# Chapter 4

Reedley, California Spring Blossoms

## Sustainable Communities Strategy:

### People. Choices. Community.

*While focusing attention on meeting Greenhouse Gas emission reduction targets, Fresno COG also established other important goals in its 2014 RTP/SCS, aimed at improving the overall quality of life in the region.*

# 4.1 Sustainable Communities Strategy

Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), which went into effect in 2009, added statutes to the California Government Code to encourage planning practices that create sustainable communities. It calls for each metropolitan planning organization to 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 autos and light trucks. Fresno COG is including the SCS for the first time in its 2014 RTP. Figure 4-1 shows Fresno COG's SCS Development Process with adoption of the RTP/SCS in June of 2014.

The 2014 RTP/SCS seeks to guide the Fresno region toward a more sustainable future by integrating land use, housing, and transportation planning to create communities that are more compact, walkable, and transit oriented. Sustainability is defined as simultaneously meeting current economic, environmental, and community needs, while ensuring that the ability of future generations to meet their needs is not jeopardized. A prosperous economy, a healthy environment, and social equity are described as the "Three Es" of sustainability.

The path toward living more sustainably is clear: focus housing and job growth in urbanized areas where there is existing and planned transportation infrastructure, protect sensitive habitat and open space, invest in a transportation network that provides residents and workers with transportation options that reduce GHG emissions, and implement the plan through incentives and collaboration.

It is important to note that the 2014 RTP addresses vehicle miles traveled from a broader range of vehicles than those addressed in SB 375 – such as public transit buses, heavy duty trucks, and school buses. The SCS focuses only on the requirements of SB 375 which call for travel related GHG reductions for the specific vehicle classes of cars and light trucks. Other performance metrics related to GHG emissions are addressed in the balance of the 2014 RTP chapters where appropriate.

In terms of cars and light trucks, there are three primary GHG emissions reduction strategies developed by the State. The SB 375 SCS requirements address regional land use and housing accommodation in the context of transportation investments. In future years, the State will also require increased use of lower carbon fuels and increased fuel efficiency in vehicles.

Transportation strategies contained in the RTP – investing in public transit system, managing transportation demand, making transportation system improvements, and continuing to expand and improve bike and pedestrian facilities - are major components of the SCS. However, the SCS also focuses on the general land use growth pattern for the region, because geographical relationships between land uses—including density and intensity—help determine the need for travel.

### In summary, under SB 375, an SCS must:

- Identify future land use patterns;
- Identify areas to accommodate long-term housing needs as well as 8-year housing needs;
- Consider resource areas and farmland;
- Identify transportation needs and the planned transportation network;
- Set forth a future land use pattern to meet GHG emission reduction targets

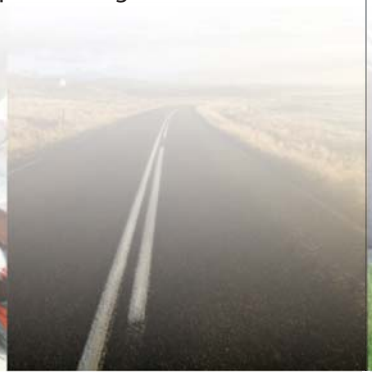
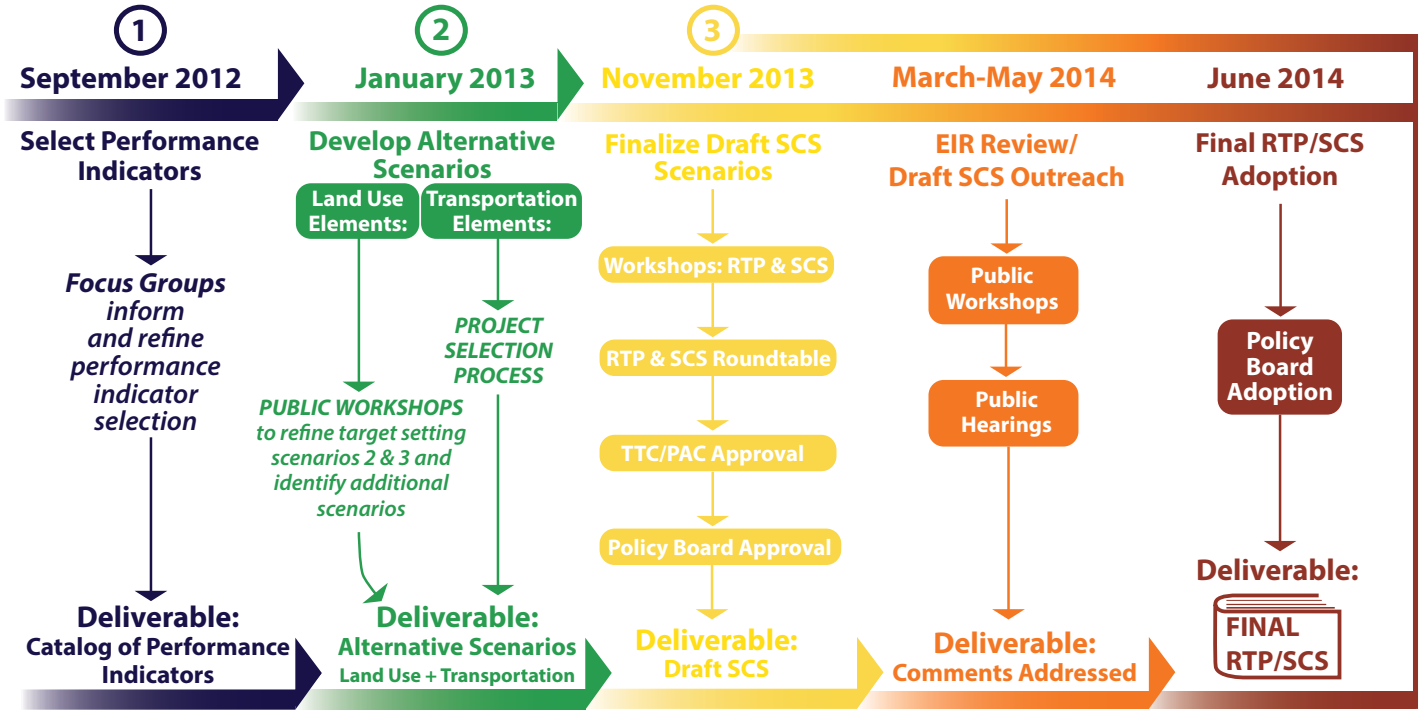



Figure 4-1: Fresno COG's SCS development process and timeline




SCS requirements do not mean that the SCS creates a mandate for certain land use policies at the local level. SB 375 specifically states, "Neither a sustainable communities strategy nor an alternative planning strategy regulates the use of land, nor, except as provided by subparagraph (J), shall either one be subject to any state approval. Nothing in a sustainable communities strategy shall be interpreted as superseding the exercise of land use authority of cities and counties within the region." (Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(K)). Rather, the SCS provides a regional policy foundation that local governments may build upon as they choose.

Because local land use agencies have land use authority, there is no requirement in the SB 375 legislation for cities and counties to change or amend their general plans to be consistent with the SCS. Local jurisdictions maintain the discretion and will be solely responsible for determining consistency of any future projects with the SCS, including discretion in certifying the environmental review for a project, regardless of eligibility for streamlining.

Cities and Counties have and will continue to be involved in the SCS planning process and will be encouraged to recognize the land use and transportation policies developed in the SCS. Federal and State transportation funds go through the MPOs to the jurisdictions, so there certainly is an implication for collaboration and working together.

## 4.2 SCS Co-benefits

It is intended that the 2014 RTP/SCS will produce benefits beyond simply reducing GHG emissions. The 2014 RTP/SCS will help the region contend with many ongoing issues across a wide range of concerns, including placemaking, the environment, responsiveness to the marketplace, and mobility:

- The 2014 RTP/SCS promotes development of better places to live and work through measures that encourage more compact development, varied housing options, bike and pedestrian improvements, and efficient transportation infrastructure.

- The demographic profile of the region is changing and the market for housing is changing with it. Residents will be looking for a "value lifestyle" in which

both housing and transportation costs are minimized even as they maintain a high-quality of life. Strategies focused on high-quality places, compact infill development, and more housing and transportation choices provide a response to these newly emerging market forces.

- By including options that create more compact neighborhoods and placing destinations closer to homes and closer to one another, the 2014 RTP/SCS's strategies can reduce the cost of development for taxpayers and reduce everyday costs of housing and transportation.

- Reducing the footprint of new development protects farmland and open space.

- The 2014 RTP/SCS does not envision wholesale redevelopment of the region. The vast majority of neighborhoods and business districts that will exist in 2035 already exist today, and most of them will be unchanged in the next 20-25 years. Rather, the 2014 RTP/SCS envisions a new development pattern for new neighborhoods and revitalized neighborhoods and business districts that will build upon current patterns to give residents more choices and opportunities as they consider where to live and work.

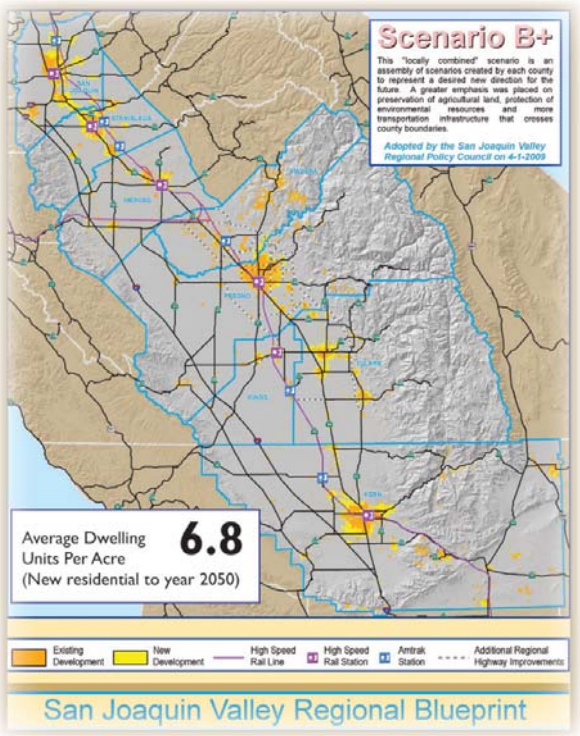
# 4.3 San Joaquin Valley Blueprint

The 2014 RTP/SCS is the latest refinement of the evolving Blueprint process that began in 2006. The Merced County Association of Governments, in coordination with the Great Valley Center, led the Valleywide Blueprint effort on behalf of the San Joaquin Valley organizations at its inception. Fresno COG assumed the lead agency role from the adoption of the Blueprint, through the development of the Blueprint Roadmap, which included the documentation of the Blueprint Planning Process, a Guidance Framework, an Institutional Arrangements Whitepaper and the web-based Blueprint Planners Toolkit. Seven Valley COGs and one RTPA participated in the Valley Blueprint: the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG), the Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG), the Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG), the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG), the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG), and the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG).

On April 1, 2009, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council, the decision-making body for the Valleywide process, approved Scenario B+ and 12 Smart Growth Principles, concluding the planning phase of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint planning process. The Valley Blueprint is a vision for the future of the San Joaquin Valley, in which less land is consumed for development, more resources are preserved for future generations, distinctive communities are enhanced, and more travel choices are available.

Fresno COG conducted extensive public outreach to provide residents with the opportunity to participate in planning the future growth of the county and its cities. During Phase 1 of the Blueprint process, Fresno COG conducted community values and vision workshops in all 15 cities. Over 2,600 participants attended these workshops and outreach events. In Phase 2 Fresno COG conducted 20 public workshops throughout Fresno County to identify a preferred growth scenario for the county.

The Fresno COG Policy Board directed and oversaw the Fresno COG Blueprint process, and ultimately selected a preferred growth scenario. The Policy Board was advised by the Fresno COG Blueprint Roundtable throughout the process. The Roundtable met monthly during the visioning and growth scenario planning phases to discuss and make recommendations on the Blueprint. Fresno COG Policy Board endorsed the Fresno Blueprint concept on May 29, 2008.




The Fresno COG preferred growth scenario is referred to as the "Hybrid" concept because it is based on elements of several alternative growth scenarios originally developed by the Fresno COG Blueprint Roundtable. The Hybrid concept includes a high-capacity, multi-modal transportation network that provides connectivity throughout the region. It involves a mix of infill development, greenfield development, and redevelopment. One of the principal objectives of the preferred growth scenario is to provide for employment centers to serve the west side of Fresno County, either along the I-5 corridor or in other appropriate locations. The preferred growth scenario also discourages growth on strategic farmland and resource conservation/ open space land. By linking east-west transportation corridors to I-5 and balancing jobs and housing, the preferred growth scenario predicts lower VMTs than the status quo scenario. The Fresno COG preferred growth scenario estimates that by 2050 countywide average residential densities for new residential growth will be 8.0 dwelling units per acre. The density of new growth in the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area (FCMA) will be slightly higher, while the average density of new growth in the non-FCMA areas will be lower.

The Blueprint in many ways was a precursor to the growth alternative scenarios developed in the SCS process. The extensive public outreach conducted for the Blueprint and the resulting shared principles support and guide the SCS process.

# 4.4 Targets for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

As part of its mandate under SB 375, in 2010, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) set specific GHG emission reduction targets for cars and light trucks for each of the state's 18 metropolitan planning organizations from a 2005 base year. The GHG targets set for the Fresno region call for a 5 percent per capita reduction by 2020, and a 10 percent per capita reduction by 2035.

SB 375 requires that Fresno COG demonstrate in its SCS that GHG emission reduction targets will be met for 2020 and 2035. If not, then an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) shall be prepared to demonstrate how the targets can be met through the alternative strategies in the APS. Fresno COG will be able to meet the targets set by the CARB through its 2014 RTP/SCS as shown in the following table:

Table 4-1: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

| Year | Per Capita GHG Reduction Targets | Fresno COG Per Capita GHG Reduction |
|---|---|---|
| 2020 | 5% | 9% |
| 2035 | 10% | 11% |
| 2040 | NA | 12% |

Fresno COG will continue to update modeling tools and planning assumptions to reflect the latest information available. Should the likely future development pattern change, this would be reflected in the next regional growth forecast and SCS land use pattern. Fresno COG will also continue to improve modeling capabilities and update modeling assumptions to reflect the most recent published and accepted data regarding changes in travel behavior and technological advances.

# 4.5 Creating the SCS Scenarios

Fresno COG's SCS scenario process was initiated in August 2012. Four land use scenarios were developed through an open and engaging public process. Several transportation project scenarios were also initially created, which were eventually narrowed down to one project list for all the land use scenarios.

### The four scenarios submitted to the Fresno COG Policy Board for consideration:

**A** **Public input from November 2012 workshop** proposed by public

**B** **Current planning assumptions** proposed by member agencies

**C** **Foothill growth to city of Fresno** proposed by RTP Roundtable

**D** **Foothill growth to existing communities** proposed by coalition of community organizations (completed after public outreach workshops)

The scenarios were designed to explore and clearly convey the impact of both where the region grows over the next 21 years—to what extent growth is focused within existing cities and towns, and how it grows—the shape and style of the neighborhoods and transportation systems that will shape growth over the period.

The Fresno COG Policy Board selected Scenario B as the preferred SCS scenario for the Fresno County region in November 2013.

### Growth Forecast

Fresno County is now home to nearly 1 million people. The County is expected to accommodate an additional 388,076 people during the period 2008 – 2035, increasing to a total population of 1,300,597 in 2035, with equally significant housing unit and employment growth. This future growth will put additional pressure on an already congested transportation system, on communities and neighborhoods that have been in existence for many decades, and on the region's natural environment.

The 2014 RTP/SCS depends heavily on an accurate and credible forecast for future growth in population, housing, and employment. The eight county-wide MPOs selected The Planning Center|DC&E and Arthur C. Nelson, PhD. to prepare growth forecasts to be used in the SCS.

Table 4-2: Forecasts for Fresno County 2008-2040, Preferred Scenario

| Year | Household Population | Housing Units | Employment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2008 | 894,270 | 310,579 | 345,816 |
| 2020 | 1,059,233 | 363,142 | 363,581 |
| 2035 | 1,272,410 | 434,519 | 427,727 |
| 2040 | 1,343,709 | 458,330 | 449,111 |

The forecast models have been developed to allow each MPO to update the underlying data each year as new data are published by state and federal agencies. The ability to update is an important component of the forecast model as updating the models over the next few years will allow the forecasts to better capture demographic characteristics that return to trend and those that are at a new normal.

Three demographic measures form the primary forecasts: household population, housing units, and employment. The forecasts developed as part of the 2014 RTP/SCS are shown in Table 4-2. It is important to note that the population and employment forecasts were held constant for each SCS scenario and were the basis for the spatial distribution of land use in each scenario.

## SCS Modeling

Fresno County will meet GHG reduction targets established by the CARB by focusing housing and employment growth in urbanized areas, protecting sensitive habitat and open space, and investing in a transportation system that provides residents and workers with transportation options. The determination that Fresno COG will meet the CARB GHG reduction target is based upon the modeling methodology described below.

In Fresno COG's 2014 RTP/SCS process, "Envision Tomorrow" was used to develop future land uses for the scenarios. The resulting land uses from Envision Tomorrow were input into the travel demand forecast model referred to as the Model Improvement Program (MIP) model to estimate vehicle trips (i.e. every home or office will generate "x" number of vehicle trips). Then, the output from the transportation model was used as input to the air quality model EMFAC2011 to determine the amount of GHG emission reductions.

Envision Tomorrow is a land-use scenario planning tool that uses development types to model possible future development patterns, called scenarios. In any given land-use scenario, parcel-level planning areas expected to acquire new development are assigned a development type, which determines the number and types of housing and employment projected to develop in that area. The aggregation of these areas, controlled to reflect Countywide targets for population and employment, reflects one particular SCS scenario for the Fresno County region.

The four land-use scenarios were developed for the 2014 RTP/SCS process, representing different growth strategies and applications of smart-growth principles. The effects of these strategies are manifest in the relative growth patterns and growth allocations reflected in the four scenarios—for example, scenarios that reflect a strong preference for compact development will contain more high-density development types and will generally exhibit smaller growth footprints on average.

The growth scenarios from the SCS process were revised and modified many times based on inputs from the public and stakeholders. Many iterations of each of the scenarios were then run through the models before scenarios were finalized.

Fresno COG's 4-step travel demand model was used in combination with EMFAC2011 to estimate GHG emission. The 4-step traffic model includes trip generation, trip distribution, mode choice and trip assignment. The improved Fresno COG traffic model is more sensitive to smart growth principles and incorporates the 4 Ds: density, destination, diversity and design. With the forecast social economic data derived from the land use pattern produced by Envision Tomorrow, and the proposed transportation network, the traffic model estimates vehicle miles traveled by the region, and provides information such as congestion level, speed, transit ridership, and travel by different modes, etc.

Please refer to the "Fresno COG technical methodology" memo submitted to the ARB for more information regarding how Fresno COG modeled the GHG emission in the 2014 RTP/SCS. The traffic model documentation is available in Appendix J. Documentation for the EMFAC2011 can be found at: www.arb.ca.gov.

# 4.6 SCS Public Participation

## SCS Public Participation Requirements

There are a few public outreach requirements spelled out in Senate Bill (SB) 375. Requirements include the development of a Public Participation Plan and conducting consultation with specific types of agencies during the development of the SCS. It also requires that each Planning Agency conduct informational meetings and workshops for elected officials and member of the public during development of the SCS and once the draft SCS is released for public review and comment.
See RTP Chapter 2 for detailed information regarding the following Public Participation Activities, as well as Appendix H.

*Requirement #1:*

*The MPO shall adopt a Public Participation Plan in advance of developing an SCS and/or APS to include the following: Outreach efforts encouraging the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders in the planning process, consistent with the agency's adopted Federal Public Participation Plan. This includes, but is not limited to affordable housing advocates, transportation advocates, neighborhood and community groups, environmental advocates, home builder representatives, broad-based business organizations, landowners, commercial property interests, and homeowner associations.*

*Requirement #2:*

*Regional public workshops with information and tools providing a clear understanding of policy choices and issues. At least one workshop in each county. At least three workshops for counties with a population greater than 500,000. To the extent practicable, each workshop shall include urban simulation computer modeling to create visual representations of the SCS and APS.*

## Fresno COG's Public Participation Plans and Strategies

Fresno COG's Public Participation Plan was adopted by the COG Policy Board in March of 2012. Two additional, complimentary strategies were then developed specific to the development process of the RTP/SCS.

### RTP Public Outreach Strategy


The Regional Transportation Plan Public Outreach Strategy established a process and outlined specific activities for communicating with the public throughout the RTP development process. The goals, strategies and methods outlined guided Fresno COG's efforts to build awareness of Fresno COG and the Regional Transportation Plan with particular emphasis on the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

### Valleywide SCS Public Outreach Strategy

The eight San Joaquin Valley Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) elected to collaborate to develop and implement a Valleywide Public Outreach Strategy as well. In recognition of their shared interests and collaboration, the MPOs received a Proposition 84 grant for funding assistance with SCS modeling and public outreach. The purpose of this Valleywide SCS Outreach Strategy entitled "Valley Visions" was to provide a project identity and consistent messaging for the SCS, while supporting individual county outreach efforts. This strategy described the approach, target audiences, methods and priorities for Valleywide SCS Outreach.

The Regional Transportation Plan Public Outreach Strategy and the Valleywide SCS Outreach Strategy were presented, reviewed and approved in open meetings by Fresno COG's 35-member Regional Transportation Plan Roundtable, the Transportation Technical Committee, the Policy Advisory Committee and the

Fresno COG Policy Board. Copies of each public outreach plan or strategy are available on Fresno COG's website.

## RTP Roundtable

A key to active and earnest public involvement was the formation of the Regional Transportation Plan Roundtable by Fresno COG to support COG staff and COG standing committees in their development and preparation of the 2014 RTP/SCS. The 35-member Roundtable, comprised of a representative from each local member agency, representatives of a wide variety of private and public sector stakeholder groups and agencies, and the public-at-large. (See Table 2-1 in RTP Chapter 2 for the Roundtable representation.) The RTP Roundtable met monthly beginning August 2012. Their comments support the final decision on the RTP by the Fresno COG Policy Board. At its September 18, 2013, meeting, after over a year of meetings, the RTP Roundtable voted 11-6 to endorse Scenario B for inclusion in the SCS.

## 18 Regional Community Workshops were held throughout Fresno County:

**Community Workshop (November 2012)**

Our first Sustainable Communities Strategy community workshop became the birthplace of Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Scenario A. Held November 2012, it was attended by approximately 150 people from around Fresno County. At the workshop participants were surveyed via real-time voting technology using "clickers". They were asked to rank transportation spending priorities and issues of importance related to the development of Sustainable Communities Strategies.

Once the surveying was completed, attendees participated in a hands-on mapping exercise, placing colored chips on maps of the Fresno County region, creating visual representations of their own land use and transportation choices. Presentation and mapping materials were available in English and Spanish, and Spanish and Hmong interpreters worked with participants who requested their services. Participants then presented their area map designs to other workshop attendees.

**Community Workshops (May-July 2013)**

Fresno COG completed a round of 10 community workshops held throughout Fresno County beginning in May 2013 that gave residents an opportunity to hear more about Fresno COG and the region's RTP/SCS Strategy. The workshops were conducted in five different languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, Punjabi and Laotian. The combined workshop attendance totaled approximately 330 people, with 262 participating in a "clicker exercise" that encouraged participants to consider transportation funding needs and the relationship of land use and transportation.

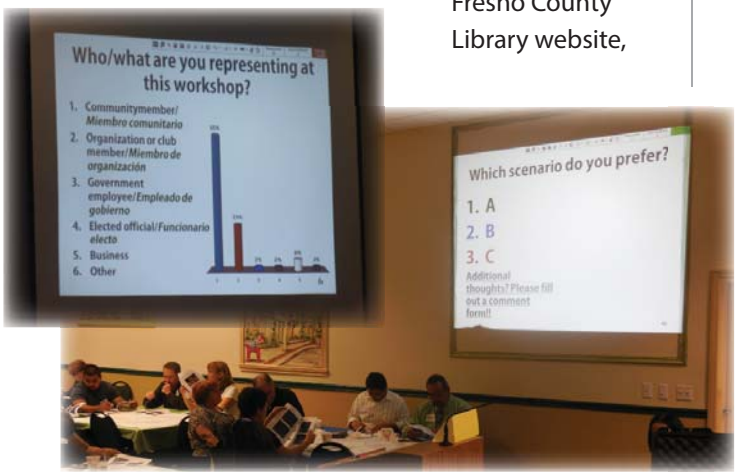
Presentation materials used for the workshops were also available in all five languages on the Fresno COG website at www.fresnocog.org/rtp from May through July 2013. The "clicker exercise" conducted at the workshops was also available in three languages on the same webpage for interested community members that were unable to attend one of the workshops.

**Scenario Workshops (August-September 2013)**

In response to the SB 375 workshop requirement, Fresno COG hosted six workshops and one video conference presentation of Sustainable Communities Strategy Scenarios A, B and C in August and September 2013. The

workshops were held in Fresno, Kingsburg, Kerman, Huron and Clovis for the general public with free transportation, child care and dinner provided. The sixth workshop was co-hosted by the American Lung Association for medical professionals and health organizations at UCSF Fresno. A video conference of the presentation was requested by the City of San Joaquin with their preferred scenario selections submitted via hard copy.

COG staff also developed complete online versions of the presentation in English and Spanish that were accessible through the COG website at www.fresnocog.org and the Fresno County Library website,




and are available on YouTube. Online participants were asked to view the presentation and then click into the link provided to select their preferred scenario and submit comments. The online presentation and survey was available to the public for participation until September 18, 2013. During each of the workshops Sustainable Communities Strategies A, B and C were presented and explained using graphic comparison charts of the 10 indicators identified in August 2013.

Demographic data was requested via clicker technology from each participant. At the completion of the presentation, following a question and answer session, participants were asked to select their preferred scenario and to submit any comments they had regarding the scenarios. Summaries of the demographic and scenario preference selections, and all of the comments received were submitted to the RTP Roundtable, TTC, PAC and Policy Board for review and consideration. Of the 348 community workshop attendees, 251 chose a personal preferred scenario from the A, B, and C scenario data presented. Of those 251 respondents, 19% chose Scenario A, 24% chose Scenario B and 57% chose Scenario C. No information was presented addressing the achievability of the scenarios.

**A fourth Scenario**

During the development of a fourth scenario, Scenario D, the process and the scenario itself were vetted before four standing committees and were available online on the Fresno COG website for over two months throughout October and November of 2013. Staff also met with our member agency representatives at the local agencies and public presentations were given before many of their city councils, and before the Board of Supervisors. Those presentations allowed Fresno COG staff to share the scenario indicator results and information, and answer questions regarding the RTP/SCS.

## Additional Public Participation

**Community Survey:**

In addition to what was required by SB375, Fresno COG commissioned a Scientific Survey of the Fresno County Community with AIS Market Research to conduct a random sample survey of Fresno County residents regarding their community values and transportation needs. Because of the way the respondents were selected, the results are representative of the county's population as a whole. The completed results were reported to the RTP Roundtable, TTC, PAC and Board, to be used during development of the RTP/SCS. Some highlights of the survey revealed that the top 10 Transportation Spending Priorities include (in ranked order):

1. **Repair potholes on city streets and/or rural roads**
2. **Improve transportation for the disabled**
3. **Improve transportation for the elderly**
4. **Resurface city streets and/or rural roads**
5. **Resurface highways and/or ramps**
6. **Reduce traffic congestion on highways and/or ramps**
7. **Repair/maintain sidewalks pedestrian walkways, and trails**
8. **Reduce traffic congestion on streets/roads**

**9. Expand local bus service routes**

**10. Improve/increase local bus service**

**Focus Groups:**
In order to prioritize a list of close to 40 indicators selected by COG staff, six focus group meetings were held to solicit input from the public and stakeholders. The focus groups were: transportation, environment, health, business, social equity and natural resources. The RTP Roundtable committee members were also polled. In all, 54 ballots were received. The top 10 performance indicators as a result of the focus groups and polling are as follows:


These 10 indicators were used to evaluate and report the impact of the SCS scenarios. Comments from the focus group members were also received and noted for the development of future Sustainable Communities Strategies.

During the entire process, Fresno COG's website hosted dedicated pages, calendar listings, agendas, data, links, presentations, results, videos, minutes, committee processes and various other listings. In addition, staff gave presentations to community and business groups, chambers, and service groups as requested.

For complete descriptions of the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan public outreach conducted during the development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy please see RTP Chapter 3, and Appendix H.

# 4.7 Land Use Scenarios and Outcomes

Fresno COG's SCS process was kicked-off in August 2012. Several focus group meetings were held and a list of priority performance indicators were selected by stakeholders and interested parties. In November 2012, a public workshop was held where the participants were asked to provide input regarding where growth should occur. The public input was then digitized, analyzed and converted into Scenario A. Scenario B was inherited from the 2012 target-setting process. Fresno COG staff met with each of the 15 cities and the County, and verified the growth allocation in Scenario B based on their latest planning assumptions. Scenario C was proposed by the RTP Roundtable Committee to study the "what if" impact if there is no growth in the foothill areas north and east of Fresno.

Scenarios A, B, and C were presented to the public in August 2013 at a series of public workshops, on Fresno COG's website and through other media channels. The public was polled regarding their preference of the scenarios. Scenario D was proposed by a coalition of community based organizations after scenario A, B and C were presented to and vetted through the public outreach process. Scenario D, which was developed later, had only COG committee review.

The four scenarios for consideration by the COG Policy Board are shown in Figure 4-2 and described below:

## Scenario A

Scenario A was based on public input from the November 2012 workshop conducted by the COG. Participants were asked to place chips at locations where growth is preferred. They also provided input about types of development at the preferred locations.

## Scenario B

Scenario B was developed to reflect current planning assumptions; it was developed after extensive outreach to the cities and the county about their growth plans and planning assumptions for land uses likely to be developed

Figure 4-2: SCS Scenario Comparisons

| Scenario > | A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Central Theme** | Public input from November 2012 workshop | Current planning assumptions | Foothill growth to City of Fresno | Foothill growth to existing communities |
| **Proposed By…** | Public | Member Agencies | RTP Round Table | Coalition of Community Organizations |
| **Defining Characteristics** | • Considers public input from November 2012 workshop<br>• Growth in the metro area conforms to historical trend<br>• Some rural communities receive much higher growth | • Follows current general and specific plan updates<br>• Growth allocation follows historical trend<br>• Includes development in Friant Ranch, Millerton, and the proposed pharmacy school | • Additional 4% of countywide growth allocated to City of Fresno along corridors and activity centers<br>• Unincorporated growth constrained to 10 existing communities; little change in incorporated cities<br>• Development in Friant Ranch, Millerton, and the proposed pharmacy school not included | • Developed by coalition of community organizations<br>• Increased redevelopment and higher density for new growth<br>• Growth reduced from the foothill communities and reallocated to existing cities and communities<br>• Development in Friant Ranch, Millerton, and the proposed pharmacy school not included |
| **Communities with Significant Changes in Growth Allocation*** | **Less Growth**<br>• Clovis, Coalinga, Parlier, Sanger<br>• Auberry, Friant Ranch, Millerton, Shaver Lake<br>**More Growth**<br>• Firebaugh, Fresno, Huron, Kerman, Kingsburg, Orange Cove, San Joaquin<br>• Caruthers, Easton, Lanare, Laton, Raisin City, Riverdale, Squaw Valley | Each city/community receives growth based on historical trend | **No Growth**<br>• Auberry, Friant Ranch, Millerton, Raisin City, Squaw Valley<br>**More Growth**<br>• Fresno | **No Growth**<br>• Friant Ranch, Millerton<br>**Less Growth**<br>• Auberry<br>**More Growth**<br>• Biola, Bowles, Caruthers, Del Rey, Easton, Lanare, Laton, Raisin City, Riverdale, Tranquillity |

*Compared to planning assumptions based on historical trend. Cities/communities not listed will receive growth approximately consistent with historical trend.

in the 2020 and 2035 horizons. Scenario B also included land uses based on the draft General Plan updates for Fresno and Clovis, both heavily influenced by the Valley-wide Blueprint goals.

## Scenario C

Scenario C was proposed by the RTP Roundtable largely at the request of the community-based organizations who expressed that Fresno and Clovis plans were not 'ambitious' enough to make a significant impact on environmental issues. The Scenario would shift foothill growth from unincorporated Fresno County to the downtown and corridors in the City of Fresno.

## Scenario D

A fourth scenario, D, was proposed by the community-based organizations and would shift foothill growth from unincorporated Fresno County to existing smaller communities and incorporated cities, as well as to downtown Fresno.

## The Merits of Scenario B

Although all four scenarios meet the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set by CARB, Scenario B represents a growth scenario that is both ambitious and achievable for the Fresno County region. The merits of Scenario B are summarized as follows:

- An ambitious plan for sustainability with significant advancements over the status quo
- A growth plan that acknowledges current planning assumptions and local land use authority
- On track to meet the goals set in the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint
- Meets the requirement of SB375.

- A realistic and feasible growth scenario that allows the Fresno County region to grow at its own pace and retain its own character

The Fresno COG Policy Board adopted Scenario B as the Prefered SCS scenario.

# 4.8 Scenario Outcomes

Once the four scenarios were created, computer models were used to estimate a broad set of land use, transportation, and environmental impacts across the four scenarios in order to facilitate comparison. Figures 4-3 through 4-12 compare the top 10 performance indicators for the four SCS scenarios.

Figure 4-3: GHG Emission Reductions compared to 2005

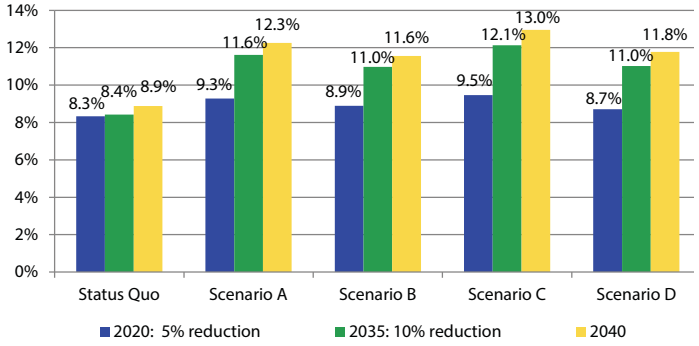



Figure 4-4: Housing types

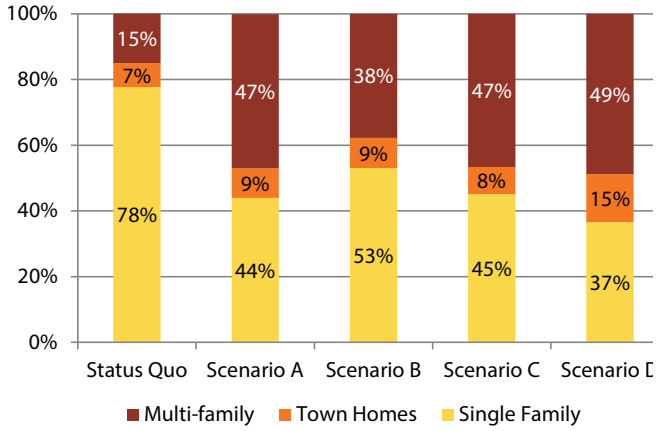



Figure 4-5: Residential density (units per acre)

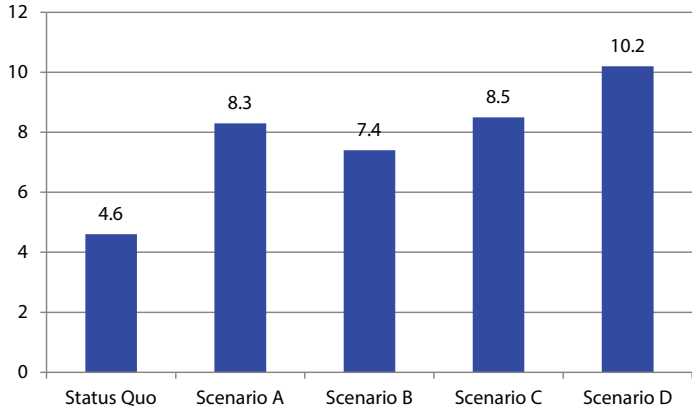



Figure 4-6: Compact development (persons per acre)

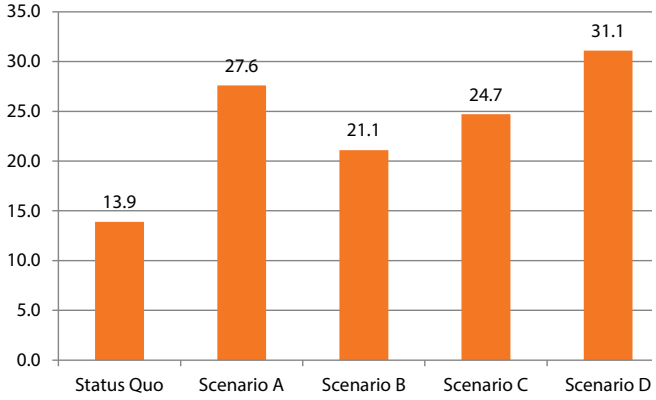



Figure 4-7: Transit Oriented Development (% growth within 1/2 mile of Bus Rapid Transit --2008-2035)

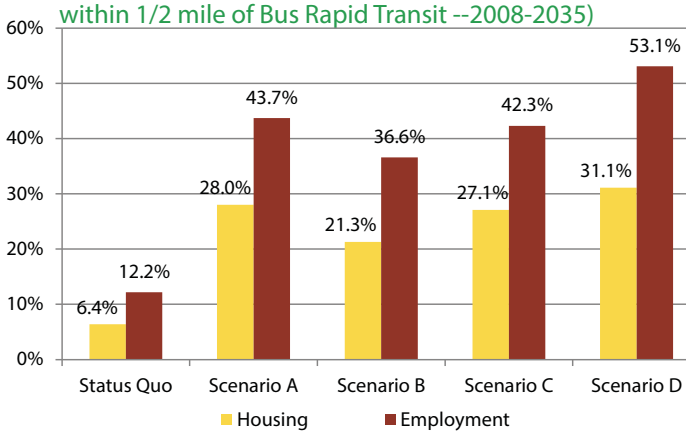



Figure 4-8: Land Consumption (acres)

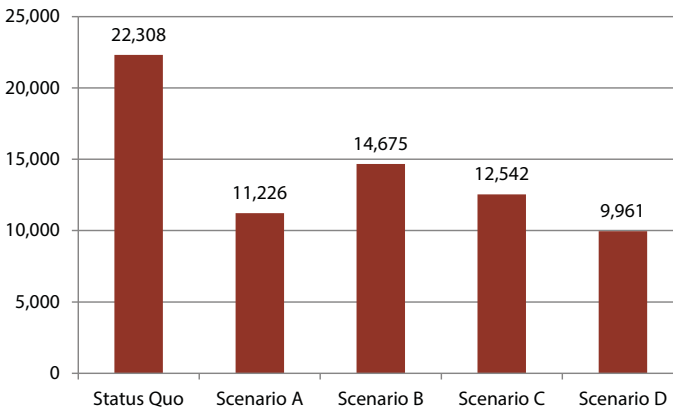


Figure 4-9: Important Farmland Consumed (by SB 375 definition, acres)

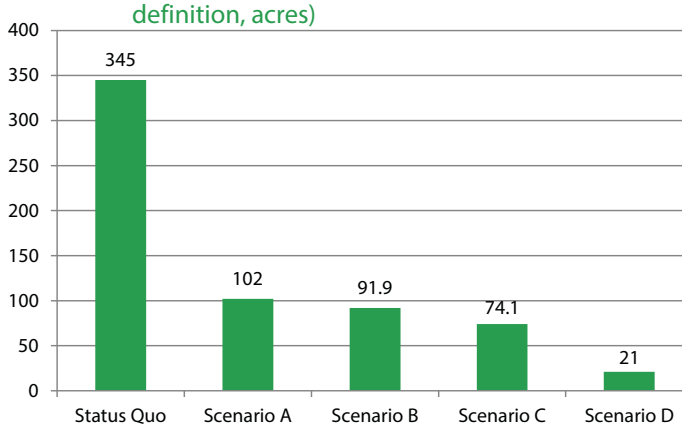



Figure 4-10: Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (million miles)

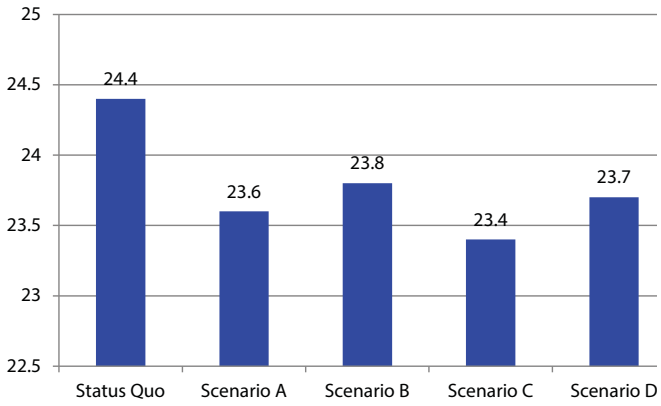



Figure 4-11: Criteria Pollutants emissions (tons per day)

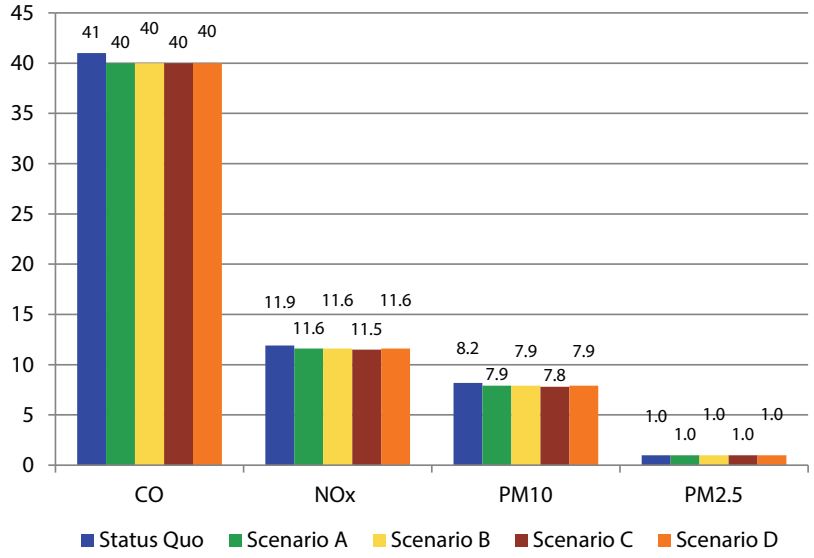
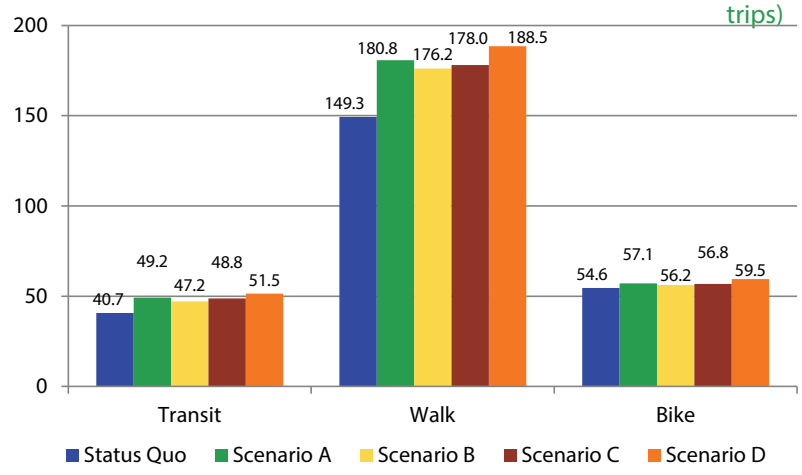



Figure 4-12: Active transportation and transit travel (thousand person trips)




**As each of these metrics was measured** across the scenarios, a clear improvement in impacts was observed by each scenario compared to the status quo. For example, compared to the status quo land consumption of 22,308 acres to accommodate growth to 2035, Scenario D consumed 9,961 acres; Scenario A consumed 11,226 acres; Scenario C consumed 12,542 acres; and Scenario B consumed 14,675 acres. All indicators showed a reduction compared to the status quo and, most importantly, all four scenarios met the 5% and 10% per capita GHG reduction targets for 2020 and 2035.

## Major features and benefits of Scenario B include:

- Compared to the status quo, Scenario B reduces total land consumption by 7,633 acres, or 34%.
- Scenario B will increase transit, walking and bicycle trips by 15-25% compared to the status quo.
- Residential densities will increase from an average of 4.6 units per acre to 7.4 units per acre under Scenario B. While average densities will be highest in the downtown metropolitan area, average residential densities will also increase in outlying communities.
- Less land consumed and higher densities are indicators of more compact development. Under Scenario B, average persons per acre of land will increase from 13.9 under the status quo to 21.1, or more than 50%.

- With Scenario B, 21.3% of all new housing and 36.6% of new employment will take place within ½ mile of bus rapid transit.

Figures 4-13 to 4-15 provide important characteristics of Scenario B, including, housing growth density, and employment growth density.

# 4.9 The SCS Land Use Pattern

Fresno COG used the feedback from local planning sessions, public outreach workshops, and consultation with local jurisdictions to work collaboratively with policymakers, stakeholders, and local governments to develop and analyze four growth scenarios. On November 21, 2013, the Fresno COG Policy Board unanimously selected Scenario B as the preferred scenario for the 2014 RTP/SCS. Scenario B was built primarily from existing local General Plans, general plan updates and input from local governments as to the most likely growth assumptions for the future.

Jurisdictions within the Fresno COG region continue to implement their own local land use and transportation projects that support the 2014 RTP/SCS. These local efforts were considered in the development of the overall land use pattern of the RTP/SCS. It is clear that there has been, and continues to be, a significant trend of local development policies and decisions toward increased integration of land use and transportation.

Through the combined vision and efforts of the municipal governments in Fresno County, significant strides are being made toward sustainable growth, walkable communities, and mixed-use development—values that are evident in their current planning assumptions and reflected in the SCS.

Figure 4-13: 2035 Land use pattern

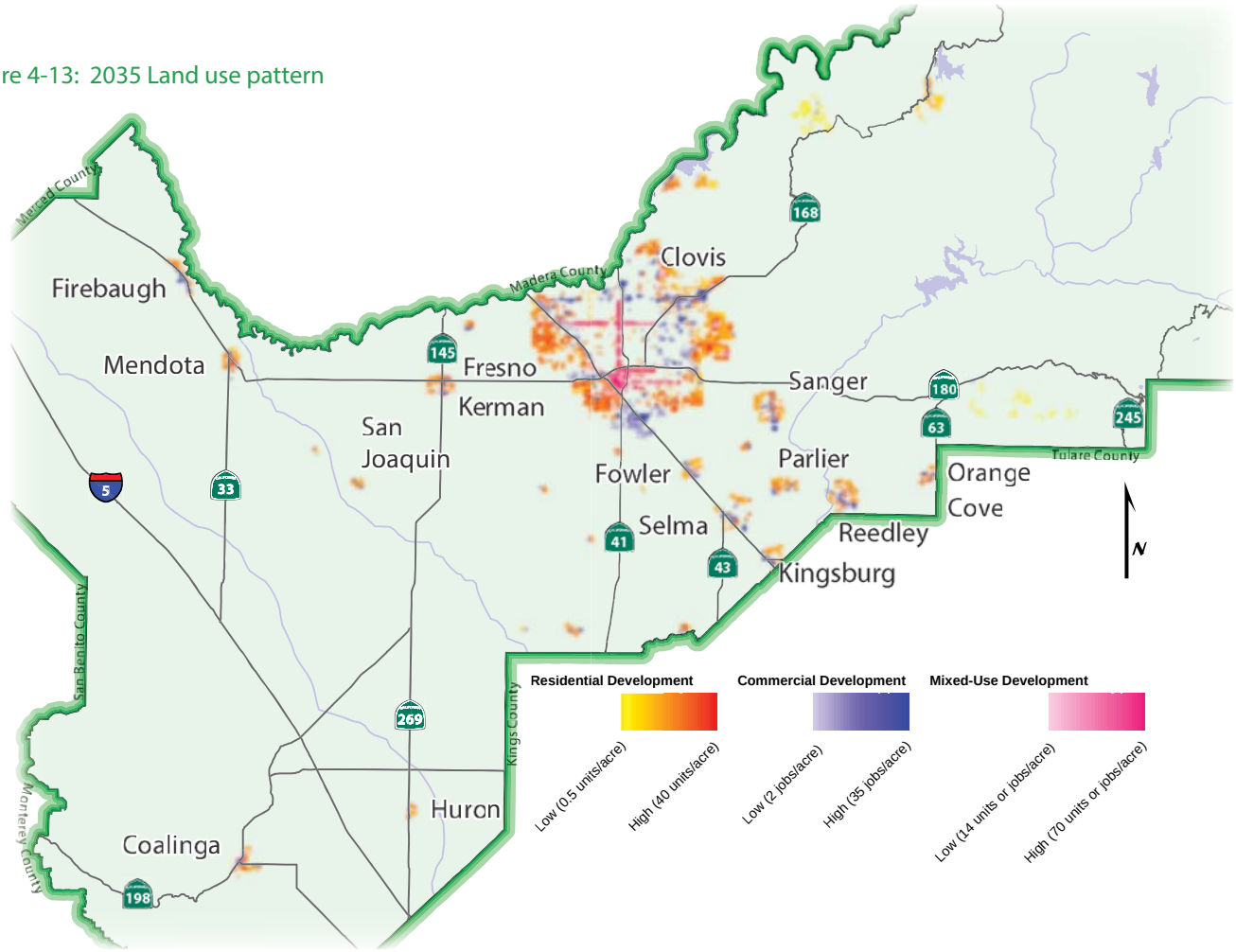
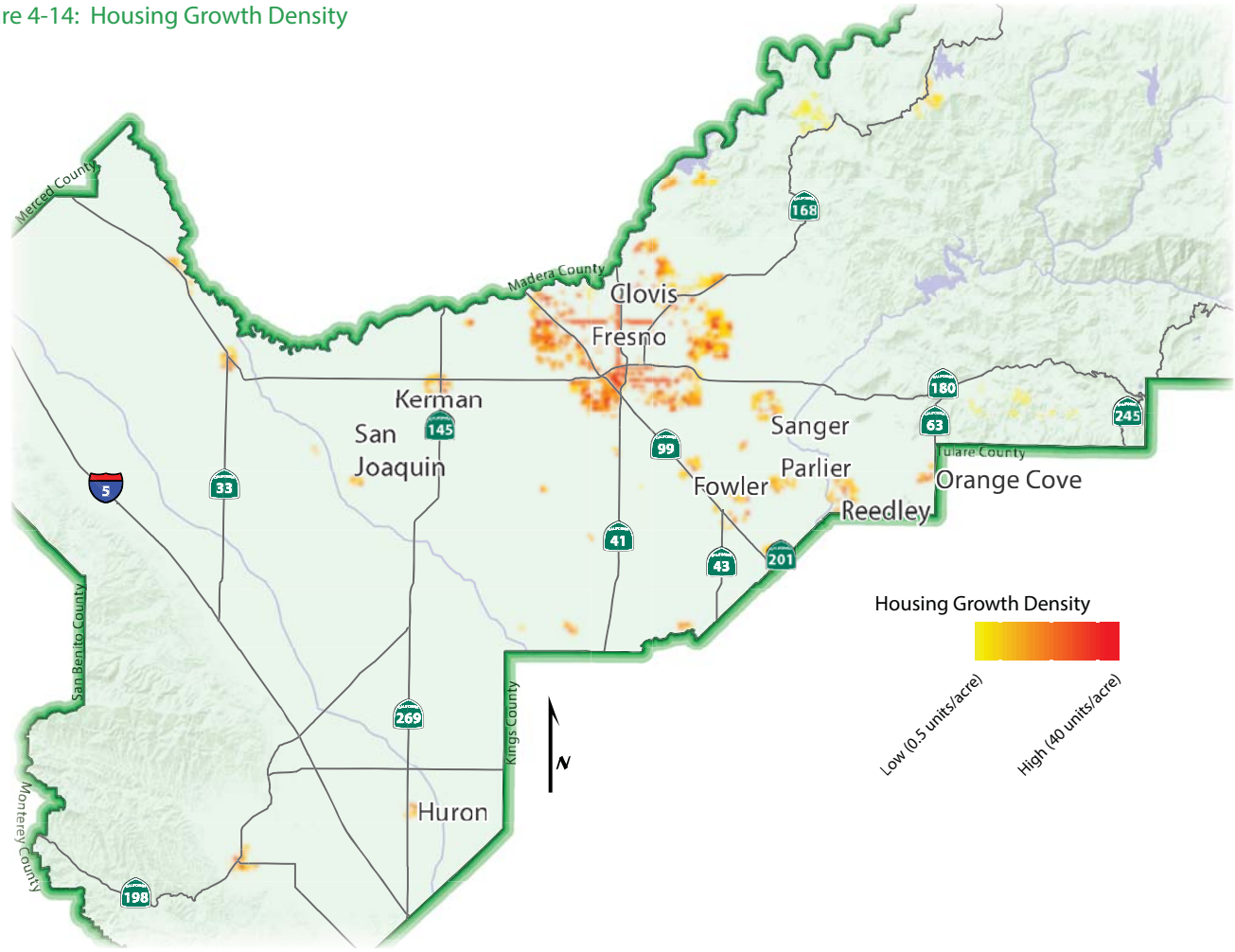


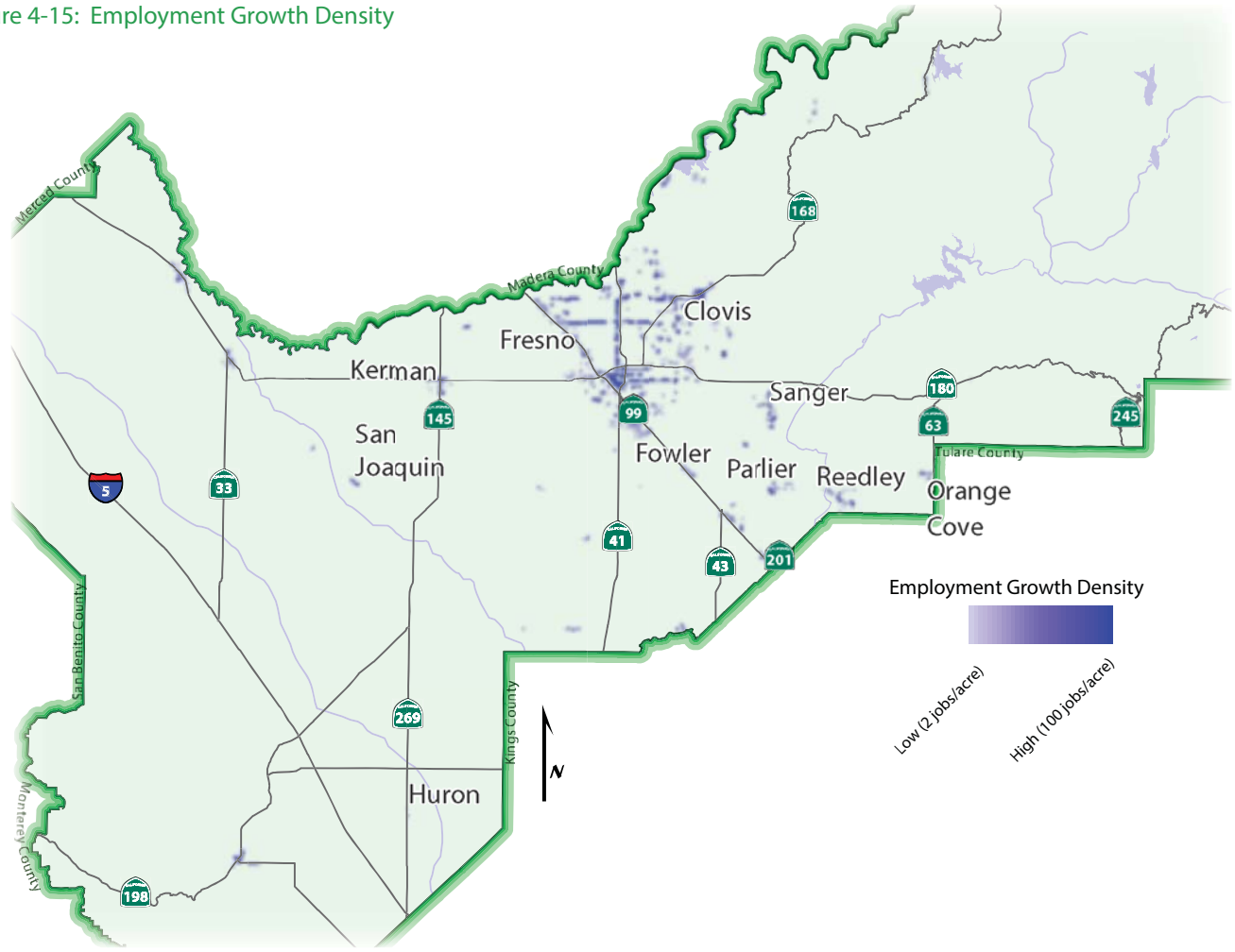
Figure 4-14: Housing Growth Density




The Fresno COG 2014 RTP/SCS reflects the core values residents in Fresno County identified in the Blueprint process. The Blueprint Smart Growth principles were reflected and implemented in the general plan updates and specific plans that are part of the SCS. The Fresno Region SCS creates a range of housing opportunities and choices by providing a more balanced supply of various housing types. The increased density and mixed use development proposed in the SCS helps preserving the precious farmland in the region, and also protects other natural resources such critical habitat, wetland and vernal pools, etc. In addition, over 20% of new housing and 36% of new employment are allocated along the high-capacity transit corridors and activity centers, which provide foundation for Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

The SCS also reflects the sustainability principle of directing and strengthening development towards existing communities. The City of Fresno's Alternative A of the general plan update includes 45% of new growth in the designated infill development areas and proposed no sphere of influence expansion by 2035, which is a significant stride towards reining in fringe development in a traditionally sprawling region. City of Fresno's Alternative A also includes elements of complete neighborhood, where residents have easier access to job, school, and other services by different transportation modes, including bike, walk and transit. The complete neighborhood concepts foster distinctive and attractive communities with a strong sense of place. The communities envisioned in the SCS will be more people friendly with more access to bike and walk facilities.

Figure 4-15: Employment Growth Density




# 4.10 Protecting Resources and Farmland

In identifying the overall land use pattern, the 2014 RTP/SCS also considers areas to be protected from development. These farmlands, open space, and natural resource areas are critical for the region's environmental and economic health.

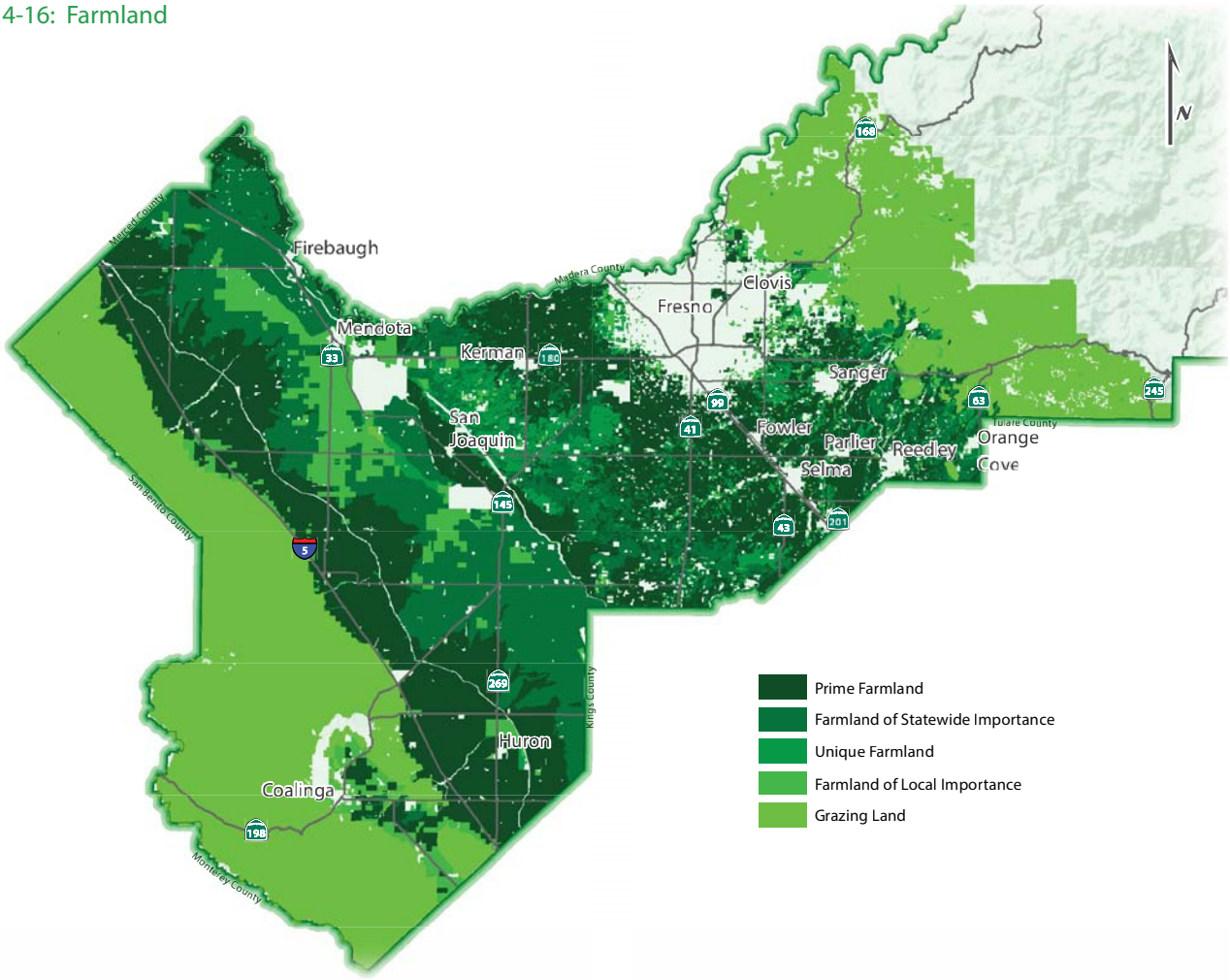
The California Department of Conservation administers the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) which analyzes impacts to agriculture in the State. FMMP maps are updated every two years to characterize existing farmland, agricultural resources, and the loss of farmland to other uses. The FMMP utilizes four categories of agricultural productivity developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which consider factors such as soil quality, water availability, slope, and flooding potential. Figure 4-16 shows that the future land use proposed in the SCS will convert 91.8 acres of Important Farmland as defined by SB375 and categorized as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Prime Farmland** | **75.7 acres** |
| **Farmland of Statewide Importance** | **16.1 acres** |
| **Unique Farmland** | **0 acres** |

In addition, the SCS would convert an estimated 1,013 acres of grazing land and 51.6 acres of farmland of local importance bringing the total farmland conversion to 1,157 acres, or 7.9% of the total land consumed for new growth between 2008 and 2035.

The San Joaquin Valley Greenprint project, funded by the Strategic Growth Council, has been a huge undertaking by the Valley to document how natural resources support the region's economy, health and quality of life, and to

Figure 4-16: Farmland




identify strategies to guide stewardship of land, water and living resources. The project covers the entire area within the eight Valley counties that are members of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council. Throughout the process, public officials, property owners, interest groups, technical experts and the public are invited to participate and provide input. A Steering Committee has been formed that consists of individuals representing the public and private sector and a diverse range of interests in the Valley's resources.

The Greenprint project will be completed in mid-2015. The first phase identified and compiled data for the natural resources in the San Joaquin Valley. The second phase will develop principles to guide resource management options and strategies.

The Greenprint project has provided valuable information regarding natural resources land for the Fresno COG SCS process. A list of natural resource data sets were recommended and forwarded by the Greenprint to be considered in the SCS planning process.

The location of some of the Fresno Region's natural resources are provided in Figures 4-16 through 4-20.

Figure 4-17: Critical Habitat

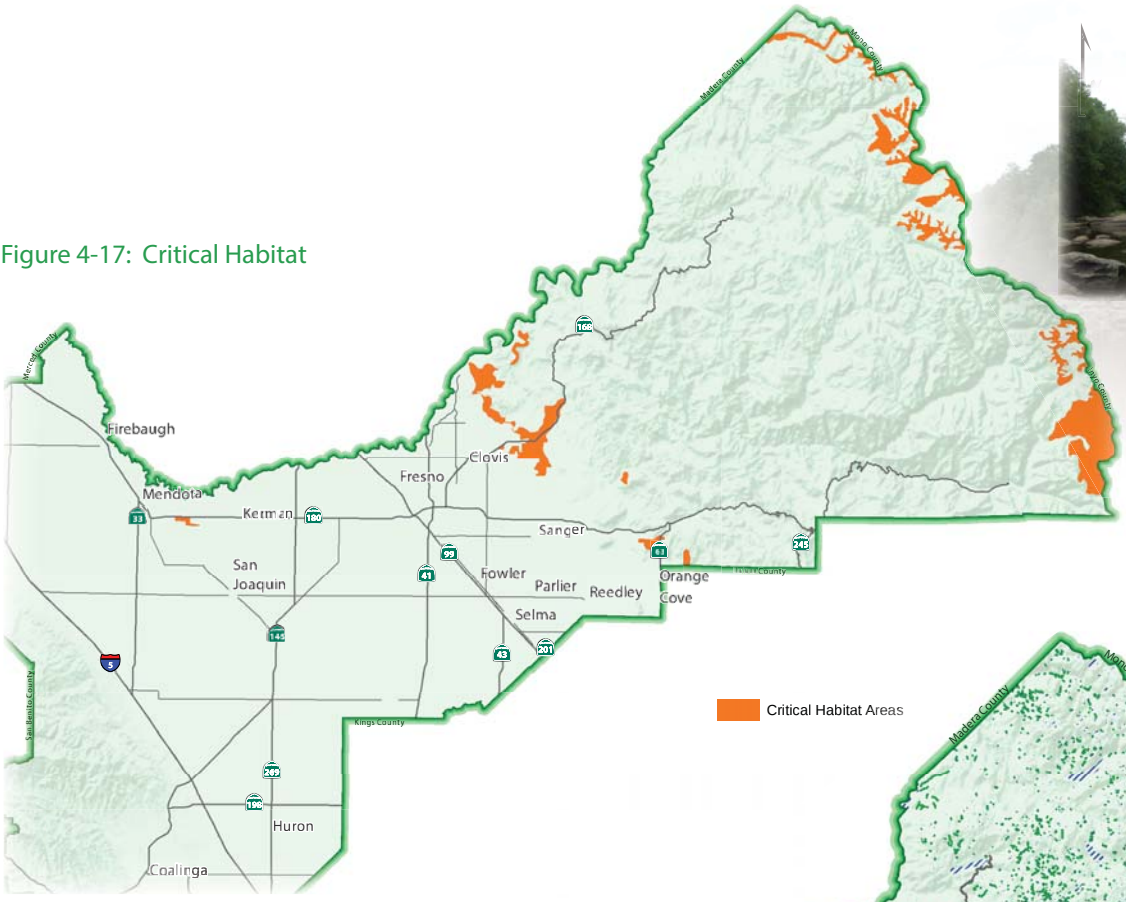



Figure 4-18: Wetlands, Riparian Forests and Vernal Pools

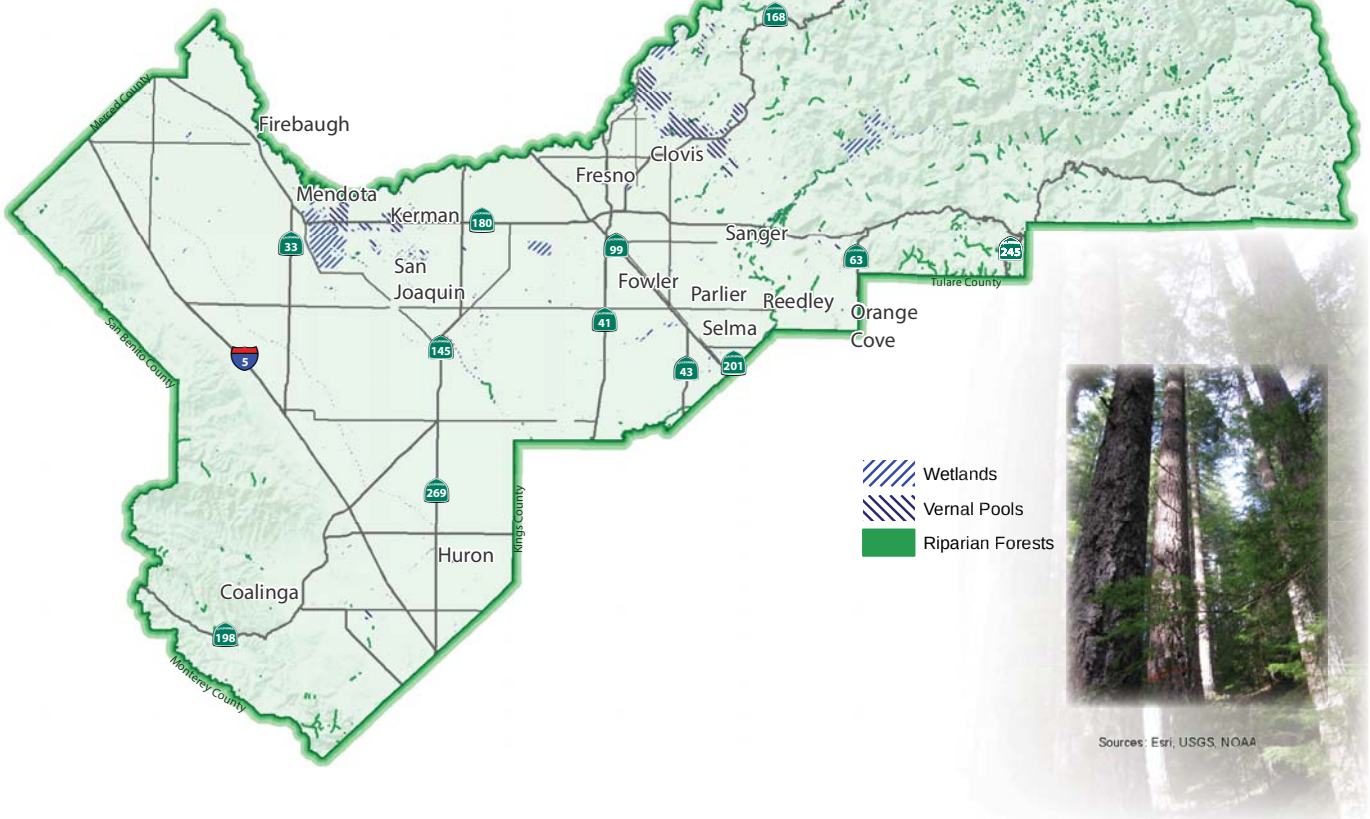


Figure 4-19: Floodplains and Groundwater Recharge Zones



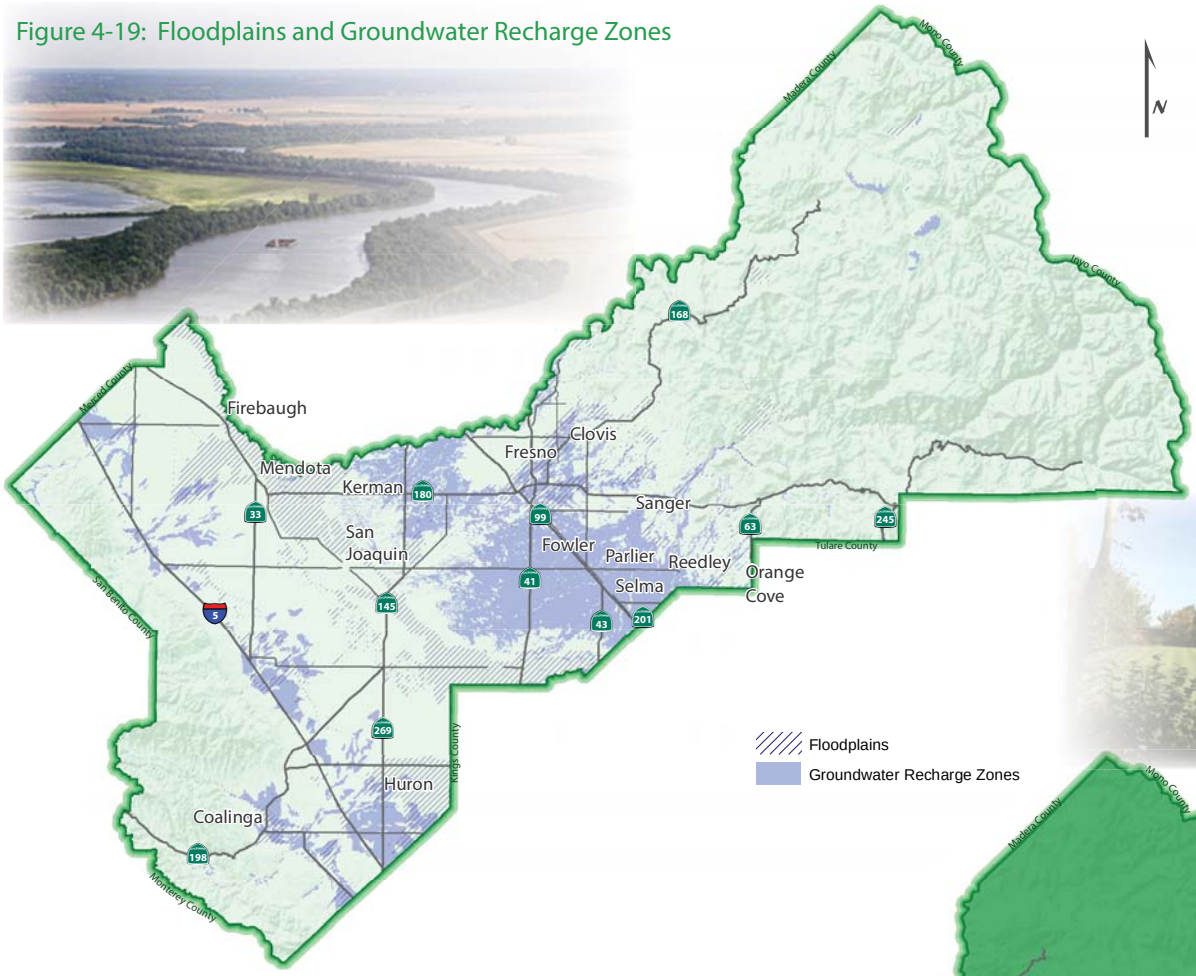
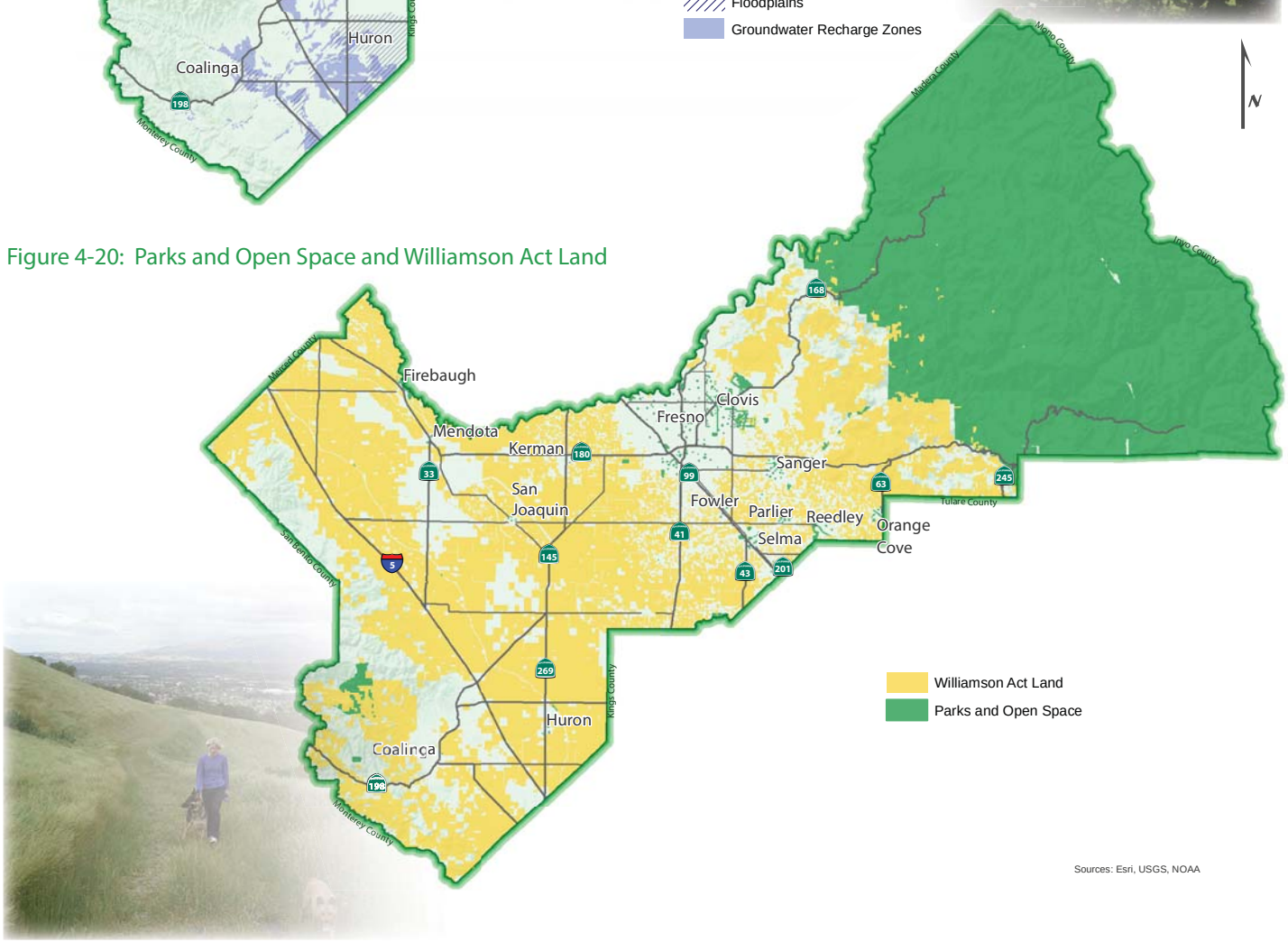



Figure 4-20: Parks and Open Space and Williamson Act Land



## Impacts of Climate Change on the Transportation Network

The climate of Fresno County and the region can be expected to change even with reductions in GHG emissions projected by the 2014 SCS/RTP. Aspects of climate change in the San Joaquin Valley include, but are not limited to, water shortages, longer wildfire seasons, more intense heat waves, and increased energy use. In addition, air quality could deteriorate given increased periods of stagnant air mixing. Climate change can have long-term impacts on the transportation network, including:

- More frequent/severe flooding of low-lying infrastructure, requiring drainage and pumping, due to more intense precipitation events.
- Increased thermal expansion of bridge joints and paved surfaces, potentially causing possible degradation.
- Higher maintenance/construction costs for roads and bridges, due to increased temperatures.
- Asphalt degradation and shorter replacement cycles, leading to limited access and higher costs, due to higher temperatures.
- Air traffic disruptions, due to severe weather and precipitation events that impact arrival and departure rates.

In addition to direct impacts of climate change, transportation systems may also have to adapt to changes in the patterns of settlement or economic activity that may be induced by climate change. For example, changes in the location of agricultural production may demand changes in the transportation system. Better understanding of broad climate change impacts and adaptation strategies will permit a better understanding of potential direct and indirect impacts on transportation. Preparing transportation infrastructure for climate change impacts is a new priority as future projects are designed and our current system is maintained. The tools and methodologies for evaluating and adapting to such impacts are still in the early stages of development and will require ongoing monitoring.

## Transportation Energy Demand and GHG Emissions

On May 19, 2009, President Obama announced a new national policy aimed at increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions for all new cars and trucks sold throughout the U.S. The new national policy, which harmonizes greenhouse gas emissions standards and fuel economy standards, is the result of an agreement among California, the federal government, and the automobile industry. As part of the agreement, EPA and the federal Department of Transportation jointly developed new federal standards for model years 2012-2016 that will require an average fuel economy standard of 35.5 mpg in 2016.

California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) Program requires a reduction in the carbon intensity of transportation fuels that are sold, supplied, or offered for sale in the state by a minimum of 10% by 2020. CARB regulations require transportation fuel producers and importers to meet specified average carbon intensity requirements for fuel. The LCFS Program allows producers and importers to generate, acquire, transfer, bank, borrow, and trade credits.

The region's need for gasoline and diesel may be further reduced by offering incentives for a variety of fuel options for personal vehicles that include electricity, hydrogen, natural gas, and biofuels.

# 4.11 Accommodating the Eight-Year Regional Housing Needs Assessment - RHNA

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) is prepared by Fresno COG and provides regional housing allocations by jurisdiction in Fresno County as input to individual Housing Elements. An overall County-wide RHNA Determination is provided to Fresno COG by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) from which the COG, working closely with local agencies, allocates each jurisdiction's fair share of regional housing need by income group. SB 375 contains two important changes to Housing Element law – the Housing Element cycle is changed from five years to eight years, and the RHNA and RTP processes are now linked to better integrate housing, land use, and transportation planning.

The Fresno region has received its RHNA Determination from HCD for the fifth housing element cycle (2013-2023). Fresno COG has been engaged in the RHNA process concurrently with development of the 2014 RTP/SCS, but has not yet completed the allocation of these units by jurisdiction. This process requires COG to work with its member agencies to identify areas within the region that can provide sufficient housing for all economic segments of the population and ensure that the state's housing goals are met.

SB 375 requires consistency between the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and the development pattern of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The Fresno County RHNA and SCS are consistent in both development pattern and quantity of housing units. Both use the same three factors to distribute housing units to jurisdiction: (a) past shares of county housing unit growth in each jurisdiction, (b) current shares of county population or housing units in each jurisdiction, and (c) the amount of available land for residential development in each jurisdiction. The RHNA and SCS consistency cannot be precise because (1) the RHNA has a 10-year (2013-2023) projection period while the SCS has a 27-year (2008-2035) projection period, and (2) the RHNA distributes housing by jurisdiction while the SCS distributes housing by location. However, the overall Fresno COG RHNA number is less than the overall SCS housing unit number further proving their consistency per the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) definition of consistent.

Housing elements are due no later than 18 months after the Fresno COG Board adopts the 2014 RTP, or December 31, 2015. Any changes to land use plans or zoning that occur during the updates of housing elements by local jurisdictions as a result of the RHNA will be reflected in the next regional growth forecast and RTP. This will ensure that land use changes resulting from the RHNA and the

housing element process will be considered in future updates of these two key planning documents. The goal is to ensure consistency between future land use and transportation plans through an iterative process.

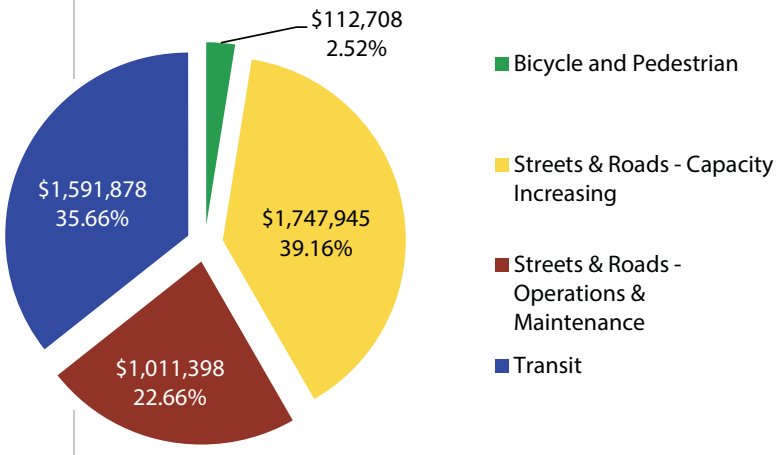
# 4.12 Transportation Strategies

The per capita GHG emissions reductions calculations do not include the use of alternative fuels. Also, they do not consider the benefits of California's low carbon fuel standard program, which calls for a reduction of at least 10 percent in the carbon intensity of California's transportation fuels by 2020. They also do not consider the benefits due to increases in vehicle efficiency ("Pavley" regulations that reduce GHG emissions in new passenger vehicles). Although Fresno COG is not able to take credit for these transportation measures toward meeting the state-mandated GHG emissions targets for the region pursuant to SB 375, Fresno COG recognizes the role that regional and local governments can play in accelerating the deployment of alternative fuel vehicles and fueling and recharging stations. Therefore, Fresno COG has been active in this area, which in turn helps the state meet its overall reduction target for greenhouse gases. The strategies in the 2014 RTP/SCS are aimed at reducing travel and providing additional travel choices. As such, the 2014 RTP/SCS complies with the conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act, as further detailed in the conformity document.

An important part of the Revenue Constrained Transportation Network, described more fully in RTP Chapter 7, is a significant investment in public transit as well as facilities that encourage walking and bicycling as forms of active transportation. The aim of these investments is to significantly increase the attractiveness of public transit, walking, and bicycling – particularly in areas that are planned for more compact and mixed-use development. Investments in our local streets and roads, including access to regional airports; goods movement projects, and Transportation Demand Measures (TDM) and Transportation System Measure (TSM) projects and programs also are integral to the overall transportation network. Proposed investments in the Revenue Constrained Transportation Network in the 2014 RTP/SCS are shown in Figure 4-21 below.

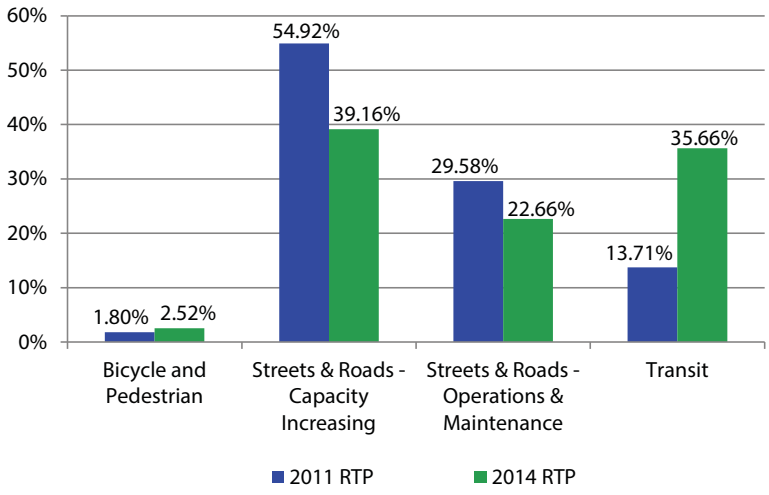
The 2014 RTP/SCS brings about big changes to transportation planning and funding. Figure 4-22 below shows the difference in projects programmed by mode between the previous and current RTP/SCS. Capacity Increasing road projects declined by about 16% and bike and pedestrian and transit projects are up about 23%.

Figure 4-21: Proposed Investments in the Revenue Constrained Transportation Network in the SCS *(in thousand dollars)*




The steep increase in transit projects is mostly due to the BRT corridors currently planned within the region and the decline in capacity increasing projects is evidence of an increase in active transportation.

Figure 4-22: Comparison of 2011 RTP and 2014 RTP projects programmed by mode



In the 2014 RTP/SCS, an important component of the transportation network is a commitment to "complete streets" policies and implementation measures. Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users and make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work, school and shopping. Roadways planned and designed using a complete streets approach may include sidewalks, bike lanes, special bus lanes, transit stops, pedestrian crossings, narrower travel lanes, and roundabouts.

By adopting a complete streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

## Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs are designed to reduce automobile usage by changing traveling behavior and encouraging the use of alternative transportation modes other than single occupant vehicle. TDM strategies also reduce vehicle trips during peak traffic periods, thereby helping to reduce GHG emissions. Managing demand can be a cost-effective alternative to increasing capacity. A demand management approach also has the potential to deliver better environmental outcomes, improved public health, and more livable communities.

**TDM strategies in Fresno County include, but are not limited to:**

- Measure C Carpool Incentive program, which provides incentives to commuters who share a ride to work or school with at least one other person
- Measure C Commuter and Farmworker Vanpool Subsidy programs, which provide subsidies and reimbursements to new and existing commuter vanpools
- CalVans is a Joint Powers Public Transportation Agency comprised of a number of Local Transportation Planning Agencies. They run a mult-county vanpool program for commuters and agricultural workers
- Fresno COG's Valleyrides.com website and Carpool App offer commuters free ride matching, and houses the information needed to participate in the Measure C Carpool and Vanpool Programs
- Flex-time work schedules with employers to reduce congestion at peak times
- Other trip reduction programs

Fresno County's Measure C Extension, a half-cent sales tax measure, allocates close to $20 million over its 20 year life-span to fund carpool, vanpool and farmworker vanpool programs. Rule 9410: Employer Based Trip Reduction, implemented by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD), is another good example of programs designed to encourage employees to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips, thus reducing GHG and other pollutant emissions.

## Transportation Systems Management

The Transportation Systems Management (TSM) approach to congestion mitigation and GHG emission reduction seeks to identify improvements to enhance and optimize the existing transportation systems. Through better management and operation of existing transportation facilities, these techniques are designed to improve traffic flow, air quality, and movement of vehicles and goods, as well as enhance safety.

**TSM measures include, but are not limited to:**

- Intersection operational improvements, including traffic signal synchronization
- Geometric changes and bottleneck alleviation
- Arterial access management
- Traffic/Freeway management system.
- Special events management strategies.
- Incident Management/emergency services

The 2014 RTP/SCS programs about $160 million to fund operational improvement projects.

## Public Transit

The 2014 RTP/SCS calls for an expansion and improvement of the public transit network and transit service on new and existing routes, resulting in greater transit accessibility and connectivity throughout the region. Transit expansion and improvement includes the addition of new corridors and improving the service of existing ones, as well as the introduction of the first bus rapid transit (BRT) system in the City of Fresno. Also included is implementation of the California High-Speed Train (HST) project.

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors defined in the Fresno COG SCS conform to the City of Fresno's 2035 General Plan Update, and are an integral part of high-capacity transit corridors that link major activity centers within the urbanized area. The BRT corridors are planned for Blackstone Avenue from Friant Road to the Central Business District (CBD), and Ventura Avenue/Kings Canyon Corridor from Clovis Avenue to the CBD. Shaw Avenue from Highway City on the west to State Route 168 (SR 168) on the east is proposed as the second BRT corridor. The other BRT corridors planned in the 2014 RTP are California Avenue in Southwest Fresno, Cedar Avenue BRT, and the Southeast Growth Area (SEGA) BRT extension.

These BRT corridors form vital links to existing and planned activity centers within Fresno. These activity centers include a close proximity of buildings with mixed land uses and are well integrated with multiple modes of transportation including walking, biking, and public transit. Frequent and reliable BRT service will be a cornerstone of these activity centers.

## Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

The 2014 RTP/SCS also includes a notable increase in the regional active transportation network for walking and bicycling. Active transportation is an essential part of the Fresno COG transportation system, is low cost, does not emit greenhouse gases, can help reduce roadway congestion, and increases health and the quality of life of residents. This emphasis signifies an important opportunity to advance the goals of SB 375 by increasing non-motorized modes of transportation, thereby expanding access to a variety of land uses and transit and improving public health and air quality. A total of $94 million is proposed in the 2014 RTP/SCS to fund bike and pedestrian projects. It is estimated that more than 500 (lane) miles of bike lanes and 120 miles of sidewalks will be added by the end of the 2040, the horizon year of this 2014 RTP.

Figure 4-23: Capacity Increasing Projects

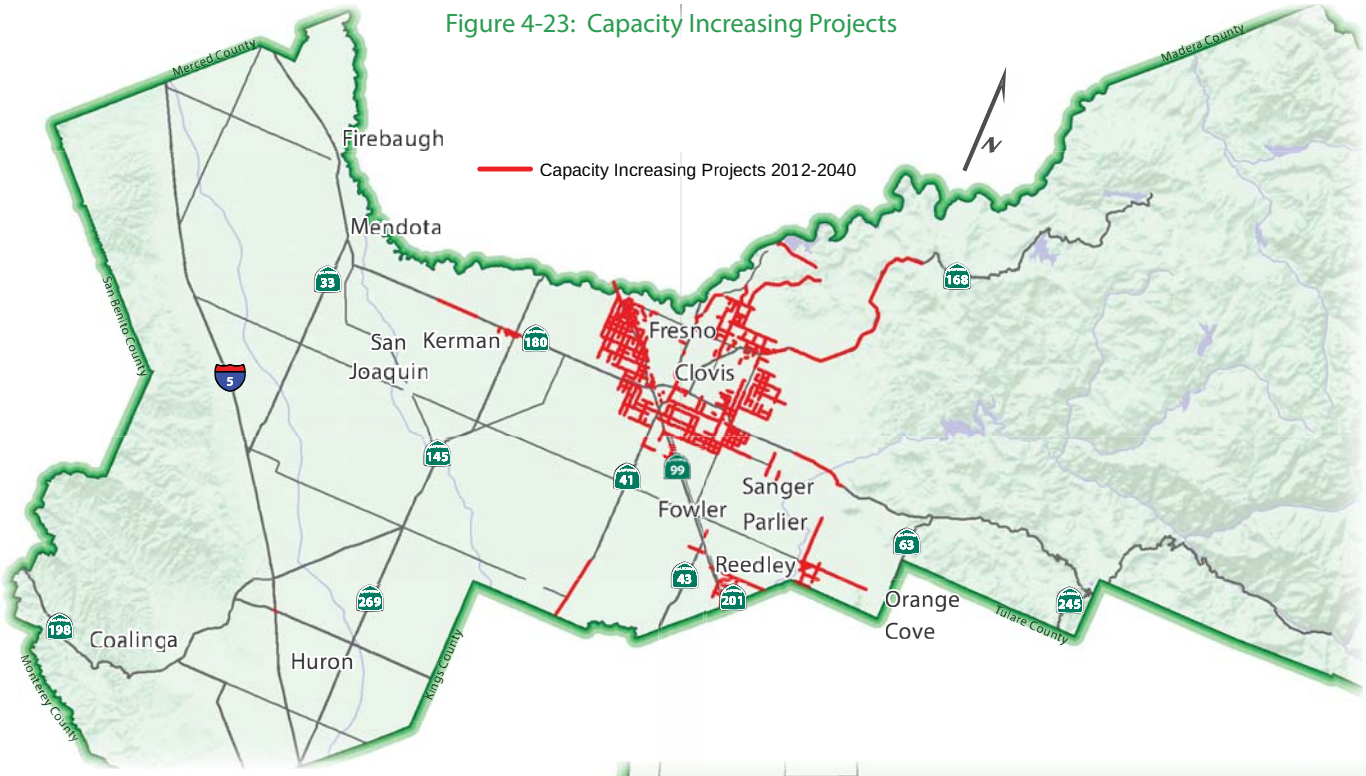
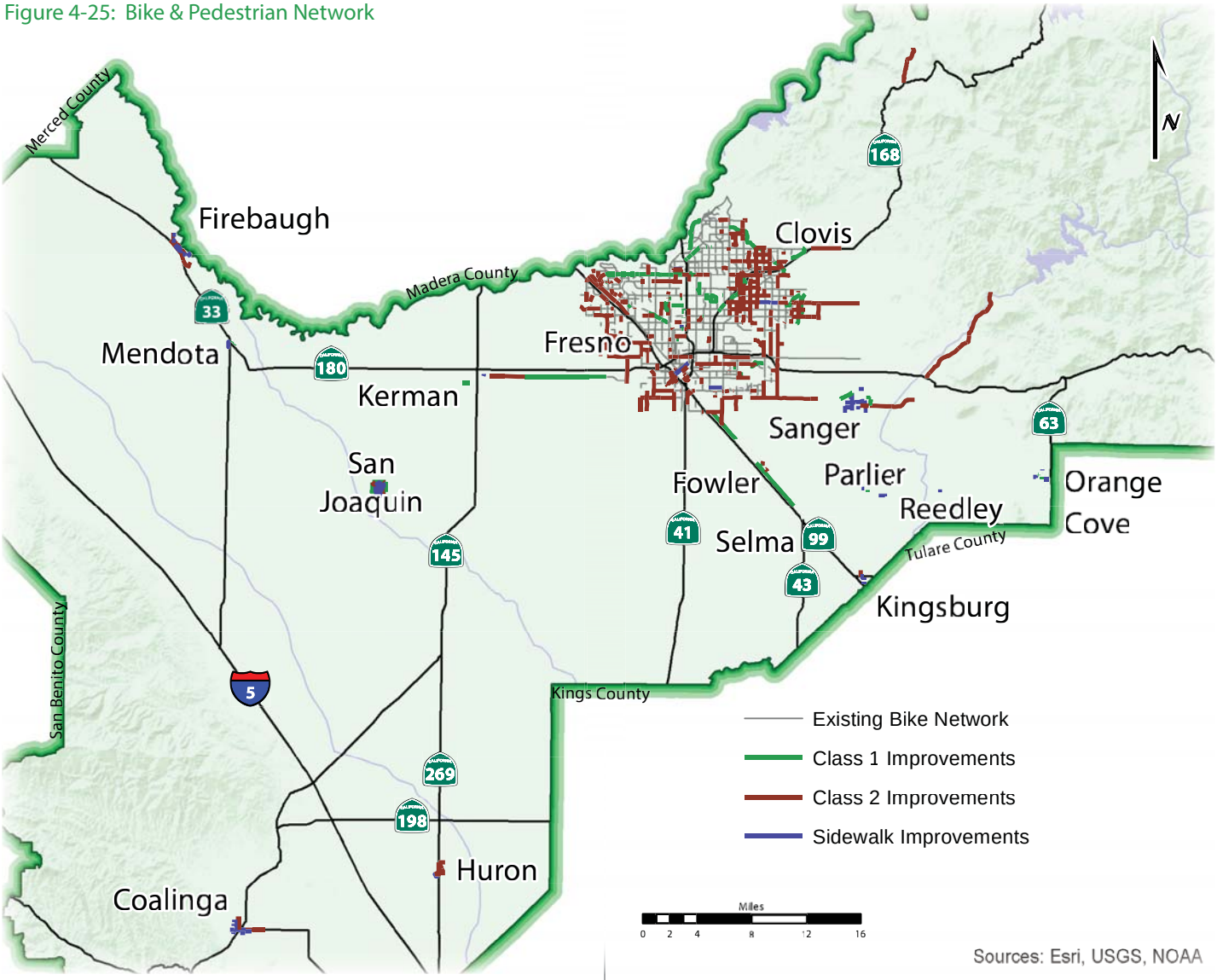



Figure 4-24: Proposed Bus Rapid Transit Network

Figure 4-25: Bike & Pedestrian Network




These transit and active transportation expansions complement the preferred land use pattern and support expected growth throughout the region. The overall land use pattern's focus on locating additional growth along transit corridors in the Fresno metropolitan area relies on the development of efficient transportation corridors, lead to significant VMT reductions and other benefits due to higher walk/bike mode share, more transit use, and shorter auto trips.

The transportation network, including proposed roadway expansion, existing and future transit lines and existing and future bike and pedestrian network, are shown in Figures 4-23, 4-24 and 4-25.

# 4.13 Consultation with the Local Agency Formation Commission

SB 375 requires that SCS preparation include coordination with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) and specifically consider adopted Spheres of Influence (SOI) adopted by LAFCo. LAFCos are empowered by enabling legislation to promote orderly development, ensure that urban services can be provided, and preserve open space and agricultural lands. SOIs have been adopted by the Fresno LAFCo for each city and special district in Fresno

County and are considered the probable future urban boundaries for each agency. Within the SOI, orderly annexations may take place if the proposal is consistent with the General Plan, the subject property is pre-zoned consistent with the General Plan designation, and has met other LAFCo standards and requirements.

In the 2014 RTP/SCS process, Fresno LAFCo was a member of the RTP Roundtable and its Executive Officer served as chairman of the roundtable. In the development of the 2014 RTP/SCS, LAFCo and Fresno COG consulted regularly and the LAFCo commission was updated regularly. In addition, the Fresno LAFCo was provided a final update on the status of the 2014 RTP/SCS and presented materials on the various scenarios at a public meeting on October 9, 2013.

# 4.14 Considering Social Equity in the SCS

In the wake of federal guidelines for environmental justice based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, growing attention has been placed on the need to incorporate environmental justice principles into transportation planning. In response, Fresno COG has developed methods to assess the impacts of their transportation plans and planning processes on low-income and minority populations. Under Title VI and related statutes, Fresno COG assures that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P.L. 100.259), be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any agency-sponsored program or activity. Nor shall sex, age or disability stand in the way of fair treatment of all individuals. Fresno COG further assures that every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not.

The population and housing projections included in the SCS include population growth of 388,076 persons in 123,940 housing units to the year 2035. These projections include all economic segments of the population. The number of multifamily housing units is projected to increase from 15% of the housing stock to 38% of the housing stock, providing the greatest opportunity for affordable housing to be built. Additionally, 21.3% of all new housing and 36.6% of all new employment will take place within one-half mile of planned Bus Rapid Transit lines. The opportunities for affordable housing and access to public transit are expected to reduce housing and transportation costs on lower income individuals and families.

### Public Outreach

Fresno COG's extensive SCS public outreach process ensures that people regardless of race, income, color, or national origin have equal access to the information being developed for the SCS. Extra efforts were made to reach out to the underserved communities that are traditionally hard to reach. In the summer of 2012, 10 workshops were conducted for the disadvantaged communities to inform them about the development of the SCS. Interpreters of Spanish, Hmong, Punjabi, and Laotian were provided at the workshops. Presentations were also published on Fresno COG's website in multiple languages. Workers hired by the Fresno COG went door to door to inform the residents

about the events. Transit was provided free of charge to those who needed transportation to the workshops. For more details about the workshops, please refer to RTP Chapter 2: Public Participation.

### Environmental Justice Task Force

During the SCS process, an Environmental Justice (EJ) Task Force was formed to provide guidance for the environmental justice analysis for the RTP required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and federal policies and guidance on environmental justice. The Task Force consisted of members representing interests of communities of low income, minorities, seniors and the disabled. A representative of the EJ Task Force was also a voting member on the RTP Roundtable Committee which advised the development of the 2014 RTP/SCS. The EJ Task Force helped define the "Environmental Justice Communities" in Fresno County. Six performance measures were used to assess the impacts of the 2014 RTP/SCS on the EJ communities in comparison to non-EJ communities. The six performance measures are: accessibility, mobility, cost-effectiveness, equity, reliability and consumer satisfaction. The Accessibility measure was broken down by accessibility to major job centers, parks, schools and medical facilities. The EJ analysis also compared impacts by different geographical areas of Fresno-Clovis Sphere of Influence (SOI), the Remainder of the County and County-wide. Although improvements are needed in a couple of areas, the analysis in the EJ Report confirms that the EJ communities are not "disproportionately burdened by high and adverse" effects and do share equitably in benefits from the 2014 RTP/SCS. In most cases, EJ communities fare better than non-EJ communities. Please refer to the Environmental Justice Report for additional details on the analysis.

# 4.15 Considering Public Health in the SCS

In much of Fresno County, housing, schools, shopping, employment, and parks are separated from each other by distances that discourage walking and biking and make people dependent on cars. In an effort to improve the health of residents, cities are promoting physical activity, particularly walking and biking, through their general plans, zoning codes, and transportation planning. These strategies address both the obesity epidemic—rates of obesity increase in proportion to vehicular miles traveled—and state mandates to reduce greenhouse gases. The co-benefits of using the general plan, zoning code and infrastructure investments to promote safe, active transportation, increased open space and nutritious food are a healthy population and a healthy environment.

Cities throughout the region are using their planning processes to address the obesity epidemic. Many are including a focus on smart growth principles -- developing healthy, vibrant communities where homes, jobs, schools and places for play are nearby each other and linked by walking, biking, and transit. The smart growth approach is gaining ground as GHG emission reduction mandates shape transportation and housing planning. Examples of smart growth incorporated into the 2014 RTP/SCS include:

- Promote Compact, Mixed-Use and Transit-Oriented Development
- Increase Walking and Biking Through Street Design
- Target infrastructure investments on walking, biking, and transit
- The selected SCS land use scenario moves the region toward towards a healthier future by improving the connection between land use and transportation. The result is more walkable communities, increased bicycling, more people using transit, and better access to healthy food.

# 4.16 Streamlining the CEQA Process

Under SB 375, general consistency with a CARB-approved SCS allows projects to qualify for two types of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining:

- **Projects consistent with the SCS or APS**

  A residential or mixed-use project consistent with the density and policies in an SCS is not required to discuss (1) growth-inducing impacts; or (2) project specific or cumulative impacts from cars and light-duty truck trips on global warming or the regional transportation network if the project incorporates the mitigation measures required by an applicable prior environmental document.

- **Three Types of Streamlining for Transit Priority Projects**

  A "transit priority project" (TPP) is created by SB 375 that must meet three requirements:

  (1) contain at least 50% residential use

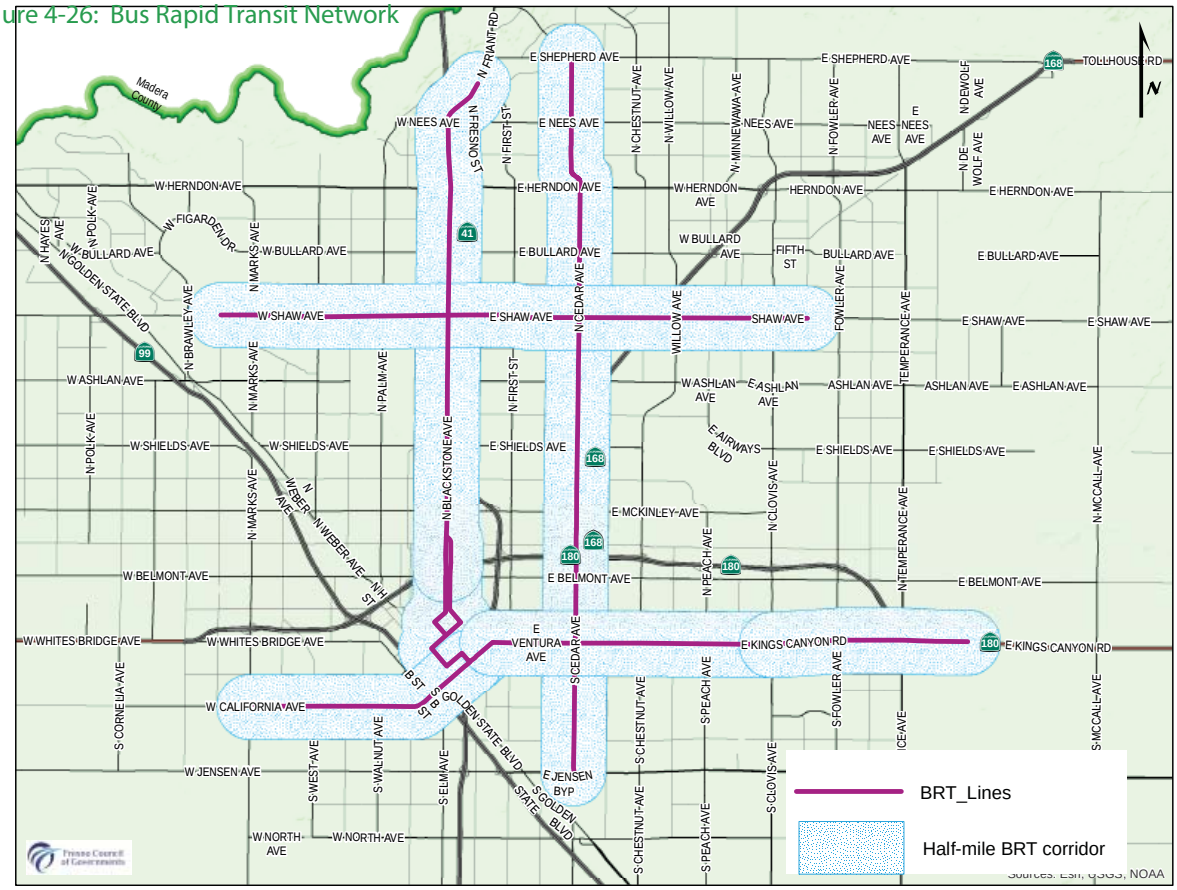
  (2) have a minimum net density of 20 units per acre

  (3) be located within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high quality transit corridor included in an RTP. A major transit stop refers to an existing rail transit station, a ferry terminal, or the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during peak commute periods. There are currently no bus routes in Fresno County with 15 minutes service during peak commute periods. A high quality transit corridor means a corridor with fixed route service with service interval of 15 minutes or less during peak commute hours. The proposed BRT routes in the 2014 RTP/SCS meet the definition of high quality transit corridor. Figure 4-26 shows the ½ mile corridors of high capacity transit in Fresno County.

A TPP is exempt from CEQA if the following applies:

1. it is not more than 200 units on not more than 8 acres
2. It can be served by existing utilities
3. It does not affect historical resourcesBuildings are

Figure 4-26: Bus Rapid Transit Network



15% more energy efficient than required

4. The project is designed to achieve 25 percent less water usage
5. It provides either a minimum of 5 acres/1,000 residents of open space, or housing for moderate, low, or very low income residents.

A TPP that does not qualify for an exemption may qualify for a sustainable community environmental assessment (SCEA) if the project incorporates mitigation measures, performance standards, or criteria from prior applicable environmental impact reports. A SCEA is similar to a negative declaration under CEQA.

SB 375 also authorizes the adoption of specific traffic mitigation measures that apply to TPPs to include requirements for traffic control improvements, street or road improvements, transit passes, or other measures that will mitigate traffic impacts of transit priority projects. A TPP does not need to comply with any additional mitigation measures for the traffic impacts of that project if traffic mitigation measures have been adopted.

However, it is widely believed that very few development projects in Fresno County could qualify as Transit Priority Project, at least in the near future. TPPs are designed for more urban locations with higher development concentrations such as the Bay Area and the Southern California region. Local jurisdictions maintain the discretion and will be solely responsible for determining consistency of any future project with the SCS. Fresno COG staff may provide a lead agency at the time of its request readily available data and documentation to help support its finding upon request.

# 4.17 What is next?

The 2014 RTP/SCS will reduce GHG emissions by focusing growth in urbanized areas, moderately increasing residential densities, encouraging in-fill development, protecting open space and agricultural land, and providing transportation alternatives to the private automobile. New opportunities to reduce GHG emissions will occur with each four-year update of the RTP.

Fresno COG will update its RTP/SCS in 2018 in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. As part of this update, Fresno COG will be reviewing its own progress in implementing the strategies identified in this Plan. In addition, the GHG emission reduction targets are reevaluated at least every eight years and may be revised every four years by ARB. This will enable the state and Fresno COG to consider changes in circumstances, funding availability, technological advances, new legislation, and other considerations that could arise over time.

Fresno COG will also track its own progress in implementing its 2014 RTP/SCS strategies in conjunction with the preparation and adoption of its Overall Work Program and Annual Budget. The OWP/Budget process provides an opportunity for Fresno COG to allocate staff resources and funding to implement short-term and mid-term strategies contained within the RTP/SCS. In addition, Fresno COG will periodically monitor the progress being made by the state, the CTCs, local jurisdictions, and other agencies and entities in implementing the strategies identified in this plan.

While SB 375 places a great deal of attention on meeting GHG emission reduction targets, Fresno COG has also established other important goals in its 2014 RTP/SCS aimed at improving the overall quality of life in the region. Map-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in 21st Century Act, requires the metropolitan planning organizations to establish and use a performance-based approach to transportation planning and decision making. Fresno COG has been, and will continue to work with the federal, state and local partners in establishing performance measures and targets, and monitoring progress towards meeting the performance targets.