

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. PURPOSE

The chief purpose of this Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is to show ways that transportation can complement regional goals and objectives. Transportation not only influences, but it is also affected by, local public policy planning for land use, infrastructure, housing, and economic development. Because the need exists to coordinate all facets of community structure, this plan takes into account a broad range of policy matters affecting transportation.

This plan is designed to comply with the Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines adopted by the California Transportation Commission in December of 1999. It is expected to be used as a guide by state and local officials as they strive to upgrade the overall transportation system in Kings County. In addition, this plan is a data source and information document for the general public. As such, it will be of value as a decision-making tool to anyone having the desire to improve and benefit from an upgraded regional transportation system in Kings County.

II. REGIONAL SETTING

The study area includes all of Kings County's 1,396 square miles. Located in the south-central San Joaquin Valley, Kings County is bounded by Fresno, Tulare, Kern, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo counties. Elevations range from 175 feet in the Tulare Lake Basin to 3,473 feet at Table Mountain in the extreme southwestern portion of the county. Two-thirds (613,373 acres) of the county's land area is level, irrigated farmland.

III. BACKGROUND TO THIS PLAN

A. Participating Agencies

This 2007 RTP update was prepared by the staff of the Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG) with the assistance of each of its member agencies: the cities of Avenal, Corcoran, Hanford and Lemoore, and the County of Kings. The Santa Rosa Tachi-Yokut tribe was also consulted during the development of the RTP, as members of the TAC. Caltrans District 6 and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District staff provided an invaluable service by furnishing helpful information, comments, and general support.

B. KCAG Organization

As a council of governments, KCAG addresses inter-jurisdictional public policy matters. Transportation is a major area of concentration. KCAG is a state-designated regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) recognized by the state's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency and a federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). As an MPO/RTPA, KCAG prepares and maintains the Regional Transportation Plan, prepares a Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), reviews the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and other state transportation programs, monitors local public transit operations, oversees federal transportation grant proposals, and administers the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA) fund.

FIGURE 1-1

Location Map

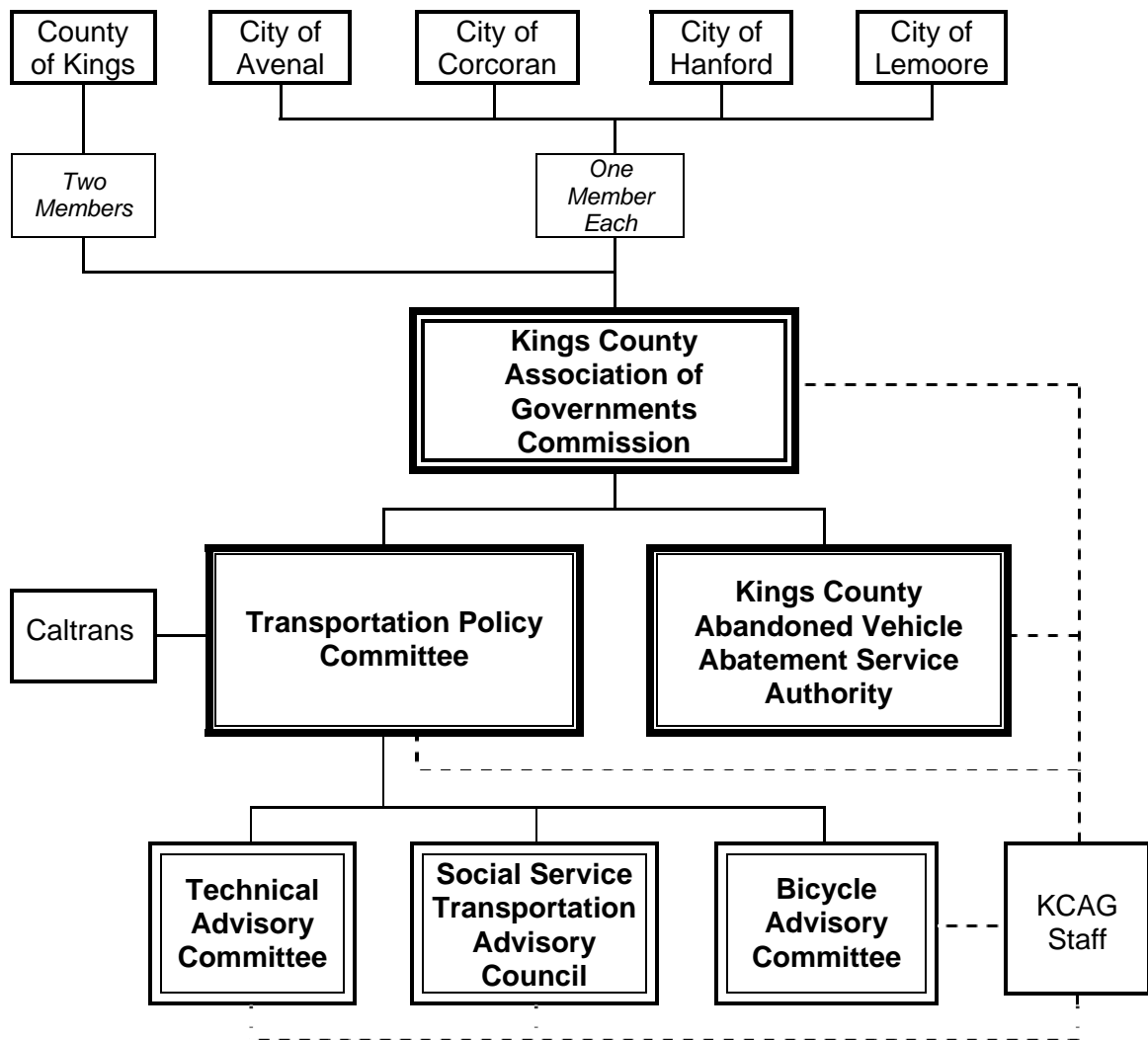


All RTPA activities are governed by a Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) composed of local elected officials of each member agency, and the Director of Caltrans.

The TPC is advised by two committees: 1) A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) whose members are: KCAG staff; county and city public works and planning directors, city managers, and the county administrator; Caltrans staff; Lemoore Naval Air Station (LNAS), San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) and Santa Rosa Tachi-Yokut Tribe representatives as ex-officio members. 2) A Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) includes appointed representatives of social service providers and transit users. The SSTAC provides input to the RTPA on the transit needs of transit dependent and transit disadvantaged persons, including elderly, handicapped, and low income persons. Other citizen committees are formed on an ad hoc basis by the TPC.

FIGURE 1-2

KCAG ORGANIZATION



IV. ORGANIZATION OF THIS PLAN

It is the intent of KCAG to produce an informative, readable, and persuasive document that provides a clear exposition of transportation needs and demands in Kings County. To do so, the following format is generally followed:

- A. Relevant socio-economic and transportation assumptions are stated. These are supported by inventories and forecasts.
- B. Emerging as well as recurring transportation issues are presented.
- C. In response to the assumptions and issues, objectives and policies are stated. These are guidelines for decision making.
- D. To carry out the objectives and policies in light of the issues and assumptions, an implementation strategy for improvements is spelled out.
- E. Financial resources needed to cover the costs of recommended projects and programs are discussed.

V. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

This plan is a continuation of the transportation planning process that began in Kings County in 1975 with the adoption of the first Kings County Regional Transportation Plan. In general, that plan has furnished a foundation for each of KCAG's biennial RTP updates. Since today's political and economic climate bears little resemblance to that of 1975, this update examines the need for improved facilities and services, while acknowledging current budget constraints. Most important, this plan sheds new light on the need for specific major improvements for the regional highway system.

A number of other state and local plans were examined for consistency with this plan. For the most part, there were no areas where these plans conflicted with this document. There were several minor differences among other Regional Transportation Plans in the region, but no major policy conflicts. The plans reviewed include:

- City of Avenal, 1993, 1992 Avenal General Plan and Environmental Impact Report
- California Department of Corrections, 1994, EIR, Emergency Bed Project, California State Prison at Avenal
- City of Corcoran, 2007, General Plan 2025
- County of Kings and City of Corcoran, 1997, Corcoran Area Plan
- California Department of Corrections, 1994, EIR, Emergency Bed Project, California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison at Corcoran
- California Department of Corrections, 1995, EIR, California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison at Corcoran
- City of Hanford, 2002, City of Hanford General Plan
- City of Lemoore, 1991, Lemoore General Plan 1990 - 2010 and EIR
- City of Lemoore, 1997, EIR, College Park at West Hills Development
- County of Kings, 1994, Kings County General Plan

- California Transportation Commission, 1999, Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines
- KCAG, 2004, Kings County Regional Transportation Plan Update
- KCAG, 2007, Kings County Federal Transportation Improvement Program
- KCAG, 2006, Kings County Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- KCAG, 2005, Kings County Regional Bicycle Plan
- City of Lemoore, 2001, City of Lemoore Bikeway Plan
- KCAG, 2003, Kings County Transit Development Plan
- KCAG, 2001 Social Service Transportation Provider Inventory
- KCAG, 1989 Action Plan for the Coordination of Social Service Transportation Providers
- County of Kings, 1989, Kings County Hazardous Waste Management Plan
- KCAG, 1988, Urban Service Areas Policy Plan
- KCAG, 1979, Airport Systems Study
- City of Hanford, 2006, Draft Hanford Municipal Airport Master Plan
- City of Hanford, 1996, EIR, Airport Master Plan Improvements
- U.S. Department of the Navy, 1992, NAS Lemoore Master Plan
- U.S. Department of the Navy, 1983, Air Installation Compatible Use Zones Study, NAS Lemoore
- U.S. Department of the Navy, 1998, Final EIS for Development of Facilities to Support Basing US Pacific Fleet F/A-18E/F Aircraft on the West Coast of the United States
- Caltrans, 1998, Central California Aviation System Plan
- Caltrans, 1998, 1999, The California Aviation System Plan, Policy, Inventory, Forecast and Capital Improvement Program Elements
- Caltrans, 1994, Draft Summary Report, Los Angeles - Bakersfield High Speed Ground Transportation Preliminary Engineering Feasibility Study
- California Intercity High Speed Rail Commission, 1996, Summary Report and Action Plan, Executive Summary
- Caltrans, 2005, California State Rail Plan, 2005/06 - 2015/16
- Caltrans, 2005, San Joaquin Corridor FY 2005-2006 Business Plan
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, 1992, 1991 Air Quality Attainment Plan, San Joaquin Valley Air Basin
- SJVAPCD, 1994, Transportation Control Measures Program
- SJVAPCD, 1994, Revised 1993 Rate of Progress Plan

- SJVAPCD, 1995, Draft Revised Post 1996 Rate of Progress Plan
- SJVAPCD, 1994, Ozone Attainment Plan
- SJVAPCD, 1994, 1994 Serious Area PM10 Plan
- SJVAPCD, 1997, Proposed PM-10 Attainment Demonstration Plan
- SJVAPCD, 2003, Proposed 2003 PM-10 Plan
- Council of Fresno County Governments, 2007, Draft 2007 Regional Transportation Plan
- Kern Council of Governments, 2007, Draft 2007 Regional Transportation Plan
- Madera County Transportation Commission, 2007, Draft 2007 Madera County Area Regional Transportation Plan
- Merced County Association of Governments, 2007, Draft 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Update
- San Joaquin County Council of Governments, 2007, Draft 2007 Regional Transportation Plan
- Stanislaus Council of Governments, 2007, Draft 2007 Stanislaus Area Transportation Plan
- Tulare County Association of Governments, 2007, Draft 2007 Regional Transportation Plan
- Tachi Yokut Tribe of the Santa Rosa Rancheria, 2001, Transportation Planning Study, Interim Report

VI. SAFE ACCOUNTABLE FLEXIBLE EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT-A LEGACY FOR USERS (SAFETEA-LU)

A. INTRODUCTION

On August 10, 2005 President Bush signed into law the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU is the most recent federal transportation bill, having been preceded by the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA).

In addition to reauthorizing the funding levels for the various federal transportation programs, SAFETEA-LU also established new transportation planning and programming requirements that impact the Regional Transportation Plan and Federal Transportation Improvement Program. This section discusses the chronology of developing the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan to address these requirements, provides an overview of how KCAG and the San Joaquin Valley as a whole coordinated in a good faith effort to comply with the requirements by the statutory deadline of July 1, 2007, and includes several specific discussions addressing SAFETEA-LU requirements that are not included elsewhere in the RTP.

B. CHRONOLOGY

Although SAFETEA-LU was signed into law in August of 2005 and federal guidance for implementing the new provisions began trickling out shortly thereafter, it wasn't until the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was published in the Federal Register in June of 2006 that the large scale efforts to understand the planning impacts of SAFETEA-LU kicked into high gear.

The June 2006 NPRM was immediately followed by federally-sponsored webcasts and panel question and answer opportunities in a wide variety of forums. KCAG staff participated in many these, including:

- Sessions at the California Transportation Planning Conference (June 2006)
- Sessions at the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) Annual Conference (June 2006)
- Federal webcast Q&A opportunities (June and July 2006)
- Statewide NPRM Workshop sponsored by Caltrans (August 2006)
- NARC conference calls to discuss NPRM comments (August 2006)

In addition, recognizing the significant impact the new SAFETEA-LU requirements would have on San Joaquin Valley COG efforts to update our RTPs and FTIPs, San Joaquin Council of Governments hosted the San Joaquin Valley 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Workshop in August 2006. The intent of this workshop was to bring together all of the relevant regional, State, and federal agencies to determine the appropriate course of action for the Valley in achieving SAFETEA-LU compliance by July 1, 2007.

The workshop was well attended, with over 25 people representing the following agencies:

- Federal Highway Administration – California Division
- Caltrans Headquarters – Programming
- Caltrans Headquarters – Planning
- Caltrans District 6 – Planning
- Caltrans District 10 – Planning
- Council of Fresno County Governments
- Kings County Association of Governments
- Madera County Transportation Commission
- Merced County Association of Governments
- San Joaquin Council of Governments
- Stanislaus Council of Governments
- Tulare County Association of Governments
- Cari Anderson Consulting

The discussion at the workshop was productive, focusing on getting through the list of questions identified in the workshop materials and obtaining answers to as many as possible. As a result of the workshop and the follow-up items that were identified, the San Joaquin Valley COGs added RTP-related issues to the monthly Model Coordinating Committee (MCC) and Programming Coordination Group (PCG) agendas.

Comments on the NPRM were due on September 7, 2006. KCAG staff participated in national, statewide, and Valley wide discussions regarding the comments, and submitted comments to the docket by the September deadline.

During the time between the publication of the NPRM in June 2006 and the publication of the Final Rule in February 2007, KCAG staff worked diligently towards a SAFETEA-LU compliant RTP and FTIP. Much of the work effort was based on the August 2006 RTP Workshop discussions, SJV Directors Association guidance, and ongoing discussions with State and federal agencies both on an individual basis and within the context of the MCC and PCG conference calls.

C. GAP ANALYSIS

On November 15, 2006 the California Division of FHWA issued a letter requesting the development of a gap analysis that would compare existing planning and programming activities against the requirements of SAFETEA-LU. The intent of this analysis is to identify SAFETEA-LU compliance items and describe either how they are currently being addressed or how KCAG intends to address them. The 2007 RTP and associated documents address many of the SAFETEA-LU requirements. The Gap Analysis will be included in the final 2007 RTP in the Appendices. The first version was submitted to Caltrans and FHWA by the Valley COG Directors in January 2007, and was subsequently revised based on comments received from FHWA.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

During the development of the 2007 RTP, KCAG carried out the following public participation process:

- Consultation with various public and local agency representatives as members of the KCAG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was undertaken. The Santa Rosa Tachi-Yokut tribe has a representative member on this committee and was included in the public participation process. The Committee's responsibilities are to provide direction on various issues related to the development of the 2007 RTP, including the identification and priority of RTP improvement projects and review and comment on various RTP elements. The general public is invited to attend the KCAG Technical Advisory Committee meetings. Meeting announcements are posted at the KCAG office, local newspapers, and the KCAG website.
- KCAG sent out a news release to all area news media announcing the availability of the draft RTP for review and comment and provided copies at all branch libraries within Kings County.
- The draft 2007 RTP documents were placed on the KCAG website to provide widespread reviewing and to allow comments from many agencies, groups, and individuals.
- Public hearings were noticed and held before the KCAG Transportation Policy Committee regarding review of the 2007 RTP. The general public is invited to attend the KCAG Transportation Policy Committee meetings and meeting announcements are posted at the KCAG office, local newspapers and the KCAG website. Copies of all notices, persons/agency comments, and the KCAG responses are on file at KCAG.
- KCAG is currently in the process of updating our Public Participation Program to be SAFETEA-LU compliant. KCAG will provide opportunities for resource agencies from local, regional, state, Tribal Governments, and federal organizations, as well as the community at large to comment on the plan throughout the update process.