

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



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 considers a broad range of policy matters affecting transportation.

This plan is designed to comply with the 2017 Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations adopted by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) on January 18, 2017. 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 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.

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. Roughly two-thirds of the county's land area is level, irrigated farmland.

BACKGROUND TO THIS PLAN

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

This 2022 RTP update was prepared by the staff of the Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG) with assistance from 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. Caltrans District 6, Lemoore Naval Air Station, and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District furnished helpful information, comments, and general support.

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 Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and a federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). As an MPO/RTPA, KCAG prepares and maintains the Regional Transportation Plan, prepares the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP), and the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). KCAG also reviews the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and other state transportation programs, monitors local public transit operations, and oversees federal transportation grant proposals. KCAG is also charged with administering the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA) fund.



FIGURE 1-1: KINGS COUNTY LOCATION MAP

Source: California State Geoportal

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

The TPC is advised by two committees:

1. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) whose members include: KCAG staff, county and city public works and planning directors, city managers, county administrative officer, Caltrans District 6 staff, a Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA) representative, a Lemoore Naval Air Station (LNAS) representative, a San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District representative, and a Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Yokut Tribe representative; and,
2. A Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) whose members include 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, disabled, and low-income persons. Other citizen committees are formed on an ad hoc basis by the TPC.

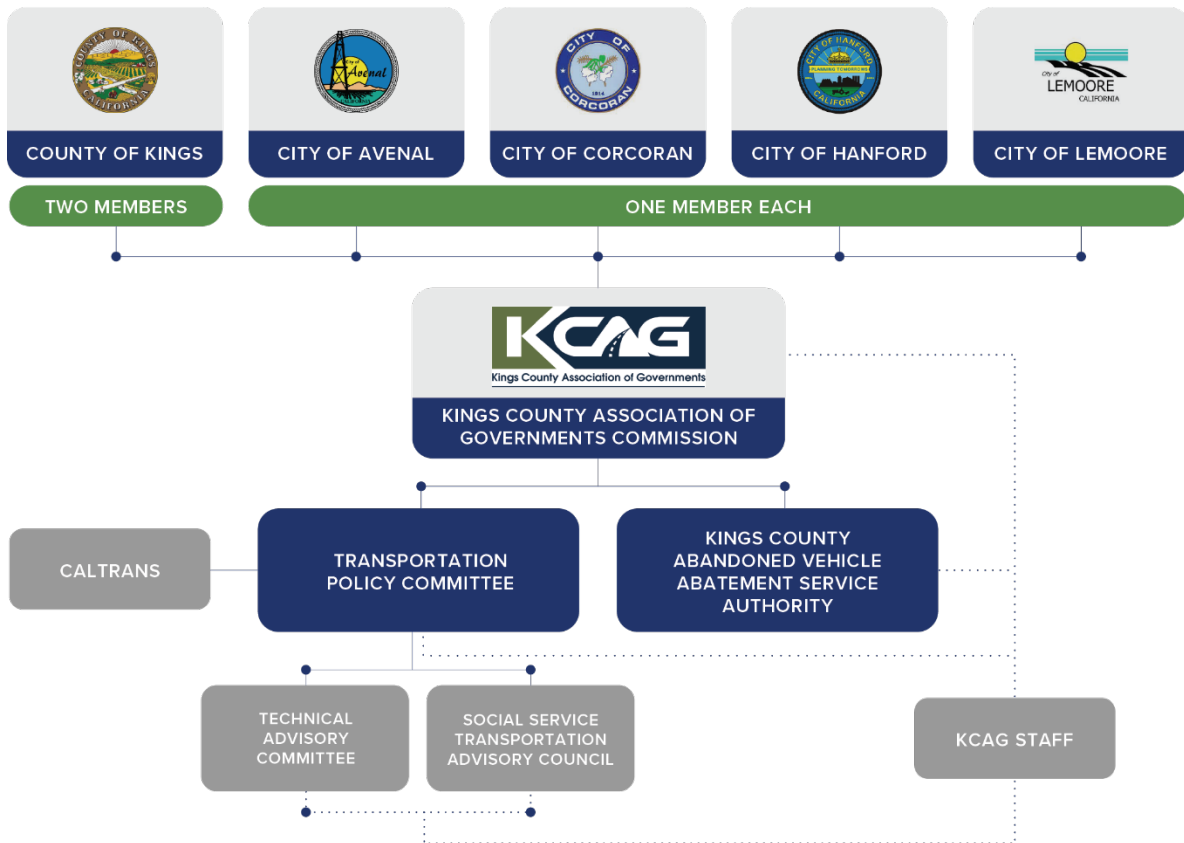


FIGURE 1-2: KINGS COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS COMMISSION ORGANIZATION

Source: KCAG

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:

1. Relevant socio-economic and transportation assumptions are stated. These are supported by inventories and forecasts.
2. Emerging and recurring transportation issues are identified and evaluated.
3. In response to the assumptions and issues, relevant objectives and policies are stated. These are the guidelines for decision making.
4. To carry out the objectives and policies in light of the issues and assumptions, an implementation strategy for improvements is identified.
5. Financial resources needed to cover the costs of recommended projects and programs are discussed.

This section discusses the development of the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and provides an overview of how KCAG and the San Joaquin Valley as a whole, coordinated the development of the 2022 RTP.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

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 provided a foundation for each of KCAG's subsequent 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 importantly, this plan sheds new light on the need for specific major improvements to 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 San Joaquin Valley, but no major policy conflicts. The plans reviewed include local agency General Plan Circulation Elements, Active Transportation Plans, Area Plans, Economic Studies, Environmental Impact Reports, and previous Regional Transportation Plan updates. The full list of plans reviewed is included in the Appendix.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING REGULATIONS

These Federal regulations (23 U.S.C. 134, 23 U.S.C. 150, and 49 U.S.C. 5303, as amended) establish the national policy for designated MPOs to implement a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive performance-based multimodal transportation planning process. As the designated MPO for Kings County, KCAG is responsible for addressing all regional transportation planning and programming requirements set forth in the MPO planning regulations. These regulations work in tandem with the federal authorization bill describe below.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT OF 2021 (IIJA)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is a federal funding bill that includes funding for infrastructure projects of various types across the United States, including for transportation. Funding may help with regional connectivity projects, government fleet electrification, and Amtrak funding. The IIJA contains a 5-year reauthorization with increased funding for all core transportation programs in the United States and several new competitive grants.

The IIJA continues the primary changes established by the two prior reauthorization bills: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century of 2012 (MAP-21) and Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2016 (FAST Act). MAP-21 made major changes in the programmatic structure for both highways and public transportation and included initiatives intended to increase program efficiency through performance-based planning and the streamlining of project development. Another key feature of MAP-21 is the establishment of a performance- and outcome- based program, known as "Performance Based Planning", with the objective to invest in projects that will make progress toward the achievement of the national goals for the transportation. The FAST Act carried forward the same performance management framework. The Federal Highway

Administration (FHWA) worked with state and regional agencies to identify performance measures that meet the requirements. Beginning in 2018, state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and Metropolitan Transportation Organizations (MPOs) were required to implement the Federal performance measures.

CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY BILL 32 AND SENATE BILL 375

Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, and Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, establish California’s climate change strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Although AB 32 did not have a direct effect on the transportation plans, SB 375 is a supplement to AB 32 that directly impacts the plans. SB 375 requires that each metropolitan planning organization prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as an integrated element of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that is updated every four years. The SCS is intended to show how integrated land use and transportation planning can lead to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles and light duty trucks. See Chapter 13 for the SCS.

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN GUIDELINES (2017)

As a fundamental building block of the State’s transportation system, the RTP should support state goals for transportation, environmental quality, economic growth, and social equity (California Government Code Section 65041.1). In recognition of this, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) developed the California RTP Guidelines in 2017 to promote an integrated, statewide, multimodal, regional transportation planning process and effective transportation investments in California. The RTP Guidelines provide guidance to MPOs and RTPAs for developing RTPs that meet applicable federal and state transportation planning requirements. The goal of California’s regional transportation planning process is to implement transportation projects that maintain California’s commitment to public health and environmental quality while considering the views of all stakeholders.

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2050

The California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050 is the state’s blueprint for transportation and land use strategies that aim to improve the movement of people and goods. The CTP 2050 is a tool for policy decision-makers; aligns regional goals and make recommendations for strategies that positively impact land use and transportation practices in California. Similar to the SB 375 requirements for Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs), SB 391 adds new requirements to the CTP to meet California’s climate change goals under AB 32. In addition, SB 391 required Caltrans to update the CTP every 5 years thereafter. The CTP is a core document that addresses the applicable federal statewide and non-metropolitan transportation planning regulations and helps tie together several internal and external plans and programs to help define and plan transportation in California. Unlike the RTP, it is not project specific or subject to both federal air quality conformity regulations and CEQA, but it does look at how SCS implementation will influence the statewide

multimodal transportation system, as well as how the state will achieve sufficient emission reductions in order to meet AB 32 and SB 391.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CONTINUING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Beginning in 2010, the eight San Joaquin Valley (SJV) Metropolitan Planning Organizations coordinated with the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) formally begin coordinating on the technical aspects and the federal requirements related to the RTP. In addition, the Valley MPOs also initiated coordination with the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to prepare for the state requirements established by Bill 32 and SB 375.

In 2010, the Valley was awarded a \$1 million grant from the Strategic Growth Council for valley wide model improvements to meet the requirements of AB 32 and SB 375. The Strategic Growth Council is charged with, among other things, making Proposition 84 funds available for data gathering and model development necessary to comply with SB 375. The program was divided into four phases. In the first phase, the less than 200,000 population valley MPOs received minor upgrades to the models and the larger valley MPOs received additional sensitivity and options to recognize a broader spectrum of land use and transportation changes.

The eight San Joaquin Valley MPOs have also continued to work cooperatively in the development of their planning and programming documents. KCAG and the other MPOs routinely participate in an Interagency Consultation (IAC) process that includes the MPOs, FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Caltrans, the Air District, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and have held workshops to coordinate the development of the 2018 RTPs and 2019 FTIPs.

KCAG PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

In June 2013, KCAG adopted a Supplemental Public Participation Plan to the comprehensive KCAG Public Participation Plan (December 7, 2011). KCAG updated the 2013 Supplemental Public Participation Plan in November 2021 in preparation for this 2022 RTP/SCS effort. The updated Supplemental Public Participation Plan identifies the following tasks that were performed as part of the 2022 RTP/SCS public participation process:

- Consultation with various public and local agency representatives who are representatives of the KCAG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Committee's responsibilities are to provide information about their general plans and land use decisions to help develop a foundation for the 2022 RTP. The agencies were also asked to identify their priorities for RTP improvement projects and review and comment on various RTP elements. Three rounds of meetings were performed with each of the four cities and the county planning departments to gather the above information.
- The Santa Rosa Tachi Yokut tribe has a representative member on the TAC and was included in the public participation process. KCAG's adopted Public Participation Plan

outlines various outreach activities required to meet the federal planning process, including a process for consultation with Federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments. KCAG adopted a policy for government-to-government consultation with federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments in Kings County. Other disadvantaged communities were invited to public meetings and workshops to ensure that their input was reflected throughout the RTP/SCS development process (See Chapter 13 for Kings County Disadvantaged Communities Maps).

- The KCAG Technical Advisory Committee convened several times during the development of the 2022 RTP/SCS. The TAC members were informed about the process, the approach to the plan, and the timeline of the development of the 2022 RTP/SCS.
- KCAG acquired a Public Outreach Consultant through standard procurement procedures to assist in the public participation process. The consultant and KCAG staff hosted public meetings and met with the city councils and Board of Supervisors for each of the member jurisdictions and provided a presentation on the entirety of the 2022 RTP and answered questions from the councils, board, and the public.
- KCAG staff formulated a focus group, the RTP Stakeholder Advisory Group consisting of community development and public works representatives from each of its member agencies, to provide, review, analyze, and formulate the information from local agency general plans. These representatives also participated in the outreach workshops for receiving public input on for the Sustainable Communities Strategy scenarios.
- KCAG also requested meetings with the Tachi Yokut Rancheria and Lemoore Naval Air Station, to provide them an opportunity to inform the process, review the inputs and compare them with their general plans and land use policies for consistency.
- The draft 2022 RTP documents were also placed on the KCAG website to provide widespread review and to allow comments from many agencies, groups, and individuals.
- KCAG held three noticed public workshops to explain the SCS scenarios and to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the scenarios. KCAG staff attended city council meetings for the four cities and the Board of Supervisors meeting to provide the same information as was provided to the public.
- Public hearings were noticed and held before the KCAG Transportation Policy Committee regarding review of the 2022 RTP/SCS. The general public is invited to attend the KCAG Transportation Policy Committee and KCAG Technical Advisory Committee meetings and meeting announcements are posted at the meeting locations, KCAG office, local newspapers, and the KCAG website. Copies of all notices, persons/agency comments, and the KCAG responses are on file at the KCAG office.

The KCAG outreach efforts for the development of the documents resulted in comments received. Comments on the draft document will be included with the final.