their own

Figure ES-6: 2024 Ribbon Cutting - SR 58 Centennial Connector Freeway Shaves-Off an Average of 12 Miles on Trips Between I-40 and the Northern San Joaquin Valley/Bay Area via I-5



hands and have become “Self-Help” counties, by passing a local ½ cent retail sales tax measure protected from state raids during economic downturns. The State has also identified a special fund of state gas tax revenue for regions that are Self-Help. Kern is the largest county in the

From 2019 to 2024 public transit services in Kern countywide saw a 47% decrease in passengers

state without a local sales tax for transportation and misses out on \$2 million per year from this special fund, even though our residents pay into it.

Furthermore, with recent declines in transit ridership and fare revenue due to the pandemic, the region’s transit operators continue to face major obstacles to providing frequent and convenient transit services. Local and regional public transit is available within and between sixteen Kern County communities and has been experiencing challenges. From 2019 to 2024 public transit services in Kern countywide saw a 47% decrease in passengers from 7.9 million to 4 million. New services such as zero emission bus

rapid transit (BRT), combined with Uber/Lyft style, curb-to-curb, on-demand, last-mile, micro-transit are promising but need funds to implement/operate (See **Figure ES-7**).

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Population, Housing, Employment & Traffic Forecasts - Population in the 8,200 square mile County of Kern was estimated to be over 924,000 in January 2025. Growth since the pandemic has been nearly flat at 1/3rd of one percent per year or about 3,000 people annually according to the California Department of Finance. The Kern COG adopted 2022 RTP forecast, projects 10,460 people per year over the 24-year planning period. This equated to a total growth of 30 percent. The revised population growth estimate shows only 11 percent resulting in a total population of 1,017,200 by 2049. This significant reduction has been driven primarily by out-migration exceeding natural increase (births minus deaths). Recent trends show a large exodus of people leaving the major urban counties and moving to more suburban counties like Riverside, or out of state. The Kern region remains California’s eleventh most populated county ahead of San Francisco, but behind Fresno County.

Figure ES-7: Arvin All Electric Fleet – 6 Buses and 1 Dial-a-Ride Vehicle - Golden Empire Transit Now Operates 14 Hydrogen and 70 CNG Buses



According to the California Employment Development Department (EDD), the unemployment rate is close to double the state rate reaching a high of 18.7% during the pandemic and is currently a little over 9% for January 2026. Kern's continued high unemployment rate is partially due to the

To help mitigate the increased trucking, a \$100M trucking container depot and intermodal rail facility is under construction in Shafter. This is the only "BNSF Certified Site" in California marketed by the class one railroad.

slowdown in the oil and agriculture sectors.

Much of Kern employment is dispersed, such that, the Metropolitan Bakersfield area experiences a "reverse commute" whereby workers commute to outlying areas such as agricultural fields, food processing facilities, distribution/logistic centers, wind farms, oil fields, prisons, power plants, and military installations.

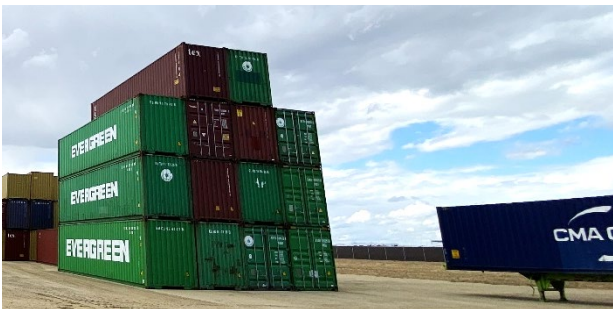
Goods Movement Increase - Kern has noticed a significant increase in trucking since 2018. According to the California Traffic Census, I-5 over the Grapevine has

seen truck traffic increase by 25% between 2018 and 2023. Warehousing and manufacturing square footage has doubled since the pandemic, in part due to a moratorium on new warehousing in the Inland Empire counties in Southern California. That warehousing demand has spilled over into the San Joaquin Valley, driving increased truck traffic.

To help mitigate the increased trucking, a \$100M trucking container depot and intermodal rail facility is under construction in Shafter (See **Figure ES-8**). This is the only "BNSF Certified Site" in California marketed by a class one railroad ([bnsf-premier-one-sheet-shafter-ca.pdf](https://www.bnsf.com/premier-one-sheet-shafter-ca.pdf)). The facility has a shipping price from BNSF to the ports of L.A./Long Beach and the Midwest that is competitive with trucking. Diverting these truck shipments to rail at Shafter reduces road-wear, emissions, congestion and traffic incidents on I-5 and 58 over the passes. Shipping by rail is 10 times more energy efficient and 7 times less polluting.

Regional Planning efforts such as the Kern Area Regional Goods Movement Operations (KARGO) Community Prosperity and Protection Study are identifying strategies to mitigate the negative effects of

Figure ES-8: April 2026 - 600 Plus Containers at Wonderful Company Shafter Container Depot Demonstrating Market for \$100M Intermodal Rail Yard Under Construction on BNSF Main line



goods movement in the region while enabling the economic benefits of high-tech jobs in resource processing, manufacturing, and logistics.

Land Use Development - Land use is one of the most important elements of effective transportation planning. Kern COG does

...the equity analysis has demonstrated that funds are being expended in a manner that benefits disadvantage communities better or as well as all communities countywide.

not have jurisdiction over land use planning, but the agency does advise and encourage dialogue among those involved in the decision-making process. The RTP/SCS and Regional RHNA were developed in consultation with local jurisdictions and are consistent with existing adopted general plans and zoning. Kern COG will continue to use the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to communicate with Kern cities and the county on issues of land use, transportation, and air quality to ensure that land use projects are environmentally sound.

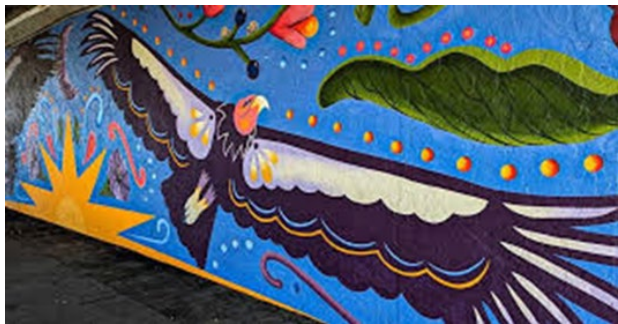
PLANNING SUCCESSES

Updated on a 4-year cycle, here are a few notable sustainable community successes from the implementation of past plans. Over 60 success stories are found in **Appendix E**.

Clean California Highway Murals – Using local artists and themes several major highway bridge ramps and underpasses were decorated with beautiful murals through a grant from the Clean California Local Grant Program provided by Caltrans. (See **Figure ES-9**)

Equity - Every RTP cycle since 1998 has included an Integrated Environmental Justice Performance Measure Analysis (see **Appendix D**). Each cycle the equity analysis has demonstrated that funds are being expended in a manner that benefits disadvantage communities better or as well as all communities countywide. This is in large part because of the grassroots public outreach effort that ensures that the projects in the plan are supported by all communities.

Figure ES-9: Clean California Local Grant Program – SR 204 Garces Circle Overpass Murals



Safety – Although safety has seen some challenges in recent years based on performance measures, the Kern Region has completed a joint update of safety plans for 9 jurisdictions in 2022, ensuring

77% of investments in this plan are for operations/maintenance, active transportation, & transit projects.

eligibility for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds.

Telecommute Strategy – The Kern region has continued its strong support for telecommuting through its Commute Kern program. As demonstrated during the pandemic, over 35% of workers telecommuted up from 5% in prior years. Local statistically valid surveys indicate that approximately 10% of all workers plan to continue telecommuting after the pandemic, resulting in the single most

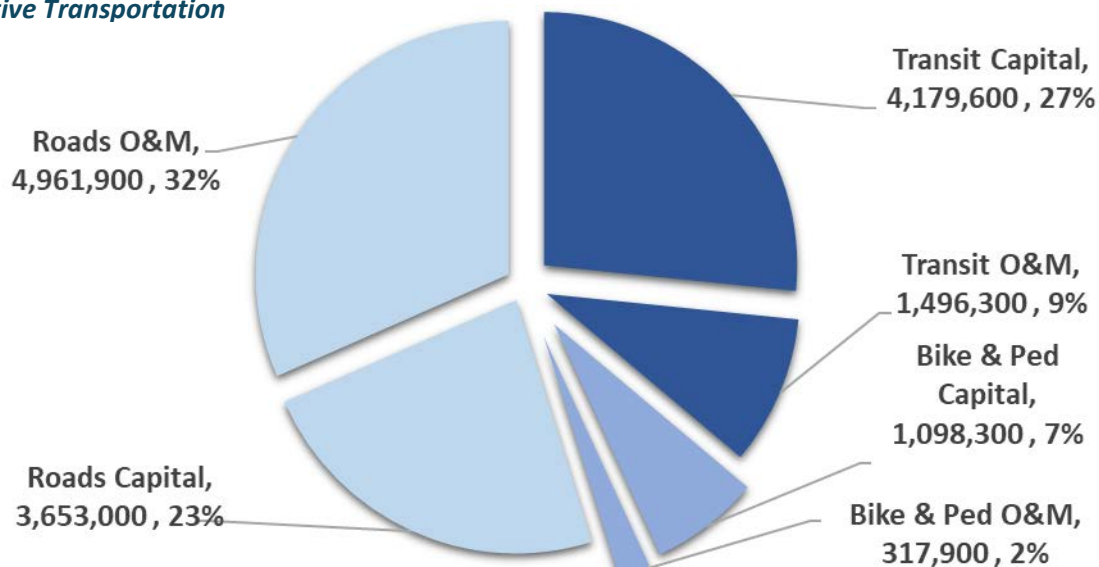
effective strategy for reduction of commute related traffic and emissions.

Longest Class I Car-Free Bike Trail in California – Started in 1976, Kern County has now completed the longest dedicated paved bike trail in the state extending 36.3 miles from Lake Ming to Lake Webb along the banks of the Kern River. The paved bikeway is used by commuters and recreational riders alike, promoting this plans sustainability and livability goals.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

The RTP/SCS includes a forecast of reasonably available revenue over the next 20-plus years at \$15.7 billion (See Chapter 6). This RTP promotes a more efficient transportation system that calls for fully funding alternative transportation modes, while emphasizing transportation demand and transportation system management approaches for new capacity. 77% of investments in this Plan are for operations/

Figure ES-10: Investments by Mode 2026-2049 (\$ x 1,000) 77% for Operations/Maintenance, Transit & Active Transportation



maintenance, active transportation, and transit projects (See **Figure ES-10**).

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

The RTP fulfills multiple requirements with one document:

- Congestion Management Program
- Sustainable Communities Strategy & Rural Urban Connectivity Strategy
- Regional Housing Need Allocation
- Environmental Justice & Performance Measure Analysis
- Safety-Security Action Element

As the Congestion Management Agency, Kern COG prepares the federally required Congestion Management Program (CMP) which is integrated into Chapter 5 of the RTP. Through the Kern Regional Traffic Count Program, Kern COG monitors compliance with the congestion standards set in the CMP. The Program includes an innovative multi-model deficiency plan policy that looks at ways to improve mobility, such as HOV lanes to keep transit moving during peak congested periods. Note that since 2006, the number of segments on the CMP system that were showing congestion deficiencies has shrunk from 8 down to 1. This is primarily due to the slower population growth discussed above.

The SCS includes a Rural Urban Connectivity Strategy designed to ensure that rural economic sectors—agriculture, energy, tourism, military, and others—are not left out of efforts to provide for a more efficient transportation system.

To ensure consistency with the SCS, Kern COG engaged in the RHNA process concurrently with the development of the RTP. The RHNA is an 8-year document that provides low-income housing goals for each community in the region.

Recognized as a state best practice, the Kern RTP includes an innovative analysis with the Integrated Performance Measures Analysis for System Level, Smart Mobility Framework, Health Equity, Environmental Justice, and Title VI. The analysis includes Safety, and Ch. 5 includes the Safety-Security Action Element.

RTP GOALS

Figure ES-11 lists the 7 publicly vetted goals of the Regional Transportation Plan.

RTP SUMMARY HANDOUTS

The following handouts summarize this RTP/SCS benefits and assumptions.

Figure ES-11: Kern's 7 Long-Range Regional Transportation Planning Goals

1. **Mobility** – Improve the mobility of people and freight;
2. **Accessibility** – Improve accessibility to major employment and other regional activity centers;
3. **Reliability** – Improve the reliability and safety of the transportation system;
4. **Efficiency** – Maximize the efficiency of the existing and future transportation system;
5. **Livability** – Promote livable communities;
6. **Sustainability** – Minimize effects on the environment; and
7. **Equity** – Ensure equitable distribution of the benefits among various demographic & user groups.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

2026 Regional Transportation Plan

The region represented by the Kern Council of Governments is projected to grow by more than 11% by 2049. To protect the quality of life for future generations, the 2026 RTP is presented as an economic development strategy as well as a transportation infrastructure and sustainability investment.

MOBILITY BENEFITS

- ✓ The plan improves overall mobility and provides needed congestion relief by maintaining, fixing and finishing what we have
- ✓ The plan fully funds maintenance of the transportation system while increasing funding for bike, pedestrian, and transit facilities
- ✓ Implementation of the plan will nearly double the number of homes within walking distance to quality transit. By integrating land use and transportation, more than 70% of homes will be near quality transit compared to less than 60% under older plans.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- ✓ The Federal Highway Administration estimates that every \$1 billion spent on transportation infrastructure creates 13,000 job years of which 1/3rd can persist long after construction, generated by increased labor from better mobility and more efficient goods movement.
- ✓ This 24-year investment plan is projected to add over 64,740 5-year jobs) from construction, maintenance, and better mobility, and saves 21,000 additional existing jobs that would have been lost because of poor road conditions.
- ✓ The plan could ultimately add about 21,600 5-year permanent non-transportation sector jobs to the region, increasing Kern's economic base, adding capacity to re-invest in an ever more efficient transportation system, triggering an upward economic spiral for future generations.

HEALTH BENEFITS

- ✓ Improve air quality and public health by reducing all criteria pollutants, emissions and their precursors to meet national standards – oxides of nitrogen (Nox), reactive organic gasses (ROG), particulate matter (PM10), fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and Carbon Monoxide (CO).
- ✓ 4% or more reduction in health expenditures because of improved air quality.
- ✓ Promotes more active transportation by fully funding the Kern Active Transportation Plan and increasing funding for bike and pedestrian facilities by 700% over the 2011 RTP.

SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS

- ✓ 20% reduction in farmland converted to urban/built-up uses outside city spheres of influence.
- ✓ 15% reduction in household water use providing a full range of housing choices
- ✓ 3% reduction in infrastructure costs by revitalizing existing communities compared to past plans

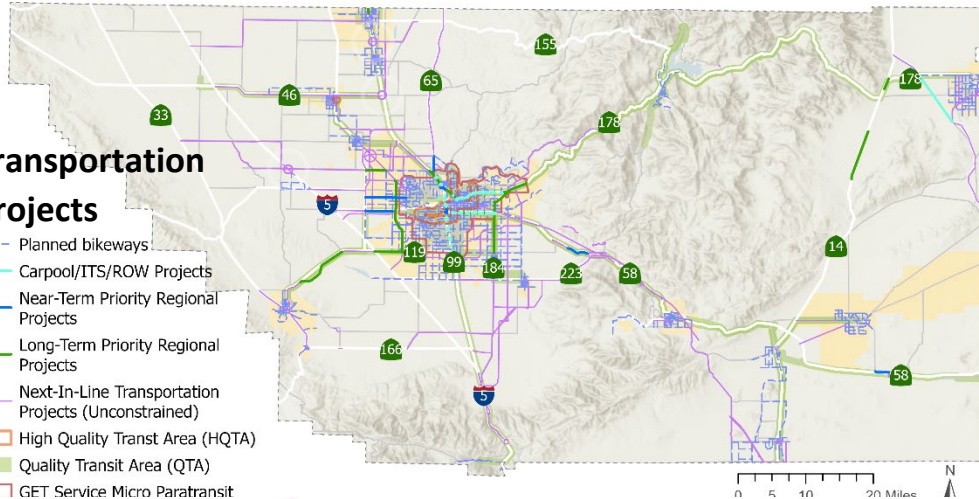


2026 Regional Transportation Plan

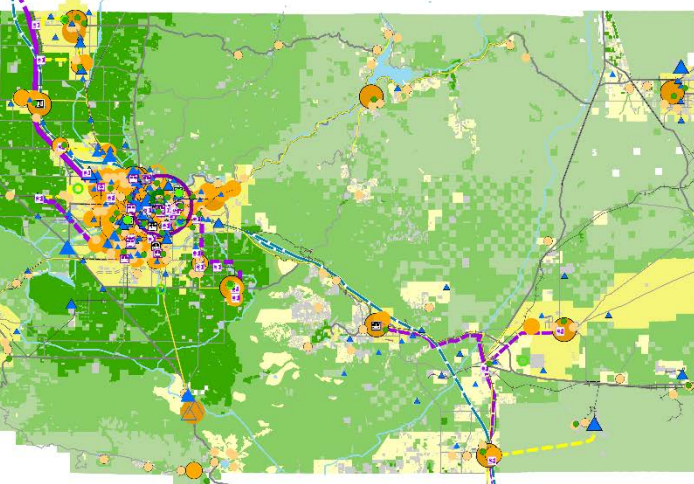
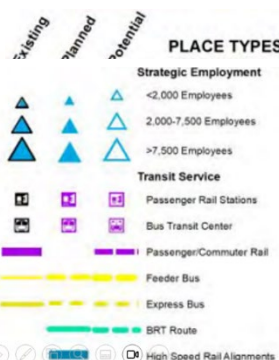
Reflecting diverse public input, the plan assumes projects that reflect a more efficient transportation system that will benefit the mobility, economy, health and sustainability of the region. Consistent with the prior plan, funding from traditional sources continue at historic rates as well as a slight increase in additional funding from potential new sources. Funding assumptions are updated every four years. Land use assumptions are based on local general plans with input from the public and the regional planning advisory committee.

Transportation Projects

- Planned bikeways
- Carpool/ITS/ROW Projects
- Near-Term Priority Regional Projects
- Long-Term Priority Regional Projects
- Next-In-Line Transportation Projects (Unconstrained)
- High Quality Transit Area (HQT)
- Quality Transit Area (QTA)
- GET Service Micro Paratransit



Future Land Use Assumptions



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BEFORE THE KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF KERN

RESOLUTION NO. 26-32

In the Matter of:

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE 2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN: (1) CERTIFICATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT; (2) ADOPTION OF THE CEQA FINDINGS OF FACT; (3) ADOPTION OF STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS; AND (4) ADOPTION OF MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Cal. Pub. Res. Code § 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., Tit 14, § 15000 et seq.), Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is the Lead Agency responsible for preparing the Final Program Environmental Impact Report for the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP);

WHEREAS, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a public document used by governmental agencies to analyze the significant environmental impacts of a project. CEQA Guidelines §15168 specifies that a Program EIR can be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project related either geographically, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways;

WHEREAS, the Program EIR for the 2026 RTP (PEIR) is a programmatic document that provides a region-wide assessment of the potential significant environmental effects of implementing the projects, programs and policies included in the 2026 RTP (including the SCS portion of the Plan);

WHEREAS, Kern COG has determined that the PEIR is appropriate to assess the environmental impacts of the 2026 RTP/SCS;

WHEREAS, the PEIR includes quantitative modeling of projects undertaken for the financially constrained 2026 RTP does not model strategic plan projects because funding for these projects is speculative and implementation of these projects is not yet reasonably foreseeable;

WHEREAS, the PEIR identifies feasible mitigation measures necessary to avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts of the 2026 RTP and a reasonable range of alternatives capable of eliminating or reducing these effects in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126.4 and 15126.6;

WHEREAS, the PEIR is a program level document which analyzes environmental impacts of the 2026 RTP constrained plan on a regional/programmatic level, and does not analyze project-specific impacts. These impacts should be analyzed in detail by lead agencies at the local jurisdiction level;

WHEREAS, Kern COG issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Draft PEIR on April 21, 2025, and circulated the NOP for a period of 30 days pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §§15082(a), 15103 and 15375;

WHEREAS, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082 and Government Code Section 65080(b) et seq., on May 01, 2025, Kern COG publicly noticed and held one scoping meeting for the purpose of inviting comments from responsible and trustee agencies, regulatory agencies, interested persons, and others on the scope and content of the environmental information to be addressed in the PEIR;

WHEREAS, once the Draft PEIR was completed and available for public review on May 18, 2026, Kern COG filed a Notice of Completion with the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in the manner prescribed by CEQA Guidelines Section 15085;

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2026, Kern COG initiated the 55-day public review and comment period on the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and on May 18, 2026 initiated the 45-day public review and comment period on the Program Environmental Impact Report; and Public Hearing Notices and Display Ads were published in newspapers of general circulation. In addition, Kern COG placed paper copies of the Draft PEIR in its office lobby, and posted an electronic copy of the Draft PEIR on the Kern COG website;

WHEREAS, during the public review period for the Draft PEIR, Kern COG requested comments from and consulted with responsible and trustee agencies, regulatory agencies, and others, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15086;

WHEREAS, the 55-day RTP and 45-day PEIR public review and comment periods ended on July 2, 2026, in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15105;

WHEREAS, 5 letters with written comments on the Draft PEIR were received by Kern COG during the comment period;

WHEREAS, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15088(a), Kern COG evaluated comments on environmental issues received from persons who reviewed the Draft PEIR and provided a written response to each comment, which are included in the Final PEIR, Chapter 3.0;

WHEREAS, the "Final PEIR" consists of: (1) the Draft PEIR; (2) all appendices to the Draft PEIR (Appendices 1.0 and 4. 7); (3) Chapter 1, "Introduction"; (4) Chapter 2, "Response to Comments"; (5) Chapter 3, "Corrections and Additions"; (6) Chapter 4, "Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program";

WHEREAS, Chapters 2 and 3 of the Final PEIR specifically include Kern COG's written, master responses to comments; a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft PEIR; Kern COG's written responses to specific comments on significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and copies of comments, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15132;

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Final PEIR 2026 RTP, Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, and
Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

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WHEREAS, the changes to the Draft PEIR in response to comments received and the corrections and additions included in the Final 2026 RTP and Final PEIR, have not produced significant new information requiring recirculation or additional environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5;

WHEREAS, Kern COG has no authority to impose mitigation measures on individual projects for which it is not the lead agency. As such, all project-level mitigation measures in the Final PEIR are subject to a lead agency's independent discretion as to whether measures are applicable to projects in their respective jurisdictions. Lead agencies may use, amend, or not use measures identified in the Final PEIR as appropriate to address project-specific conditions. The determination of significance and identification of appropriate mitigation is solely the responsibility of the lead agency;

WHEREAS, mitigation measures in the PEIR that include the language, "Kern COG through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to ..." are intended to be used by projects seeking to use this Program EIR for CEQA streamlining (e.g., under SB 375, SB743 and SB 226) and tiering pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15152;

WHEREAS, Kern COG has prepared CEQA Findings of Fact (Findings), attached hereto and incorporated herein as "Attachment 1," for every significant environmental impact of the 2026 RTP identified in the PEIR and for each alternative evaluated in the PEIR, including an explanation of the rationale for each finding, in compliance with Public Resources Code §§21081 and 21081.5 and CEQA Guidelines § 15091; and

WHEREAS, implementation of the 2026 RTP will result in significant environmental impacts that cannot be fully mitigated to less than significant, and Kern COG has issued a Statement of Overriding Considerations, attached hereto and incorporated herein as "Attachment 2," setting forth specific economic, legal, social, technological, and other benefits of the 2026 RTP that outweigh the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts identified in the PEIR, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(b); and

WHEREAS, when making the Findings, the agency must also adopt a mitigation monitoring program to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures identified in the PEIR which avoid or substantially lessen significant effects, and which are fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other measures, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 (d);

WHEREAS, Kern COG has adopted a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(d), which is incorporated into the Final EIR as Chapter 4;

WHEREAS, Kern COG made the proposed Final PEIR, publicly available on its website on September 4, 2026;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092.5 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088, Kern COG provided proposed written responses to all agencies who submitted comments on the Draft PEIR at least 10 days prior to certification of the PEIR;

WHEREAS, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15089(a), Kern COG, as the Lead Agency, must prepare and certify a Final PEIR before approving the Final 2026 RTP; and

WHEREAS, all legal prerequisites to the adoption of this Resolution have occurred;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Final PEIR prepared for the 2026 RTP was completed in compliance with CEQA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PEIR for the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan has been presented to the Kern COG Policy Board as the decision-making body of the Lead Agency prior to approving the 2026 RTP, and that Kern COG has independently reviewed and evaluated the information contained in both the Draft and Final EIR and written and oral testimony; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Kern COG, as the decision-making body for the Lead Agency, hereby certifies that the EIR for the 2026 RTP has been completed in compliance with CEQA and CEQA Guidelines; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Kern COG finds that certain changes or mitigation measures will substantially lessen or avoid potentially significant environmental effects identified in the Final EIR and will be incorporated into the RTP as conditions of future entitlements, permits, and agreements that are under the authority of Kern COG; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Kern COG finds that certain changes or mitigation measures that will substantially lessen or avoid potentially significant effects of individual projects are not under the jurisdiction of Kern COG and that such measures would be imposed as appropriate, and at the discretion of, individual local agencies on projects seeking to tier from the PEIR; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certain unavoidable significant environmental effects, resulting from Plan implementation even with mitigation measures to reduce these effects, have been identified in the EIR, but it is infeasible to avoid or substantially lessen these effects because of specific economic, social or other considerations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that as required by CEQA, Kern COG has balanced the benefits of the Plan against unavoidable significant environmental effects in determining whether to approve the Plan, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Kern COG has independently determined that the benefits of the Plan outweigh the unavoidable significant environmental effects for the reasons stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations; and

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Final PEIR 2026 RTP, Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, and
Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Kern COG adopts the CEQA Findings of Fact (Attachment 1);
Statement of Overriding Considerations (Attachment 2); and the Mitigation Monitoring and
Reporting Program (Chapter 4 of the Final PEIR)

AUTHORIZED AND SIGNED THIS 17th DAY OF September, 2026.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:
IN:

ABSENT:
NT:

Bob Smith, Chairman
Kern Council of Governments

ATTEST:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution of the Kern Council of Governments
duly adopted at a regular meeting thereof held on the 17th day of September, 2026.

John Schlosser, Executive Director
Kern Council of Governments

Date

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KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

ATTACHMENT 1: FINDINGS OF FACT

Prepared for:

Kern Council of Governments
1401 19th Street, Suite #300
Bakersfield, California 93301

Prepared by:

Impact Sciences, Inc.
445 S. Figueroa Street, Suite 2550
Los Angeles, California 90071

September 2026

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ATTACHMENT 1: FINDINGS OF FACT

INTRODUCTION

Section 21081 of the California Public Resources Code (“PRC”) and Section 15091 of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) Guidelines require that the Kern Council of Governments (“Kern COG”), as the Lead Agency for the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (2026 RTP, RTP, Plan, or Project), identify significant impacts on the environment and make one or more written findings for each of the significant impacts. In addition, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 and PRC Section 21081, the existence of significant unavoidable impacts resulting from the 2026 RTP requires Kern COG to prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations explaining why the agency is willing to accept the residual significant impacts. The CEQA Findings of Fact (Findings) reported in the following pages incorporate the facts and discussions of environmental impacts that are found in the 2026 RTP Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR, PEIR or EIR). The Statement of Overriding Considerations set forth in Attachment 2 describes the economic, social, environmental and other benefits of the 2026 RTP that override the significant environmental impacts.

For each of the impacts associated with the 2026 RTP, the following are provided:

- Description of Impacts – A specific description of the environmental impact identified in the PEIR.
- Mitigation – Identified mitigation measures or actions that are proposed for implementation as part of the project.
- Findings and Rationale – Explanation regarding the adoption of mitigation measures, their implementation, and the acceptability of any residual adverse impacts.

CEQA also requires a mitigation monitoring or reporting program to be adopted by the Lead Agency. Kern COG thus prepared a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) in compliance with the requirements of Section 21081.6 of CEQA to assess and ensure the efficacy of proposed mitigation measures. The PEIR identifies the potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the project and specifies measures designed to mitigate adverse environmental impacts. The MMRP is included in the Final PEIR. This MMRP relates directly to the procedures to be used to implement the mitigation measures adopted in connection with the certification of the 2026 RTP PEIR and the methods of monitoring and reporting.

The PEIR presents a region-wide assessment of existing conditions and potential impacts associated with implementation of the 2026 RTP. As such, this PEIR identifies programmatic mitigation measures for which Kern COG would be responsible on a regional scale. Mitigation measures phrased, “Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to...” are specifically intended for use by local agencies and implementing agencies in undertaking streamlined environmental review in accordance with SB 375 and SB 226 and for tiering pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15152.

Kern COG has no authority to require specific mitigation measures at the project level, and local agencies have the sole discretion and authority to determine which mitigation measures are applicable and feasible based on the location-specific circumstances, Kern COG cannot make a finding that specific project-level mitigation measures be implemented by the local agencies.

Project Description Summary

The 2026 RTP/SCS is a 24-year blueprint that establishes a set of regional transportation goals, policies, and actions intended to guide development of the planned multimodal transportation systems in Kern County. It has been developed through a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process, and provides for effective coordination between local, regional, state, and federal agencies. California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (Senate Bill [SB] 375) calls for RTPs to include a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks. Executive Order B-30-15, signed by Governor Brown in April 2015, and SB 32, approved in September 2016, established a statewide GHG reduction goal of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 from all sources. EO B-55-18 established a statewide goal "to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, and no later than 2045, and achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter." These are the most aggressive benchmarks enacted by any government in North America to reduce carbon emissions. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) sets the emissions reduction target for each region. Targets are reflective of conditions in each area of the state and are tailored to address conditions in each area. SB 375 will help meet the state goals included in Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. Meeting these targets will point the County toward overall sustainability and will provide benefits beyond reducing carbon emissions.

The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is a federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and a state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA). These designations formally establish Kern COG's role in transportation planning. Kern COG's Board of Directors comprises elected representatives from the eleven incorporated cities within Kern County and two members of the County Board of Supervisors.

As an RTPA, Kern COG is mandated by California Government Code Section 65080 to prepare and periodically update the RTP/SCS. Indeed, regional transportation planning is a dynamic process requiring periodic refinement, monitoring, and amendment. The planning program for the next four-year period will continue with extensive evaluation of the RTP/SCS, including the elements required by the federal surface transportation act, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed into law December 4, 2015. Each component will be studied and modified consistent with RTP/SCS priorities as Kern County moves toward a more efficient, integrated, and multimodal transportation system.

Project Objectives

At the core of the 2026 RTP are seven goals:

1. **Mobility** – Improve the mobility of people and freight.
2. **Accessibility** – Improve accessibility to, and the economic wellbeing of, major employment and other regional activity centers.
3. **Reliability** – Improve the reliability and safety of the transportation system.
4. **Efficiency** – Maximize the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the existing and future transportation system.
5. **Livability** – Promote livable communities and satisfaction of consumers with the transportation system.
6. **Sustainability** – Provide for the enhancement and expansion of the system while minimizing effects on the environment.
7. **Equity** – Ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits among various demographic and user groups.

While all goals are considered interrelated and important, improving mobility is considered the Plan's highest goal.

Another important goal of the 2026 RTP is to achieve SB 375 targets as established by the California Air Resources Board ("CARB"). Kern COG has made certain land use assumptions based on the policies and projects contained within the RTP and market demand (within existing zoning) in order to model anticipated development in the year 2049. However, it will be up to individual jurisdictions to determine consistency of individual projects with the RTP (including the SB 375 goals). It is not the intent of the RTP or associated modeling effort to impose land use requirements on local jurisdictions.

Project List

The RTP includes approximately \$14 billion worth of investment in our regional transportation system. Kern COG collects projects submitted by member agencies or recommended by regional studies and plans that align with the public based needs and goals. These submissions are consistent with the RTP Goals as demonstrated by Kern COG regional transportation performance measures analyzed at the system level. The RTP project list (Table 5-1 of the Plan) includes over 1,000 projects with both near-term and long-term investments: the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) reflects near-term investments which form the foundation of the RTP project investment strategy and represents the six years of already-committed funding for projects requiring federal approval or those that are regionally significant. The RTP reflects long-term investments and contains a financially constrained set of transportation projects above and beyond the FTIP, including strategies needed to achieve the Plan's goals and performance targets.

Type of EIR

The 2026 RTP EIR is a program EIR (PEIR). CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 specifies that a PEIR can be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project. The PEIR can serve as a first-tier document for later CEQA review of individual projects included in the program. These project-specific CEQA reviews will focus on project-specific impacts and mitigation measures, and need not repeat the broad analyses contained in the PEIR. As such, the focus of the environmental analysis in the PEIR is on regional-scale and cumulative impacts of implementation of the Plan and the alternatives. The long-range planning horizon of more than 20 years necessitates that many of the highway, arterial goods movement, and transit projects included in the Plan (and the alternatives) are identified at the conceptual level.

Procedural History

In accordance with Section 15050 of the *State CEQA Guidelines* Kern COG is the lead agency that prepared both the Draft and Final PEIR for the project, the 2026 RTP.

Kern COG prepared and circulated the Draft PEIR for a period of 45 days, extending from May 18, 2026 and ending on July 2, 2026. The Draft PEIR was available for review at the office of Kern COG and an electronic copy of the Draft PEIR was posted on the Kern COG website. Public hearings on the Draft PEIR were held June 1, 2026, at the Tehachapi Police Department Community Room and on June 18, 2026, at Kern COG's offices in Bakersfield. Both meetings were also accessible on the web. A Notice of Availability of the Draft PEIR was transmitted to responsible and trustee agencies, regulatory agencies and other to request comments on the Draft PEIR, pursuant to *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15086. Comments on the Draft PEIR were received during the comment period, and those comments are responded to in the Final PEIR.

On September 17, 2026, the Kern COG Board is meeting to consider the Final PEIR including the Draft PEIR, and adopting the Findings, Statement of Overriding Considerations, and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

Incorporation of Final PEIR by Reference

The Final PEIR consists of: (1) the Draft PEIR, (2) all appendices to the Draft PEIR (Appendix 1.0); (3) Chapter 1, "Introduction"; (4) Chapter 2, "Responses to Comments on the Draft PEIR"; (5) Chapter 3 Corrections and Additions to the Draft PEIR; and (6) Chapter 4, "Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program." The Final PEIR Chapter 2 specifically includes a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft PEIR; Kern COG's written responses to specific comments on significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and copies of comments, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15132. The Final PEIR consisting of the aforementioned components is hereby incorporated by reference into these Findings.

I. CEQA FINDINGS: GENERAL

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines Section §15091, no public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been certified which identifies one or more significant effects on the environment that would occur if the project is approved or carried out unless the public agency makes one or more of the following findings with respect to each significant impact:

1. Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which mitigate or avoid the significant effects on the environment.
2. Those changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and have been, or can and should be, adopted by that other agency.
3. Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including considerations for the provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the environmental impact report. (The concept of infeasibility also encompasses whether a particular alternative or mitigation measure promotes the Project's underlying goals and objectives, and whether an alternative or mitigation measure is impractical or undesirable from a policy standpoint. See *California Native Plant Society v. City of Santa Cruz* (2009) 177 Cal.App.4th 957.; *City of Del Mar v. City of San Diego* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 410).

Kern COG has made one or more of these specific written findings regarding each significant impact associated with the Project. Those findings are presented below, along with a presentation of facts in support of the findings. Kern COG certifies these findings are based on full appraisal of all viewpoints, including all comments received up to the date of adoption of these findings, concerning the environmental issues identified and discussed.

As discussed above, the 2026 RTP PEIR has been prepared as a PEIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. The degree of specificity in the PEIR corresponds to the specificity of the regional goals, policies, and investment strategies of the 2026 RTP. The PEIR included an appropriately detailed (conservative) analysis of impacts in 20 environmental topics, analyzing the Project and alternatives, including a No Project Alternative. The PEIR disclosed the environmental impacts expected to result from the adoption and implementation of the 2026 RTP. Feasible mitigation measures were identified to avoid or minimize significant environmental effects.

The mitigation measures adopted as part of the 2026 RTP are feasible, as appropriate for a PEIR, and the 2026 RTP mitigates the environmental impacts to the maximum extent feasible as discussed in the findings made below. The adopted mitigation measures directed at Kern COG are particularly suitable on a regional/programmatic level for the 2026 RTP. The Findings, in Section IV below, indicate where mitigation measures are not capable of reducing impacts to levels of insignificance.

The Final PEIR includes minor clarifications to the Draft PEIR. These changes made to the Draft PEIR are shown in the Final PEIR in Chapter 3 Corrections and Additions and are shown in strikethrough and underline text. Thus, it is the finding of the Kern COG Board that such clarifying changes as described in the Final PEIR, do not present any new, significant information requiring recirculation or additional environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (“MMRP”) for the 2026 RTP has been adopted pursuant to the requirements of Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 to ensure implementation of the adopted mitigation measures to reduce significant effects on the environment, and is included in the Final PEIR document dated September 2026. Kern COG is the custodian of the documents and other material that constitute the record of the proceedings upon which certification of the Final PEIR for the 2026 RTP is based, as described below in Section VII, Finding Regarding Location and Custodian of Record.

It is the finding of the Kern COG Board that the proposed Final PEIR fulfills environmental review requirements for the 2026 RTP, that the document constitutes a complete, accurate, adequate, and good faith effort at full disclosure under CEQA, and reflects the independent judgment of the Kern COG Board.

II. MASTER FINDING

Master Finding No. 1:

The Kern COG Board finds that for all impacts identified in the Program EIR, some or all, mitigation activities must occur at the project-level. However, Kern COG has no authority to require specific mitigation measures at the project-level, given that local lead agencies have the sole discretion to determine which mitigation measures are applicable and feasible based on the location-specific circumstances. Nevertheless, Kern COG reasonably assumes that local lead agencies will continue to exercise their discretionary authority (through local land use and other project permits and approvals) to implement all feasible mitigation measures (and alternatives) identified through the CEQA process to reduce significant environmental impacts. The Kern COG Board finds it has no authority to impose mitigation measures on individual projects for which it is not the lead agency. Mitigation measures in the PEIR that include the language, “Kern COG through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to ...” are intended to be used by projects seeking to use the PEIR for CEQA streamlining (e.g., under SB 375, SB 743, and SB 226) and tiering. For projects seeking to use CEQA streamlining and/or tier from the 2026 RTP PEIR, such mitigation measures included in the PEIR (or equivalent) should be required by the lead agency as appropriate and applicable. Many lead agencies have existing regulations, policies and/or standard conditions of approval that address potential impacts.

Nothing in the PEIR is intended to supersede existing regulations and policies of individual jurisdictions. SB 375 specifically provides that nothing in a SCS supersedes the land use authority of cities and counties, and that cities and counties are not required to change their land use policies and regulations, including their general plans, to be consistent with the SCS or an alternative planning strategy (Govt. Code

§65080(b)(2)(K)). Moreover, cities and counties have plenary authority to regulate land use through their police powers granted by the California Constitution, art. XI, §7, and under several statutes, including the local planning law (Govt. Code §§65100-65763), the zoning law (Govt. Code §§65800-65912), and the Subdivision Map Act (Govt. Code §§66410-66499.37). With respect to the transportation projects in the 2026 RTP, these projects would be implemented by Caltrans, local transit agencies, and local governments (i.e., cities and Kern County), and not Kern COG. As such, Kern COG also has no authority or jurisdiction to require these agencies to implement project-specific mitigation measures.

III. FINDINGS THAT SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS ARE MITIGATED TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT FEASIBLE

Kern COG's Board hereby finds that the 2026 RTP PEIR identifies a number of individual significant environmental impacts (analyzed for the region and separately for TPAs) within 13 major issue areas, which cannot be fully mitigated and are therefore considered significant and unavoidable impacts. To the extent these impacts remain significant and unavoidable, such impacts are acceptable when weighed against the overriding social, economic, legal, technical, and other considerations set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations. The significant and unavoidable impacts identified in the PEIR are discussed below, along with the appropriate findings per CEQA Guidelines Section 15091.

A. Aesthetics

Impact AES-1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Impact AES-2: Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AES-1** through **AES-3**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level.

AES-1 Impacts to aesthetic resources shall be minimized through cooperation, information sharing regarding the locations of designated scenic vistas, and regional program development as part of Kern COG's ongoing regional planning efforts.

AES-2 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to identify and protect panoramic views and significant landscape features or landforms and implement project-specific mitigation as applicable. If it is determined that a project would significantly obstruct scenic views, implementing and local agencies should consider alternative designs that seek to avoid and/or minimize obstruction of scenic views to ensure compliance with Caltrans regulations for scenic vistas and the goals and policies with county and city general plans as applicable and feasible. Project-specific design measures may include reduction in height of improvements or width of improvements to reduce obstruction of views, or relocation of improvements to reduce obstruction of views. Additional measures may include the following, or other comparable measures identified by the Lead Agency:

- Use a palette of colors, textures, building materials that are graffiti-resistant, and/or plant materials that complement the surrounding landscape and development.
- Use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain. Contour edges of major cut-and-fill to provide a more natural looking finished profile.
- Use alternating facades to “break up” large facades and provide visual interest.
- Design new corridor landscaping to respect existing natural and man-made features and to complement the dominant landscaping of the surrounding areas.
- Replace and renew landscaping along corridors with road widenings, interchange projects, and related improvements.
- Retain or replace trees bordering highways, so that clear-cutting is not evident.
- Provide new corridor landscaping that respects and provides appropriate transition to existing natural and man-made features and is complementary to the dominant landscaping or native habitats of surrounding areas.
- Reduce the visibility of construction staging areas by fencing and screening these areas with low contrast materials consistent with the surrounding environment, and by revegetating graded slopes and exposed earth surfaces at the earliest opportunity.
- Use see-through safety barrier designs (e.g., railings rather than walls).
- Implement design guidelines, local policies, and programs aimed at protecting views of scenic corridors and avoiding visual intrusions in design of projects to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and developments. Avoid, if possible, large cuts and fills when the visual environment (natural or urban) would be substantially disrupted. Site or design of projects should minimize their intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain.

- AES-3:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to protect panoramic views and views of significant landscape features or landforms and implement project-specific mitigation as applicable. Kern COG will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to consider taking the following (or equivalent) actions:
- require that the scale and massing of new development in higher-density areas provide appropriate transitions in building height and bulk that are sensitive to the physical and visual character of adjoining neighborhoods that have lower development intensities and building heights; ensure building heights stepped back from sensitive adjoining uses to maintain appropriate transitions in scale and to protect scenic views;
 - avoid siting electric towers, solar power facilities, wind power facilities, communication transmission facilities and/or above ground lines along scenic roadways and routes, to the maximum feasible extent;

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measures AES-1 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures AES-2** and **AES-3** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1 with respect to mitigating **Impacts AES-1** and **AES-2**.

While project-specific mitigation may provide a reduction in visual impacts, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact AES-3: **In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings; (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). In an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure AES-1**, above, and **AES-4** through **AES-6**, described below, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level.

AES-4: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to design projects to be visually compatible with surrounding areas that possess high aesthetic value. Implementing and local agencies should design projects to minimize contrasts in scale and massing between the project and surrounding natural forms and development. The design of projects should minimize intrusion into important viewsheds and use contour grading to better match surrounding terrain. To the extent feasible, landscaping should be designed to add significant natural elements and visual interest to soften hard edges. Projects should, to the extent feasible, avoid large cuts and fills when the visual environment (natural or urban) would be substantially disrupted.

AES-5: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to establish development standards for visually sensitive areas. Prior to approval of individual projects, Kern COG will encourage and facilitate implementing and local agencies to apply such development standards to maintain compatibility with surrounding natural areas, including site coverage, building height and massing, building materials and color, landscaping, site grading, etc.

AES-6: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to ensure that sites should be kept in a blight/nuisance-free condition. Any existing blight or nuisance should be abated within 60 to 90 days of approval, unless an earlier date is specified elsewhere.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measures AES-1 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures AES-4** through **AES-6** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Individual impacts of planning, development and transportation projects will remain significant and unavoidable because some of the projects and expected development are located in areas where changes to the existing visual landscape cannot be avoided. While project-level mitigation may reduce visual impacts, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce this impact to a less than significant level, the impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact AES-4: **Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure AES-7** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level.

AES-7: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to design measures to reduce glare, light, and shadow. As part of planning, design, and engineering for projects, implementing and local agencies should ensure that projects proposed near light-sensitive uses avoid substantial spillover lighting. Design measures could include the following:

- Use lighting fixtures that are adequately shielded to a point below the light bulb and reflector and that prevent unnecessary glare onto adjacent properties.
- Restrict the operation of outdoor lighting for construction and operation activities to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- Use high-pressure sodium and/or cut-off fixtures instead of typical mercury vapor fixtures for outdoor lighting.
- Use unidirectional lighting to avoid light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- Design exterior lighting to confine illumination to the project site, and/or to areas which do not include light-sensitive uses.
- Provide structural and/or vegetative screening from light-sensitive uses.
- Shield and direct all new street and pedestrian lighting away from light-sensitive off-site uses.
- Use non-reflective glass or glass treated with a non-reflective coating for all exterior windows and glass used on building surfaces.

- Architectural lighting shall be directed onto the building surfaces and have low reflectivity to minimize glare and limit light onto adjacent properties.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure AES-7** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1 with respect to mitigating **Impact AES-4**.

The 2026 RTP anticipates that implementation of land use and transportation network improvements will result a more urbanized region that necessarily results in significant changes to the existing visual character of some areas. While mitigation may provide a reduction in visual impacts, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce this impact to a less than significant level, the impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

B. Agricultural Resources

Impact AG-1 **Convert prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance (farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the farmland mapping and monitoring program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AG-1** through **AG-5**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level.

AG-1: Kern COG shall facilitate minimizing future impacts to Important Farmland resources through cooperation, information sharing, and regional program development as part of Kern COG's ongoing regional planning efforts, such as web-based planning tools for local government and other GIS tools and data services. Lead Agencies, such as county and city planning departments, shall be consulted during this update process.

AG-2: Kern COG shall work with member agencies and the region's farmland interests to develop regional best practices information for buffering farmland from urban encroachment, resolving conflicts that prevent farming on hillsides and other designated areas, and closing loopholes that allow conversion of non-farm uses without a grading permit.

AG-3: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to establish

preservation ratios to minimize loss of prime, unique, and statewide importance farmland, such as the preservation of 1 acre of unprotected agricultural land being permanently conserved for each acre of agricultural land developed on major projects affecting more than 100 acres of agricultural land, or as consistent with local agencies best practice.

AG-4: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to encourage urban development, in place of development in rural and sensitive areas. Local jurisdictions should seek funding to prepare specific plans and related environmental documents to facilitate mixed-use development, and to allow these areas to serve as receiver sites for transfer of development rights away from environmentally sensitive lands and rural areas outside established spheres of influence and urban service district boundaries.

AG-5: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to identify and minimize impacts to agricultural resources through project design.

Prior to the design approval of RTP transportation projects, the implementing agency should assess the project area for agricultural resources and constraints. For federally funded projects, implementing and local agencies are required to follow the rules and regulations of Farmland Protection Policy Act including determining the impact by completing the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (AD-1006). For non-federally funded projects, implementing and local agencies should assess projects for the presence of important farmlands (prime farmland, unique farmland, farmland of statewide importance), and if present, perform a Land Assessment and Site Evaluation (LESA).

If significant agricultural resources are identified within the limits of a project, implementing and local agencies should consider alternative designs that seek to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the agricultural resources. Design measures could include, but are not limited to, reducing the footprint of a roadway or development or relocating/realigning a project to avoid important and significant farmlands. If a project cannot be designed without complete avoidance of important or significant farmlands, implementing and local agencies should compensate for unavoidable conversion impacts in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act and local and regional standards, which may include enrolling off-site agricultural lands under a Williamson Act contract or other conservation or agricultural easement, mitigation banks, or paying mitigation fees.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measures AG-1 and AG-2 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. However, the mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures AG-3** through **AG-5** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1 with respect to mitigating **Impacts AG-1, AG-2 and AG-4**.

Although mitigation could reduce the significant impact associated with **Impact AG-1** the impact could remain significant and unavoidable. Some transportation projects and expected development are located in areas where the loss of important and significant farmlands cannot be avoided. The 2026 RTP anticipates

that implementation of land use and transportation network improvements will result in a more urbanized region that necessarily results in significant changes to the important and significant farmlands of some areas. While mitigation may provide a reduction in the loss of important and significant farmlands, it is not known whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce this impact to a less than significant level, the impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AG-1 through AG-5**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measures AG-1 and AG-2 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. However, the mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures AG-3 through AG-5** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1 with respect to mitigating **Impacts AG-1, AG-2 and AG-4**.

Although mitigation could reduce the significant impact associated with **Impact AG-2** the impact could remain significant and unavoidable. Some transportation projects and expected development are located in areas where the loss of important and significant farmlands cannot be avoided. The 2026 RTP anticipates that implementation of land use and transportation network improvements will result in a more urbanized region that necessarily results in significant changes to the important and significant farmlands of some areas. While mitigation may provide a reduction in the loss of important and significant farmlands, it is not known whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce this impact to a less than significant level, the impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact AG-3 Conflict with existing zoning or land use designation for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Pub. Resources Code, § 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Pub. Resources Code, § 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Gov. Code, § 51104(g)).

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AG-4**, and **AG-6** through **AG-9**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level.

AG-6 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to identify and minimize impacts to agricultural resources through project design.

Prior to the design approval of RTP transportation projects, the implementing agency should assess the project area for agricultural resources and constraints. For federally funded projects, implementing and local agencies are required to follow the rules and regulations of Farmland Protection Policy Act including determining the impact by completing the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (AD-1006). For non-federally funded projects, implementing and local agencies should assess projects for the presence of important farmlands (prime farmland, unique farmland, farmland of statewide importance), and if present, perform a Land Assessment and Site Evaluation (LESA).

If significant agricultural resources are identified within the limits of a project, implementing and local agencies should consider alternative designs that seek to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the agricultural resources. Design measures could include, but are not limited to, reducing the footprint of a roadway or development or relocating/realigning a project to avoid important and significant farmlands. If a project cannot be designed without complete avoidance of important or significant farmlands, implementing and local agencies should compensate for unavoidable conversion impacts in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act and local and regional standards, which may include enrolling off-site agricultural lands under a Williamson Act contract or other conservation or agricultural easement, mitigation banks, or paying mitigation fees.

AG-7 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to establish preservation ratios to minimize loss of forest land, and timberland, such as 1 acre of unprotected forest land and timber land to be permanently conserved for each acre of open space developed as a result of individual projects affecting more than 100 acres of forest land and timberland.

AG-8 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to implement design features in transportation projects to minimize impacts. Implementing agencies should consider corridor realignment, buffer zones and setbacks, and berms and fencing where feasible, to avoid forest lands and timberlands and to reduce conflicts between transportation uses and forest and timberlands.

AG-9 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to consider tree plantings at a minimum 1:1 ratio to mitigate impacts to forest lands.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures AG-4** and **AG-6** through **AG-9** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1 with respect to mitigating **Impact AG-3**.

The 2026 RTP anticipates that implementation of land use and transportation network improvements will result in increased urban development that necessarily results in significant changes to timberland and forest land resources of some areas. While mitigation may provide a reduction in the loss of timberland and forest land resources, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce this impact to a less than significant level, the impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

C. Air Quality

Impact AIR-3: **Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure AIR-1**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional and TPA level.

AIR-1: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to require contractors to assemble a comprehensive inventory list (i.e., make, model, engine year, horsepower, emission rates) of all heavy-duty off-road (portable and mobile) equipment (50 horsepower and greater) that could be used an aggregate of 40 or more hours for the construction project and apply the following:

- Prepare a plan for approval by the applicable air district demonstrating that the heavy-duty (equal to or greater than 50 horsepower) off-road equipment to be used in the construction project, including owned, leased and subcontractor vehicles, will achieve a project wide fleet-average 20 percent NOx reduction and 45 percent particulate reduction compared to the most recent CARB fleet average at time of construction. A Construction Mitigation Calculator (MS Excel) may be downloaded from the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD) web site to perform the fleet average evaluation <http://www.airquality.org/ceqa/index.shtml>. Acceptable options for reducing emissions may include use of late model engines, low-emission diesel products, alternative fuels, engine retrofit technology (Carl Moyer Guidelines), after-treatment products, voluntary offsite mitigation projects, provide

funds for air district off-site mitigation projects, and/or other options as they become available. The air district should be contacted to discuss alternative measures.

- Ensure that all construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained.
- Minimize idling time to 5 minutes – saves fuel and reduces emissions.
- Provide an operational water truck on-site at all times. Apply water to control dust as needed to prevent dust impacts off-site.
- Utilize existing power sources (e.g., power poles) or clean fuel generators rather than temporary power generators.
- Develop a traffic plan to minimize traffic flow interference from construction activities. The plan may include advance public notice of routing, use of public transportation, and satellite parking areas with a shuttle service. Schedule operations affecting traffic for off-peak hours. Minimize obstruction of through-traffic lanes. Provide a flag person to guide traffic properly and ensure safety at construction sites.
- As appropriate, require that portable engines and portable engine-driven equipment units used at the project work site, with the exception of on-road and off-road motor vehicles, obtain California Air Resources Board (ARB) Portable Equipment Registration with the state or a local district permit. Arrange appropriate consultations with the ARB or the District to determine registration and permitting requirements prior to equipment operation at the site.
- Project sponsors should review the San Joaquin Valley Air District's, Emission Reduction Clean Air Measures and incorporate measures as appropriate for their projects. The measures are available at: <https://ww2.valleyair.org/media/ob0pweru/clean-air-measures.pdf>.
- Lead agencies and project sponsors should incorporate strategies and best practices as appropriate and feasible with respect to siting freight facilities (see for example, California Air Resource Board's (CARB's) Freight Handbook Concept Paper located at: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/2019.12.12%20-%20Concept%20Paper%20for%20the%20Freight%20Handbook_1.pdf).

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure AIR-1** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Health Implications associated with PM₁₀ (and PM_{2.5}) include worsening of symptoms in sensitive patients with respiratory disease and excess seasonal declines in pulmonary function, especially in children. This can include an increase in the number and severity of asthma attacks, cause or aggravate bronchitis and other lung diseases, and reduce the body's ability to fight infections. Very small particles of substances, such as lead, sulfates, and nitrates can cause lung damage directly. These substances can be absorbed into the blood stream and cause damage elsewhere in the body. While mitigation may provide a reduction in air quality impacts, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The

Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact AIR-4 **Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations**

Impact AIR-5 **Localized concentrations of toxic air contaminants at sensitive receptors (short-term and/or long-term) are considered significant if they would exceed existing conditions.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AIR-2** through **AIR-7**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional and TPA level.

AIR-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to implement measures adopted by ARB designed to attain federal air quality standards for PM_{2.5}. ARB's strategy includes the following elements:

- Set technology forcing new engine standards;
- Reduce emissions from the in-use fleet;
- Require clean fuels, and reduce petroleum dependency;
- Work with USEPA to reduce emissions from federal and state sources; and
- Pursue long-term advanced technology measures.
- Proposed new transportation-related SIP measures include:¹

On-road Sources

- Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation
- Zero-Emissions Trucks Measure
- On-Road Motorcycles New Emissions Standards
- Clean Miles Standard

Off-road Sources

- Tier 5 Off-Road New Compression-Ignition Engine Standards
- Amendments to the In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets Regulation
- Transport Refrigeration Unit Regulation
- Commercial Harbor Craft Amendments
- Cargo Handling Equipment Amendments
- Off-Road Zero-Emission Targeted Manufacturer Rule
- Clean Off-Road Fleet Recognition Program
- Spark-Ignition Marine Engine Standards

AIR-3: Kern COG shall pursue the following activities in reducing the impact associated with health risk within 500 feet of freeways and high-traffic volume roadways:

- Participate in on-going statewide deliberations on health risks near freeways and high-traffic volume roadways. This involvement includes inputting to the statewide process by providing available data and information such as the current and projected locations of sensitive receptors relative to transportation infrastructure;

¹ CARB. Draft 2022 State Strategy for the State Implementation Plan January 31, 2022. Available online at: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Draft_2022_State_SIP_Strategy.pdf, accessed April 11, 2022.

- Work with air agencies including CARB and the air districts in the Kern COG region to support their work in monitoring the progress on reducing exposure to emissions of PM10 and PM2.5 for sensitive receptors, including schools and residents within 500 feet of high-traffic volume roadways;
- Work with stakeholders to identify planning and development practices that are effective in reducing health impacts to sensitive receptors; and
- Share information on all of the above efforts with stakeholders, member cities, counties and the public.

AIR-4:

Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to comply with the CARB recommendations to achieve an acceptable interior air quality level for sensitive receptors, project sponsors can and should identify appropriate measures, to be incorporated into project building design for residential, school and other sensitive uses located within 500 feet (or other appropriate distance as may be identified by CARB) of freeways, heavily travelled arterials, railways and other sources of Diesel particulate Matter and other known carcinogens. The measures should include one or more of the following methods as appropriate:

- a. the project sponsor should retain a qualified air quality consultant to prepare a health risk assessment (HRA) in accordance with the California Air Resources Board and the Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment requirements to determine the exposure of project residents/occupants/users to stationary air quality pollutants prior to issuance of a demolition, grading, or building permit. The HRA should be submitted to the Lead Agency for review and approval. The sponsor should implement the approved HRA recommendations, if any. If the HRA concludes that the air quality risks from nearby sources are at or below acceptable levels, then additional measures are not required.
- b. The project sponsor should implement the following features that have been found to reduce the air quality risk to sensitive receptors and should be included in the project construction plans. These should be submitted to the appropriate agency for review and approval prior to the issuance of a demolition, grading, or building permit and ongoing.
 - i. Do not locate sensitive receptors near distribution center's entry and exit points.
 - ii. Do not locate sensitive receptors in the same building as a perchloroethylene dry cleaning facility.
 - iii. Maintain a 50-foot buffer from a typical gas dispensing facility (under 3.6 million gallons of gas per year).
 - iv. Install, operate and maintain in good working order a central heating and ventilation (HV) system or other air take system in the building, or in each individual residential unit, that meets the efficiency standard of the MERV 13. The HV system should include the following features: Installation of a high efficiency filter and/or carbon filter-to-filter particulates and other chemical matter from entering the building. Either HEPA filters or ASHRAE 85 percent supply filters should be used.

- v. Retain a qualified HV consultant or HERS rater during the design phase of the project to locate the HV system based on exposure modeling from the mobile and/or stationary pollutant sources.
 - vi. Maintain positive pressure within the building.
 - vii. Achieve a performance standard of at least one air exchange per hour of fresh outside filtered air.
 - viii. Achieve a performance standard of at least 4 air exchanges per hour of recirculation
 - ix. Achieve a performance standard of 0.25 air exchanges per hour of unfiltered infiltration if the building is not positively pressurized.
- c. Project sponsor should maintain, repair and/or replace HV system or prepare an Operation and Maintenance Manual for the HV system and the filter. The manual should include the operating instructions and maintenance and replacement schedule. This manual should be included in the CC&R's for residential projects and distributed to the building maintenance staff. In addition, the sponsor should prepare a separate Homeowners Manual. The manual should contain the operating instructions and maintenance and replacement schedule for the HV system and the filters. It should also include a disclosure to the buyers of the air quality analysis findings.
- d. To the maximum extent practicable the Lead Agency can and should ensure that private (individual and common) exterior open space, including playgrounds, patios, and decks, should either be shielded from stationary sources of air pollution by buildings or otherwise buffered to further reduce air pollution exposure for project occupants.

AIR-5: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies, as applicable and feasible, to investigate (using for example procedures and guidelines for PM hotspot analysis consistent with U.S. EPA (2021) PM Hot-Spot Guidance) the relationship between 1) any increases in PM10 and PM2.5 within 500 feet of freeways in their jurisdiction, and 2) existing sensitive receptors in that area that do not have adequate air filtration to reduce such impacts to a less than significant level. To the extent that existing sensitive receptors are identified that do not have adequate air filtration, local jurisdictions may establish a program by which project sponsors can mitigate significant increases in PM10 and PM2.5 (e.g., by providing a retrofit program for older higher emitting vehicles, anti-idling requirements or policies, controlling fugitive dust, routing traffic away from populated zones, replacing older buses with cleaner buses, and paying in to a fund established to retrofit sensitive receptors with HEPA filters when sensitive receptors are located within 500 feet of freeways and high-traffic volume roadways that generate substantial diesel particulate emissions).

AIR-6: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies, as applicable and feasible, to plant appropriate vegetation to reduce PM10/PM2.5 when constructing a sensitive receptor within 500 feet of freeways and high-traffic volume roadways generating substantial diesel particulate emissions.

AIR-7: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies for major transportation

projects (especially those that generate substantial diesel particulate emissions) in the region, if health risks are shown to increase significantly at sensitive receptors within 500 feet of a transportation facility, to consider applicable mitigation. Examples include planting appropriate vegetation and retrofitting existing sensitive uses with air filtration to reduce potential health risk impacts to a less than significant level.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure AIR-3 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. However, the mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures AIR-2 and AIR-4 through 7** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The individual impacts of transportation projects and anticipated development in the region will remain significant and unavoidable because construction projects would create substantial emissions. Each project would result in long-term emissions, including an increase in diesel particulate matter, which is often found in higher concentrations in areas with significant truck traffic; however, other areas such as industrial sites can also result in high local concentrations of DPM. While mitigation may provide a reduction in air quality impacts, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

D. Biological Resources

Impact BIO-1: Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-5** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

BIO-1: Kern COG shall facilitate reducing future impacts to species identified as candidate, sensitive, or special status species and associated habitats through cooperation, information sharing, and program development. Kern COG shall consult with the resource agencies, such as the USFWS, NMFS, USACOE, USFS, BLM, and CDFW, as well as local jurisdictions including cities and counties, to incorporate designated critical habitat, federally protected wetlands, the protection of sensitive natural communities and riparian habitats, designated open space or protected wildlife habitat, local policies and tree

preservation ordinances, applicable HCPs and NCCPs, or other related planning documents into Kern COG's ongoing regional planning efforts. Planning efforts shall be consistent with the approach outlined in the California Wildlife Action Plan.

BIO-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to document Special-Status Plant Populations as follows:

Retain a qualified botanist to document the presence or absence of special-status plants before project implementation. Implement the following steps to document special-status plants:

- **Review Existing Information.** The botanist should review the most current existing information to develop a list of special-status plants that have a potential to occur in the specific project area. Sources of information consulted should include CDFW's California Natural Diversity Database ("CNDDDB"), previously prepared environmental documents, city and county general plans, Habitat Conservation Plans ("HCPs") and Natural Community Conservation Planning ("NCCP"), and the California Native Plant Society ("CNPS") electronic inventory.
- **Coordinate with Agencies.** The botanist should coordinate with the appropriate agencies (CDFW, USFWS, Caltrans) to discuss botanical resource issues and determine the appropriate level of surveys necessary to document special-status plants.
- **Conduct Field Studies.** The botanist should evaluate existing habitat conditions for each project and determine what level of botanical surveys may be required. The type of botanical survey should depend on species richness, habitat type and quality, and the probability of special-status species occurring in a particular habitat type. Depending on these factors and the proposed construction activity, one or a combination of the following levels of survey may be required:
- **Habitat Assessment.** A habitat assessment will be conducted to determine whether suitable habitat is present. This type of assessment can be conducted at any time of year and is used to assess and characterize habitat conditions and determine whether return surveys are necessary. If no suitable habitat is present, no additional surveys should be required.
- **Species-Focused Surveys.** Species-focused surveys (or target species surveys) should be conducted if suitable habitat is present for special-status plants. The surveys should focus on special-status plants that could grow in the region, and would be conducted during a period when the target species are evident and identifiable.
- **Floristic Protocol-Level Surveys.** Floristic surveys that follow the CNPS Botanical Survey Guidelines should be conducted in areas that are relatively undisturbed and/or have a moderate to high potential to support special-status plants. Surveys would follow the guidelines outlined in the "Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special-Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities". The CNPS Botanical Survey Guidelines require that all species be identified to the level necessary to determine whether they qualify as special-status plants, or are plant species with unusual or significant range extensions. The guidelines also require that field surveys be conducted when special-status plants that could occur in the area are evident and identifiable. To account for different special-status plant identification periods, one or more series of field surveys may be required in spring and summer months.

Special-status plant populations identified during the field surveys should be mapped and documented as part of CEQA and NEPA process, as applicable.

BIO-3: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to avoid or minimize impacts on Special-Status Plant Populations by redesigning the Project, protecting special-status plant populations, and developing a transplantation plan (if necessary and approved by resource agencies)

If special-status plants are identified in their project area, the proponents of specific projects included in the proposed RTP should implement the following measures, as appropriate, to avoid and minimize impacts on special-status plants:

- Redesign or modify their project to avoid direct and indirect impacts on special status plants, if feasible.
- Protect special-status plants near their project site by installing environmentally sensitive area fencing (orange construction barrier fencing) around special-status plant populations. The environmentally sensitive area fencing should be installed at least 20 feet from the edge of the population. The location of the fencing should be marked in the field with stakes and flagging and shown on the construction drawings. The construction specifications should contain clear language that prohibits construction-related activities, vehicle operation, material and equipment storage, and other surface-disturbing activities within the fenced environmentally sensitive area.
- Coordinate with the appropriate resource agencies and local experts to determine whether transplantation is feasible. If the agencies concur that transplantation is a feasible mitigation measure, the botanist should develop and implement a transplantation plan through coordination with the appropriate agencies. The special-status plant transplantation plan should involve identifying a suitable transplant site; moving the plant material and seed bank to the transplant site; collecting seed material and propagating it in a nursery; and monitoring the transplant sites to document recruitment and survival rates.

BIO-4: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to document special-status wildlife species and their habitats as follows:

Retain a qualified wildlife biologist to document the presence or absence of suitable habitat for special-status wildlife in the highway project study area. The following steps should be implemented to document special-status wildlife and their habitats for each highway project:

- **Review Existing Information.** The wildlife biologist should review existing information to develop a list of special-status wildlife species that could occur in the project area. The following information should be reviewed as part of this process: the USFWS special-status species list for the project region, CDFW's CNDDb, previously prepared environmental documents, city and county general plans, HCPs and NCCPs (if applicable), and USFWS issued biological opinions for previous projects.
- **Coordinate with State and Federal Agencies.** The wildlife biologist should coordinate with the appropriate agencies (CDFW, USFWS, and Caltrans) to discuss wildlife

resource issues in the project region and determine the appropriate level of surveys necessary to document special-status wildlife and their habitats.

- **Conduct Field Studies.** The wildlife biologist should evaluate existing habitat conditions and determine what level of biological surveys may be required. The type of survey required should depend on species richness, habitat type and quality, and the probability of special-status species occurring in a particular habitat type. Depending on the existing conditions in the project area and the proposed construction activity, one or a combination of the following levels of survey may be required:
- **Habitat Assessment.** A habitat assessment determines whether suitable habitat is present. This type of assessment can be conducted at any time of year and is used to assess and characterize habitat conditions and to determine whether return surveys are necessary. If no suitable habitat is present, no additional surveys should be required.
- **Species-Focused Surveys.** Species-focused surveys (or target species surveys) should be conducted if suitable habitat is present for special-status wildlife and if it is necessary to determine the presence or absence of the species in the project area. The surveys should focus on special-status wildlife species that have the potential to occur in the region. The surveys should be conducted during a period when the target species are present and/or active.
- **Protocol-Level Wildlife Surveys.** The project proponent should comply with protocols and guidelines issued by responsible agencies for certain special-status species. USFWS and CDFW have issued survey protocols and guidelines for several special-status wildlife species that could occur in the project region, including (but not limited to) the California red-legged frog, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, desert tortoise and San Joaquin kit fox. The protocols and guidelines may require that surveys be conducted during a particular time of year and/or time of day when the species is present and active. Many survey protocols require that only a USFWS permitted or CDFW-approved biologist perform the surveys. The project proponent should coordinate with the appropriate state or federal agency biologist before the initiation of protocol-level surveys to ensure that the survey results would be valid. Because some species can be difficult to detect or observe, multiple field techniques may be used during a survey period and additional surveys may be required in subsequent seasons or years as outlined in the protocol or guidelines for each species. Special-status wildlife or suitable habitat identified during the field surveys should be mapped and documented as part of the CEQA and NEPA documentation, as applicable.

BIO-5: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to avoid and minimize impacts on Special-Status Wildlife Species by redesigning the Project, protecting special-status wildlife habitat, and developing a mitigation monitoring plan (if necessary)

This mitigation measure focuses on avoiding and minimizing all direct and indirect effects on special-status wildlife. Implement the following measures to avoid and minimize impacts on special-status wildlife and their habitats:

- Redesign or modify the project to avoid direct and indirect impacts on special-status wildlife or their habitats, if feasible.

- Protect special-status wildlife and their habitat near the project site by installing environmentally sensitive area fencing around habitat features, such as seasonal wetlands, burrows, and nest trees. The environmentally sensitive area fencing or staking should be installed at a distance from the edge of the resource determined through coordination with state and federal agency biologists (USFWS and CDFW). The location of the fencing should be marked in the field with stakes and flagging and shown on the construction drawings. The construction specifications should contain clear language that prohibits construction-related activities, vehicle operation, material and equipment storage, and other surface-disturbing activities within the fenced environmentally sensitive area.
- Restrict construction-related activities to the non-breeding season for special-status wildlife species that could occur in the project area. Timing restrictions may vary depending on the species and could occur during any time of the year. Coordinate with the appropriate resource agencies to determine whether a monitoring plan for special-status wildlife is necessary as part of all highway projects. If a monitoring plan is required, it should be developed and implemented in coordination with appropriate agencies and should include
 - a description of each of the protected wildlife species and any suitable habitat for special-status species that could occur at the project site;
 - the locations of known occurrences of special-status wildlife species within 1.0 mile of the project site;
 - the location and size of no-disturbance zones in and adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas for wildlife;
 - directions on the handling and relocating of special-status wildlife species found on the project site that are in immediate danger of being destroyed; and
 - notification and reporting requirements for special-status species that are identified on the project site.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures BIO-1** would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. However, **Mitigation Measures BIO-2** through **BIO-5** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The individual impacts of local planning, development and transportation projects will remain significant and unavoidable due to the regional scale of the Plan and projects and development anticipated in the Plan. It is possible that impacts to sensitive species would not be limited to the locations of reported sightings, as mapped by California Natural Diversity Database (“CNDDDB”). The CNDDDB system relies on reported sightings of sensitive species, and it is not a complete inventory of sensitive species habitat. Proponents of specific projects in the RTP cannot guarantee that special-status species can be avoided as part of future projects. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to sensitive species, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found

to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact BIO-2 Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-6** through **BIO-8**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

BIO-6: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to identify and document riparian habitat as follows:

- Retain a qualified biologist to document the location, type, extent, and habitat functions and values for riparian communities that occur in the site-specific project area and could be affected by their project. This information should be mapped and documented as part of CEQA and NEPA documentation, as applicable.
- Consult with the USFWS and NMFS where such state-designated sensitive or riparian habitats provide potential or occupied habitat for federally listed rare, threatened, and endangered species afforded protection pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Consult with the USFS where such state-designated sensitive or riparian habitats provide potential or occupied habitat for federally listed rare, threatened, and endangered species afforded protection pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act and any additional species afforded protection by an adopted Forest Land Management Plan or Resource Management Plan.
- Consult with the CDFW where such state-designated sensitive or riparian habitats provide potential or occupied habitat for state-listed rare, threatened, and endangered species afforded protection pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act, or Fully-Protected Species afforded protection pursuant to the State Fish and Game Code.
- Consult with the CDFW pursuant to the provisions of Section 1600 of the State Fish and Game Code as they relate to Lakes and Streambeds.
- Consult with the USFWS, USFS, CDFW, and counties and cities in the Kern COG region, where state-designated sensitive or riparian habitats are occupied by birds afforded protection pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act during the breeding season.
- Consult with the CDFW for state-designated sensitive or riparian habitats where furbearing mammals, afforded protection pursuant to the provisions of the State Fish and Game Code for fur-beaming mammals, are actively using the areas in conjunction with breeding activities.

BIO-7: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to avoid and minimize disturbance of riparian communities as follows:

If riparian communities are present in the project area, avoid or minimize impacts on riparian communities by implementing the following measures:

- Redesign or modify the project to avoid direct and indirect impacts on riparian communities, if feasible.
- Protect riparian communities near the project site by installing environmentally sensitive area fencing at least 20 feet from the edge of the riparian vegetation. Depending on site-specific conditions, this buffer may be narrower or wider than 20 feet. The location of the fencing should be marked in the field with stakes and flagging and shown on the construction drawings. The construction specifications should contain clear language that prohibits construction-related activities, vehicle operation, material and equipment storage, and other surface-disturbing activities within the fenced environmentally sensitive area.
- Minimize the potential for long-term loss of riparian vegetation by trimming vegetation rather than removing the entire shrub. Shrub vegetation should be cut at least 1 foot above ground level to leave the root systems intact and allow for more rapid regeneration of the species. Cutting should be limited to a minimum area necessary within the construction zone. This type of removal should be allowed only for shrub species (all trees should be avoided) in areas that do not provide habitat for sensitive species (e.g., willow flycatcher). To protect migratory birds, woody riparian vegetation should not be removed March 15 through September 15, as required under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

BIO-8: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to compensate for the Loss of Riparian Community as follows:

If riparian vegetation is removed as part of their project, compensate for the loss of riparian vegetation to ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. Compensation ratios should be based on site-specific information and determined through coordination with state and federal agencies (including CDFW, USFWS, United States Army Corps of Engineers ["USACE"], and National Marine Fisheries Service ["NMFS"]). Compensation should be provided at a minimum 1:1 ratio (1 acre restored or created for every 1 acre removed) and may be a combination of on-site restoration/creation, off-site restoration, or mitigation credits. Develop a restoration and monitoring plan that describes how riparian habitat should be enhanced or recreated and monitored over a minimum period of time, as determined by the appropriate state and federal agencies. Implement the restoration and monitoring plan.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures BIO-6** through **BIO-8** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Although project-specific mitigation would reduce the significant impact on riparian habitat and other sensitive natural community, the impact could remain significant and unavoidable due to the regional scale of the Plan. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to riparian habitat or other sensitive natural communities, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact BIO 3 Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-9** through **BIO-11** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

BIO-9: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to identify and Delineate Waters of the United States (including jurisdictional and isolated wetlands).

Wetlands should be identified using both the USACE and USFWS/CDFW definitions of wetlands. USACE jurisdictional wetlands should be delineated using the methods outlined in the USACE 1987 *Wetlands Delineation Manual* and the Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Arid West Region (Version 2.0), September 2008¹. The jurisdictional boundary for other waters of the United States should be identified based on:

- The shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding area (33 CFR 328.3[e]).

This information should be mapped and documented as part of the CEQA and NEPA documentation, as applicable, and in wetland delineation reports.

BIO-10: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to avoid and minimize disturbance of Waters of the United States, including wetland communities.

Avoid and minimize impacts on wetlands and other waters of the United States (creeks, streams, and rivers) by implementing the following measures:

- Redesign or modify the project to avoid direct and indirect impacts on wetland habitats.
- Protect wetland habitats that occur near the project site by installing environmentally sensitive area fencing at least 20 feet from the edge of the wetland. Depending on site-specific conditions and permit requirements, this buffer may be wider than 20 feet (e.g., 250 feet for seasonal wetlands that are considered special-status shrimp habitat). The location of the fencing should be marked in the field with stakes and flagging and shown on the construction drawings. The construction specifications should contain

clear language that prohibits construction-related activities, vehicle operation, material and equipment storage, and other surface-disturbing activities within the fenced environmentally sensitive area.

- Avoid installation activities in saturated or ponded wetlands during the wet season (spring and winter) to the maximum extent possible. Where such activities are unavoidable, protective practices, such as use of padding or vehicles with balloon tires, should be used.
- Where determined necessary by resource specialists, use geotextile cushions and other materials (e.g., timber pads, prefabricated equipment pads, or geotextile fabric) in saturated conditions to minimize damage to the substrate and vegetation.
- Stabilize exposed slopes and stream banks immediately on completion of installation activities. Other waters of the United States should be restored in a manner that encourages vegetation to reestablish to its pre-project condition and reduces the effects of erosion on the drainage system.
- In highly erodible stream systems, stabilize banks using a non-vegetative material that will bind the soil initially and break down within a few years. If the project engineers determine that more aggressive erosion control treatments are needed, use geotextile mats, excelsior blankets, or other soil stabilization products.
- During construction, remove trees, shrubs, debris, or soils that are inadvertently deposited below the ordinary high-water mark of drainages in a manner that minimizes disturbance of the drainage bed and bank.

These measures should be incorporated into contract specifications and implemented by the construction contractor. In addition, the project proponent should ensure that the contractor incorporates all state and federal permit conditions into construction specifications.

BIO-11: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to compensate for the loss of wetland habitat as follows:

If wetlands are filled or disturbed as part of the highway project, compensate for the loss of wetland habitat to ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. Compensation ratios should be based on site-specific information and determined through coordination with state and federal agencies (including CDFW, USFWS, and USACE). The compensation should be at a minimum 1:1 ratio (1 acre restored or created for every 1 acre filled) and may be a combination of on-site restoration/creation, off-site restoration, or mitigation credits. A restoration and monitoring plan should be developed and implemented if on-site or off-site restoration or creation is chosen. The plan should describe how wetlands should be created and monitored over a minimum of five years (or as required by the regulatory agencies).

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures BIO-9** through **BIO-11** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The degree of site-specific impacts will depend on several factors, including the amount and kind of riparian and aquatic habitat removed and the ability of individual projects to mitigate their impacts. Although the substantial development under the Plan would be in urbanized areas without substantial amounts of valuable habitat, the large number of projects that would be implemented under the Plan and anticipated land consumption could substantially affect riparian and wetland habitat. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to marshes, vernal pools, and/or seasonal wetlands, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact BIO-4 Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure BIO-12**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

BIO-12: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to incorporate Design Measures to Allow Animal Movement as follows:

Prior to design approval of RTP projects that contain movement habitat, the implementing agency should incorporate economically viable design measures, as applicable and necessary, to allow wildlife or fish to move through the transportation corridor, both during construction activities and post construction. Such measures may include appropriately spaced breaks in a center barrier, or other measures that are designed to allow wildlife to move through the transportation corridor. If the project cannot be designed with these design measures due to traffic safety, etc., the implementing agency should coordinate with the appropriate regulatory agency (i.e., USFWS, NMFS, CDFW) to obtain regulatory permits and implement alternative project-specific mitigation prior to any construction activities. Such measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Consult with the USFWS, USFS, CDFW, and local agencies, where impacts to birds afforded protection pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act during the breeding season may occur.
- Consult with local jurisdictions and other local organizations when impacts may occur to open space areas that have been designated as important for wildlife movement.
- Prohibit construction activities within 500 feet of occupied breeding areas for wildlife afforded protection pursuant to Title 14 § 460 of the California Code of Regulations protecting fur-bearing mammals, during the breeding season.

- Conduct a survey to identify active raptor and other migratory nongame bird nests by a qualified biologist at least two weeks before the start of construction at project sites from February 1 through August 31.
- Install wildlife fencing where appropriate to minimize the probability of wildlife injury due to direct interaction between wildlife and roads or construction.
- where avoidance is determined to be infeasible, design sufficient conservation measures through coordination with local agencies and the regulatory agency (i.e., USFWS or CDFW) and in accordance with the respective counties and cities general plans to establish plans to mitigate for the loss of fish and wildlife movement corridors and/or wildlife nursery sites. The consideration of conservation measures may include the following measures where applicable:
 - Wildlife movement buffer zones
 - Corridor realignment
 - Appropriately spaced breaks in center barriers
 - Stream rerouting
 - Culverts
 - Creation of artificial movement corridors such as freeway under- or overpasses
 - Other comparable measures

Where the Lead Agency has identified that a RTP project, or other regionally significant project, has the potential to impact other open space or nursery site areas, seek comparable coverage for these areas in consultation with the USFWS, CDFW, NMFS, or other local jurisdictions.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure BIO-12** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The degree of site-specific impacts will depend on several factors, including the duration and size of the area of construction activities, the presence of habitat of special status species, the timing of construction activity, and the final project design. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to biological resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact BIO-5	Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.
Impact BIO-6	Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO 1 through 12 and BIO-13 and BIO 14**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

MM BIO-13: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to review Local City and County Policies, Ordinances, and Conservation Plans. Review of these documents and compliance with their requirements should be demonstrated in project-level environmental documentation. Where lead agencies have determined a significant impact would occur, lead agencies should consider mitigation measures to minimize impacts. Such measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Design projects to avoid conflicts with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources.
- Where avoidance is determined to be infeasible, sufficient conservation measures to fulfill the requirements of the applicable policy or ordinance should be developed, such as to support issuance of a tree removal permit. The consideration of conservation measures may include:
 - Avoidance strategies
 - Contribution of in-lieu fees
 - Planting of replacement trees at a minimum ratio of 2:1
 - Re-landscaping areas with native vegetation post-construction
 - Other comparable measures.

MM-BIO-14 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to review Local City and County Policies, Ordinances, and Conservation Plans. Review of these documents and compliance with their requirements should be demonstrated in project-level environmental documentation. Where lead agencies have determined a significant impact would occur, lead agencies should consider mitigation measures to minimize impacts. Such measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Consult with the appropriate federal, state, and/or local agency responsible for the administration of HCPs or NCCPs.
- Wherever practicable and feasible, the project should be designed to avoid through project design lands preserved under the conditions of an HCP or NCCP.

Where avoidance is determined to be infeasible, sufficient conservation measures to fulfill the requirements of the HCP and/or NCCP, which would include but not be limited to applicable authorization for incidental take pursuant to Section 7 or 10(a) of the federal Endangered Species Act or Section 2081 of the California Endangered Species Act, should

be developed to support issuance of an Incidental take permit or any other permissions required for development within the HCP/NCCP boundaries.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure BIO-13 and 14** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Individual projects could impact habitat conservation plans discussed above, including the Valley Floor Habitat Conservation Plan, the Metropolitan Bakersfield Habitat Conservation Plan, the Tulare Basin Riparian & Wildlife Corridor Conservation Plan, and the West Mojave Conservation Habitat Plan. The degree of site-specific impacts will depend on several factors, including the duration and size of the area of construction activities, the presence of habitat of special status species, the timing of construction activity, and the final project design. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to biological resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

E. Cultural Resources And Tribal Cultural Resources

Impact CR-1: Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical structure as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure CR-1**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

CR-1: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to require historical resource studies and to identify and implement project-specific mitigation.

As part of planning, design, and engineering for projects, implementing and local agencies should ensure that historic resources are treated in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. When a project has been identified as potentially affecting a historical resource, a historical resources inventory should be conducted by a qualified architectural historian. The study should comply with State CEQA Guidelines section 15064.5(b), and, if federal funding or permits are required, with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") of 1966 (16 USC Sec. 470 et seq.). As applicable, the study should consist of the following elements:

- a records search at the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (California State University, Bakersfield);
- contact with local historical societies, museums, or other interested parties as appropriate to help determine locations of known significant historical resources;
- necessary background, archival and historic research;
- a survey of built environment/architectural resources that are 50 years old or older that may be directly or indirectly impacted by project activities; and
- recordation and evaluation of built environment/architectural resources that are 50 years old or older that may be directly or indirectly impacted by project activities;
- buildings should be evaluated under California Register of Historic Resources (“CRHR”) and/or NRHP Criteria as appropriate and recorded on California Department of Parks and Recreation 523 forms.

These elements should be compiled into a Historical Survey Report that should be submitted to the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (California State University, Bakersfield) and should also be used for State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”) consultation if the project is subject to NHPA section 106.

If architectural resources are deemed as potentially eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources or the National Register of Historic Places, implementing and local agencies should consider avoidance through project redesign as feasible and appropriate. If avoidance is not feasible, implementing or local agencies should ensure that historic resources are formally documented through the use of large-format photography, measured drawings, written architectural descriptions, and historical narratives. The documentation should be entered into the Library of Congress, and archived in the California Historical Resources Information System. In the event of building relocation, implementing and local agencies should ensure that any alterations to significant buildings or structures conform to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure CR-1** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Development and transportation improvements would occur where impacts to historic resources could occur. It cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact CR-2 **Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure CR-2** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

CR-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to require consultation, surveys, and monitoring for archaeological resources.

During environmental review of projects, implementing and local agencies should:

- Consult with the Native American Heritage Commission to determine whether known sacred sites are in the project area, and identify the Native American(s) to contact to obtain information about the project area.
- Conduct a records search at the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (California State University, Bakersfield) to determine whether the project area has been previously surveyed and whether resources were identified.

In the event the records indicate that no previous survey has been conducted, the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (California State University, Bakersfield) will make a recommendation on whether a survey is warranted based on the archaeological sensitivity of the project area. If recommended, a qualified archaeologist should be retained to conduct archaeological surveys. The significance of any resources that are determined to be in the project area should be assessed according to the applicable local, state, and federal significance criteria. Implementing and local agencies should devise treatment measures to ameliorate “substantial adverse changes” to significant archaeological resources, in consultation with qualified archaeologists and other concerned parties. Such treatment measures may include avoidance through project redesign, data recovery excavation, and public interpretation of the resource.

Implementing and local agencies and the contractors performing the improvements should adhere to the following requirements:

- If a project is located in an area rich with cultural materials, implementing and local agencies should retain a qualified archaeologist to monitor any subsurface operations, including but not limited to grading, excavation, trenching, or removal of existing features of the subject property.
- If, during the course of construction cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated artifacts and features) are discovered work should be halted immediately within 50 meters (165 feet) of the discovery, implementing and local agencies should be notified, and a qualified archaeologist that meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards in prehistoric or historical archaeology should be retained to determine the significance of the discovery.
- Implementing and local agencies should consider mitigation recommendations presented by a professional archaeologist that meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards in prehistoric or historical archaeology for any unanticipated discoveries and should carry out the measures deemed feasible and

appropriate. Such measures may include avoidance, preservation in place, excavation, documentation, curation, data recovery, or other appropriate measures. The project proponent should be required to implement any mitigation necessary for the protection of cultural resources.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure CR-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The Plan encompasses projects that take place in previously undisturbed areas, where archeological resources are generally more likely to be discovered. Soil removal of any kind could potentially disturb undiscovered archeological resources, particularly as the location of many archeological sites is confidential and/or unknown. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to cultural resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact CR-3 Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures CR-2** and **CR-3** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

CR-3: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to implement Stop-Work and Consultation Procedures Mandated by PRC 5097.

In the event of discovery or recognition of any human remains during construction or excavation activities implementing and local agencies should cease further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent human remains until the following steps are taken:

- The Kern County Coroner has been informed and has determined that no investigation of the cause of death is required.
- If the remains are of Native American origin, either of the following steps will be taken:
- The coroner should contact the Native American Heritage Commission in order to ascertain the proper descendants from the deceased individual. The coroner should make a recommendation to the landowner or the person responsible for the excavation work, for means of treating or disposing of, with appropriate dignity, the human

remains and any associated grave goods, which may include obtaining a qualified archaeologist or team of archaeologists to properly excavate the human remains.

Implementing or local agencies or authorized representatives should retain a Native American monitor, and an archaeologist, if recommended by the Native American monitor, and rebury the Native American human remains and any associated grave goods, with appropriate dignity, on the property and in a location that is not subject to further subsurface disturbance when any of the following conditions occurs:

- The Native American Heritage Commission is unable to identify a descendent.
- The descendant identified fails to make a recommendation.
- The implementing agency or its authorized representative rejects the recommendation of the descendant, and the mediation by the Native American Heritage Commission fails to provide measures acceptable to the landowner.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure CR-2** and **CR-3** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

It is possible that excavation and construction activities, regardless of depth, may yield human remains that may not be interred in marked, formal burials. New lanes and transit projects require earthwork that could affect paleontological resources in both previously undisturbed and urban areas. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to cultural resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact TCR-1	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 that is: a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1.
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Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures CR-2** and **CR-3** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

MM TCR-1 Kern COG through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to consult with the Native American Heritage Commission, as well as Native American tribes, to identify opportunities for early and effective consultation to identify tribal cultural resources to avoid such resources wherever practicable and feasible and reduce or mitigate for conflicts in compatible land use to the maximum extent practicable.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures CR-2 and CR-3 and TCR-1** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Excavation and soil removal of any kind, particularly in previously undisturbed areas, have the potential to tribal resources. Many tribal cultural resources are encountered near areas of prior Native American occupation and activity, which includes areas both within and outside areas of current development. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to tribal cultural resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

F. Geology And Soils

Impact GEO-2 **Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-1** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

GEO-1: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to require the development and implementation of detailed erosion control measures, consistent with the CBC and UBC regulations and guidelines and/or local NPDES, to address erosion control specific to the project site; revegetate sites to minimize soil loss and prevent significant soil erosion; avoid construction on unstable slopes and other areas subject to soil erosion where possible; require management techniques that minimize soil loss and erosion; manage grading to maximize the capture and retention of water runoff through ditches, trenches, siltation ponds, or similar measures; and minimize erosion through adopted protocols and standards in the industry. The implementing and local agencies should also require land use and transportation projects to comply with locally adopted grading, erosion, and/or sediment control ordinances beginning when any preconstruction

or construction-related grading or soil storage first occurs, until all final improvements are completed.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure GEO-1** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Soil erosion and loss of topsoil could be impacted through transportation network improvements, since these usually involve grading or earthwork, and increased impervious surfaces and removal of vegetative cover. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to loss of topsoil, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact GEO-3 Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

GEO-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to conduct site-specific, design level geotechnical investigation for individual projects. Investigations should include an analysis of expected ground motions from known active faults. The analyses should be in accordance with applicable regulations and consistent with the most recent version of the California Building Code, which requires structural design that can accommodate ground accelerations expected from known active faults. In addition, investigations should determine final design parameters for walls, foundations, foundation slabs, and surrounding related improvements (utilities, roadways, parking lots and sidewalks). Investigations should be conducted by a registered geotechnical engineer. All recommendations by project engineers and geotechnical engineers should be included in final designs. Final seismic considerations should be submitted to and approved by the appropriate local jurisdiction prior to the commencement of a project.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Excavation related to construction projects or as needed to construct anticipated development could result in unstable soils. Soils with high percentages of clay can expand when wet, causing structural damage to surface improvements. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to soil stability, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact GEO-4 Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Excavation related to construction projects or as needed to construct anticipated development could result in unstable soils. Soils with high percentages of clay can expand when wet, causing structural damage to surface improvements. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to soil stability, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact GEO-6 **Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geological feature.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

GEO-3: Kern COG shall consult with resource agencies such as the National Park Service, United States Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management to identify opportunities for early and effective consultation to identify unique paleontological resources and unique geological features to avoid such resources wherever practicable and feasible and reduce or mitigation for conflicts in compatible land use to the maximum extent practicable.

GEO-4: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing to ensure compliance with the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Antiquities Act, Section 5097.5 of the Public Resources Code (PRC), adopted county and city general plans, and other federal, state and local regulations, as applicable and feasible, by adhering to and incorporating the performance standards and practices from the 2010 Society for Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) standard procedures for the assessment and mitigation of adverse impacts to paleontological resources.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure GEO-3 and GEO-4** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The development of new transportation facilities as well as new development consistent with the RTP could affect paleontological resources, primarily through the disturbance or vandalism of buried resources. Frequently, these resources are previously unidentified. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to soil stability, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

F. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Impact GHG-1 **Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AIR-1 and AIR-2, TR-2 through TR-4 and GHG-1 through GHG-7** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

- GHG-1:** Kern COG shall update future Regional Transportation Plans (including Sustainable Community Strategies) to incorporate policies and measures that build upon successful GHG reduction strategies from the 2026 RTP and lead to further reduced GHG emissions. Such policies and measures may be derived from the General Plans, local jurisdictions' Climate Action Plans ("CAPs"), and other adopted policies and plans of its member agencies that include GHG mitigation and adaptation measures or other sources.
- GHG-2:** Kern COG shall, through its ongoing outreach and technical assistance programs, work with and encourage local governments to adopt policies and develop practices that lead to GHG emission reductions. These activities should include, but are not limited to, providing technical assistance and information sharing on developing local Climate Action Plans.
- GHG-3:** Kern COG shall continue the Regional Energy Action Planning, as funding allows, and assist member agencies in adopting regional energy action plans and community climate action plans to advance regional climate strategies. These plans should assess the cost effectiveness of local jurisdictions' GHG reduction measures and prioritize strategies that have greatest overall benefit to the economy.
- GHG-4:** Consistent with the CMP, Kern COG shall encourage and work with local governments to develop multimodal performance standards to determine how much traffic, during peak hours, is acceptable on state freeways, highways, and major streets within Kern County. Local jurisdictions should incorporate multimodal level of service standards in their circulation plans consistent with AB 1358 California Complete Streets Act of 2008 and as appropriate for each community facility type, place type, and corridor type, as recommended in the latest Highway Capacity Manual update. In addition, Kern COG will work with local agencies to identify frequency and routing of transit service, in order to assist in coordinating transit service provided by separate operators throughout Kern County.
- GHG-5:** Kern COG will continue to promote GHG and criteria pollutant emission reductions through the VMT Reduction Progress Tracking & Assistance Program by providing local jurisdictions with regular progress reports on changes in observed VMT, and providing planning assistance and resources to make progress toward reduction goals. Other resources being provided to local planners include the San Joaquin Valley Planners Toolkit.
- GHG-6:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to build on the work done for the Kern County GHG inventory. Implementing agencies and local agencies should also adopt and implement Climate Action Plans (CAPs, also known as Plans for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions as described in CEQA Guidelines Section

15183.5 Tiering and Streamlining the Analysis of Greenhouse Gas Emissions) that do the following:

- a) Quantify GHG emissions, both existing and projected over a specified period, resulting from activities within each agency's jurisdiction;
- b) Establish a level, based on substantial evidence, below which the contribution to GHG emissions from activities covered by the plan would not be cumulatively considerable;
- c) Identify and analyze the GHG emissions resulting for specific actions or categories of actions anticipated within their respective jurisdictions;
- d) Specify measures or a group of measures, including performance standards, that substantial evidence demonstrates, if implemented on a project-by-project basis, would collectively achieve the specified emissions level;
- e) Establish a mechanism to monitor the plan's progress toward achieving that level and to require amendment if the plan is not achieving specified levels; and
- f) Be adopted in a public process following environmental review.

GHG-7:

In accordance with provisions of sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B) of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, a Lead Agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to reduce substantial adverse effects related to greenhouse gas emissions. Such measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the Lead Agency:

- a) Integrate green building measures consistent with CALGreen (California Building Code Title 24), local building codes and other applicable laws, into project design including:
 - i) Use energy efficient materials in building design, construction, rehabilitation, and retrofit.
 - ii) Install energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems (cogeneration); water heaters; appliances; equipment; and control systems.
 - iii) Reduce lighting, heating, and cooling needs by taking advantage of light-colored roofs, trees for shade, and sunlight.
 - iv) Incorporate passive environmental control systems that account for the characteristics of the natural environment.
 - v) Use high-efficiency lighting and cooking devices.
 - vi) Incorporate passive solar design.
 - vii) Use high-reflectivity building materials and multiple glazing.
 - viii) Prohibit gas-powered landscape maintenance equipment.
 - ix) Install electric vehicle charging stations.
 - x) Reduce wood burning stoves or fireplaces.
 - xi) Provide bike lanes accessibility and parking at residential developments.
- b) Reduce emissions resulting from projects through implementation of project features, project design, or other measures, such as those described in Appendix F of the *State CEQA Guidelines*.
- c) Include off-site measures to mitigate a project's emissions.
- d) Measures that consider incorporation of Best Available Control Technology (BACT) during design, construction and operation of projects to minimize GHG emissions, including but not limited to:
 - i) Use energy and fuel-efficient vehicles and equipment;
 - ii) Deployment of zero- and/or near zero emission technologies;
 - iii) Use lighting systems that are energy efficient, such as LED technology;
 - iv) Use the minimum feasible amount of GHG-emitting construction materials;

- v) Use cement blended with the maximum feasible amount of flash or other materials that reduce GHG emissions from cement production;
 - vi) Incorporate design measures to reduce GHG emissions from solid waste management through encouraging solid waste recycling and reuse;
 - vii) Incorporate design measures to reduce energy consumption and increase use of renewable energy;
 - viii) Incorporate design measures to reduce water consumption;
 - ix) Use lighter-colored pavement where feasible;
 - x) Recycle construction debris to maximum extent feasible;
 - xi) Plant shade trees in or near construction projects where feasible; and
 - xii) Solicit bids that include concepts listed above.
- e) Measures that encourage transit use, carpooling, bike-share and car-share programs, active transportation, and parking strategies, including, but not limited to the following:
- i) Promote transit-active transportation coordinated strategies;
 - ii) Increase bicycle carrying capacity on transit and rail vehicles;
 - iii) Improve or increase access to transit;
 - iv) Increase access to common goods and services, such as groceries, schools, and day care;
 - v) Incorporate affordable housing into the project;
 - vi) Incorporate the neighborhood electric vehicle network;
 - vii) Orient the project toward transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
 - viii) Improve pedestrian or bicycle networks, or transit service;
 - ix) Provide traffic calming measures;
 - x) Provide bicycle parking;
 - xi) Limit or eliminate park supply;
 - xii) Unbundle parking costs;
 - xiii) Provide parking cash-out programs;
 - xiv) Implement or provide access to commute reduction program;
- f) Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities into project designs, maintaining these facilities, and providing amenities incentivizing their use; and planning for and building local bicycle projects that connect with the regional network;
- g) Improving transit access to rail and bus routes by incentives for construction of transit facilities within developments, and/or providing dedicated shuttle service to transit stations; and
- h) Adopting employer trip reduction measures to reduce employee trips such as vanpool and carpool programs, providing end-of-trip facilities, and telecommuting programs including but not limited to measures that:
- i) Provide car-sharing, bike sharing, and ride-sharing programs;
 - ii) Provide transit passes;
 - iii) Shift single occupancy vehicle trips to carpooling or vanpooling, for example providing ride-matching services;
 - iv) Provide incentives or subsidies that increase that use of modes other than single-occupancy vehicle;
 - v) Provide on-site amenities at places of work, such as priority parking for carpools and vanpools, secure bike parking, and showers and locker rooms;
 - vi) Provide employee transportation coordinators at employment sites;
 - vii) Provide a guaranteed ride home service to users of non-auto modes.

- i) Designate a percentage of parking spaces for ride-sharing vehicles or high-occupancy vehicles, and provide adequate passenger loading and unloading for those vehicles;
- j) Land use siting and design measures that reduce GHG emissions, including:
 - i) Developing on infill and brownfields sites;
 - ii) Building compact and mixed-use developments near transit;
 - iii) Retaining on-site mature trees and vegetation, and planting new canopy trees;
 - iv) Measures that increase vehicle efficiency, encourage use of zero and low emissions vehicles, or reduce the carbon content of fuels, including constructing or encouraging construction of electric vehicle charging stations or neighborhood electric vehicle networks, or charging for electric bicycles; and
 - v) Measures to reduce GHG emissions from solid waste management through encouraging solid waste recycling and reuse.

Findings and Rationale

For the significant impact to greenhouse gas emissions associated with **Impact GHG-1**, measures **Mitigation Measures GHG-1** through **GHG-7** as presented above have been adopted as part of the 2026 RTP to lessen the effects of increased GHG emissions. Additionally, the implementation of **Mitigation Measures AIR-1, AIR-2, and TR-2** through **TR-4** provide mitigation for this impact. The Kern COG Board finds that some of these mitigation activities are the responsibility of Kern COG, while others are the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies and other agencies.

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures GHG-1** through **GHG-5** require Kern COG to coordinate, collaborate, and share information with resource and local agencies and others to reduce the significant impact associated with **Impact GHG-1**. The Kern COG Board hereby finds that **Mitigation Measures GHG-1** through **GHG-5** are feasible and would reduce **Impact GHG-1**.

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures TR-1, TR-2, TR-3, TR-4, GHG-6 and GHG-7** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Although **Mitigation Measures GHG-1** through **GHG-7** reduce the significant impact associated with **Impact GHG-1**, such mitigation activities cannot ensure that the impacts of individual projects will result in less than significant effects.

Further, the individual impacts of local planning and development projects could remain significant and unavoidable because Kern COG does not have authority to guarantee that some of the measures would be implemented, thus there is no guarantee that GHG emissions in 2049 would be reduced to less than or equal to current conditions. While mitigation may provide a reduction in greenhouse gas emission impacts, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

In addition, the Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding

considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact GHG-2: **Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AIR-1 and AIR-2, TR-2 through TR-4 and GHG-1 through GHG-7** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure GHG-1 through GHG-4 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. Additionally, the implementation of **Mitigation Measures AIR-1, AIR-2, and TR-2 through TR-5** provide mitigation for this impact. The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures TR-1, TR-2, TR-3, TR-4 , and GHG-6 and GHG-7** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Individual impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable because although the Plan successfully meets or exceeds its emissions targets, given the unknowns associated with the other required sectors, such as the demand for water and energy, and the projected population growth in the region, estimated total emissions could result in a significant impact without assuming that the strategies in the Scoping Plan are implemented. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to greenhouse gas emissions, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

G. Land Use And Planning

Impact LU-1: **Physically divide an established community**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures LU-1 and POP-1** impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

LU-1: Kern COG shall continue to coordinate with local County Transportation Commissions, Caltrans, and other local jurisdictions when siting new facilities in residential areas to facilitate minimizing future impacts on established communities through cooperation,

information sharing, and regional program development as part of Kern COG's ongoing regional planning efforts to promote best planning practices.

POP-1: Kern COG, will work with its member agencies to implement growth strategies to create an urban form designed to focus development in TPAs in accordance with the policies, strategies and investments contained in the 2026 RTP, enhancing mobility and reducing land consumption, providing urban infrastructure to support growth and ensuring a jobs-housing balance that supports decreases in greenhouse gas emissions.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure LU-1 and POP-1 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG.

The individual impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable because while Kern COG can coordinate with local jurisdictions on the siting of facilities, new roadways or other infrastructure may still divide communities. While mitigation may provide a reduction in land use impacts, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact LU-2 **Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures LU-1** through **LU-4** and **POP-1**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

LU-1: Kern COG shall work with the County and other member agencies on the Regional Planning Advisory Committee to ensure that RTP transportation projects and growth are consistent with general plans and associated local government planning assumptions.

LU-2: Kern COG shall provide technical assistance and regional leadership to local governments to implement the RTP goals and strategies, integrate growth and land use planning with the existing and planned transportation network, and in determining consistency with the SCS.

LU-3: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to reflect RTP

policies and strategies in their general plan updates. Kern COG will work to build consensus on how to address inconsistencies between general plans and RTP policies.

LU-4: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to reflect RTP policies and strategies in their general plan updates. Kern COG will work to build consensus on how to address inconsistencies between general plans and RTP policies.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure LU-1, LU-2 and POP 1 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG.

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure LU-3 and LU-4** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

While Kern COG can encourage local jurisdictions to adopt plans consistent with growth assumptions and existing plans, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

H. Mineral Resources

IMPACT MIN-2 **Potential to result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures MIN-11**, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable at the regional level and TPA level.

MIN-1: Kern COG through its intergovernmental review process, shall coordinate with the Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey to ensure that transportation projects avoid MRZs and areas identified through the General Plan to contain natural resources, and access to recoverable mineral and fuel resources is sustained through construction, operation and maintenance of projects. Efforts will be made to maintain portions of MRZ-2 areas in open space or other general plan land use categories and zoning that allow for mining of mineral resources. Where avoidance is infeasible, design transportation network improvements in a manner that does not preclude adjacent or nearby extraction of known mineral and aggregate resources following completion of the

improvement and during long-term operations, such as buffer zones or screening, maintaining portions of MRZ-2 areas in open space or other general plan land use categories and zoning that allow for mining of mineral resources.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure MIN-1** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Transportation projects contained in the Plan and development projects anticipated to occur under the Plan have the potential to impact the availability of mineral resources if they are constructed in mineral resource zones. This would be a significant impact if there is a loss of available resources.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable at the regional level. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

I. Noise

Impact NOISE-1: **Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures NOISE-1** and **NOISE-2** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

NOISE-1: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to assess and mitigate to the extent feasible short- and long-term noise impacts in accordance with applicable regulations and to implement site-specific noise reduction measures, including the following as applicable:

- Equipment and trucks used for project construction can and should utilize the best available noise control techniques (e.g., improved mufflers, equipment redesign, use of intake silencers, ducts, engine enclosures, and acoustically attenuating shields or shrouds, wherever feasible).
- Tools (e.g., jack hammers, pavement breakers, and rock drills) used for project construction can and should be hydraulically or electrically powered to avoid noise associated with compressed air exhaust from pneumatically powered tools. However, where use of pneumatic tools is unavoidable, an exhaust muffler on the compressed air exhaust should be used; this muffler can lower noise levels from the exhaust by up to about 10 dB(A). External jackets on the tools themselves should be used, if such

jackets are commercially available and this could achieve a reduction of 5 dB(A). Quieter procedures should be used, such as drills rather than impact equipment, whenever such procedures are available and consistent with construction procedures.

- Stationary noise sources can and should be located as far from adjacent sensitive receptors as possible and they should be muffled and enclosed within temporary sheds, incorporate insulation barriers, or use other measures as determined by the Lead Agency (or other appropriate government agency) to provide equivalent noise reduction.
- A procedure and phone numbers for notifying the Lead Agency staff and local Police Department; (during regular construction hours and off-hours).
- A sign posted on-site pertaining with permitted construction days and hours and complaint procedures and who to notify in the event of a problem. The sign should also include a listing of both the Lead Agency and construction contractor's telephone numbers (during regular construction hours and off-hours).
- The designation of an on-site construction complaint and enforcement manager for the project.
- Notification of neighbors and occupants within 300 feet of the project construction area at least 30 days in advance of extreme noise generating activities about the estimated duration of the activity.
- A preconstruction meeting can and should be held with the job inspectors and the general contractor/on-site project manager to confirm that noise measures and practices (including construction hours, neighborhood notification, posted signs, etc.) are completed.
- Use of portable barriers in the vicinity of sensitive receptors during construction.
- Projects that require pile driving or other construction noise above 90 dB(A) in proximity to sensitive receptors, should reduce potential pier drilling, pile driving and/or other extreme noise generating construction impacts greater than 90 dB(A), a set of site-specific noise attenuation measures should be completed under the supervision of a qualified acoustical consultant.
- Implement noise control at the receivers by temporarily improving the noise reduction capability of adjacent buildings (for instance by the use of sound blankets), and implement if such measures are feasible and would noticeably reduce noise
- Monitor the effectiveness of noise attenuation measures by taking noise measurements.
- Maximize the distance between noise-sensitive land uses and new roadway lanes, roadways, rail lines, transit centers, park-and-ride lots, and other new noise-generating facilities.
- Construct sound reducing barriers between noise sources and noise-sensitive land uses.

NOISE-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to assess and mitigate to the extent feasible short- and long-term noise impacts in accordance with applicable regulations and to implement site-specific noise reduction measures, including the following as applicable: Such measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Stationary noise sources can and should be located as far from adjacent sensitive receptors as possible and they should be muffled and enclosed within temporary sheds, incorporate insulation barriers, or use other measures as determined by the

Lead Agency (or other appropriate government agency) to provide equivalent noise reduction.

- Implement, to the extent feasible and practicable, speed limits and limits on hours of operation of rail and transit systems, where such limits may reduce noise impacts.
- Use techniques such as grade separation, buffer zones, landscaped berms, dense plantings, sound walls, reduced-noise paving materials, and traffic calming measures.
- Maximize the distance of new route alignments from sensitive receptors.
- Locate transit-related passenger stations, central maintenance facilities, decentralized maintenance facilities, and electric substations away from sensitive receptors to the maximum extent feasible.
- Use land use measures such as zoning, site design, and buffers to ensure that future development is noise compatible with adjacent transportation facilities and land uses.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures NOISE-1** and **NOISE-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Construction activities associated with the Plan would result in temporary noise increases at nearby sensitive receptors and have the potential to generate substantial noise levels that exceeds local regulations. While mitigation may provide a reduction in noise impacts, it is unknown whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable at the regional level. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact NOISE-2: Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures NOISE-1** and **NOISE-2** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures NOISE-1** and **NOISE-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The Plan includes development or expansion of transportation systems that are primary vibration sources, such as heavy truck and bus traffic along roadways and train traffic along rail lines. Operation of expanded and new facilities may expose sensitive receptors to a substantial increase in vibration levels relative to

existing conditions. While mitigation may provide a reduction in noise impacts, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

J. Population, Housing And Employment

Impact POP-1 **Induce substantial population growth to areas of the region either directly (by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (by extending roads and other infrastructure).**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure POP-1** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

POP-1: Kern COG, will work with its member agencies to implement growth strategies to create an urban form designed to focus development in TPAs in accordance with the policies, strategies and investments contained in the 2026 RTP, enhancing mobility and reducing land consumption, providing urban infrastructure to support growth and ensuring a jobs-housing balance that supports decreases in greenhouse gas emissions.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure POP-1 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG.

Impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable because improved accessibility from the Plan could facilitate population and economic growth to areas of the region that are currently not developed, thus resulting in growth in some areas of the Kern COG region. Additionally, growth associated with the Plan may result in potential gentrification and displacement that may come as a result of new development. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to population, housing and employment, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact POP-2: **Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the**

construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures POP-2** and **POP-3** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

POP-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to evaluate alternate route alignments and transportation facilities that minimize the displacement of homes and businesses. An iterative design and impact analysis would help where impacts to homes or businesses are involved. Potential impacts should be minimized to the extent feasible. If possible, existing rights-of-way should be used.

POP-3: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to mitigate impacts to affordable housing as feasible through construction of affordable units (deed restricted to remain affordable for an appropriate period of time) or payment of any fee established to address loss of affordable housing.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures POP-2** and **POP-3** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Development of some highway, arterial, and transit projects proposed under the Plan would result in the disturbance and/or loss of residential and business. In general, the Plan attempts to utilize existing right-of-ways (ROWs) to the maximum extent feasible. However, the Plan includes system expansion projects such as new freeway lane miles and new transit track miles that have the potential to result in the loss of land currently used for residential purposes. While mitigation may provide a reduction in population, housing and employment impacts, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

K. Public Services

Impact REC-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial deterioration of the facilities would occur.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures REC-1** through **REC-3** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

- REC-1:** Kern COG shall facilitate reducing future impacts as a result of increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other facilities from population growth through cooperation with member agencies, information sharing, and program development in order to ensure consistency with planning for expansion of new neighborhood parks within or in nearby accessible locations to TPAs in funding opportunities and programs administered by Kern COG.
- REC-2:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process shall encourage member jurisdictions to explore multiple use spaces and redevelopment in areas where it will provide more opportunities for recreational uses and access to natural areas close to the urban core.
- REC-3:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process shall encourage member jurisdictions to work as partners to address regional outdoor recreation needs and to acquire the necessary funding for the implementation of their plans and programs. This should be done, in part, by consulting with agencies and organizations that have active open space work plans.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure REC-1 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG. The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measures REC-2** through **REC-3** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The individual impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable because many of urbanized areas within the Kern COG region are currently deficient in park space. Although policies included in the Plan encourage additional parks and other amenities, many of the areas where population would be expected to increase would be areas without sufficient park space, resulting in increased use and deterioration of existing neighborhood and regional parks. The Plan also includes projects that could result in the acquisition of parks and recreational facilities, further increasing use at remaining facilities and further reducing the ratio of parks-to-people in these urban areas. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to neighborhood and regional parks and recreational facilities, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

L. Transportation, Traffic And Safety

Impact TR-2: Conflict or be inconsistent with *CEQA Guidelines* section 15064.3(b).

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures TR-1** through **TR-5** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

- TR-1:** Consistent with the CMP, Kern COG should encourage and work with local governments to develop multimodal performance standards to determine how much traffic, during peak hours, is acceptable on state freeways, highways, and major streets within Kern County. Local jurisdictions should incorporate multimodal level of service standards in their circulation plans consistent with AB 1358 California Complete Streets Act of 2008 and as appropriate for each community facility type, place type and corridor type as recommended in the latest Highway Capacity Manual update. In addition, Kern COG will work with local agencies to identify frequency and routing of transit service, in order to assist in coordinating transit service provided by separate operators throughout Kern County.
- TR-2:** In addition to the current Tier 1 and Tier 2 RTP projects, Kern COG shall continue to explore potential measures to reduce vehicular travel. Such measures as land-use strategies, car-sharing programs, additional car- and vanpool programs, additional bicycle programs, and implementation of a universal transit booking and fare collection smart phone application should be considered.
- TR-3:** Kern COG will continue to encourage and facilitate transportation projects that maximize efficiency of the transportation system, and include VMT reduction.
- TR-4:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to evaluate VMT as part of project specific review and identify and implement measures that reduce VMT including mixed use, alternative transportation facilities (bike racks, transit stops, and pedestrian amenities) as appropriate for each local agency.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measures TR-1 through **TR-3** would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG.

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure TR-4** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Implementation of the 2026 RTP in 2049 will increase VMT and congested vehicle hours when compared to existing (2024) conditions. Overall, VMT levels will rise by approximately 9 percent by 2049, reflecting Kern's 11 percent population gains during the 24-year period. This increase in absolute VMT will result in an increase in the number of hours Kern motorists will experience congested conditions even with

Mitigation Measures TR-1 through TR-4. The individual impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable because despite regional planning efforts to improve the efficiency of goods movement, increased demand for goods will lead to substantial increases in total heavy-duty trucks on the roadway network under the Plan. While mitigation may provide a reduction in congestion on roadways, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

M. Utilities

Impact SW-1 **Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure SW-1** through **SW-3** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

MM SW-1: Kern COG through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage diversion of solid waste such as recycling and composting programs.

MM SW-2: Kern COG through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage local jurisdictions to require project sponsors to integrate green building measures consistent with CALGreen (California Building Code Title 24) into project design which could include the following:

- Reuse and minimization of construction and demolition (C&D) debris and diversion of C&D waste from landfills to recycling facilities.
- The inclusion of a waste management plan that promotes maximum C&D diversion.
- Source reduction through (1) use of materials that are more durable and easier to repair and maintain, (2) design to generate less scrap material through dimensional planning, (3) increased recycled content, (4) use of reclaimed materials, and (5) use of structural materials in a dual role as finish material (e.g., stained concrete flooring and unfinished ceilings).
- Reuse of existing structure and shell in renovation projects.
- Design for deconstruction without compromising safety.
- Design for flexibility through the use of moveable walls, raised floors, modular furniture, moveable task lighting, and other reusable building components.
- Development of indoor recycling program and space.

MM SW-3: Kern COG through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage local jurisdictions and waste management agencies

to discourage the siting of new landfills unless all other waste reduction and prevention actions have been fully explored. If landfill siting or expansion is necessary, landfills should be sited with an adequate landfill-owned, undeveloped land buffer to minimize the potential adverse impacts of the landfill in neighboring communities.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure SW-1 through SW-3** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Because sufficient landfill capacity has not been identified to serve the needs of the County; therefore, the impact on solid waste facilities would be significant. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

N. Hydrology & Water Resources

Impact W-1: **Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure W-1 through W-3** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

W-1: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to undergo individual project review and comply with NPDES requirements and all applicable storm water regulations. Such measures include, but are not limited to:

- Complete, and have approved, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) prior to initiation of construction.
- Implement Best Management Practices to reduce the peak stormwater runoff from the project site to the maximum extent practicable.
- Comply with the Caltrans storm water discharge permit as applicable and implement Best Management Practices can and should be identified and implemented to manage site erosion, wash water runoff, and spill control.
- Complete, and have approved, a Standard Urban Stormwater Management Plan, prior to occupancy of residential or commercial structures.

- Ensure adequate capacity of the surrounding stormwater system to support stormwater runoff from new or rehabilitated structures or buildings.
- Prior to construction within the vicinity of a watercourse, the project sponsor can and should obtain all required permit approvals and certifications for construction within the vicinity of a watercourse:
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps): Section 404. Permit approval from the Corps should be obtained for the placement of dredge or fill material in Waters of the U.S., if any, within the interior of the project site, pursuant to Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act.
 - Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB): Section 401 Water Quality Certification. Certification that the project will not violate state water quality standards is required before the Corps can issue a 404 permit, above.
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW): Section 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement. Work that will alter the bed or bank of a stream requires authorization from CDFW.
- Where feasible, restore or expand riparian areas such that there is no net loss of impervious surface as a result of the project.
- New facilities should install structural water quality control features such as drainage channels, detention basins, oil and grease traps, filter systems, and vegetated buffers to prevent pollution of adjacent water resources by polluted runoff where required by applicable urban storm water runoff discharge permits.
- Structural storm water runoff treatment should be provided according to the applicable urban storm water runoff permit where facilities will be operated by a permitted municipality or county. Where Caltrans is the operator, the statewide permit applies.
- Comply with applicable municipal separate storm sewer system discharge permits as well as Caltrans' storm water discharge permit including long-term sediment control and drainage of roadway runoff.
- Incorporate as appropriate treatment and control features such as detention basins, infiltration strips, and porous paving, other features to control surface runoff and facilitate groundwater recharge into the design of new transportation projects early on in the process to ensure that adequate acreage and elevation contours are provided during the right-of-way acquisition process.
- Design projects to maintain volume of runoff, where any downstream receiving water body has not been designed and maintained to accommodate the increase in flow velocity, rate, and volume without impacting the water's beneficial uses. Pre-project flow velocities, rates, and volumes must not be exceeded. This applies not only to increases in storm water runoff from the project site, but also to hydrologic changes induced by flood plain encroachment. Projects should not cause or contribute to conditions that degrade the physical integrity or ecological function of any downstream receiving waters.
- Provide culverts and facilities that do not increase the flow velocity, rate, or volume and/or acquiring sufficient storm drain easements that accommodate an appropriately vegetated earthen drainage channel.
- Upgrade stormwater drainage facilities to accommodate any increased runoff volumes. These upgrades may include the construction of detention basins or structures that will delay peak flows and reduce flow velocities, including expansion

and restoration of wetlands and riparian buffer areas. System designs should be completed to eliminate increases in peak flow rates from current levels.

- Encourage Low Impact Development (LID) and incorporation of natural spaces that reduce, treat, infiltrate and manage stormwater runoff flows in all new developments, where practical and feasible.
- For sites that are less than one acre, project drawings submitted for a building permit (or other construction-related permit) shall contain a final site plan to be reviewed and approved by the appropriate local agency. The final site plan should incorporate appropriate site design measures to manage stormwater runoff and minimize impacts to water quality after the construction of the project.

MM W-2: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to ensure that projects requiring continual dewatering facilities implement monitoring systems and long-term administrative procedures to prevent degrading of surface water and minimize, to the greatest extent possible, adverse impacts on groundwater for the life of the project. Construction designs should comply with appropriate building codes and standard practices including the Uniform Building Code.

MM W-3: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to maximize, where practical and feasible, permeable surface area in existing urbanized areas to protect water quality, reduce flooding, allow for groundwater recharge, and preserve wildlife habitat. New impervious surfaces should be minimized to the greatest extent possible, including the use of in-lieu fees and off-site mitigation.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure W-1 through W-3** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The individual impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable due to the regional scale of the Plan. Construction activities of projects and developments related to the Plan would increase impervious surfaces in the Kern COG region, thus potentially increasing pollutant loads carried by storm water runoff. Additionally, most of the Plan projects would occur within watersheds that have impaired water bodies. Any increase in contaminant loading in these water bodies by constituents of concern as a result of the Plan's implementation would be considered a significant impact. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to water resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact W-2: **Substantially interfere with groundwater recharge or interfere substantially**

with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures W-2** through **W-5** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

- W-4:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to avoid development in groundwater recharge areas. Where feasible, transportation facilities should not be sited in groundwater recharge areas, to prevent conversion of those areas to impervious surface.
- W-5:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to reduce hardscape to the extent feasible to facilitate groundwater recharge as appropriate.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure W-4** through **W-5** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

New impervious surfaces installed through new roadway projects under the Plan, in addition to urban development associated with the population distribution in 2049, would increase runoff and potentially affect groundwater recharge rates. While mitigation would reduce impacts to water resources, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

- Impact W-3:** **Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:**
- i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on-or-off site;**
 - ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or offsite;**
 - iii. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or**
 - iv. Impede or redirect flood flows.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures W-6** and **W-7** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

W-6: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to conduct or require project-specific hydrology studies for projects proposed to be constructed within floodplains to demonstrate compliance with applicable federal, state, and local agency flood-control regulations. These studies should identify project design features or mitigation measures that reduce impacts to either floodplains or flood flows such that the project is consistent with federal, state, and local regulations and laws related to development in the floodplain.

W-7: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to, the extent feasible and appropriate, prevent development in flood hazard areas that do not have appropriate protection.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure W-6** and **W-7** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Construction activities of projects and developments related to the Plan would increase impervious surfaces in the Kern COG region, which could alter existing drainage patterns or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff. This alteration could result in flooding or produce or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems. In addition, some development may occur within an existing floodplain where structures can impede flood waters, altering the flood risks both upstream and downstream. While mitigation may provide a higher reduction in impacts to flooding hazards than without mitigation, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact W-4: **Result in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures W-6** through **W-7** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

Finding and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure W-6** and **W-7** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The introduction of impermeable surfaces greatly reduces natural infiltration, allowing for a greater volume of runoff. Finally, paved surfaces and drainage conduits can accelerate the velocity of runoff, concentrating peak flows in downstream areas faster than under natural conditions. Placing new structures within an existing floodplain can impede flood waters, altering the flood risks both upstream and downstream. While mitigation may provide a higher reduction in impacts to flooding hazards than without mitigation, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact W-5: **Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.**

Mitigation

With implementation of Mitigation Measures W-1 through W-3 impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

Finding and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in Mitigation Measure W-1 and W-3 require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

Implementation of the 2026 RTP would increase impervious surfaces due to additional lane miles and conversion of green fields to developed land. An increase in impervious surfaces would increase water runoff and potentially affect groundwater recharge rates and water quality in the basins

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact W-6 **Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably for seeable future development during normal dry and multiple dry years.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures W-8** through **W-19** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

- W-8:** Kern COG will facilitate minimizing future impacts to water supply through cooperation, information sharing, and program development as part of the Kern COG's ongoing regional planning efforts, in-coordination with regional water agencies, and other stakeholders.
- W-9:** Kern COG, in coordination with regional water agencies and other stakeholders, shall encourage regional coordination throughout California to develop and support sustainable policies in accommodating growth.
- W-10:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage regional water agencies to consider, to the extent feasible, potential climate change hydrology and attendant impacts on available water supplies and reliability in the process of creating or modifying systems to manage water resources for both year round use and ecosystem health. As the methodology and base data for such decisions is still developing, agencies should use the best currently available science in decision making.
- W-11:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to reduce exterior uses of water in public areas, and promote reductions in private homes and businesses by shifting to drought-tolerant native landscape plantings, using weather-based irrigation systems, educating other public agencies about water use, and installing related water pricing incentives. Kern COG will also encourage local jurisdictions to work with local water retailers to promote the availability of drought resistant landscaping options and provide information on where these can be purchased. Use of reclaimed water especially in median landscaping and hillside landscaping should be implemented where feasible.
- W-12:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to coordinate with the local water provider to ensure that existing and/or planned water supply and water conveyance facilities are capable of meeting water demand/pressure requirements. In accordance with state law, a Water Supply Assessment should be required for projects that meet the size requirements specified in the regulations. In coordination with the local water provider, each project sponsor should identify specific on- and off-site improvements needed to ensure that impacts related to water supply and conveyance demand/pressure requirements are addressed prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy. Water supply and conveyance demand/pressure clearance from the local water provider will be required at the time that a water connection permit application is submitted.
- W-13:** Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to implement water

conservation measures in new development that should include but not be limited to the following:

- High efficiency toilets
- Restroom faucets with automatic shut-off
- High efficiency clothes washers
- High efficiency dishwashers
- Use of reclaimed water for appropriate uses
- Water saving irrigation measures including: weather-based irrigation controller with rain shut-off.

W-14: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to consult with the local water provider to identify feasible and reasonable measures to reduce water consumption, including, but not limited to, systems to use reclaimed water for landscaping, drip irrigation, re-circulating hot water systems, water conserving landscape techniques (such as mulching, installation of drip irrigation systems, landscape design to group plants of similar water demand, soil moisture sensors, automatic irrigation systems, clustered landscaped areas to maximize the efficiency of the irrigation system), water conserving kitchen and bathroom fixtures and appliances, thermostatically controlled mixing valves for baths and showers, and insulated hot water lines.

W-15: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to comply with local drought measures as appropriate including prohibiting hose watering of driveways and associated walkways; requiring decorative fountains to use recycled water, and repairing water leaks in a timely manner.

W-16 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy to increase water conservation and the use of recycled water that includes similar measures to the following:

- **Water Consumption Reduction Target:** Regional water agencies should work together to set a target to reduce per capita water consumption by 2020.
- **Water Conservation Plan:** Regional water agencies should establish a water conservation plan that may include such policies and actions as:
 - Tiered rate structures for water use;
 - Restrictions on time of use for landscape watering, and other demand management strategies;
 - Performance standards for irrigation equipment and water fixtures;
 - Requirements that increased demand from new construction are offset with reductions so that there is no net increase in water use.
- **Recycled Water Use:** Local jurisdictions and regional water agencies should establish programs and policies to increase the use of recycled water, including:
 - Create an inventory of non-potable water uses within the jurisdiction that could be served with recycled water;
 - Produce and promote the use of recycled water for agricultural, industrial, and irrigation purposes, including grey water systems for residential irrigation;

- Produce and promote the use of treated, recycled water for potable uses where greenhouse gas emissions from producing such water are lower than from other potable sources.
- **Water Conservation Outreach:** Local jurisdictions and regional water agencies should implement a public education and outreach campaign to promote water conservation, and highlights specific water-wasting activities to discourage, such as the watering of non-vegetated surfaces and using water to clean sidewalks and driveways.

W-17: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to establish building design guidelines and criteria to promote water-efficient building design, including minimizing the amount of non-roof impervious surfaces around the building(s) and menus and check-lists for developers and contractors to ensure water-efficient infrastructure and technology are used in new construction, including low-flow toilets and shower heads, moisture-sensing irrigation, and other such advances.

W-18: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to establish criteria and standards to permit the safe and effective use of gray water (on-site water recycling), and review and appropriately revise, without compromising health and safety, other building code requirements that might prevent the use of such systems.

MM W-19: Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to establish best practices for encouraging efficient use of water.

Findings and Rationale

Mitigation Measure W-8 would reduce project impacts to the maximum extent feasible within the authority of Kern COG.

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure W-9** through **W-19** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The individual impacts of local planning and development projects will remain significant and unavoidable due to the regional scale of the Plan. Even with long-range plans accounting for anticipated growth, some water agencies could experience average year water supply deficits within the lifetime of the Plan if current management and supply efforts are not augmented. Reduction in water supply, as well as uncertainty in the reliability of that supply, could result from increased temperatures due to global climate change, as well as regulatory or legislative decisions that affect the availability of imported water. While mitigation may provide a reduction in impacts to water demand and supply, it cannot be known at this time whether all future project-level impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The

Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

O. Wildfire

Impact WF-1 **Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including whether wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands.**

Mitigation

With implementation of Mitigation Measures WF-1 and WF-1 impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

MM WF-1 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to avoid siting new development in wildfire zones.

MM WF-2 Kern COG, through its Environmental Review Program/Intergovernmental Review process will facilitate and encourage implementing and local agencies to ensure that in the event that new development occurs in wildfire zones, the projects comply with safety measures as specified by CAL FIRE.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure WF-1** and **WF-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The 2026 RTP includes the expansion or extension of the transportation system, which could increase the threat of adverse impacts from wildland fires. Transportation improvements that expand the transportation system and extend it to new areas can expose more urban-adjointing land uses to risks associated with wildland fires.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact WF-2 **If located in or near state responsibility areas of lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, the project would:**

Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire.

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures WF-1 and WF-1** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure WF-1 and WF-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The 2026 RTP includes the expansion or extension of the transportation system, which could increase the threat of adverse impacts from wildland fires. Transportation improvements that expand the transportation system and extend it to new areas can expose more urban-adjointing land uses to risks associated with wildland fires. As wildfires occur, more people could be exposed to wildfire related pollutants.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact WF-3 **Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risks or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures WF-1 and WF-1** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure WF-1 and WF-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

The 2026 RTP includes the expansion or extension of the transportation system, which could increase the threat of adverse impacts from wildland fires. The extension of roadways and other infrastructure could exacerbate wildfire risk.

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Impact WF-4 **Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope stability, or drainage changes.**

Mitigation

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures WF-1 and WF-1** impacts would remain significant at the regional and TPA levels.

Findings and Rationale

The mitigation activities identified in **Mitigation Measure WF-1 and WF-2** require the exercise of discretionary authority to implement project-specific mitigation that is wholly within the responsibility of local lead agencies. The Kern COG Board hereby incorporates Master Finding No. 1.

While the RTP focuses development in urban and compact areas, Kern COG recognizes there will continue to be development towards, and through natural wildland areas. These potential fire-prone spaces have created situations where people and property could be impacted by wildfire and associated subsequent hazards (flooding, landslides, etc.).

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including policy considerations make mandatory project-specific mitigation measures directed at local agencies infeasible. Since no specific feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives have been found to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. The Kern COG Board finds that the significant impact is acceptable due to the overriding considerations that support adoption of the 2026 RTP, discussed in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

IV. FINDINGS REGARDING LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS (NO MITIGATION REQUIRED)

A. Aesthetics

Impact AES-1: **Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista**

Impact AES-2: **Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic or eligible highway for example by altering the appearance of designated scenic resources along or**

near a state-designated or eligible scenic highway.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant at the TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to scenic resources or vistas.

Impact AES-3: In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings; (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). In an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant at the TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to visual character.

Impact AES-4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which could affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant at the TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to light and glare.

B. Agricultural Resources

Impact AG-1: Convert prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance (farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the farmland mapping and monitoring program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.

Impact AG-2 Conflict with existing zoning or land use designation for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant at the TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to agricultural resources.

Impact AG-3 **Conflict with existing zoning or land use designation for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Pub. Resources Code, § 12220(G)), timberland (as defined by Pub. Resources Code, § 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Gov. Code, § 51104(G)); and/or result in the loss of "Forest Land" as defined in the California Forest Legacy Act of 2007 (Pub. Resources Code, § 12220(G)) or conversion of Forest Land into non-forest use.**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant at the TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to forestry resources.

Impact AG-4: **Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.**

Impact AG-5: **Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland, to non-agricultural use.**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant at the TPA level.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to forestry resources.

C. Air Quality

Impact AIR-1: Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to conflict with applicable air plans.

Impact AIR-2: Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to potential air quality violation.

Impact AIR-5: Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in odors that would affect a large number of people.

D. Geology

Impact GEO-1 Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death, involving:

- i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault. Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42;
- ii. Strong seismic ground shaking;
- iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction; and
- iv. Landslides.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

In 2015, the California Supreme Court in *California Building Industry Association v. Bay Area Air Quality Management District* (CBIA v. BAAQMD (2015) 62 Cal.4th 369), held that CEQA generally does not require a lead agency to consider the impacts of existing environmental conditions on the future residents or users of a project. However, if a project risks exacerbating preexisting environmental hazards or conditions, the lead agency is required to analyze the impact of that exacerbated condition on the environment, which may include future residents and users within the project area. Transportation and land use projects under the 2026 RTP would not exacerbate existing environmental hazards related to geological and soil conditions.

Impact GEO-5 Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to septic systems quality violation.

E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Impact HAZ-3 Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to emissions within ¼ mile of an existing school.

Impact HAZ-5 For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to excessive airport noise for people residing or working in the project area.

Impact HAZ-6 Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to impairing an adopted emergency response plan.

F. Mineral Resources

Impact MIN-1: Potential to result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

Therefore, implementation of the 2026 RTP would not result in significant impacts related to availability of a known mineral resource.

G. Noise

Impact NOISE-3: For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that existing plans and regulations of airports and airstrips, would sufficiently minimize noise exposure for people residing or working in the project area. Therefore, this impact is less than significant without mitigation.

H. Public Services

Impact FIRE-1: Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios and response times.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that, at a programmatic level, impacts as a result of construction of new fire protection facilities related to the land use changes and transportation improvements from implementation of the proposed 2026 RTP are considered less than significant without mitigation.

The Kern COG Board recognizes the potential necessity to construct new fire facilities to maintain adequate response times, equipment, and personnel. However, analyzing any potential impacts from individual facilities would be speculative at this time. Construction of these future facilities would comply with all applicable, laws, regulations, and ordinances and mitigation measures would be required to address any potentially significant impacts.

Impact POLICE-1: Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios and response times.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that, at a programmatic level, impacts as a result of construction of new police protection facilities related to the land use changes and transportation improvements from implementation of the proposed 2026 RTP are considered less than significant without mitigation.

The Kern COG Board recognizes the potential necessity to construct new police facilities to maintain adequate response times, equipment, and personnel. However, analyzing any potential impacts from individual facilities would be speculative at this time. Construction of these future facilities would comply with all applicable, laws, regulations, and ordinances and mitigation measures would be required to address any potentially significant impacts.

Impact EDU-1: Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered school facilities the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios or other educational performance factors.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that, at a programmatic level, impacts as a result of construction of new school facilities related to the land use changes and transportation improvements from implementation of the proposed 2026 RTP are considered less than significant without mitigation.

The Kern COG Board recognizes the potential necessity to construct new educational facilities to meet increased demand on local school districts as the Kern population grows. However, analyzing any potential impacts from individual facilities would be speculative at this time. Construction of these future facilities would comply with all applicable, laws, regulations, and ordinances and mitigation measures would be required to address any potentially significant impacts.

Impact REC-2: **Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered parks and recreational facilities the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios.**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that, at a programmatic level, impacts as a result of construction of new recreation facilities related to the land use changes and transportation improvements from implementation of the proposed 2026 RTP are considered less than significant without mitigation.

The Kern COG Board recognizes the potential necessity to construct new parks and recreational facilities to meet increased demand on park space as the Kern population grows. However, analyzing any potential impacts from individual facilities would be speculative at this time. Construction of these future facilities would comply with all applicable, laws, regulations, and ordinances and mitigation measures would be required to address any potentially significant impacts.

Impact LIB-1: **Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered library facilities the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios.**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that, at a programmatic level, impacts as a result of construction of new library facilities related to the land use changes and transportation improvements from implementation of the proposed 2026 RTP are considered less than significant without mitigation.

The Kern COG Board recognizes the potential necessity to construct new library facilities to meet increased demand as the Kern population grows. However, analyzing any potential impacts from individual facilities would be speculative at this time. Construction of these future facilities would comply with all applicable, laws, regulations, and ordinances and mitigation measures would be required to address any potentially significant impacts.

I. Transportation And Traffic

Impact TR-1: **Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The 2026 RTP will not conflict with a program, plan or policy for addressing transit, roadway or pedestrian facilities.

Impact TR-3: **Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that 2026 RTP will not in itself result in increased hazards or land use conflicts patterns. Therefore, the impact is less than significant without mitigation.

Impact TR4: **Result in inadequate emergency access.**

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

While the 2026RTP would increase congestion, there is not a direct relationship between predicted travel delay and response times as California state law requires drivers to yield the right-of-way to emergency

vehicles and even permits emergency vehicles to use opposing lane of travel, the center turn lanes, or bus-only lanes. In some instances, roadway reconfigurations with the implementation of the transportation improvements as part of the 2026 RTP could improve emergency access. As future projects under the 2026 RTP would be individually evaluated and mitigated as necessary, impacts at the regional level would be less than significant.

J. Utilities

Impact WW-1: Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects.

Impact WW-2: Result in the determination by a wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments.

Mitigation

No mitigation measures are necessary as the project impact would be less than significant.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that any impacts from wastewater treatment facilities would be at the local level and any significant impacts resulting from the unique characteristics of a specific project site would be speculative at this time. Therefore, the impact is less than significant without mitigation.

V. FINDINGS REGARDING PLAN ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires that an EIR describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the project or to the location of the project that could feasibly avoid or lessen significant environmental impacts while substantially attaining the basic objectives of the project. An EIR should also evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. This chapter sets forth potential alternatives to the proposed project and provides a qualitative analysis of each alternative and a comparison of each alternative to the proposed project. Key provisions of the CEQA Guidelines pertaining to the alternatives analysis are summarized below.

- The discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project including alternative locations that are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.
- The No Project Alternative shall be evaluated along with its potential impacts. The No Project Alternative analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, as well as what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.
- The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason." Therefore, the EIR must evaluate only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project.

- For alternative locations, only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need be considered for inclusion in the EIR.
- An EIR need not consider an alternative whose effects cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote and speculative.

A. Project Objectives And Legal Requirements

At the time of project approval, the lead agency's decision-making body must determine whether the alternatives are feasible or not -- a task it cannot delegate. (See *California Native Plant Society v. City of Santa Cruz* (2009) 177 Cal.App.4th 957, 998-1000; and CEQA Guidelines §§ 15025(b)(2), 15091(a)(3)). The lead agency must consider whether specific "economic, legal, social, technological, and other considerations . . . make infeasible mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the environmental impact report." (Pub. Res. Code, § 21081(a)(3); CEQA Guidelines § 15091(a)(3)).

"Feasible" means "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors." (CEQA Guidelines § 15364; see also CEQA Guidelines § 15021(b)). The concept of "feasibility" under CEQA also encompasses "desirability" to the extent that desirability is based on a reasonable balancing of all relevant factors. (*City of Del Mar v. City of San Diego* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 401, 417). Additionally, "policy considerations," may also be taken into account because they are "permissible" under CEQA as "other considerations" that make infeasible mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the EIR. (See *California Native Plant Society*, 177 Cal.App.4th at 1001 (An agency may reject project alternatives if found to be impracticable or undesirable from a policy standpoint.)). Finally, an alternative or measure is legally infeasible if "there is no way to legally implement it." (*Sequoia Hills Homeowners Assn. v. City of Oakland*, 23 Cal.App.4th 704, 714 (1993)).

Importantly, CEQA gives lead agencies the authority to approve a project notwithstanding its significant environmental impacts, if the agency determines it is not "feasible" to lessen or avoid the significant effects. (Pub. Res. Code, § 21002). If specifically identified benefits of the project outweigh the significant unavoidable environmental impacts, the adverse impacts may be considered "acceptable," thereby allowing for lead agency approval of the project, notwithstanding such adverse impacts, provided the agency adopts a statement of overriding considerations. (Pub. Res. Code, § 21081.1(b); CEQA Guidelines § 15093).

As called for by the CEQA Guidelines, the achievement of project objectives must be balanced by the ability of an alternative to reduce the significant impacts of the project. The objectives of the 2026 RTP are as follows:

1. Mobility – Improve the mobility of people and freight.
2. Accessibility – Improve accessibility to, and the economic well-being of, major employment and other regional activity centers.
3. Reliability – Improve the reliability and safety of the transportation system.
4. Efficiency – Maximize the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the existing and future transportation system.
5. Livability – Promote livable communities and satisfaction of consumers with the transportation system.
6. Sustainability – Provide for the enhancement and expansion of the system while minimizing effects on the environment.

7. Equity – Ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits among various demographic and user groups.

CEQA does not require adoption of an alternative that does not adequately meet project objectives as determined by the lead agency decision-makers. A feasible alternative must meet most if not all of these project objectives. In addition, while not specifically required under CEQA, other parameters may be used to further establish criteria for selecting alternatives such as adjustments to phasing, and other “fine-tuning” that could shape feasible alternatives in a manner that could result in reducing identified environmental impacts.

The Kern COG Board finds that the Plan meets all of the above objectives and is feasible. Furthermore, the Kern COG Board finds that the Plan is consistent with the current housing demand in Kern County and reflects market conditions.

All of the alternatives considered herein, with the exception of the No Project Alternative, meet the objectives of the 2026 RTP to varying degrees. The No Project Alternative would not meet any of the Project Objectives as there would be no Plan, although market forces could result in some of the objectives being met to a certain degree. As discussed in more detail below, the Kern COG Board finds that all alternatives are infeasible at the regional level due to economic, legal, social, technological, and other considerations including policy considerations.

B. Alternatives Analyzed in the Program EIR

Alternative 1: The No Project Alternative

Description

The No Project Alternative is required by Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines and assumes that the proposed project would not be implemented. The No Project Alternative allows decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. However, “no project” does not necessarily mean that development will be prohibited. The No Project Alternative includes “what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.” For purposes of this document, the No Project Alternative includes only those transportation projects that are included in the first year of the previously conforming transportation plan and/or TIP, or have completed environmental review by January 2026. These reasonably foreseeable projects fulfill the definition of the CEQA mandated “No Project Alternative.” The growth scenario included in the No Project Alternative is based on local general plans and growth patterns.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, financial, legal, social, technological or other considerations, including policy considerations, make Alternative 1 infeasible and rejects this alternative for the reasons explained below:

As set forth in detail in Section 5.0 of the Program EIR, Alternative 1, the No Project Alternative, would result in greater impacts than the proposed Plan (2026 RTP) in the following resource areas: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality (regional), Biological Resources, Cultural Resources (archaeology),

Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Mineral Resources, Noise, Public Services, Transportation, Utilities and Wildfire.

Alternative 1 would result in less impact compared to the Plan in the following resource areas: Air Quality (urban areas); (2) Noise (urban areas).

On balance, the proposed project is environmentally superior compared to Alternative 1.

In addition, Alternative 1 is legally infeasible. It does not meet the requirements of federal transportation planning law. Pursuant to 23 USC §134(i), Kern COG is required to “prepare and update” its RTP every four years if it is in an area designated as nonattainment under the federal Clean Air Act. Nor does Alternative 1 include the SCS as a component to the RTP as required pursuant to SB 375 [California Government Code§65080(b)(2)(B)]. Alternative 1 also does not meet the requirements of 23 USC §134(h)(1) which requires that the RTP contain projects and strategies that will:

- (A) support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- (B) increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- (C) increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- (D) increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
- (E) protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- (F) enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- (G) promote efficient system management and operation; and
- (H) emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

For the reasons described above, the Kern COG Board finds that Alternative 1 does not meet project objectives and is not feasible.

Alternative 2: Old Plan Alternative (2022 RTP)

Description

The Old Plan Alternative is an update of the adopted 2022 RTP reflecting the most recent growth distribution and transportation planning decisions and assumptions, extrapolated from the 2045 horizon year in the Old Plan out to 2049, the horizon year of the 2026 RTP. This Old Plan alternative does not include the same development pattern strategies included within the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), but includes all of the projects in the 2022 RTP. The Old Plan also includes significantly less funding for maintenance, transit, and alternative transportation projects. The growth scenario for the Old Plan is a combination of local input and existing general plan and land use data provided by local jurisdictions during the 2022 RTP.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that specific economic, financial, legal, social, technological or other considerations, including policy considerations, make Alternative 2, the Old Plan Alternative, infeasible and rejects this alternative for the reasons explained below.

As set forth in detail in Section 5.0 of the Program EIR, Alternative 2 will result in greater impacts than the proposed Plan (2026 RTP) in the following resource areas: Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Land Use, Mineral Resources, Transportation, Utilities and Wildfire.

Alternative 2 would result in less impact compared to the Plan in the following resource areas: Aesthetics , Noise (in urban areas), Air Quality (urban areas).

On balance, the proposed Plan is environmentally superior compared to Alternative 2.

Alternative 2 is not as effective as the Plan in protecting the environment and health of residents by improving air quality and encouraging active transportation (non-motorized transportation, such as bicycling and walking) because Alternative 2 does not employ the same land use and transportation strategies in the SCS which encourage increased density and a compact land form and facilitates active transportation. In addition, Alternative 2 lacks sufficient funding to support active transportation as compared to the Plan.

For the reasons described above, the Kern COG Board finds that Alternative 2 does not meet all the project objectives and is not feasible.

Alternative 3: Countywide Infill Alternative

Description

The Countywide Infill Alternative builds on the development pattern and other strategies of the SCS as described in the Plan and goes further. It accelerates implementation of the Plan's development pattern in the region's predominant urban area, accelerates passenger rail and transit improvements, reduces emissions, and limits the development of large lot single-family housing. The Countywide Infill transportation network is similar to the Plan network except that transit and passenger rail improvements would be accelerated. The alternative growth pattern associated with Countywide Infill Alternative emphasizes medium and high density housing in the predominant urban area, with only two percent of housing consisting of low-density large lots. This alternative would require additional bonding or some other funding mechanism to deliver the projects according to the proposed schedule.

Findings and Rationale

The Kern COG Board finds that specific financial, legal, social, technological or other considerations, including policy considerations, make Alternative 3, the Countywide Infill Alternative, infeasible and rejects this alternative for the reasons explained below.

As discussed throughout the PEIR, Kern COG has no land use authority; rather it sets regional land use policy. SB 375 addresses the land use component (in the context of transportation planning) of statewide efforts to achieve AB 32 GHG reduction goals that include all sectors of the economy. In order to meet the

SB 375 targets for statewide GHG reductions, CARB identified that Kern COG must plan to reduce GHG emissions compared to 2005 by 5 percent per capita by 2020 and 10 percent per capita by 2035. Kern COG has developed the SCS (the regional land use policy component of the 2026 RTP) which sets forth land use strategies to meet these GHG emissions reduction targets. Actual implementation of the SCS will be undertaken by local jurisdictions through general plans and specific plans and through actions on individual projects.

While the Countywide Infill Alternative includes a potential generalized land use scenario that results in achieving CARB GHG targets, the Countywide Infill Alternative would have other impacts (see below). The jurisdiction that is anticipated to receive most of the infill development under this alternative is the City of Bakersfield.

Each community must determine what level of population it can support – balancing infrastructure capacity and population density. In developing the Plan, Kern COG has satisfied its obligation under SB 375 to identify a policy and growth pattern that meets desired GHG reduction goals. Imposing additional land use guidelines that would further exceed identified GHG targets would result in greater impacts on local communities (primarily the City of Bakersfield). While these communities (i.e., the City of Bakersfield) may be able to accommodate such growth at a later time, at the present time, without detailed evaluation of infrastructure carrying capacity, the potential increased impacts to these communities could offset the decreased GHG emissions and decreased consumption of open space that could be achieved by the Countywide Infill Alternative. Nonetheless, local jurisdictions, in exercising their land use authority, could choose to interpret the regional SCS policies in terms of the growth pattern identified in the Countywide Infill Alternative.

The Plan provides general guidance on location of development. The 2026RTP does not impose specific land use controls.

Kern COG is not rejecting the Countywide Infill Alternative as a possible land use scenario for 2049. Rather, Kern COG is rejecting the inclusion of policies in the 2026 RTP that would impose extensive land use intervention (to mandate specific land use densities and/or specific locations) with local jurisdictions because 1) such intervention is not necessary to achieve SB 375 targets and 2) Kern COG has no land use authority and no mechanism exists to impose detailed land use control. In the future, should monitoring indicate that such detailed land use intervention appear necessary, Kern COG will work with local jurisdictions and state officials to determine the best mechanism(s) to implement such controls. Kern COG believes that the land use pattern analyzed for the Plan most closely approximates recent studies (see discussion above) regarding density and location of development. However, individual jurisdictions may choose to further intensify growth patterns compared to what is analyzed for the 2026 RTP.

As set forth in detail in Section 5.0 of the Program EIR, Alternative 3 will result in greater impacts than the proposed Plan (2026 RTP) in the following resource areas: Air Quality (localized air toxics), Cultural Resource (historical resources), Land Use (compatibility with General Plans, Noise (urban areas) Population and Housing.

Alternative 3 would result in less impact compared to the Plan in the following resource areas: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality (criteria pollutants), Cultural Resource (Tribal Cultural Resources), Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Mineral Resources, Public Services (Parks), Transportation, Wildfire.

Alternative 3 would have similar impacts to the Plan in a number of areas and would have less impact in resource areas associated with land use consumption, it would have greater impacts in urban areas and therefore would have a greater impact on people and existing infrastructure as compared to the proposed Plan.

Although Alternative 3 would result in fewer impacts related to consumption of land and would require less extension of infrastructure, it would result in greater impacts to urban areas and people.

For the reasons described above, the Kern COG Board finds that Alternative 3 is not feasible.

VI. LOCATION AND CUSTODIAN OF RECORD

The documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings on which Kern COG's Findings of Fact are based are located at 1401 19th Street, Suite 300, Bakersfield, California 93301.

The custodian of these documents is Ben Raymond, Regional Planner. This information is provided in compliance with Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a)(2) and 14 Cal. Code Regs. Section 15091(e).

For purposes of CEQA, the Record of Proceedings for the 2026 RTP Program EIR consists of the following documents, at a minimum:

- The Notice of Preparation and all other public notices issued by Kern COG in conjunction with the 2026 RTP Program EIR.
- The Draft and Final Program EIRs, including appendices and technical studies included or referenced in the Draft and Final Program EIRs.
- All comments submitted by agencies or members of the public during the 45-day public comment period on the Draft Program EIR.
- The MMRP for the 2026 RTP.
- All Findings and resolutions adopted by the Kern COG Board in connection with the 2026 RTP, and all documents cited or referred to therein.
- All reports, studies, memoranda, maps, staff reports, or other planning documents relating to the 2026 RTP Program EIR prepared by Impact Sciences, Inc. consultant to Kern COG.
- All documents and information submitted to Kern COG by responsible, trustee, or other public agencies, or by individuals or organizations, in connection with the 2026 RTP Program EIR, up through the date the Kern COG Board approved the 2026 RTP.
- Minutes and/or summary transcripts of all public meetings and public hearings held by Kern COG, in connection with the 2026 RTP Program EIR.
- Any documentary or other evidence submitted to Kern COG at such public meetings and public hearings.
- Matters of common knowledge to Kern COG, including, but not limited to federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- Any documents expressly cited in these Findings, in addition to those cited above.
- Any other materials required to be in the Record of Proceedings by Public Resources Code Section 21167.6(e).

ATTACHMENT 2:

STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) hereby adopts this Statement of Overriding Considerations concerning the unavoidable significant impacts of the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (2026 RTP or Plan) to explain why the benefits of the 2026 RTP outweigh and override its unavoidable impacts.

The Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the 2026 RTP identifies and discloses significant environmental impacts that could occur as a result of implementation of the 2026 RTP. It should be noted that without the Plan, however, the impacts would be greater. Kern COG made specific Findings (Attachment 1) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), on each of the significant environmental impacts of the 2026 RTP and on mitigation measures and alternatives. Nevertheless, even with implementation of feasible mitigation measures, many of the significant and unavoidable impacts still remain.

Note that because Kern COG is not responsible for implementing the projects in the Plan and has no authority to require specific mitigation measures at the project level, the mitigation measures directed at Kern COG are primarily designed to mitigate impacts at the regional level. Mitigation of project level mitigation measures are the responsibility of local agencies and project sponsors pursuant to CEQA

In accordance with Section 15093 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, the Kern COG Board of Directors hereby finds that following economic, legal, social, technological, environmental and other benefits of the 2026 RTP outweigh its unavoidable, adverse environmental impacts discussed in the Findings, based on the considerations set forth herein:

Benefits of the 2026 RTP:

1. The 2026 RTP will provide congestion relief in Kern County. The 2026RTP contains transportation improvements to the region's multimodal transportation system. In 2049, if the Plan were not implemented, the region would experience approximately 570,838 vehicle hours of congestion compared to approximately 551,175 vehicle hours of delay with the Plan in place.
2. The 2026 RTP would decrease vehicle miles travelled (VMT) per weekday compared to the condition without a Plan. In 2049 the Plan would result in approximately 1,379,000 fewer weekday daily VMT compared to without the Plan.
3. The 2026 RTP promotes active transportation modes (i.e., bicycling and walking). The 2026 RTP includes \$767 million in funding for pedestrian complete streets and bicycle improvements and maintenance. The 2026 RTP also fully funds the Kern Active Transportation Plan and increasing funding for bike and pedestrian facilities 700% over Pre-SCS RTPs.
4. The 2026 RTP promotes transit use. The 2026 RTP includes over \$4 billion in transit, rail, and high speed rail investments.
5. The development pattern in the 2026 RTP accommodates the forecasted population, housing, and employment growth while improving access to employment and services throughout the region. The 2026 RTP expands passenger rail stops and high frequency transit service (<20-minute headways)

within ½ mile of jobs and homes. Implementation of the plan will nearly double the number of homes within walking distance to quality transit. By integrating land use and transportation, 70% of homes will be near quality transit compared to 60% under the prior plans.

6. The 2026 RTP provides air quality and public health benefits. Compared to conditions without implementation of the Plan, the 2026 RTP would result in less mobile-source emissions of some criteria pollutants (and greenhouse gases) - reactive organic gases (ROG), oxides of nitrogen (NOx), oxides of sulfur (SOx), in 2049. Failure to implement the Plan would result in higher health risks related to transportation-generated air contaminants. In addition, the Plan's emphasis on transit and active transportation will allow the region's residents to lead a healthier and active lifestyle.
7. As required by SB 375, the RTP and SCS includes effective transportation strategies, which manage transportation demand, as well as a more compact growth pattern¹ that would reduce vehicle trips and VMT. The 2026 RTP exceeded (does better than) the 2020 target with a reduction of almost 10.8 percent in 2020, and the 2026 RTP meets the 2035 target with a reduction of 15.0 percent in 2035. Therefore, the 2026 RTP would achieve the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets required under California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (Senate Bill 375), meeting the target set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB)).
8. Compact and urban infill development patterns under the 2026 RTP would result in reduced water and energy consumption compared to the No Project Alternative.
9. The 2026 RTP actively encourages and creates incentives for energy efficiency by supporting compact land uses that reduce consumption of transportation fuel, electricity, and natural gas. The overall energy savings resulting from developing more compactly translates to meaningful savings in transportation fuel costs and residential energy bills.
10. Implementation of the 2026 RTP is also expected to provide economic benefits to Kern County through the jobs created by projects included in the 2026 RTP and more importantly through the benefits of a more efficient transportation system. The transportation investments in the 2026 RTP would foster economic and household growth and improve accessibility to transportation infrastructure and many other amenities.
11. The transportation goals, strategies, and improvements proposed in the 2026 RTP were derived from extensive public participation garnering input from over 10,000 residents, and consultation efforts led by Kern COG and reflect broad agency and public support, as documented in the Final 2026 RTP Outreach Results Appendix C.
12. The 2026 RTP balances the policy goals and objectives established by Kern COG and legal requirements for a long-range regional transportation plan better than the alternatives, as discussed in the Attachment 1, Section 5, "Findings Regarding Plan Alternatives."

¹ It is noted that any number of development patterns may achieve the targets; Kern COG has no land use authority. Each jurisdiction will be responsible for determining consistency with SB 375 in carrying out land use actions.

ATTACHMENT 2: STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Kern COG Board of Directors hereby concludes that the benefits of the 2026 RTP outweigh and override any adverse environmental impacts associated with the Plan.

BEFORE THE KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF KERN

RESOLUTION NO. 26-33

In the Matter of:

Resolution Adopting the Kern Council of Governments 2027 Federal Transportation Improvement Program, 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and Corresponding Conformity Analysis

WHEREAS, the Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Metropolitan Planning Organization, pursuant to State and Federal designation; and

WHEREAS, federal planning regulations require Metropolitan Planning Organizations to prepare and adopt a long range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for their region; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill (SB) 375 (Steinberg, 2008) requires that Metropolitan Planning Organizations prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as part of the 2026 RTP that demonstrates how the region will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from automobiles and light trucks to achieve, if there is a feasible way to do so, the applicable greenhouse gas emission reduction targets approved by the California Air Resources Board (ARB); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to SB 375, the applicable ARB per capita GHG emission reduction targets for Kern COG are 9% below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2020 and 15% below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2035; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to SB 375, the SCS must: (1) identify the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region; (2) identify areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region, including all economic segments of the population, over the course of the planning period of the regional transportation plan taking into account net migration into the region, population growth, household formation and employment growth; (3) identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight-year projection of the regional housing need for the region pursuant to Government Code Section 65584; (4) identify a transportation network to service the transportation needs of the region; (5) gather and consider the best practically available scientific information regarding resource areas and farmland in the region as defined in subdivisions (1) and (b) of the Government Code Sections 65080 and 65581; and (6) consider the statutory housing goals specified in Sections 65580 and 65581, (7) set forth a forecasted development pattern for the region which when integrated with the transportation network, and other transportation measures and policies, will reduce the GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks to achieve the GHG reduction targets, and (8) allow the RTP to comply with air quality conformity requirements under the federal Clean Air Act; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS includes the SCS which sets forth a regional growth forecast to determine the projected increase in population, households, and jobs based on local general plans and known development entitlement agreements, which, when integrated with the transportation network and other transportation measures and policies will reduce the GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks to achieve the regional GHG targets set by CARB;

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS reconfirms the use of the socio-economic assumptions and data forecasted adopted by the Kern COG Board in April 2024 and was developed consistent with the adopted Kern COG oversight procedure; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS must be consistent with all applicable provisions of federal and state law including:

(1) The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21, PL 112-141) and the metropolitan planning regulations at Title 23, United States Code Section 134 et seq., as amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (P.L. 114-94, December 4, 2015) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58, November 15, 2021);

(2) The metropolitan planning regulations at 23 C.F.R. Part 450, Subpart C;

(3) Government Code Section 65080 et seq.; Public Utilities Code Section 130058 and 130059; and Public Utilities Code Section 44243.5;

(4) Sections 174 and 176(c) and (d) of the federal Clean Air Act [(42 U.S.C. Sections 7504 and 7506(c) and (d)] and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Transportation Conformity Rule, 40 C.F.R. Parts 51 and 93;

(5) Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Title VI assurance executed by the State pursuant to Title 23, U.S.C Section 324;

(6) The Department of Transportation's Final Environmental Justice Strategy (60 Fed. Reg. 33896; June 29, 1995) enacted pursuant to Executive Order 12898, which seeks to avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations with respect to human health and the environment;

(7) Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. Section 12101 et seq.) and its accompanying regulations (49 C.F.R. Sections 27, 37, and 38); and

(8) Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008) as codified in Government Code §65080(b) et seq.;

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS has been prepared in accordance with state guidelines adopted by the California Transportation Commission; and

WHEREAS, a 2026 RTP/SCS has been prepared in full compliance with federal guidance; and

WHEREAS, a 2026 RTP/SCS includes the Congestion Management Program which is consistent with the final rules for the Federal Management and Monitoring System effective Congestion Management Process; and

WHEREAS, federal planning regulations require that Metropolitan Planning Organizations prepare and adopt a short range Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) for their region; and

WHEREAS, projects submitted in the 2027 FTIP must be financially constrained and the financial plan affirms that funding is available; and

WHEREAS, the 2027 FTIP has been prepared to comply with Federal and State requirements for local projects and through a cooperative process between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), principal elected officials of general purpose local governments and their staffs, and public owner operators of mass transportation services acting through Kern COG forum and general public involvement; and

WHEREAS, the 2027 FTIP program listing is consistent with: 1) the 2026 RTP/SCS; 2) the 2026 State Transportation Improvement Program; and 3) the Corresponding Conformity Analysis; and

WHEREAS, the 2027 FTIP contains the MPO's certification of the transportation planning process assuring that all federal requirements have been fulfilled; and

WHEREAS, the 2027 FTIP meets all applicable transportation planning requirements per 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450; and

WHEREAS, Kern COG has established performance targets that address the performance standards per 23 CFR Part 490, 49 United States Code (U.S.C.) 5326(c), and 49 U.S.C. 5329(d) to use in tracking progress toward attainment of critical outcomes for the region of the MPO; and

WHEREAS, Kern COG has integrated into its metropolitan transportation planning process, directly or by reference, the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets described in other State transportation plans and transportation processes, as well as any plans developed under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 by providers of public transportation, required as part of a performance-based program; and

WHEREAS, the MPO must demonstrate conformity per 40 CFR Part 93 for the 2026 RTP/SCS and 2027 FTIP; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS and 2027 FTIP includes a new Conformity Analysis; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS and 2027 FTIP conforms to the applicable SIPs; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 RTP/SCS and 2027 FTIP do not interfere with the timely implementation of the Transportation Control Measures; and

WHEREAS, Kern COG has developed a sub-area regional emissions analysis for 2008 and 2015 Ozone, PM2.5, and PM10 for Kern County; and

WHEREAS, the 2008 and 2015 Ozone standard nonattainment area conformity demonstration is contingent upon U.S. EPA final approval of the motor vehicle emission budgets in the “2026 Updates to Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets for the San Joaquin Valley 75 parts per billion Ozone State Implementation Plan” (2026 Valley Budget Update);

WHEREAS, the 2026 Valley Budget Update was proposed to be approved by U.S. EPA with Notice of Proposed Rulemaking published on July 9, 2026 (91 FR 42399);

WHEREAS, the documents have been widely circulated and reviewed by Kern COG’s advisory committees representing the technical and management staffs of the member agencies; representatives of other governmental agencies, including State and Federal; representatives of special interest groups; representatives of the private business sector; and residents of Kern County consistent with the public participation process adopted by Kern COG; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was conducted on June 18, 2026 to hear and consider comments on the 2026 RTP/SCS, 2027 FTIP, and Corresponding Conformity Analysis;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Cal. Pub. Res. Code § 21000 et seq.) and CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., Tit. 14, Section 15000 et seq.), Kern COG, as the Lead Agency, prepared the Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the 2026 RTP/SCS;

WHEREAS, Kern COG has also prepared and adopted a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program in compliance with Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15097;

WHEREAS, prior to the adoption of this resolution the Kern COG certified the final PEIR prepared for the 2024 RTP/SCS to be in compliance with CEQA;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Kern COG finds that the Final PEIR for the 2026 RTP/SCS has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and adopts the 2026 RTP/SCS, 2027 FTIP, and Corresponding Conformity Analysis, contingent upon the U.S. EPA final approval of the motor vehicle emission budgets in the 2026 Valley Budget Update.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Kern COG finds that the 2026 RTP/SCS and 2027 FTIP are in conformity with the requirements of the Federal Clean Air Act Amendments and applicable State Implementation Plans for air quality, contingent upon U.S. EPA final approval of the motor vehicle emission budgets in the 2026 Valley Budget Update.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Kern COG also finds that the 2026 RTP/SCS meets the SB 375 GHG reduction targets of 9% below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2020 and 15% below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2035.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION was passed by the Kern COG this 17th day of September, 2026.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION will become effective as it applies to the 2008 and 2015 Ozone standard nonattainment area conformity demonstration on the effective date of EPA's final approval of the motor vehicle emission budgets contained in the 2026 Valley Budget Update.

AUTHORIZED AND SIGNED THIS 17TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2026.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Bob Smith, Chairman
Kern Council of Governments

ATTEST:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution of the Kern Council of Governments duly adopted at a regular meeting thereof held on the 17th day of September 2026.

I hereby certify that the U.S. EPA issued final approval of the motor vehicle emission budgets in the 2026 Valley Budget Update on the _____ day of _____, making the foregoing resolution effective on the _____ day of _____.

Signed: _____

John Schlosser, Executive Director
Kern Council of Governments