



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS EARNS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

BAKERSFIELD, CA — October 1, 2026 — The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) has been selected as the winner of the **2026 Outstanding Overall Achievement – Medium MPO Award** by the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). This national honor recognizes Kern COG's leadership, innovation, and holistic approach to regional transportation planning, sustainable community development, and infrastructure development across Kern County. Specifically, the award mentions the development of the "Greenpass Corridors" concept, essentially a truck bypass that spares rural communities from increasing truck traffic. This approach allows for more community-centric infrastructure to create more vibrant downtowns in communities like Shafter, Arvin, Lamont, and Delano.

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

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

"More than 10,000 residents shared their input that has helped identify new projects such as the Green-passes in the long-range transportation plan, better reflecting the needs of our community and where we need to make investments. This study is also creating opportunities to make our downtowns more business friendly, safer, more accessible and more welcoming for people who walk and ride bikes," said Bob Smith, Bakersfield City Councilmember and Chairman of the Kern COG Board of Directors.

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

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

About Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG)

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

About the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)

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

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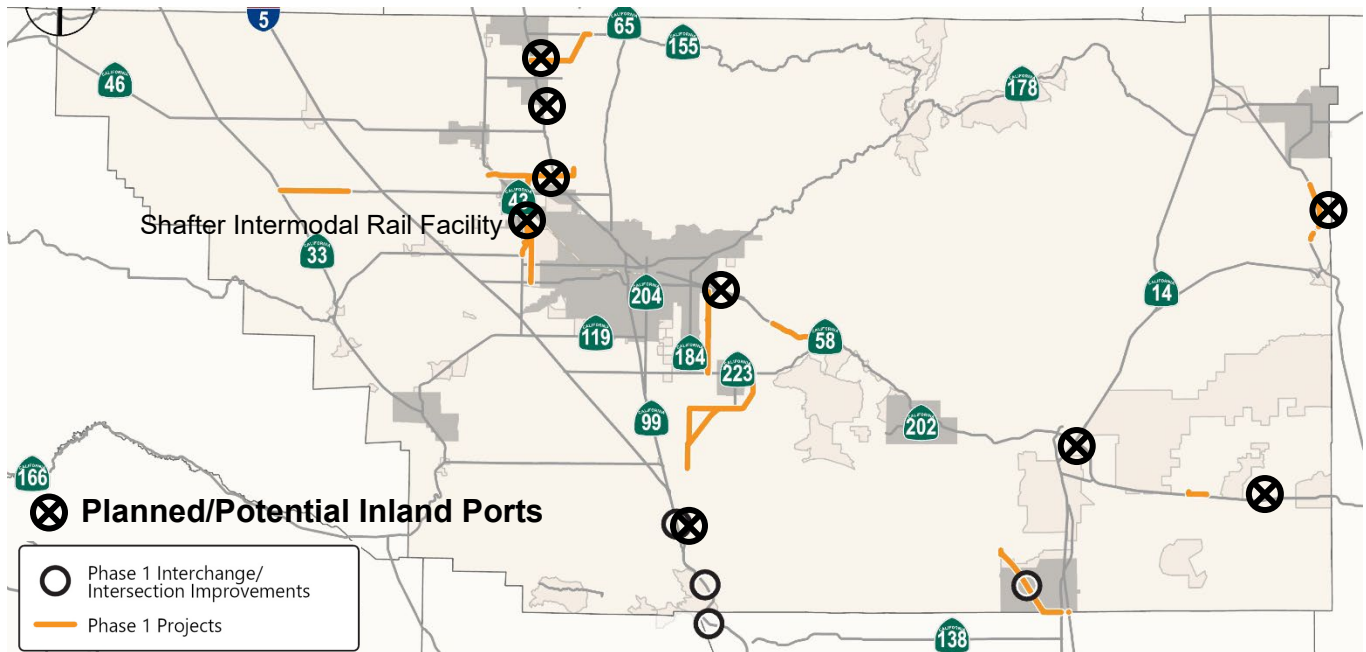
Greenpass Corridors: Kern Area Regional Goods-movement Operations (KARGO) Community Prosperity/Protection Study (CPPS)

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

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



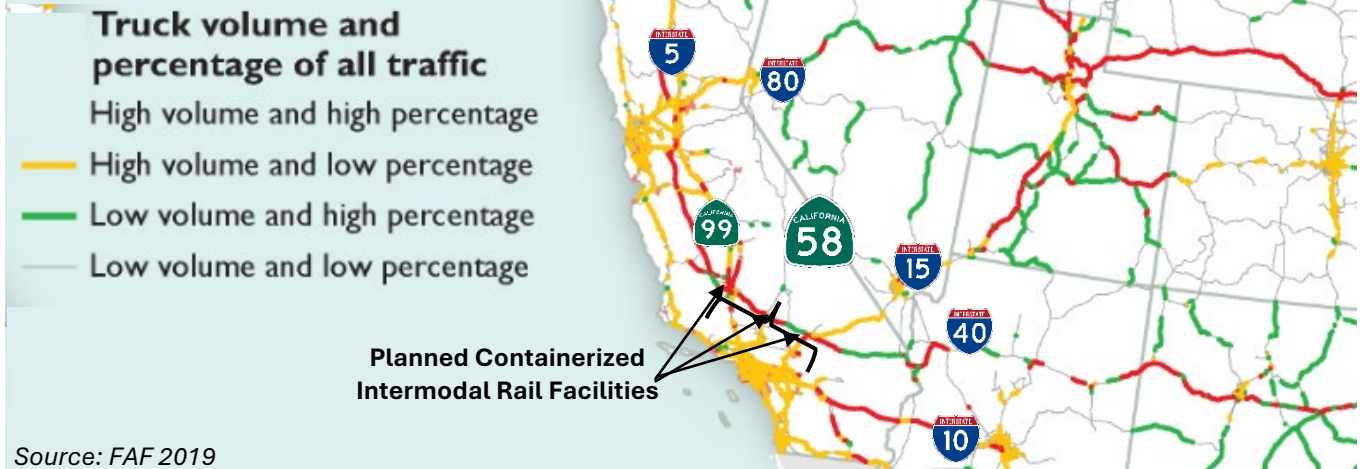
Rural Greenpass Network Connecting to Potential inland Ports Throughout The County



Shafter Intermodal Rail Facility BNSF/WLC Under Construction -



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



Source: FAF 2019

