

Chapter 2

Regional Setting, State and Federal Issues

2.1 Introduction

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a comprehensive assessment of all forms of transportation available in Fresno County and of needs for travel and goods movement projected into the future until the year 2035. The first RTP was adopted in 1975; this Plan is the seventeenth edition, and is a continuation of a process of intergovernmental cooperation, coordination and long-range planning which has involved the fifteen cities, Fresno County, staff from related local public agencies, the Air District, Caltrans and other state agencies, federal agencies, and the public. This process has been accomplished within the framework of the Council of Fresno County Governments (Fresno COG), which is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Fresno County area. Updated editions are required every four years and are refinements of the original and subsequent plans.

Federal and State legislation mandate that long range transportation planning be done every four years for a period of at least 20 years into the future.

The 2011 version of the Regional Transportation Plan is a reflection of the federal directives embodied in Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1991. These acts require that Regional Transportation Plans *include only those projects which can actually be delivered with funds expected to be available, and that those projects will help attain and maintain air quality standards.*

In 1991 Fresno County was part of the formation of a new regional agency, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The District covers the eight county Central Valley (San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern). Only the San Joaquin Valley portion of Kern County is located within the SJVAPCD. Because of the federal government's approach to cleaning up the air in the nation's cities, and our air basin's non-attainment status, the District and local agencies are working together even more closely on this planning effort and on other traffic management systems specified in federal legislation. Our task in relation to air quality will be to demonstrate that the projects recommended in the Regional Transportation Plan collectively will help attain and maintain federal air quality standards. Failure to do so is to risk the loss of federal transportation funding.

This plan will specify those projects and programs that can be funded throughout the life of the plan, and will evaluate them utilizing computer modeling to determine their impacts upon air quality. This is called demonstrating "conformity" with adopted air quality targets. Projects will only be evaluated for conformity if they have a strong likelihood of being funded.

The financial element of the plan will advocate for a stable and equitable approach to statewide funding, so that the entire Valley can respond appropriately to the needs of a growing population, environmental quality, and the continuing needs of both maintenance and innovation in transportation systems.

Fresno COG is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for the Fresno County region, a designation given by the State of California. Under federal legislation, it is also designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Working with technical advisory committees, interested citizens, and other government agencies, a coordinated effort has been made to develop a multimodal regional transportation system plan for Fresno County. Given the growth anticipated in southern Madera County just across the San Joaquin River from the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area, we are also giving consideration to the potential traffic impacts upon our county, and the needs for connectivity from one county to the next.

2.2 Background

Transportation planning in Fresno County is considered a coordinated and continuous process, involving all local governments, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), other interested agencies such as urban and rural transit agencies, other state and federal agencies, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the public.

The 1994 RTP was based on extensive supportive technical studies and public review and comment. A program level Environmental Impact Report was prepared, presented for public review, and adopted by the COG Policy Board. Subsequent plan updates have built upon that foundation, with environmental assessments recommending the use of the negative declaration as to environmental impacts, implying that no new significant changes to prior plans were included. This position was taken as, 1) land use agencies had continued to plan within established growth areas, 2) the area continued to pursue the implementation of a basic freeway system planned for over thirty years, and 3) no new major regional transportation facilities were proposed which might have needed evaluation. It was also understood that a separate environmental document was required at the project or corridor level, as a major facility moved closer to implementation.

Conditions changed, however, with the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan. The long desired metropolitan and rural freeway system has been and is now under construction due to the 1986 passage of a local sales tax - Measure "C". The 2006 extension of Measure C has provided additional funds for the next 20 years. Also, in November 2006, voters approved statewide transportation bonds that will provide funding for a number of transportation projects. As such, the 2007 RTP was accompanied by a new Environmental Impact Report, building on the analysis of the 2006 Measure C Extension initiative.

A Subsequent Environmental Impact Report will be prepared for this 2011 Revision of the RTP. Fresno COG understands that 2011 RTP improvement projects have changed or the timing of those projects has changed since certification of the previous RTP EIR in May 2007. As a result of these changes, rather than prepare a complete new EIR, Fresno COG desires to use the previous EIR and update/change sections to address RTP project changes, as well as greenhouse gas/global warming (climate change) issues.

Federal legislation and state air quality requirements require that the RTP be restricted to those new facilities for which funding can be reasonably projected, and that the plan must meet air quality conformity requirements. These new conditions have shifted the focus and working arrangements of those local and regional agencies that participate in this planning effort. The determination of conformity with defined air quality goals necessitates closer consideration of the links between air quality, transportation, and land use than has been attempted in the past.

2.3 Scope of the Plan

The RTP is developed in response to federal and state requirements and it is organized into three separate elements: Policy Element, Action Element, Air Quality Element and Financial Element.

The Policy Element provides a general overview of the RTP and the Fresno County region, documents certain trends and assumptions made within the plan, and describes the regional planning process. It also sets forth the Fresno COG's transportation goals, policies and objectives.

The Action Element introduces the multimodal system and then separates the various transportation modes. The RTP's overall goals, policies and objectives are expanded with more specific short- and long-term policies appropriate for each mode. Plan accomplishments are discussed in the following manner: the existing system is described, recent planning activities are noted, improvements made in the past two years are listed, and transportation needs and issues are identified. Proposed short-term and long-term actions for both planning and actual program and project improvements are described. Finally, revenue sources are identified and actual projections of both revenues and expenditures are made.

The Air Quality Element is a new element in the 2011 RTP. It provides the necessary transition to a fully SB375 compliant 2014 RTP that includes a separate Sustainable Communities Strategy. The Air Quality Element will address appropriate aspects of AB32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, and other air quality issues that have arisen since the 2007 RTP.

The Financial Element contains a listing of all projected revenues over the life of the plan, as well as a list of candidate projects that would utilize the funding. Also included as an appendix is a comprehensive list of member agency identified candidate transportation projects. Considerable discussion is given to the need to develop more comprehensive and equitable long-term statewide funding strategies.

Appendices include the RTP Checklist, a listing of Fresno COG committee members, SAFETEA-LU gap analysis, performance measures, Measure "C" summary, and a listing of supportive documents.

2.4 The Region

Fresno County is the second largest county in the San Joaquin Valley, encompassing approximately 6,000 square miles. As the nation's number one farm county, Fresno County's gross value of agricultural products is estimated at \$5.7 billion annually. The estimated population as of 2009 is 942,300 placing Fresno as the tenth most populous county of the 58 counties in California. There are fifteen incorporated cities and the county contains a federally recognized urbanized area, known as the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area (FCMA), with a population of about 677,400. The City of Fresno is now the fifth largest city in the state, with a population of 496,000. A map of the region's population distribution is given on Exhibit 2-1.

Along the western boundary of Fresno County are the arid foothills of the Coastal Range. The western and central areas of the county are part of the fertile San Joaquin Valley where almost all of the agricultural production takes place. In the east, one again encounters foothills and the Sierra Nevada Range; most of this area is either part of the National Forest or National Park Service. There are eight neighboring counties, which include: Kings, Tulare, Inyo, Mono, Madera, Merced, San Benito, and Monterey.

2.5 Regional Growth Policies

The RTP was developed to support Regional Land Use Element development policies that were first established in 1980, and to be consistent with the general plans of each of the cities and the county. These development policies are as follows:

- Establish development policies that are directed toward the long-term beneficial use of the region's resources and protection of the public health, safety and welfare.
- Protect productive and potentially productive agricultural land from urban encroachment, and thereby maintain the region's agriculturally based economy.
- Preserve and enhance the character and inherent values of natural, scenic and open space resource land as well as historical features in the region.
- Encourage annexation prior to urban development on the unincorporated fringe, consistent with a city's development program.
- Promote the concentration of urban and other intensive development in and around existing urban centers.
- Encourage development alternatives that maximize energy conservation and promote clean air.
- Promote the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint's adopted Smart Growth Principles.

2.6 Regional Planning Forecasts and Assumptions

Several factors are considered in the development of regional planning forecasts and assumptions, including regional population, housing and employment growth. These factors in turn provide the basis for projecting optimum transportation networks, street, highway, and transit loading, and traffic flow. The integration of these regional forecasts and assumptions into local planning policies requires the active participation of all involved jurisdictions. A technical steering committee composed of jurisdictional representatives has been involved in the development of the planning assumptions, which follow.

2.6.1 Overview

Changes in population, housing, and employment alter travel demand and travel patterns that affect transportation facilities. By anticipating the magnitude and distribution of growth and change within the region, today's decisions can be made to capitalize on the positive aspects of anticipated growth while minimizing the adverse consequences.

2.6.2 Political / Planning Assumptions

- The establishment of development policies which are directed toward the long-term beneficial use of the region's resources and the protection of the public health, safety and welfare will become more critical as population growth pressures increase.
- Protection of productive and potentially productive agricultural land from urban encroachment will continue to be a significant goal in an effort to maintain the region's agriculture based economy.
- Fresno County will continue its policy of encouraging urban development in existing cities and limiting urban growth in areas of prime agricultural land. This will be implemented through referral for annexation.
- The goals of the Local Agency Formation Commission will continue to support logical boundaries for the delivery of urban services.
- The need for the achievement of clean air goals and resource conservation will continue to influence federal, state, and local policy decisions.
- Development alternatives that maximize energy conservation and promote clean air will continue to be valued by society.
- Recent State legislation related to climate change will continue to influence planning policy at the local and regional levels.

2.6.3 Population Assumptions

Countywide population will grow to an estimated 1,519,300 persons by the year 2035 based on the forecast of the Central California Futures Institute. This assumes an average annual growth rate of 1.7% over the planning period of 2010-2035.

In the past, County population has increased at rates of 2.4% a year from 1970 to 1990, and 2.0% a year from 1990 to 2010. During the next two and a half decades or so (2010-2035) 556,400, or 58%, more people are expected to reside in Fresno County.

As shown in Exhibit 2-2, Fresno County's share of California population is expected to increase. From 1970 to 1990, the County's population share remained steady at 2.2%. After 1990, the share will gradually increase, so that by the year 2035, Fresno County will capture 2.9% of the state population.

**Exhibit 2-1
Regional Population Distribution
2009**

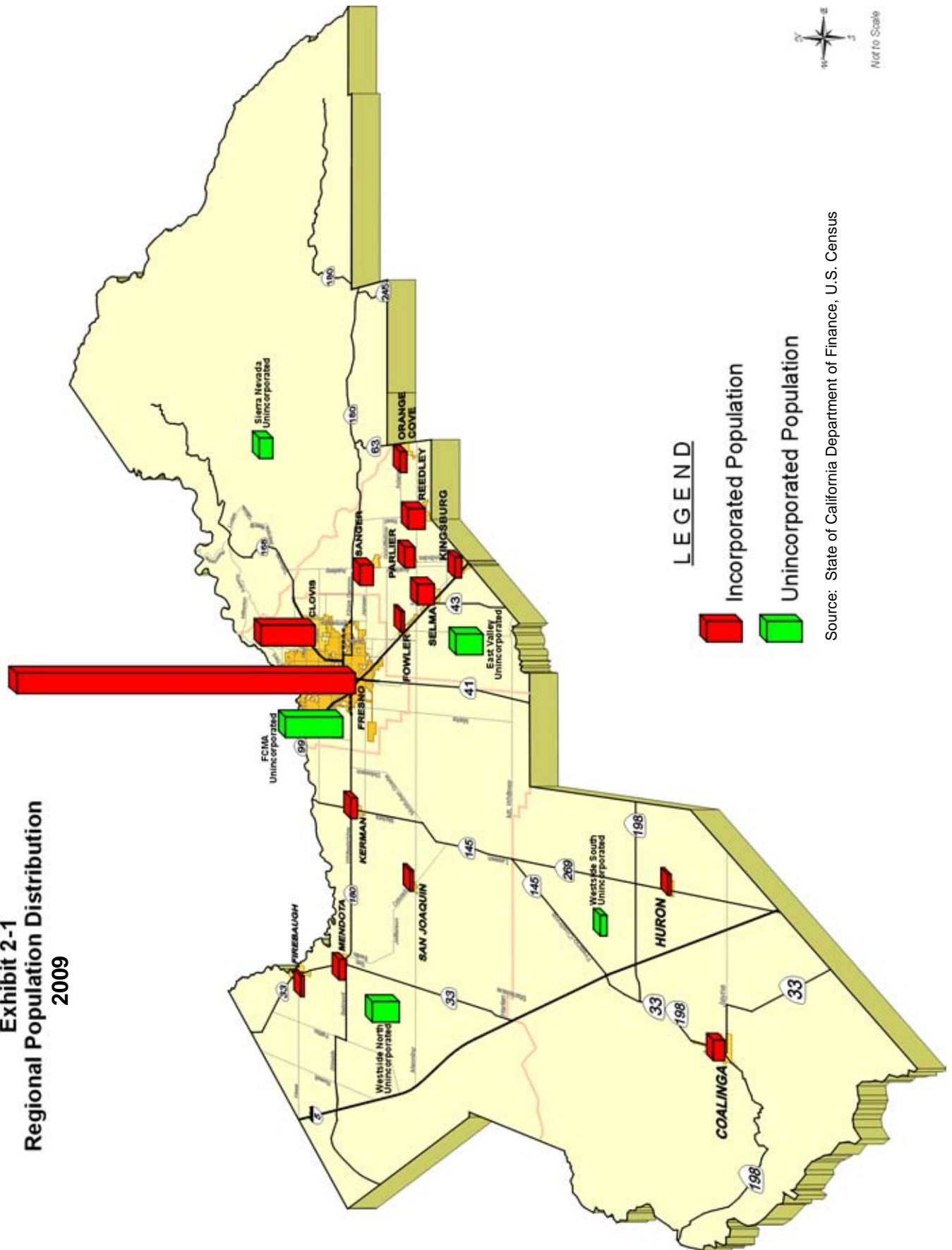


Exhibit 2-2 Population of Fresno County 1970-2035

| Date | Fresno County | California | Fresno County Share of California Population |
|------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| April 1970 | 413,100 ¹ | 19,053,100 ¹ | 2.2% |
| April 1980 | 514,600 ¹ | 23,667,900 ¹ | 2.2% |
| April 1990 | 667,500 ¹ | 29,760,000 ¹ | 2.2% |
| April 2000 | 799,407 ¹ | 33,871,648 ¹ | 2.4% |
| July 2005 | 888,873 ² | 36,899,392 ² | 2.4% |
| July 2010 | 991,922 ² | 39,135,676 ² | 2.5% |
| July 2015 | 1,086,843 ³ | 41,560,669 ² | 2.6% |
| July 2020 | 1,185,766 ³ | 44,135,923 ² | 2.7% |
| July 2025 | 1,290,481 ³ | 46,618,582 ² | 2.8% |
| July 2030 | 1,402,727 ³ | 49,240,891 ² | 2.8% |
| July 2035 | 1,519,325 ³ | 51,692,474 ² | 2.9% |

Sources: ¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census

² Based on Central California Futures Institute forecast

³ State of California Department of Finance

2.6.4 Employment Forecasts

The Fresno County employment level will increase during the planning period, 2001-2035 despite the recession that began in 2007, However the unemployment rate will continue to be higher than the California average.

Fresno County employment has always grown steadily from year to year, but the unemployment rate has been consistently higher than that of the state. Since 1990, the unemployment rate in Fresno County has fluctuated between 11.5% and 15.1% with no clear upward or downward trend. At the same time, California's rate has been considerably lower, ranging from 4.9% to 11.4% during the 1990-2009 period.

Much of Fresno County's future employment level and unemployment rates will depend on the agricultural industry, since agriculture plays such a major role in the county's economy. Since 1954, Fresno County has led all U.S. counties in the value of agricultural products for each year except one (2001). Agricultural levels effect agricultural employment as well as employment in traditionally non-agricultural sectors such as wholesale trade; manufacturing; services; and finance, insurance and real estate. Future agricultural activities in the county could be affected by:

- Drought
- Federal water allocation to the County
- The gradual conversion to more high valued, labor intensive crops
- The intrusion of urban uses on farm land
- Governmental regulations on the use of chemicals
- The continual replacement of farm labor by machinery
- The limits on the amount of cultivable land and water for irrigation
- Potentially reduced yields due to declining air quality

The demand for labor may decline as advances in technology allow farmers to achieve greater production per acre.

2.6.5 Land Use Planning

Responsibility for land use planning within Fresno County lies with each of the fifteen incorporated cities within the County, and with the County of Fresno for development proposed within unincorporated territory. In 1983, the three primary agencies (the Cities of Fresno and Clovis and the County of Fresno) involved in land use planning within the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area (FCMA) negotiated an agreement known as the Joint Resolution on Metropolitan Planning which defined an Urban Boundary coterminous with the Sphere of Influence adopted by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and required that the boundary not be amended without the agreement of the parties affected by the change.

This arrangement ensures that all Sphere of Influence expansions have concurrence of the other impacted public agencies prior to moving forward to LAFCO for approval. In addition, sales tax agreements negotiated between Fresno County and the cities contain land use provisions that required consultation and adherence to certain conditions, or risk the ability to annex, as well as possible legal sanctions. These provisions include measures that assure that annexations are orderly, leapfrog development is avoided, and urban growth is directed to the existing cities' boundaries (meaning that annexation takes place prior to development).

Currently, each of the three above mentioned entities have general plans last updated as follows:

- *City of Fresno* - The City of Fresno formally adopted its General Plan in May of 2002.
- *City of Clovis* - Clovis formally adopted its General Plan Update in April of 1993.
- *County of Fresno* - The County adopted its updated General Plan in October of 2000.

While local land use issues continue to evolve, it can be safely stated that the metropolitan area is facing population increases that will require regional coordination and agreement as to the direction of growth. It is also expected that federal and state air quality requirements may ultimately have an effect upon land use planning in this non-attainment area. In addition, the state's passage of AB 32 and SB 375 to address climate change will have a further impact on future land use decisions at the local level.

2.7 The Use of Land Use Projections for Traffic and Air Quality Modeling

We are updating the Regional Transportation Plan at a point when many issues dealing with growth are unresolved. Those local agencies involved are in general agreement that, barring unforeseen changes, the area will experience population growth during the planning period. As described, there is less agreement regarding where that growth will occur within the metropolitan area. We are using available maps and information provided by those agencies actively involved in land use planning. Given federal and state requirements, the Fresno COG is using the best available information to describe growth scenarios in the metropolitan area and throughout the county. These projected land use patterns form the database, which is input to the regional traffic model. By using future population growth and socio-economic information, The Fresno COG regional traffic model can project the traffic on the regional transportation system as it would exist at a given future time. This information is essential to the transportation planning process. However, as the RTP covers sixteen land use jurisdictions, it is unlikely that all planning documents will ever be newly updated at the same time. The fact that we are required to update this document every four years allows it to adapt successfully to changing plans, regulations, and conditions over time.

Exhibit 2-3 Fresno County Population by Jurisdiction 1970-2009

| Jurisdiction | 1970 | | 1980 | | 1990 | | 2000 | | 2009 | |
|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| | Population | Percent Share of County | Population | Percent Share of County | Population | Percent Share of County | Population | Percent Share of County | Population | Percent Share of County |
| Clovis | 13,856 | 3.4% | 33,021 | 6.4% | 50,323 | 7.5% | 68,516 | 8.6% | 95,128 | 10.1% |
| Coalinga | 6,161 | 1.5% | 6,593 | 1.3% | 8,212 | 1.2% | 15,798 | 2.0% | 19,109 | 2.0% |
| Firebaugh | 2,517 | 0.6% | 3,740 | 0.7% | 4,429 | 0.7% | 5,743 | 0.7% | 6,807 | 0.7% |
| Fowler | 2,239 | 0.5% | 2,496 | 0.5% | 3,394 | 0.5% | 4,046 | 0.5% | 5,671 | 0.6% |
| Fresno | 165,972 | 40.2% | 217,346 | 42.2% | 354,091 | 53.0% | 427,652 | 53.5% | 495,913 | 52.6% |
| Huron | 1,525 | 0.4% | 2,768 | 0.5% | 4,766 | 0.7% | 6,310 | 0.8% | 7,836 | 0.8% |
| Kerman | 2,667 | 0.6% | 4,002 | 0.8% | 5,448 | 0.8% | 8,548 | 1.1% | 14,064 | 1.5% |
| Kingsburg | 3,843 | 0.9% | 5,115 | 1.0% | 7,245 | 1.1% | 9,231 | 1.2% | 11,427 | 1.2% |
| Mendota | 2,705 | 0.7% | 5,038 | 1.0% | 6,821 | 1.0% | 7,890 | 1.0% | 9,870 | 1.0% |
| Orange Cove | 3,392 | 0.8% | 4,026 | 0.8% | 5,604 | 0.8% | 7,722 | 1.0% | 10,930 | 1.2% |
| Parlier | 1,993 | 0.5% | 2,902 | 0.6% | 7,938 | 1.2% | 11,145 | 1.4% | 13,555 | 1.4% |
| Reedley | 8,131 | 2.0% | 11,071 | 2.2% | 15,791 | 2.4% | 20,756 | 2.6% | 25,723 | 2.7% |
| Sanger | 10,088 | 2.4% | 12,542 | 2.4% | 16,839 | 2.5% | 18,931 | 2.4% | 25,417 | 2.7% |
| San Joaquin | 1,506 | 0.4% | 1,930 | 0.4% | 2,311 | 0.3% | 3,270 | 0.4% | 4,060 | 0.4% |
| Selma | 7,459 | 1.8% | 10,942 | 2.1% | 14,757 | 2.2% | 19,444 | 2.4% | 23,301 | 2.5% |
| Unincorporated Fresno County | 179,275 | 43.4% | 191,089 | 37.1% | 159,521 | 23.9% | 164,405 | 20.6% | 173,487 | 18.4% |
| Fresno County | 413,329 | 100.0% | 514,621 | 100.0% | 667,490 | 100.0% | 799,407 | 100.0% | 942,298 | 100.0% |

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses and 2009 State of California Department of Finance report

2.8 Regional Planning Process

Regional transportation planning is a dynamic process requiring periodic refinement, monitoring and updating. The planning program for the next three-year period will include extensive evaluation of the Plan itself and the elements of each respective transportation mode. Each component will be studied and modified consistent with Plan priorities in an attempt to achieve an integrated multimodal system.

2.8.1 Current Practices

Fresno COG is a federally designated MPO and a state-designated RTPA. These designations formally establish the Fresno COG's role in transportation planning. The Fresno COG Policy Board is composed of mayors from the fifteen incorporated cities in Fresno County and the Chairman of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Fresno COG and Caltrans also provides for an Areawide Transportation Policy Committee, which consists of the existing Board and a Caltrans representative. Two committees serve as basic support to the Board: 1) the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) is composed of city managers, the county administrator and Caltrans; 2) the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) is composed of technical staff from member agencies, other interested agencies, public members, and Caltrans. Several subcommittees also exist to evaluate and forward recommendations to the TTC on specific regionally significant issues and projects. Public participation is encouraged at every stage of the planning process and all meetings are open to the public. Public hearings are held for formal adoption of major planning documents.

Fresno COG's efforts toward citizen involvement center on public information, education, and citizen participation in an advisory and decision-making process. Efforts include the dissemination of pamphlets,

the Fresno COG website, annual reports, newsletters, speeches, and public hearings. From time to time, citizen workshops and conferences are held jointly and coordinated with public and quasi-public agencies.

Fresno COG continues to focus on strengthening our government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes and makes every effort to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with them on matters that significantly or uniquely affect their communities. Fresno COG staff have received training on the requirements of SB18, the California law that requires cities and counties to contact and consult with California Native American Tribes before adopting or amending a General Plan, or when designating land as open space. Consultation and coordination with the Tribes is also encouraged at every stage of the planning process.

Currently, citizens are represented on the following committees: Transportation Technical Committee, Model Steering Committee, Social Services Transportation Advisory Council, RTP Steering Committee, Environmental Justice Task Force, COG Rail Committee, Association for the Beautification of Highway 99, and the Quad-County Freight Advisory Committee. Reports from these committees ensure that all committee members' viewpoints are reviewed by the Policy Advisory Committee and the Fresno COG Policy Board. Citizens are encouraged to participate in whatever capacity may be appropriate to their cause.

The passage in 1986 of the original Measure "C", a local sales tax, introduced a new agency into the transportation planning process, the Fresno County Transportation Authority. Authority staff has been seated on the TTC and works closely with the Fresno COG and Caltrans to implement a highway improvement program which is reasonable and deliverable. A 20-year extension of Measure "C" was approved in 2006. It is a multi-modal transportation program with almost 25% of the expected Measure funds directed to public transit services; roughly 30% directed to capacity-enhancing street and highway improvements; and, just under 35% directed to local street and highway maintenance, ADA improvements, and pedestrian, trail, and bicycle facilities.

The adopted RTP establishes a basis upon which funding applications at the state and federal level are evaluated. The intended use of any state and federal transportation funds by local governments must conform to the Regional Transportation Plan, the SJVAPCD portion of the State Implementation Plan, and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

2.8.2 Title VI and Environmental Justice

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set a standard that authoritatively outlawed discrimination in the conduct of all federal activities. It reads as follows: *"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."* Although considerable progress has been made during the 1990s, individuals both inside and outside government are troubled by the high and adverse environmental impacts of private or governmental actions that fall disproportionately on populations protected by laws such as the civil rights act. The term *"environmental justice"* was created by people concerned that everyone within the United States deserves equal protection under the country's laws. Executive Order 12898 issued in 1994, responded to this concern by organizing and explaining in detail the federal government's commitment to promote environmental justice. Each Federal agency was directed to review its procedures and to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance on Environmental Justice (EJ) requires that Metropolitan Planning Organizations ensure that traditionally underrepresented groups are engaged in the regional transportation planning process and demonstrate how their influence and feedback impacted development of the Regional Transportation Plan. Further, the guidance also requires an evaluation of the adopted plan to ensure that there is no disparate negative impact borne by low-income or minority communities. FHWA and FTA have embraced the principles of environmental justice as a means toward improving the transportation decision-making process. Today, effective transportation decision-making requires understanding and addressing the unique needs of

many different socioeconomic groups. Early, inclusive, and meaningful public involvement in transportation decision making is a proven means of designing transportation facilities that fit more harmoniously into communities.

There are three fundamental principles at the core of environmental justice:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Environmental Justice does not end with the RTP; rather it is just one of many arenas where EJ principles apply. EJ is also applicable at the project level when project sponsors are proposing to build a new project in a local community and federal funds are involved. Unfortunately, neither Title VI nor Executive Order 12898 prescribes the specific methods and processes for ensuring environmental justice in transportation planning. States and MPOs are free to explore and devise more effective analytical techniques and public involvement approaches to ensure that transportation plans successfully integrate environmental justice into decision-making.

In order to comply with the federal directives, Fresno COG has established an Environmental Justice Task Force made up of transportation planners, community leaders, and representatives from Environmental Justice/Title VI populations. The Task Force has developed a process with which to assess and ensure compliance of Fresno COG's transportation planning efforts with Environmental Justice requirements of Title VI. The Task Force played a key role in the following:

- Evaluated current Environmental Justice and Public Participation efforts and provide guidance on how to achieve the desired results;
- Defined the Environmental Justice populations within Fresno County;
- Reviewed existing COG process for identifying needs of environmental justice populations in Fresno County and provided appropriate feedback; and
- Developed appropriate performance measures for gauging the burdens/benefits of the Fresno COG's transportation system investments on Environmental Justice populations.

Utilization performance measures such as mobility, accessibility, environment, cost effectiveness, reliability, safety, and customer satisfaction provide a broader analytical framework for decision makers. Staff used Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping software and Census data to determine the location of Environmental Justice populations within Fresno County and to provide a visual representation of these populations. Fresno COG staff incorporated the above information into a travel-demand forecast model to assess the benefits and burdens of existing and planned transportation system investments on target populations. The result was the Fresno County Environmental Justice Plan, adopted by the Council of Fresno County Governments Policy Board in May 2009. The Fresno COG Environmental Justice Plan assesses our current efforts at complying with both the spirit and the law of Environmental Justice and also, help guide Fresno COG's future efforts in this area.

Effective Environmental Justice practice requires an agency to reach out to minority and low-income populations as well as other traditionally underrepresented groups to learn about their concerns, needs, and circumstances. This is usually done through some kind of targeted and expanded public involvement process. To complement our existing efforts with Environmental Justice, the Fresno COG Policy Board adopted an updated and expanded version of the Public Involvement Procedures in March of 2003, which included new and enhanced approaches to outreach to Environmental Justice populations with the goal

of adequately providing information to and soliciting input from these historically underserved populations in Fresno County (i.e. low-income, minority, Native American Tribes, elderly, and people with disabilities). For example, the outreach activities included in the Public Involvement Procedures contain provisions for additional public notification tools when applicable, such as culturally adapted community flyers, radio advertising, a bilingual Fresno COG website, direct mail, and notices in non-English language publications to complement traditional public and legal notices, display ads and workshops. A translator/interpreter for non-English speaking individuals will be available if requested at least 3 working days in advance. Staff will also provide appropriate assistance, auxiliary aids and/or services when necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity at public meetings and workshops if requested at least 3 days in advance. Staff will obtain a language line as needed for day-to-day public inquiries and all public meetings will be held in locations that can be accessed by public transportation for the transit dependent. By including these outreach activities in the Public Involvement Procedures, Fresno COG is enhancing the public participation process to eliminate participation barriers and encourage minority and low-income populations in transportation decision-making, which is consistent with state and federal guidelines.

Environmental Justice Grants

Since May of 2002, Fresno COG has been awarded four grants through the Environmental Justice Grant Program for Context Sensitive Planning made available through Caltrans. The grants were awarded for the following four projects:

1. Traffic Calming and Urban Revitalization in West Fresno

This project was awarded \$75,087 in state funds to work with community residents and businesses in the Fresno West neighborhood through an intensive Design Charrette process, to build a shared community vision for improving the traffic, safety, walking and biking conditions around the Kearney Palm Shopping Center at Fresno Street and Kearney, and for increasing safety, walkability and beautified streetscapes throughout the Fresno Street corridor and its main intersecting streets. The project has been conducted through a partnership of the Fresno COG, the Local Government Commission, the Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development and the consulting team of Walkable Communities, Inc.

A Final Report, titled, "The West Fresno Community Vision Plan" summarizes background information on West Fresno, the charrette process and results, and a vision plan prepared by the consultant team. The COG Policy Board accepted the report at their February, 2004 meeting.

2. Better Access for Low-Income and Minority Residents through Transportation Planning: A Community-based Needs Assessment

This project was awarded \$80,000 in State funds, \$10,000 from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and \$10,000 from the Fresno COG for a total of \$100,000 to gather input from low-income and minority communities about low-cost improvements that will improve transportation and increase transit ridership in Fresno County and also aims at improving air quality, which is a major concern in the Valley. The project will work with the local transit agencies to implement feasible solutions.

This project is a partnership between the non-profit organization Odyssey, Fresno COG, Fresno Area Express, Fresno County Rural Transit Agency, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and Caltrans to improve transportation options by engaging low-income and minority communities in transportation planning. Specifically, the project goals are to:

- Increase ridership on 7 transit routes (FAX and FCRTA systems) through community input processes followed by low-cost marketing.
- Generate community input on low-cost and higher-cost transportation improvements in selected neighborhoods.
- Train community members in selected neighborhoods on how to impact the transportation planning process.

This project was completed in June of 2004.

3. Fresno Yosemite Village Revitalization Plan

Fresno COG as the applicant, and the Housing Authority of the City of Fresno (HACF) as subrecipient, received a \$225,000 Caltrans Environmental Justice Grant for fiscal years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. These funds are designated for further planning activities related to the Edison Village Center area of The Fresno Yosemite Village Revitalization Implementation Plan, and further planning that was initiated by the West Fresno Community Vision Plan in October 2003.

4. Southeast Asian Transit Ridership Awareness

Fresno COG with the Lao Veterans of America Institute, through a \$50,000 Caltrans Environmental Justice Grant are seeking to increase transit ridership in the low income and minority Hmong and Laotian communities by increasing awareness of the service.

Native American Outreach and Consultation

The federal and state governments have long had a unique legal and political relationship with federally recognized tribes and have, through presidential executive orders, transportation authorization acts, state and federal agency guidelines and orders, directed all agencies receiving federal funds to establish government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes and to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with them on matters that significantly or uniquely affect their communities. The Federally Recognized Tribal Governments, of which there are 3 in Fresno County, are considered sovereign nations with governments that have jurisdiction over specific territories and individuals. According to the U.S. Constitution, in court decisions and various laws and regulations, tribal governments must be involved on a *government-to-government* basis in decision-making on issues (such as transportation) that will affect them.

To comply with the above direction, Fresno COG includes the following in our outreach and consultation efforts with the Tribes:

- Establishing and maintaining government-to-government working relationships with the Tribes,
- Establishing clear and open, ongoing communication between the Tribes and Fresno COG,
- Ensuring that Fresno COG's policy and program recommendations, actions, and information having potential effects on the Tribe's land or resources are routinely transmitted to the Tribes in a timely manner.

The three Federally Recognized Tribes located in Fresno County are as follows:

1. Big Sandy Rancheria
2. Cold Springs Rancheria
3. Table Mountain Rancheria

Tribal consultation is *not* the same as public involvement. Tribal governments must be formally notified of agency actions and proposals and should be given the same courtesies and opportunities for participation and review that are given to other governmental entities. U.S. DOT Order 5301.1 also suggests that tribal representation *should* be sought in traditional public outreach efforts such as meetings, negotiations, rulemaking efforts, advisory committees, and focus groups. Individual members of native tribes, as well as tribal officials, can participate in these forums. In addition to these opportunities, DOT and its State transportation partners must recognize the rights of tribal governments to represent their interests as governments.

Senate Bill 18 requires cities and counties to contact, and consult with, California Native American tribes prior to amending or adoption a general plan, or specific plan, or designating land as open space. The California Transportation Commission also developed the Regional Transportation Guidelines that emphasizes the Federal and State requirement to consult with and consider the interests of Indian Tribal

Governments in development of transportation plans and programs. Fresno COG makes every effort to consult with the Tribal Governments during the process of reviewing and updating the Regional Transportation Plan and to receive their input on the components of the Plan.

With the preceding information as guidance, Fresno COG has developed its current consultation and outreach efforts to Native Americans to be in line with current state and federal guidance. The current practices utilized by Fresno COG in its outreach to the Tribes include:

- *Government-to-Government Tribal Outreach* - Fresno COG notifies tribal governments of COG activities within Fresno County with particular emphasis on the need to make regular formal contact with representatives of the tribal governments to discuss important issues and to seek their input on tribal concerns and viewpoints. COG has met with representatives from each of the Tribal Governments at their Rancheria locations and at various meetings in Fresno. COG has made continual efforts to meet with the Tribal Councils and Tribal representatives to discuss COG activities, which include, among other things, our Regional Transportation Plan and potential funding opportunities for the Tribes.
- *Regular Contact and Updates* - Fresno COG provides area tribes with information and invitations to regularly scheduled meetings including, but not limited to, our monthly committees and Policy Board meetings, our Regional Transportation Plan Steering Committee meetings and Open Houses, important regional study meetings, and the Environmental Justice Task Force meetings. COG also provides to the Tribes information about funding opportunities, newsletters, special meeting announcements, and opportunities to participate in planning activities and studies that may be of importance to the tribes.
- *Sensitivity to Tribal Cultural Views* - Fresno COG will work towards facilitating an evolving knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of tribal concerns and viewpoints.

All COG planning activities are forwarded to the following list of federally recognized Native American tribes located in Fresno County via telephone communication, email, fax, or traditional mail.

Some accomplishments in our outreach efforts include the following:

- Fresno COG has ongoing contact with the federally recognized Tribes. All pertinent information is provided to them via mail, fax, or by telephone.
- Fresno COG has had face-to-face meetings with representatives from the Tribes and has attended tribal functions like groundbreaking ceremonies and cultural workshops.
- Fresno COG attends local and state conferences, workshops, and tribal academy training where tribal issues are discussed and focus is placed on improving government-to-government working relationships with the Tribes and understanding cultural sensitivity. At one of these state conferences, Fresno COG provided a presentation on our successful government-to-government relationship with the Big Sandy Rancheria.
- Fresno COG has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Big Sandy Rancheria that outlines the government-to-government relationship with the Tribe.
- Tribal representatives have attended our monthly Transportation Technical Committee meetings where Fresno COG activities are discussed on a regular basis as well as our Regional Transportation Plan Steering Committee and Environmental Justice Task Force meetings.

Non-Federally recognized tribes are not considered government entities by the federal government, but they are protected under Environmental Justice and Fresno COG does understand the importance of ensuring that these tribes are also receiving adequate information on COG planning activities and are provided with ample opportunities to participate in our planning processes.

The three non-Federally recognized tribes located in Fresno County are as follows:

1. Choinumni Tribe
2. Dunlap Band of Mono Indians

3. Sierra Foothill Wuksache Tribe

The above Tribes receive our monthly committee and Policy Board meeting notices, special meeting announcements, newsletters, and invitations to important regional study meetings to include the Regional Transportation Plan Steering Committee, the Environmental Justice Task Force, and the Public Infrastructure Study.

In addition to the above, Fresno COG includes on our mailing list the following Native American entities:

| | |
|---|--|
| North Fork Rancheria | Picayune Rancheria |
| Dumna Tribal Council Heritage Committee | Sierra Mono Museum |
| Sierra National Forest | Haslett Basin Preservation Society |
| Osa Center for Indian Education | Table Mountain Rancheria Cultural Resource |
| Four Winds Lodge | Central Valley Indian Health Inc. |
| Dunlap Band of Mono Indians Historical Preservation Society | |

Fresno COG will continue in our efforts to consult with and outreach to the Native American Indians in our region and has continued to do so through participation in the Environmental Justice Tribal Mapping project being run out of Kern COG. As an early contributor to the project, Fresno COG has interacted with many of the Tribes listed above and others throughout the San Joaquin Valley. A couple of productive meetings have already come out of participation in this project with more planned in the near future. These meetings have allowed Fresno COG to reestablish channels of communication with the recognized tribes in Fresno County.

Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan

SAFETEA-LU requires that projects selected for funding under the Elderly Individuals with Disabilities grant (section 5310), JARC (section 5316), and New Freedom (section 5317) programs be “derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit human services transportation plan” and that the plan be “developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public. The goals of the Coordinated Plan are to inventory existing public non-profit and private transit services, determine where service gaps exist, and develop a strategy for meeting identified needs. This process includes asking transit users, transit providers, agency representatives, and the general public about their needs and suggestions for future transit development and funding. In order to apply for grant

Fresno COG completed the Fresno County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan meets the requirements set forth in SAFETEA-LU. Adopted by the Fresno COG Policy Board in January 2008, the Plan was completed with input from a Consolidated Plan advisory group convened from members of the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) Input from the Consolidated Plan Advisory Group has been incorporated into the plan. In May 2008 the Fresno COG Policy Board adopted the Fresno County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan Project Management Plan that outlines implementation of the findings set forth in Fresno County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

2.9 Making the Transition to Interactive Regional Planning

As discussed earlier, the metropolitan area is experiencing a period of continuing growth amid the realities of air quality and requirements for transportation conformity. Local agencies coordinate within the traditional framework available at the Council of Fresno County Governments. Past Fresno COG efforts have focused primarily on the interactions between transportation and air quality. While the Fresno COG has no land use planning function and fully supports the continuation of independent decision-making by those elected officials most closely related to their communities, under recent federal requirements, this and future RTPs will necessitate a stronger level of coordination, communication, and cooperation in order to achieve air quality conformity.

Three components of comprehensive planning need to be addressed working with those agencies and organizations which have functioned fairly independently in the past:

- *Transportation* - Fresno COG, Caltrans, the County, the cities, the Transportation Authority, Madera County agencies, and the Tribal Governments
- *Air Quality* - SJVAPCD, the cities, the County, and the Tribal Governments
- *Land Use* - Fresno County, Clovis, Fresno, the 13 cities outside the FCMA, Madera County, and the Tribal Governments.

Fresno COG, along with the other seven RTPAs in the San Joaquin Valley, is party to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. This MOU defines a coordinated and cooperative process aimed at maximum effectiveness and compatibility of air quality and transportation plans. While there has been enhanced coordination between the Air District and transportation planning efforts in the past few years, both the District and the RTPAs in the Valley have been reluctant to venture into discussions of land use planning, as the responsibility clearly lies within the jurisdiction of cities and counties.

This orientation has been modified to some extent with the initiation of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint planning process in 2006. The Valley COGs, with support from Caltrans and the Air District, have embarked upon a comprehensive and regional approach for developing a long range vision for the Valley. This vision will address urban and rural form; mobility and connectivity; economic development; environment, open space and resources; as well as affordable housing. On April 1, 2009, The San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council adopted a Valleywide preferred Blueprint growth scenario along with 12 Smart Growth Principles to guide development. The Blueprint will provide policy makers in local jurisdictions with the tools to implement planning concepts at the local level while it continues to acknowledge local land use authority.

In 2006 the eight Valley COGs established another joint venture MOU called the "San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council". The Council includes two elected officials from each of the eight counties' Councils of Government. The purpose is to establish a Policy Council of elected officials and to develop a process and framework for establishing formal San Joaquin Valley positions on issues where valleywide consensus exists.

2.9.1 Council of Fresno County Government's Transportation Forum

Beginning in 1995, the COG has hosted the Fresno County Transportation Forum six times. The Forum is an effort by COG staff to bring together for one day, top public administrators, private sector executives and interested citizens in an effort to discuss and educate citizens on transportation issues and challenges facing Fresno County. Fresno County, like other counties and cities in California, is facing major challenges to its transportation system. The Forum is intended to serve as a first step in developing an informed and educated transportation coalition that can act as an advocate for Fresno County in matters related to transportation. Topics discussed at the Transportation Forums have included air quality conformity, transportation funding, air transportation, goods movement, land use, rail transportation and public transportation. An underlying theme of the Forum is to reinforce the need to integrate land use, transportation and air quality in long range planning endeavors.

2.9.2 The Need for Improved Analytical Tools

The Fresno COG provides a valuable resource to urban planning activities through maintenance of the FCMA Socio-Economic Database. The existing calibrated Mode Choice Countywide traffic model provides the basis for ongoing transportation planning activities. Fresno COG is also strongly involved in valley-wide modeling activities critical to an understanding of the role of the transportation sector in resolving serious air quality problems in the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin.

Fresno County and the cities of Fresno and Clovis have developed geographic information system (GIS) capacity. The effects of land use growth on transportation infrastructure is generally well documented in both general plans and in previous RTPs. Currently, we are limited in our ability to explore land use/transportation alternatives by the amount of labor required to input land use data. As technology is available to connect the GIS with the Fresno COG traffic and air quality modeling capability, the capacity to provide alternative analysis to local agencies could help considerably with understanding the transportation and air quality ramifications of land use decision-making. It may be most cost-effective to explore developing a land use/transportation modeling capacity which could be used throughout the Valley, with the financial participation of the Air District, other regional transportation planning organizations, and land use agencies.

In addition to the analytical tools listed above, in 2009-10 Fresno COG completed development of a new mode-choice, peak period countywide traffic model. The mode-choice model differs from the current Fresno COG peak hour traffic model in that it contains complete transit networks and assigns passenger trips to all types of alternative modes of travel as well as to passenger cars. Several agencies have identified projects that would benefit from a mode-split model. Among those identified are: General Plan updates, highway route adoption studies and potential transit corridor studies.

These modeling tools will assist the cities of Fresno and Clovis and the counties of Fresno and Madera in reviewing the urban landscape, considering alternative growth scenarios, and making policy changes to successfully implement their planning documents. The tools will provide information on the land use patterns that could enhance transit, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and address air quality issues. The land use allocation model will consider projected population and employment, future household characteristics, development densities, and other factors. Public officials and citizens will be able to view the likely impacts of alternative growth policies in easy-to-understand maps and tables. The output data would be inputted into the visualization and indicator model. The visualization and indicator model, a GIS-based planning support system, will consider a set of indicators that local decision-makers and stakeholders could use to measure conditions, identify issues, evaluate alternative courses of action, and monitor changes overtime. Indicators could include population and employment, development density, multi-family housing share, share of employees within ¼ mile of transit, vehicle miles traveled, air pollutant emissions, etc. Output data would be further analyzed in Fresno COG's transportation demand model.

2.9.3 Intergovernmental Cooperation on Land Use / Transportation / Air Quality Planning

Ultimately, local agencies need to find ways to work together to solve the air quality and congestion problems inherent in growth, especially in the urban area. Assuming that there is general agreement that multi-modal options must be encouraged, jurisdictional proximity will argue for a heightened level of coordination of transit systems, integrated design of bikeway facilities, cooperation on the reservation and planning for future light rail, other corridors, etc. The Regional Transportation Plan process itself will require that we agree upon priorities for funding on an ongoing basis. If we are unable to achieve air quality conformity, we all will suffer the impacts of severely reduced funding for transit and transportation corridors, and additional air district constraints on our ability to build a healthy economy, attract industry, and develop jobs. The stakes are high and the impacts will be felt in all areas within the county. Millions of dollars in highway funding may be at risk valleywide should air quality sanctions go into effect.

There is a continuing need to find creative ways to work jointly on areas which have been decided independently or on an incremental basis in the past. Ultimately, there may be a desire to create some structured arrangement to work together on issues that would benefit by shared analysis and decision-making. Approaches that could assist include the following:

The use of available modeling tools for transportation and air quality by land use agencies for general plan development - Information developed for this and future RTPs is available to member agencies to clarify the ramifications of plan alternatives. Improved interactivity between the Fresno COG model and

local GIS capabilities could be used at both project and general plan levels.

Integrated staff work groups to frame the questions which need to be addressed - An integrated team of local agency staff could assist the decision-making process through: 1) listing consensus-building goals, 2) framing the questions that need to be addressed and articulating individual agency positions in a neutral manner, 3) making recommendations as to what would constitute the type of issues (i.e. inter-jurisdictional facilities, resource issues such as air and water, economic development) which would benefit from regional planning and decision-making 4) working through a proposal for structured agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding or equally effective mechanism.

Setting up an educational process for staff, the public, and elected and appointive officials - We all need to better understand the linkages between land use, transportation, and air quality. Interactive institutional arrangements and policies may need to be created involving planning commissions, LAFCO, the Air District and legislative bodies at the local level to make the system work.

Technical assistance from the Air District and statewide design and environmental groups - The problems of the Central Valley are gaining wider appreciation and analysis as the state looks to this area for absorption of future population. Local agencies could be pro-active in asking for assistance in working through our land use/transportation/air quality relationships from the Air District, Caltrans, and other resource agencies.

San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint Planning Process

As mentioned earlier, in 2006 the Valley COGs and the Air District embarked upon a comprehensive and regional approach for developing a long range vision for the Valley. This vision will address urban and rural form; mobility and connectivity; economic development; environment, open space and resources; and affordable housing. The Blueprint will provide policy makers in local jurisdictions with the tools to implement planning concepts at the local level while acknowledging local land use authority.

Committed to interfacing with the San Joaquin Valley Partnership, the Blueprint effort has provided an institutional framework, process development and product creation to support long-range planning for the region.

The following process components will underlie all work during the course of the Blueprint for 2035 and beyond:

- **Thinking Regionally** – Understanding that opportunities and challenges are not bound by jurisdictional boundaries, the Blueprint has engaged Valley COGs, elected officials, business representatives, industry, interest and community groups and the public-at-large to develop a vision that recognizes this interdependency.
- **Effective Partnering** – Recognizing the need for the region to compete globally, the SJ Valley Regional Blueprint has worked to develop effective and strategic partnerships to advance the regional economy and protect regional resources.
- **Inclusive Participation** – Acknowledging the importance of participation from the diverse constituency of the region, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint strives to include representation of race, ethnicity, gender, geography, and profession to help ensure success.
- **Consensus Building** – Working toward a common San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint Vision has provided opportunities for constructive conversations and debate to facilitate the melding of multiple needs into a comprehensive regional vision.
- **Information Integration** – By assembling and assimilating unrelated datasets into a comprehensive and integrated decision-making tool, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint was able to develop scenario planning comparisons to assure that resource choices that will determine the future of the Valley are made with the best available regional information.

Throughout the process, multiple strategies have been employed to further the development of each component and each component was utilized to support underlying values and principles. While these values and principles will need to be developed and affirmed by the region, the following are the basic elements that were used throughout the Blueprint planning process and will continue to influence implementation:

- Broad public outreach & engagement
- Integration of multiple planning tools
- Infrastructure plans to support quality of life
- Efficient land use to accommodate agriculture, industry, business, housing, & resources
- Utilization of technology to optimize regional decision-making & civic engagement
- Optimization of new partnerships
- Commitment to implementation through consensus
- Recognition that “failure to plan is planning to fail”

With the adoption of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint preferred growth scenario and Smart Growth Principles by the Regional Policy Council on April 1, 2009, the Blueprint planning process has advanced to the Blueprint Roadmap. Activities are now focused on producing a summary document; implementation plan and toolkit to assist local jurisdictions with integrating the Blueprint principles into their local planning processes.

2.10 SAFETEA-LU Planning Areas

2.10.1 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).

Federal transportation statutes have for years required multimodal transportation planning by MPOs. Previous federal transportation legislation and now SAFETEA-LU require states to plan as well. Each state must create a long-range plan, which should be a composite of the MPOs’ plans combined with the state’s plan for the areas outside of the MPOs jurisdiction. SAFETEA-LU provides the framework in its provision of flexible funds so that areas can build the systems that best meet their needs.

Among the factors that states and MPOs must consider in their long-range plans are land use, transit service, and traffic congestion. They must take into account the relationship of transportation, land use, and development decisions. Just as transportation investments can influence land use patterns, so can land use patterns influence transportation needs. The relationship has a definite air quality impact. MPOs must plan to decrease traffic congestion or prevent it from occurring in uncongested areas.

SAFETEA-LU also continues the Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Improvements (CMAQ) Program, begun in ISTEA. CMAQ can only be spent on Transportation Control Measures, other transportation measures within approved State Implementation Plans, comparable Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved programs, and other projects intended to improve air quality.

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. 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 really started.

Chronology

During the time between the publication of the NPRM in June 2006 and the publication of the Final Rule in February 2007, Fresno COG staff worked towards a SAFETEA-LU compliant 2007 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 Model Coordinating Committee (MCC) and Programming Coordinating Group (PCG) conference calls. This work effort has continued with the 2011 RTP and FTIP.

2.10.2 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 was to identify SAFETEA-LU compliance items and describe either how they were currently being addressed or how Fresno COG intended to address them. The 2007 RTP and associated documents addressed many of the SAFETEA-LU requirements. The Gap Analysis attached in Appendix C is the most recent version and, updated and revised for the 2011 RTP, applies only to Fresno COG, as FHWA has requested a gap analysis from each MPO.

2.10.3 SAFETEA-LU Planning Areas

SAFETEA-LU identifies eight broad planning areas to be considered in the planning process. Those areas are as follows:

Planning Area #1

Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

RTP Response:

The RTP identifies the importance of developing and maintaining a properly functioning transportation system not only within the metropolitan area but throughout the rural areas as well. As the number one agricultural county in the world, it is critical that the movement of agricultural commodities from farm to market remain a high priority for transportation providers in Fresno County.

Planning Area #2

Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

RTP Response:

Safety and Security are critical components of a properly functioning multi-modal transportation system. As detailed in the Action Element, Fresno COG has developed a long range Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Strategic Plan. ITS makes use of communications technology to more effectively manage the transportation system through means of electronic communications. Several ITS applications (Emergency Vehicle Management, Visibility Warning Systems, Automated Roadside Safety Inspection, etc.) have direct benefits for improving safety and security for the transportation system.

Planning Area #3

Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

RTP Response:

Fresno Area Express has implemented a security system involving the installation of surveillance cameras and the use of police officers to provide security on buses and at bus stops throughout the fixed-route system, at various times of the day. In addition to safety and security as it relates to the streets and highways system, continued development of the region's multipurpose trail and bicycle facilities will also require development of policies by local agencies to promote safety and security for users.

Planning Area #4

Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.

RTP Response:

The enhancement of mobility for people and goods is discussed in the Multimodal, Highways, Streets, and Roads, Rail, and Aviation sections of the Action Element. Policies supportive of this desired outcome are included in comparable sections of the Policy Element. In addition, Fresno COG has established an Intermodal Freight Advisory Committee as a venue for discussion of goods movement issues.

Planning Area #5

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.

RTP Response:

The overall environmental impacts of transportation decisions are discussed and documented in the Environmental Assessment prepared in conjunction with the RTP. The Policy Element of the RTP reflects specific goals, objectives and policies directed toward energy conservation. The Transportation Systems Management section of the RTP seeks to be responsive to energy conservation goals by implementing traffic and public transit improvements and by encouraging the use of non-motorized forms of transportation

Planning Area #6

Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.

RTP Response:

Specific goals, objectives, and policy statements which address the need for connectivity of the transportation system are listed throughout the RTP. Both the urban and rural networks are included in our traffic model, and are given consideration in management of the transportation system. In addition, four long range planning studies have been completed. The Fresno-Madera County East-West Corridor Study (Phases I and II), the Herndon Avenue Specific Study, the Southeast Corridor Study, and the Fresno-Madera County Freeway Deficiency Study. In addition, another long-range planning study is underway, the Fresno County Public Transportation Infrastructure Study.

Planning Area #7

Promote efficient system management and operation.

RTP Response:

Throughout the RTP emphasis is placed on more efficiently managing the existing transportation system. The Fresno County Intelligent Transportation Systems Strategic Plan has identified specific strategies which will allow for more efficient management of the existing transportation system using communications technology.

Planning Area #8

Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

RTP Response:

The Policy Element of the RTP contains specific goals, objectives, and policies reflecting Fresno COG's commitment to preserving and maintaining the existing transportation system. Local agencies have included anticipated maintenance and reconstruction needs in the countywide network as background to air quality analysis. This assumes that ongoing maintenance of streets and highways, bridges, bikeway facilities, airport facilities, and rail will continue to preserve the safety and efficiencies of the transportation system.