



**FYs 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15
Triennial Performance Audit
of Fresno Council of Governments**

**Submitted to
Fresno Council of Governments**

January 2017

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Executive Summary

Michael Baker International was retained by the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) to conduct its Transportation Development Act (TDA) performance audit for Fiscal Years (FY) 2012–13 through 2014–15. As a Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), Fresno COG is required by Public Utilities Code (PUC) Section 99246 to prepare and submit an audit of its performance on a triennial basis to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to continue to receive TDA funding. TDA funding is used for Fresno COG administration and planning and is distributed to local jurisdictions for motorized and non-motorized forms of transportation.

This performance audit is intended to describe how well Fresno COG is meeting its administrative and planning obligations under the TDA, as well as to present a description of its organizational management and efficiency. To gather information for the TDA performance audit, Michael Baker International conducted interviews with agency staff and the transit operators within Fresno COG’s jurisdiction, reviewed various documents, and evaluated Fresno COG’s responsibilities, functions, and performance of the TDA guidelines and regulations.

Below are findings from the analysis:

1. Fresno COG has continued its management of the TDA program in a competent, professional manner. This is shown through the COG’s satisfactory compliance with most state legislative mandates for Regional Transportation Planning Agencies. The COG was in partial compliance related to the timely submittal of all TDA fiscal and compliance audits of the transit operators.
2. Fresno COG has fully implemented the two prior performance audit recommendations that help strengthen the agency’s administration of TDA.
3. While able to maintain staffing levels during the audit period, the COG experienced staff turnover and the retirement of several senior staff, including the Deputy Director. The staff separations and new hires have resulted in the composition of COG staff trending younger. The COG makes a point to recruit early enough so that new hires can receive training and shadow departing senior staff to ensure a smoother transition.
4. The COG has acted in more of an advisory role with regard to land use development in its member jurisdictions to ensure compliance with state mandates pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 32 and Senate Bill (SB) 375. For instance, Fresno COG has retained consultants to assist local agencies to comply with state air quality and smart growth initiatives through the commissioning of climate action plans.
5. The 2014 Regional Transportation Plan-Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP-SCS) was adopted in June 2014 and guides the development of transportation in Fresno County

over a 25-year horizon. Key elements of the RTP-SCS included adoption of goals, objectives, and performance measures and development of a list of RTP projects and project evaluation criteria for prioritizing project funding in the plan. The former Deputy Director oversaw the entire RTP-SCS process.

6. Fresno COG implemented a new public outreach strategy during development of its RTP-SCS. In lieu of holding community open houses and workshops, the COG made available \$3,000 community outreach mini-grants each to seven agencies to host 10 RTP-SCS community workshops held during the spring of 2013 throughout Fresno County, including presentations in five different languages.
7. Fresno COG adopted several key programming documents on schedule, including updates to the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) in July 2012 and June 2014, and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) in October 2013.
8. Fresno COG has undertaken a comprehensive planning effort to develop public transit services from the Fresno-Clovis area to the three national parks in the region: Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia. The planning process included coordination efforts with multiple regional partners including the National Park Service, Madera County, and multiple municipal jurisdictions along the proposed transit corridors.
9. Fresno COG prepares and distributes several documents during the TDA claims process. The documents include the initial and final estimates of apportionment to each jurisdiction and a packet providing claimants with the necessary forms and funding information needed to prepare TDA claims.
10. The COG has streamlined the TDA claims requirements by allowing the claimants an option to provide a continuing resolution from their respective council or board approving their annual submittal of the claim to COG. The City of Clovis and the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) continue to adopt resolutions on an annual basis. Fresno COG now requires that the Fresno Area Express (FAX) adopt a new resolution should its operating budget exceed 15 percent over the prior year's budget.
11. The One Voice advocacy program unites Fresno County communities and regional interests in a voluntary and collaborative effort to seek federal and state support through policy changes, legislation, and funding. The regional priorities raised during recent visits have included STIP funding, water allocation and drought relief, agricultural support, air quality, workforce development, and high-speed rail support.

Three recommendations are provided to improve Fresno COG's administration and management of the TDA and its organization. Each recommendation is described in detail in the last chapter of this audit and is summarized below.

Performance Audit Recommendations

1. Include an analysis of transit-dependent populations in the annual Unmet Transit Needs report.

Working in conjunction with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), Fresno COG has developed a fairly thorough unmet transit needs process. Staff prepares a report and discussion of the unmet needs process and a resolution approving the annual unmet transit needs findings. However, an analysis of the transit-dependent population is not included in the findings. Pursuant to PUC Section 99401.5, groups that are transit-dependent or transit-disadvantaged are to be identified as part of the annual unmet needs process. Fresno COG includes transit-dependent and transit-disadvantaged groups in its Title VI plans and should include a similar detailed analysis in the unmet needs process and findings.

2. Evaluate opportunities to increase rural county representatives on the SSTAC.

The SSTAC plays an important role in decisions surrounding the provision of public transportation. While the SSTAC membership meets the requirements of state law, the majority of current members (10 of 13) are residents of the city of Fresno. Remaining members (one each) are from Clovis, Sanger, and Firebaugh. Because the SSTAC is charged with making recommendations on countywide transit services during the unmet transit needs process, a wider representation of residents from throughout the county should be evaluated for the SSTAC.

Fresno COG has initiated discussions with the SSTAC to see if expanded membership is warranted. Discussions are also underway to evaluate the feasibility of conducting SSTAC meetings at rural locations as a mean to further promote interest and involvement from other communities. These meetings would be in addition to those rotated by SSTAC throughout the rural areas during the unmet needs process. A complimentary transit pass can be offered to members as an incentive to travel to meetings. As member terms expire or through an expansion of membership, Fresno COG could also partake in active recruitment by advertising openings to different communities, reaching out to specific agencies, and placing an application on the COG website for easy and convenient electronic access.

3. Continue active promotion of technology development with regard to transit data coordination.

Fresno COG has demonstrated its competency with regard to transit data coordination through the Fresno County Transportation Guide. This information is now available on the website with a recommendation to continue the active promotion of transit information through technology channels in partnership with the transit operators. Fresno COG encourages the transit operators to make operating schedules as accessible

to the public as feasible. FAX and FCRTA are currently registered with Google Transit and Clovis Transit is planning to join later this year. As the transit agencies update their technological capabilities, bus information will be more easily attainable, including real time passenger information and service alerts. For example, FAX has partnered with ScholarDev to develop such an application, but at this time, it is limited to scheduled information only. The COG should continue promoting this expansion of technology among the transit operators and lend assistance such as identifying grant funds to digitize information that enhances the visibility and customer experience from using transit.

Section I

Introduction – Initial Review of RTPA Functions

The Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) retained Michael Baker International to conduct its Transportation Development Act (TDA) performance audit covering the most recent triennial period, Fiscal Years (FY) 2012–13 through 2014–15. As a Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), Fresno COG is required by Public Utilities Code (PUC) Section 99246 to prepare and submit an audit of its performance on a triennial basis to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in order to continue to receive TDA funding.

This performance audit, as required by the TDA, is intended to describe how well Fresno COG is meeting its administrative and planning obligations under the TDA.

Overview of Fresno COG and Fresno County

Fresno COG is a voluntary association of governments initially formed in 1967 by elected officials in Fresno County and its incorporated cities as a cooperative body for the discussion and resolution of issues affecting the region. Subsequent federal and state legislation supported such efforts, and the agency was formalized in 1969.

Fresno County is located in the southern San Joaquin Valley and extends eastward into the Sierra Nevada mountain range and westward toward the Coast Range. The county is bordered by Madera and Merced counties to the north, Kings and Tulare counties to the south, Monterey and San Benito counties to the west, and Inyo and Mono counties to the east. Fresno County was created in 1856 out of Mariposa, Merced, and Tulare counties. The county derives its name from Fresno Creek. The word *Fresno* is a Spanish term for the ash trees that were found in abundance in the region. The county geographically is the sixth largest in the state, encompassing over 6,017 square miles in total with a land area of 5,963 square miles. The highest elevation is 14,248 feet at the summit of North Palisade, the third highest mountain in the Sierra Nevada range.

Fresno is the county seat and largest city. Other incorporated cities in order of population rank are Clovis, Sanger, Reedley, Selma, Coalinga, Kerman, Parlier, Kingsburg, Orange Cove, Mendota, Huron, Firebaugh, Fowler, and San Joaquin. The 15 incorporated cities account for nearly 82 percent of the county's total population. Notable unincorporated communities and census-designated places include Auberry, Biola, Calwa, Cantua Creek, Caruthers, Centerville, Del Rey, Easton, Friant, Lanare, Laton, Malaga, Minkler, Raisin City, Riverdale, Shaver Lake, Squaw Valley, and Tranquility. Federally recognized Native American tribal entities in Fresno County include the Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians of California, the Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians of California, and the Table Mountain Rancheria composed of the

Chukchansi band of Yokuts and the Monache tribe. A demographic snapshot of incorporated cities and the county is presented below in Table I-1.

**Table I-1
Fresno County Demographics**

City/Jurisdiction	2010 US Census Population	Change from 2000 US Census	Population 65 Years & Older	2016 DOF Estimate	Land Area (in square miles)
Clovis	95,631	39.7%	10.6%	108,039	23.28
Coalinga	13,380	14.7%	7.9%	16,667	6.12
Firebaugh	7,549	31.4%	6.5%	8,154	3.46
Fowler	5,570	40.0%	10.0%	5,944	2.53
Fresno (<i>county seat</i>)	494,665	15.7%	9.3%	520,453	111.96
Huron	6,754	7.1%	4.9%	6,914	1.59
Kerman	13,544	58.4%	7.2%	14,366	3.23
Kingsburg	11,382	23.7%	12.8%	12,101	2.83
Mendota	11,014	39.6%	4.7%	11,763	3.28
Orange Cove	9,078	17.6%	5.7%	9,220	1.91
Parlier	14,494	30.0%	5.5%	15,395	2.19
Reedley	24,194	16.6%	9.5%	25,999	5.08
Sanger	24,270	28.2%	9.4%	26,024	5.52
San Joaquin	4,001	22.4%	4.4%	4,047	1.15
Selma	23,219	19.4%	9.9%	24,844	5.14
Unincorporated Area	171,705	18.5%	13.7%	174,611	5,778.72
Fresno County (County Total)	930,450	16.4%	10.0%	984,541	5,957.99

Source: 2010 US Census, California Department of Finance

The county and its incorporated cities saw significant growth between the 2000 and 2010 US Census. Kerman saw the highest percentage increase in population, followed by Fowler, Clovis, and Mendota. The senior citizen population, comprising residents aged 65 and over, is 10 percent countywide. The 2016 population for Fresno County is estimated to be 984,541 as reported by the California Department of Finance.

Major highways traversing Fresno County include Interstate 5 (I-5) and State Routes (SR) 33, 41, 43, 63, 99, 145, 168, 180, 198, 201, and 269. SR 99 is the main north–south highway connecting Fresno with other major San Joaquin Valley cities. Interstate 5 runs north–south through the western portion of the county. SR–41, also running north–south, connects the county with the central coast and Yosemite National Park. SR 168 and SR 180 are the main east–west highways connecting the San Joaquin Valley with the Sierra Nevada foothill and mountain areas including Huntington and Shaver lakes and Kings Canyon and Sequoia national parks.

Agriculture, distribution centers, food processing, government, and educational and health services are mainstays of the local economy. In spite of rapid urbanization and economic

diversification, agriculture still remains the most important sector of Fresno County's economy. Fresno County is ranked as the most productive agricultural county in the nation. In 2015, the county's total crop valuation was approximately \$6.6 billion. The top five agricultural commodities in 2015 ranked in value were almonds, grapes (including wine and raisin grapes), poultry, cattle and calves, and tomatoes.

Role of Fresno COG

Similar to many other large regional transportation planning agencies in California, Fresno COG has a complex legal structure that delineates its responsibilities in the areas of transportation, planning, and investment decision-making. Fresno COG's current Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), dated March 25, 1976, has served as the foundation upon which several additional responsibilities have been added in later years by the state legislature.

Another important feature of Fresno COG is that it operates in a complex intergovernmental environment, which requires ongoing communications and coordination with agencies at the local, regional, state, and federal levels of government. This means, for example, that Fresno COG's long-range transportation plan, transportation improvement programs, and air quality conformity processes are coordinated with those of the other San Joaquin Valley counties to address interregional issues. In addition, to ensure ongoing coordination with local jurisdictions, Fresno COG interacts regularly with county government, the cities in the county, and the county's transit operators to ensure coordination between Fresno COG policies and programs and the member agencies' programs and services.

In addition to its primary role as a Council of Governments and Regional Transportation Planning Agency, Fresno COG also serves as the federal Metropolitan Planning Organization as well as the Regional Transportation Mitigation Fee Agency to enact a mitigation fee on new development that contributes toward regional street, highway, and other transportation projects.

Metropolitan Planning Organization

Fresno COG is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Fresno County. The designation allows federal funding for transportation projects and programs to be channeled through the agency. An integral element of this planning process is the annual development of the Overall Work Program (OWP).

As the MPO, Fresno COG has responsibility as the Affiliate State Census Data Center for Fresno County. Staff responds to requests for census information from member agencies and the public. There is also continued coordination with the US Census Bureau relative to public dissemination of census reports, announcements, and maintenance of census geography. Also, as the designated Areawide Planning Organization for the Fresno County Region, the

COG adopts housing, land use, and open space elements when appropriate in providing comprehensive regional planning.

Measure C Extension & Regional Transportation Mitigation Fee (RTMF)

The Fresno County Transportation Authority is responsible for administration and implementation of the Measure C Extension half-cent sales tax revenues to ensure implementation of the program of projects adopted by the voters. The 20-year funding program for transportation projects won voter approval in November 2006. The Authority and Fresno COG have executed a contract to have Fresno COG provide salary and personnel administration.

Fresno COG, serving as the Regional Transportation Mitigation Fee Agency, collects the Regional Transportation Mitigation Fee (RTMF) under the Measure C Extension. The RTMF is assessed on all new or expanded development in the county that increases traffic impacts. For residential developments, the fee is calculated based on the number of dwelling units, whereas for nonresidential development, the fee is calculated on the square footage.

Fresno COG has an important role to play in the overall development and ongoing oversight of the sales tax program. The expenditure plan is updated every two years and adopted by the Fresno COG Policy Board. The Authority reviews and approves the expenditure plan as submitted by the Policy Board. Moreover, Fresno COG is responsible for ensuring that the plan's projects are included in the Regional Transportation Plan, Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Overall, the responsibility assigned to the Fresno COG in the sales tax program to plan for and deliver the program of projects is considered essential. The COG is viewed positively in its technical analysis and as being a skilled manager of the programming process which results in projects being funded. The COG also provides leadership in developing transportation options for the community.

Organizational Structure

Fresno COG's primary governing body is the 16-member Policy Board comprising the mayors of each incorporated city and the chair of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, or their designated representatives. The Policy Board generally meets on the fourth Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. in the COG's Sequoia Conference Room, with a few exceptions. In addition to the Policy Board, there are two other leadership committees: the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC).

The PAC is a 16-member leadership committee comprising the chief administrative officer of each member agency or their designated representatives. With the exception of urgent matters, all action items must first be considered by the PAC before submission to the Policy

Board. The PAC meets on the third Friday of each month. The TTC is a leadership committee comprising planning and public works personnel from each incorporated city and the County, as well as representatives from transit agencies and community stakeholder groups. The TTC provides technical guidance on transportation issues and projects.

Fresno COG also has several other committees that focus on specific areas. They include the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), Measure C Citizen Oversight Committee, Airport Land Use Commission, Freight Advisory Committee, Rail Committee, Model Steering Committee, Environmental Justice Task Force, and SAFETEA-LU Subcommittee. Matters before the Policy Board are first channeled through the various committees and technical working groups to build consensus.

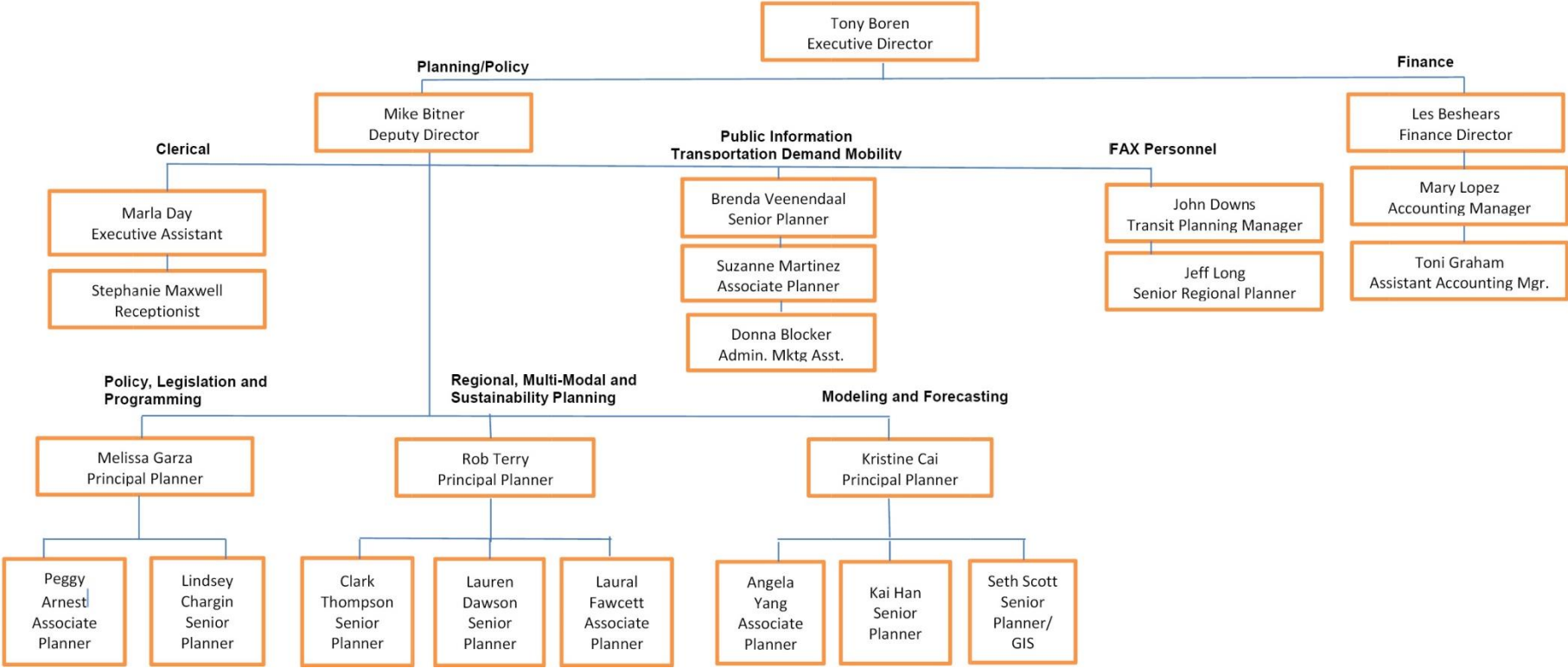
The SSTAC is required under the TDA statute and conducts an annual review of the unmet transit needs process as well as addresses social service issues related to transit in the county.

Membership of the Fresno COG Social Services Transportation Advisory Council consists of:

- One representative of potential transit users who is 60 years of age or older;
- One representative of potential transit users who is disabled;
- Two representatives of the local social service providers for seniors, including one representative of a social service transportation, if one exists;
- Two representatives of local social service providers for the disabled, including one representative of a social service transportation provider, if one exists;
- One representative of a local service provider for persons of limited means;
- Two representatives for the local consolidated transportation service agency, designated pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 15975 of the Government Code, if one exists, including one representative from an operator, if one exists;
- Unspecified representatives of social service organizations; and
- One representative of potential transit users from local youth (18–25 years of age).

Figure I-1 shows an organization chart of the COG during the audit period. The organization chart has since been revised as shown in the recent Overall Work Program.

**Figure I-1
Fresno COG Organization Chart**



The Fresno COG Annual Financial Report lists the agency's yearly expenditures of its general fund. Total actual general fund expenditures ranged from \$7,782,077 in FY 2013 to \$8,635,661 million in FY 2014 to \$9,286,022 in FY 2015.¹

Transit Operators

Fresno COG approves TDA fund claims for and monitors public transportation systems in the county. Most of the transit services in Fresno COG's jurisdiction are currently directly operated by the sponsoring local public agency. Public transportation in Fresno County consisted of four public systems. Each service is briefly described below.

City of Clovis – Clovis Transit Stageline/Round Up: The City of Clovis administers and operates fixed-route and demand-responsive transit services within its city limits and in adjacent areas of Fresno. The Stageline is the fixed-route service that operates four routes Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. and Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Round Up is a curb-to-curb dial-a-ride service for seniors and persons with disabilities. Round Up operates 7 days a week in Clovis. The hours of operation are from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on weekends. Fresno service operates during the week from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The system utilizes 30 lift-equipped vehicles and transports over 227,000 riders annually.

City of Fresno – Fresno Area Express/Handy Ride: Fresno Area Express (FAX) is administered and operated by the City of Fresno along 16 routes throughout the Fresno area. Service hours for FAX are Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and weekends from 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Handy Ride provides complementary curb-to-curb dial-a-ride service to persons with disabilities unable to utilize the FAX fixed-route service. Handy Ride is operated under contract by Keolis Transit America on the same service days and during the same hours as the FAX fixed route.

Fresno County Rural Transit Agency: The Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) provides intercity and local community transit service through 23 subsystems in the rural areas of Fresno County and parts of Kings and Tulare counties. The hours of operation for most services are Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with limited service on Saturdays. FCRTA does not operate on Sundays and major holidays, with the exception of the National Park shuttles. Each subsystem generally adheres to the local city's holiday schedule. FCRTA was established as a Joint Powers Agency in September 1979 by the 13 rural incorporated cities and Fresno County.

Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission: The Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (Fresno EOC) Transit Systems operates a specialized transit service for social service clients throughout Fresno County acting as the co-designated Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for both the urban and rural regions of the county.

¹ Fresno COG Annual Financial Reports. Budgetary Comparison Schedule, General Fund.

The Fresno EOC is co-designated with FAX for the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area, and with the FCRTA for the non-urbanized areas of the county. Fresno EOC also provides general public rural transportation services under a contract with the FCRTA. From this designation, Fresno EOC has responsibility for working toward improved social service transportation through coordination and consolidation of transportation services.

Audit Methodology

To gather information for this performance audit, Michael Baker International accomplished the following activities:

- **Document Review:** Conducted an extensive review of documents including various Fresno COG files and internal reports, Fresno COG claims files, financial reports, committee and board agendas, and other published public documents.
- **Interviews:** Interviewed Fresno COG management and planning staff as well as the transit operators under Fresno COG's jurisdiction.
- **Analysis:** Evaluated the responses from the interviews as well as the documents reviewed about Fresno COG's responsibilities, functions, and performance to TDA guidelines and regulations. Additional research was conducted in audit areas that required further analysis.

This report is divided into five chapters. In Chapter II, Michael Baker International provides a review of the compliance requirements of the TDA administrative process. Chapter III describes Fresno COG's responses to the recommendations provided in the previous performance audit. In Chapter IV, Michael Baker International provides a detailed review of Fresno COG's functions. The last section summarizes our findings and recommendations.

Section II

RTPA Compliance Requirements

Fourteen key compliance requirements are suggested in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities* September 2008, which was developed by Caltrans, to assess Fresno COG’s conformance with the TDA. Our findings concerning Fresno COG’s compliance with state legislative requirements are summarized in Table II-1.

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG’s Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
All transportation operators and city or county governments which have responsibility for serving a given area, in total, claim no more than those Local Transportation Fund (LTF) monies apportioned to that area.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99231	Fresno COG accounts for its claimants’ areas of apportionment and has not allowed those claimants to claim more than what is apportioned for their area. Fresno COG makes this finding in each adopted resolution approving LTF claims. Fresno COG utilizes a formula based on population to determine each claimant’s apportionments each year. A resolution is passed by the COG adopting the apportionment findings for each claimant. Conclusion: Complied
The RTPA has adopted rules and regulations delineating procedures for the submission of claims for facilities provided for the exclusive use of pedestrians and bicycles.	Public Utilities Code, Sections 99233.3 and 99234	Fresno COG provides guidance in its TDA Claims Manual and includes instructions in its claim packet for the submission of claims for pedestrian and bicycle projects. Through its annual apportionment process of LTF revenues, each member agency is provided with the amount of Article 3 bicycle and pedestrian funds that can be claimed.

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
		Conclusion: Complied
The RTPA has established a social services transportation advisory council. The RTPAs must ensure that there is a citizen participation process which includes at least an annual public hearing.	Public Utilities Code, Sections 99238 and 99238.5	<p>The SSTAC is established and meets the required membership roster while having additional members at the COG's discretion. There are 13 members as of June 2015. Most members are residents of the city of Fresno; meetings are held at COG offices in downtown Fresno. A few members are from other cities in the county.</p> <p>A legally noticed public hearing is held at Fresno COG annually to receive public testimony to determine if public transportation needs within Fresno County will be reasonably met.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied</p>
<p>The RTPA has annually identified, analyzed, and recommended potential productivity improvements which could lower the operating costs of those operators which operate at least 50 percent of their vehicle service miles within the RTPA's jurisdiction. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, those made in the performance audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A committee for the purpose of providing 	Public Utilities Code, Section 99244	<p>Fresno COG develops an Annual Transit Productivity Evaluation document that assesses the progress of transit operators and to recommend potential productivity improvements. The evaluation includes a description of each operator's activities for the past year including significant service changes and activities, and follow-up to recommendations in performance audits.</p> <p>Productivity data and performance indicators are shown for a four-year period to</p>

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
<p>advice on productivity improvements may be formed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The operator has made a reasonable effort to implement improvements recommended by the RTPA, as determined by the RTPA, or else the operator has not received an allocation which exceeds its prior year allocation. 		<p>indicate the operational performance trends for each operator. Graphical displays of the data are also provided for added analysis and information.</p> <p>Recommendations for productivity improvement are then made by the TTC and SSTAC based on the data.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied</p>
<p>The RTPA has ensured that all claimants to whom it allocates Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds submits to it and to the State Controller an annual certified fiscal and compliance audit within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year (December 27). The RTPA may grant an extension of up to 90 days as it deems necessary (March 26).</p>	<p>Public Utilities Code, Section 99245</p>	<p>Fresno COG has ensured that all TDA claimants have submitted an annual certified fiscal and compliance audit within the allowed time frame. The following fiscal audits were completed:</p> <p>The CPA firm of Dedekian, George, Small & Markarian was retained and completed the fiscal audits for FYs 2013, 2014, and 2015 for the following operators:</p> <p>City of Clovis: FY 2013: June 20, 2014 FY 2014: March 26, 2015 FY 2015: March 31, 2016</p> <p>City of Fresno/FAX: FY 2013: June 20, 2014 FY 2014: June 18, 2015 FY 2015: March 31, 2016</p>

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
		<p>FCRTA: FY 2013: February 19, 2014 FY 2014: February 11, 2015 FY 2015: February 8, 2016</p> <p>The CPA firms of Price Paige & Company and Kaku & Mersino were retained and completed the fiscal audits for FYs 2013, 2014, and 2015 for the following operator:</p> <p>Fresno EOC (Rural/Urban CTSA): FY 2013: December 6, 2013 FY 2014: November 21, 2014 FY 2015: November 1, 2015</p> <p>The FY 2013 TDA compliance audit of the City of Clovis and the FY 2013 and 2014 TDA compliance audits of FAX were submitted after the 90-day extension period.</p> <p>A 90-day extension was granted by the RTPA pursuant to the TDA statute for the remaining audits. The TDA compliance audits for the Fresno EOC were submitted within the 180-day time frame.</p> <p>Conclusion: Partial Compliance</p>
The RTPA has designated an independent entity to conduct a performance audit of operators and itself (for the current and previous triennium). For operators, the audit was	Public Utilities Code, Sections 99246 and 99248	For the current three-year period, Fresno COG has retained Michael Baker International to conduct the audit of Fresno COG and of the four transit operators.

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
made and calculated the required performance indicators, and the audit report was transmitted to the entity that allocates the operator's TDA monies and to the RTPA within 12 months after the end of the triennium. If an operator's audit was not transmitted by the start of the second fiscal year following the last fiscal year of the triennium, TDA funds were not allocated to that operator for that or subsequent fiscal years until the audit was transmitted.		PMC was retained to conduct the previous audit for the three fiscal years that ended June 30, 2012. Conclusion: Complied
The RTPA has submitted a copy of its performance audit to the Director of the California Department of Transportation. In addition, the RTPA has certified in writing to the Director that the performance audits of operators located in the area under its jurisdiction have been completed.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99246(c)	Fresno COG submitted its triennial performance audit and that of the transit operators to Caltrans. A copy of the cover letter accompanying the audits was provided to verify the date of submittal, which was February 12, 2014. Conclusion: Complied.
The performance audit of the operator providing public transportation services shall include, but not be limited to, a verification of the operator's operating cost per passenger, operating cost per vehicle service hour,	Public Utilities Code, Section 99246(d)	The performance audits of the operators include all required elements. Efforts to improve productivity and trends in productivity are discussed by each operator in their respective Short Range Transit Plans and the annual

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
passengers per vehicle service mile, and vehicle service hours per employee, as defined in Section 99247. The performance audit shall include, but not be limited to, consideration of the needs and types of passengers being served and the employment of part-time drivers and the contracting with common carriers of persons operating under a franchise or license to provide services during peak hours, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 99260.2.		Transit Productivity Evaluation report. Conclusion: Complied
The RTPA has established rules and regulations regarding revenue ratios for transportation operators providing services in urbanized and new urbanized areas.	Public Utilities Code, Sections 99270.1 and 99270.2	Fresno COG has established minimum revenue ratios for the urbanized operators (FAX and Clovis Transit). The 20 percent fare recovery ratio is consistent with TDA law. Conclusion: Complied
The RTPA has adopted criteria, rules, and regulations for the evaluation of claims under Article 4.5 of the TDA and the determination of the cost-effectiveness of the proposed community transit services.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99275.5	Fresno COG adopted an SB 826 Inventory and Action Plan for Fresno County in 1994. The plan guides the implementation of social service transportation and designation of Consolidated Transportation Service Agencies (CTSAs). The plan designated the City of Fresno and the Fresno EOC as the urban CTSA for the Fresno Metropolitan Area, and the Fresno EOC and the Fresno

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
		<p>County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) as the rural CTSA. The City of Clovis was designated the CTSA for the Clovis Urbanized Area.</p> <p>The Action Plan also provides a Financial Matching Strategy for LTF Article 4.5 funding that includes a formula for determining the cost effectiveness of the service. The formula includes a maximum of 45 percent of the cost paid by LTF Article 4.5, 45 percent of the cost paid by social service funding, and 10 percent of the cost paid by farebox revenues. Because the Fresno EOC does not collect fare revenues, the formula allows for a 55 percent social service funding/45 percent LTF Article 4.5 match. Fresno COG also requires CTSAs to prepare an annual operations program and budget (OPB) document that provides the service justification for Article 4.5 claims.</p> <p>The OPB document provides a program of operations, including an implementation schedule for new or modified services, and a program budget.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied</p>
State transit assistance funds received by the RTPA are allocated only for	Public Utilities Code, Sections 99310.5 and	Fresno COG allocates State Transit Assistance (STA) funds for transit services only.

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
transportation planning and mass transportation purposes.	99313.3, and Proposition 116	Conclusion: Complied
The amount received pursuant to Public Utilities Code, Section 99314.3 by each RTPA for state transit assistance is allocated to the operators in the area of its jurisdiction as allocated by the State Controller's Office.	Public Utilities Code, Section 99314.3	Fresno COG administers STA funds in accordance with the relevant PUC requirements (i.e., on the basis of population and operator revenues). Conclusion: Complied
If TDA funds are allocated to purposes not directly related to public or specialized transportation services, or facilities for exclusive use of pedestrians and bicycles, the transit planning agency has annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulted with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) established pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 99238; • Identified transit needs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Groups that are transit-dependent or transit-disadvantaged; ✓ Adequacy of existing transit services to 	Public Utilities Code, Section 99401.5	TDA funds are used exclusively for public transit in the city of Fresno. Fresno COG conducts the annual unmet transit needs process both in the rural area and in the urban area. In consultation with the SSTAC, Fresno COG produces an annual report of findings which provides an identification and analysis for determination and adoption of unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet before any allocations are made for streets and roads. The definitions of "unmet transit needs" and "reasonable to meet" are reaffirmed in the report, and findings of the unmet needs process are adopted through Board resolution. Evidence of published advertisement of the hearings in each jurisdiction is also provided in the report.

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
<p>meet the needs of groups identified; and</p> <p>✓ Analysis of potential alternatives to provide transportation alternatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted or reaffirmed definitions of "unmet transit needs" and "reasonable to meet"; • Identified the unmet transit needs and those needs that are reasonable to meet; • Adopted a finding that there are no unmet transit needs, that there are no unmet needs that are reasonable to meet, or that there are unmet transit needs including needs that are reasonable to meet. <p>If a finding is adopted that there are unmet transit needs, these needs must have been funded before an allocation was made for streets and roads.</p>		<p>LTF funds have only been allocated to streets and roads after completion of the unmet needs process.</p> <p>Upon conclusion of the unmet needs process, Fresno COG submits all documentation to Caltrans, Division of Mass Transportation, as evidence of conducting the hearings and incorporating the recommendations of the SSTAC. Transit-dependent population analysis is not included in the Unmet Transit Needs report. It is suggested that the COG include such analysis in its annual unmet transit needs findings.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied</p>
The RTPA has caused an audit of its accounts and records to be performed for each fiscal year by the	California Administrative Code, Section 6662	The accounting firm of Dedekian, George, Small & Markarian conducted the annual financial audit of Fresno COG during the

TABLE II-1 Fresno COG's Compliance Requirements Matrix		
RTPA Compliance Requirements	Reference	Compliance Efforts
<p>county auditor or a certified public accountant. The RTPA must transmit the resulting audit report to the State Controller within 12 months of the end of each fiscal year, and it must be performed in accordance with the Basic Audit Program and Report Guidelines for California Special Districts prescribed by the State Controller. The audit shall include a determination of compliance with the transportation development act and accompanying rules and regulations. Financial statements may not commingle the State Transit Assistance fund, the local transportation fund, or other revenues or funds of any city, county, or other agency. The RTPA must maintain fiscal and accounting records and supporting papers for at least four years following fiscal year close.</p>		<p>triennial performance audit period. The audits were completed within the statutory time frame for all fiscal years covered by this audit. These Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports were submitted to the State Controller within 12 months of the end of each fiscal year.</p> <p>The completion dates were:</p> <p>FY 2013: February 19, 2014 FY 2014: February 11, 2015 FY 2015: February 5, 2016</p> <p>Fresno COG also maintains fiscal and accounting records and supporting papers for at least four years following the fiscal year close.</p> <p>Conclusion: Complied</p>

Findings and Observations from RTPA Compliance Requirements Matrix

Fresno COG has satisfactorily complied with most state legislative mandates for Regional Transportation Planning Agencies. With regard to the submittal of the operator TDA compliance audits, the FY 2013 TDA compliance audit of the City of Clovis and the FY 2013 and 2014 TDA compliance audits of FAX were submitted after the 90-day extension period. A 90-day extension was granted by the RTPA pursuant to the TDA statute for the remaining

audits. The TDA compliance audits for the Fresno EOC were submitted within the 180-day time frame.

In terms of its unmet transit needs process, an analysis of the transit-dependent population is not included in the findings. Pursuant to PUC Section 99401.5, groups that are transit-dependent or transit-disadvantaged are to be identified as part of the annual unmet needs process. Further, the SSTAC is represented predominantly by city of Fresno residents, although the SSTAC reviews countywide transit needs. As of June 2015, 10 of 13 SSTAC members were from Fresno, while the remaining members were from Clovis, Sanger, and Firebaugh. Consideration should be made to diversify the SSTAC with potential members from the various communities in the county.

Section III

Prior Triennial Performance Audit Recommendations

This chapter describes Fresno COG's response to the recommendations included in the prior triennial performance audit. For this purpose, each prior recommendation for the agency is described, followed by a discussion of the agency's efforts to implement the recommendation. Conclusions are then presented concerning the extent to which the recommendations have been adopted by the agency.

Prior Recommendation 1

Retain copy of transmittal letter to the State regarding completion of triennial performance audit.

Actions taken by Fresno COG

Background: Each triennial period, the COG submits the performance audit to Caltrans as required by law. Typically a transmittal cover letter accompanies the audit submittal indicating its completion. As a check of compliance during the prior performance audit, Fresno COG was unable to furnish a copy of the transmittal letter verifying the submission of the prior performance audits to Caltrans, although Caltrans verified that the prior performance audits had been completed. It was suggested that a copy of the transmittal cover letter be retained on file by the COG for future audit cycles as evidence of this transaction.

Action: In response to this recommendation and pursuant to Public Utilities Code, Section 99246(c), Fresno COG has retained and provided a copy of the transmittal letter to Caltrans regarding completion of triennial performance audits conducted during the prior audit period. A copy of the letter submitted to Caltrans dated February 12, 2014, was provided that verified completion of the triennial performance audits of Fresno COG and the transit operators under its jurisdiction.

Conclusion

This recommendation has been implemented.

Prior Recommendation 2

As policy, the COG should request TDA transit claimants to submit a new adopted resolution in lieu of a continuing resolution when a TDA budget claim request exceeds the TDA threshold of 15 percent from the prior year.

Actions taken by Fresno COG

Background: The COG has streamlined the TDA claims requirements by allowing claimants an option to provide a continuing resolution from their respective council or board approving their annual submittal of the claim to Fresno COG. A continuous resolution bypasses this routine action for the claimants. The auditor commended the COG for instituting this streamlined provision, but suggested that any transit claim with a budget increase of more than 15 percent from the prior year include a new resolution for that claim. PUC Section 99266 requires justification for expenditures in excess of 15 percent from the prior year. While the TDA claim form already includes a requirement to substantiate the budget increase in writing, it is prudent that the claimant's governing board also adopt a new resolution as reassurance of the claim amount and the reason for the increase.

Action: Fresno Area Express (FAX) is the only transit operator/claimant that uses a continuing resolution. The City of Clovis and FCRTA continue to adopt resolutions on an annual basis. Fresno COG now requires that FAX adopt a new resolution should its operating budget exceed 15 percent over the prior year's budget pursuant to PUC Section 99266.

Conclusion

This recommendation has been implemented.

Section IV

Detailed Review of RTPA Functions

In this section, Fresno COG's functions and performance as an RTPA during this audit period are assessed in detail. As adapted from Caltrans' *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*, Fresno COG's activities can be divided into the following activities:

- Administration and Management
- Transportation Planning and Regional Coordination
- TDA Claimant Relationships and Oversight
- Public Information and External Affairs
- Grant Application and Management

Administration and Management

This section discusses the overall administration of Fresno COG's functions, which include general administration, internal planning and achievements, Overall Work Program, and Policy Board activities.

General Administration

Fresno COG is one of the largest councils of governments in the San Joaquin Valley. Staffing levels at the COG have remained steady at about 23 employees. Among the staff are two employees who are assigned roles to help administer the Measure C program and two additional employees who have planning-related responsibilities for Fresno Area Express (FAX). During FY 2013, an intern was hired to assist with the Measure C Taxi Script Program.

The COG's organizational structure during the audit period retained a horizontal configuration that places emphasis on performance-based merit instituted by the Executive Director in recent years. This configuration allows greater staff opportunities for project management responsibilities and accountability. Essentially the COG has operated in a lean manner during the audit period as it administers and expands upon the various programs within its purview.

In spite of its lean staffing and horizontal organizational structure, Fresno COG has continued to successfully guide and deliver projects and programs of regional importance. The COG has retained its leadership role among the eight San Joaquin Valley councils of governments with regard to air quality and modeling. At the local level, the COG acts in more of an advisory role

with regard to land use development in its member jurisdictions to ensure compliance with state mandates pursuant to AB 32 and SB 375. For instance, the COG has retained consultants to assist local agencies to comply with state air quality and smart growth initiatives through the commissioning of climate action Plans. The COG has also provided technical support toward the California High-Speed Rail heavy maintenance facility, which could be constructed in Fresno.

Personnel

While able to maintain staffing levels during the audit period, the COG experienced employee turnover and retirement of several senior staff, including the Deputy Director. From this change, the Executive Director modified the organization chart shortly after the audit period including promoting one principal planner to Deputy Director and creating two new principal planner positions to manage technical staff. The staff separations and new hires have resulted in the composition of COG staff trending younger. Recruitment efforts involve career postings and outreach to the American Planning Association and California State University, Fresno. The COG makes a point to recruit early enough so that new hires can receive training and shadow departing senior staff to ensure a smoother transition.

The COG and FAX continue to share planning staff. The FAX Transit Planning Manager position is 80 percent funded by FAX and 20 percent funded by the COG. The Planning Manager and Transit Planner assigned to FAX are COG employees. The FAX Transit Planner oversees the SSTAC meetings and unmet transit needs hearings.

The personnel policies, job classifications, and benefits summaries are found in the Fresno COG Employee Manual, updated in July 2013. The update involved changes to several job classification titles. Fresno COG offers two defined contribution retirement plans composed of a qualified 401(a) plan and a 457 deferred compensation plan. These plans are administered by the International City/County Management Association. The COG makes a tax-deferred contribution of 15 percent of gross salary to the 401(a) plan for each regular full-time employee up to the maximums allowed by federal and state tax law. Employees are exempt from FICA (Social Security) tax and instead are required to make a minimum tax-deferred contribution of 7.5 percent to the 457 deferred compensation plan.

Internal Planning and Achievements

The COG saw a number of achievements and planning initiatives take place during the audit period. Some of these developments were initiated during the prior audit period and were completed during the time frame of this audit.

2014 Regional Transportation Plan-Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP-SCS): The 2014 RTP-SCS was adopted in June 2014 and guides the development of transportation in Fresno County over a 25-year horizon. Key elements of the RTP-SCS included adoption of goals, objectives, and performance measures and development of a list of RTP projects and project evaluation criteria for prioritizing project funding in the plan.

Public Participation: Fresno COG embarked on the Public Participation Plan (PPP) update pursuant to SB 375 and in concert with the RTP-SCS. The PPP is intended to provide direction for public participation activities conducted by Fresno COG and contains the requirements, procedures, strategies, and techniques used by the COG to communicate with the public and appropriate, affected agencies. The 2016 Public Participation Plan was approved by the COG Policy Board in July 2016.

Fresno County Public Transportation Gap Analysis and Service Coordination Plan (Gap Analysis): Adopted in December 2013, the Gap Analysis qualitatively and quantitatively defined where mobility gaps exist between public transportation and human service agency transportation. It also developed specific coordination strategies to address the existing mobility gaps.

Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area Public Transportation Strategic Service Evaluation: The Strategic Service Evaluation focuses on reducing transit travel times, improving linkages to major trip generators, and improving the overall productivity, cost effectiveness, and sustainability of transit. The evaluation was commissioned by Fresno COG in May 2014 and completed in May 2015.

Adoption of Programming Documents: Fresno COG adopted several key programming documents on schedule, including updates to the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) in July 2012 and June 2014, and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) in October 2013. The FTIP met the requirements of the former federal Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), and the RTIP was consistent with the 2014 RTP-SCS.

Measure C: This local measure provides funding toward transportation projects and mobility programs of regional significance in Fresno County. Some of the projects funded through Measure C have included the SR 180 Extension, carpool incentive and vanpool subsidy programs, and a taxi script program for seniors aged 70 and older. Measure C continues to provide funding for local and regional public transportation service throughout the county, as well as revenue for locally selected bicycle, pedestrian, and roadway repair projects.

Title VI Plan: Pursuant to the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, Fresno COG adopted a Title VI Plan in 2013, which was approved by the US Department of Transportation in July 2013. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires that no person in the United States, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Overall Work Program

The Overall Work Program (OWP) serves as Fresno COG's annual budget and program guide. The OWP identifies the specific work elements that Fresno COG will undertake for the coming fiscal year. Most of the work elements in the OWP address Fresno COG's state and federal planning requirements. Other work elements are also included in the OWP to address and resolve local transportation planning issues and priorities, including the Measure C Extension. In terms of cross-training and succession planning, staff participates in the development of all elements of the work program.

The OWP is adopted annually by the Policy Board. Primary work element categories include Regional Transportation Planning, Transportation Program Development, Services and General Coordination Activities, Regional Coordination of Transportation, Land Use & Housing, Valleywide Coordinated Activities, and Administrative Activities. The OWP also includes an overview of Fresno COG's management structure and organizational charts. Administration of the TDA is found in the Local Transportation Funds Administration element under the Administrative Activities category.

Each work element contained in the OWP is enumerated along with the stated objective, background discussion, previous work products completed, current work products, tasks, schedule, and itemized budget. The budget for each work element contains a summary of staffing, overhead, and direct costs. During the development of the OWP, the COG identified a challenge with categorizing certain grants such as those from the California Department of Conservation. Fresno COG has had to balance federal oversight concerns as an MPO with state mandates such as SB 375.

The annual tasks outlined in the element specific to TDA administration are:

1. Ensuring that apportionment, unmet transit need hearings and findings, audits, and other regional transportation planning agency responsibilities are fulfilled;
2. Monitoring related legislative activity;
3. Assisting with claims preparation;
4. Reviewing claims for conformance with applicable TDA law, the Regional Transportation Plan, and Short Range Transit Plans;
5. Maintaining appropriate financial activity records;
6. Conducting Social Service Transportation Advisory Council meetings/public hearings;
7. Updating unmet transit needs staff reports and conducting public hearings;
8. Contracting for appropriate fiscal and triennial performance audits; and

9. Allocating PTMISEA, CTAF, and LCTOP funds.

The element lists six work products in conjunction with the aforementioned tasks that include Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA) apportionment and claim allocation records, monthly legislative reports, fiscal and triennial performance audits, SSTAC meetings, and an unmet transit needs staff report.

Policy Board Activities

The Policy Board is Fresno COG's main governing body guiding the agency's activities and staff. This body is made up of 16 members comprising the mayors from each incorporated city and the chair of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, or their designated representatives. The Policy Board adopts Fresno COG's annual budget and OWP, offers guidance, and votes on issues brought before it by staff. The Policy Board chair serves a two-year term.

The Policy Board underwent significant turnover during the audit period, in part as a result of the run-up to the national elections in November 2012 coupled with a relatively large number of elected officials on the board. The Executive Director spends time individually with each new board member to familiarize them with the COG's activities and programs. The Executive Director signed a new three-year contract approved by the COG Policy Board.

The Policy Board has a double-weighted voting system. Each member has a vote based on population. To approve any action, the board must pass two tests:

1. Agencies representing 40 percent of the population must be in favor of an action.
2. A majority of members must support the action (9 out of the 16 members).

Board meetings are convened on the fourth Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. in the COG's Sequoia Conference Room, with a few exceptions. A quorum call is conducted before each meeting to ensure 40 percent attendance. The Fresno COG *Board Actions* newsletter summarizes the actions taken by the Policy Board for the month. New board members receive an orientation packet of resource materials introducing the COG's activities and its role in transportation. The packet includes a copy of the most recent OWP, governance information, an acronym dictionary, and other COG-related data to provide a thorough overview of the agency to the new board member.

Transportation Planning and Regional Coordination

This functional area addresses planning functions required of Fresno COG, including development of the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and transit planning including performance monitoring and the short-range transit planning

process. Additional transportation programs administered by the agency to promote regional coordination are also discussed.

Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is Fresno COG's long-range planning document that guides the development of transportation in Fresno County over a 25-year horizon. The RTP demonstrates how Fresno County will better maintain, operate, and expand its transportation system in a financially constrained manner. The document is updated every four years and is required by state and federal law. It also serves to expedite project approval and prioritization.

During the audit period, the most recent RTP was developed and adopted in the spring of 2014 that has a planning horizon through the year 2040. Pursuant to SB 375, RTPs are required to incorporate sustainability mandates that address land use and air quality through a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). An SCS is a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through coordinated transportation and land use planning. The former Deputy Director oversaw the entire RTP-SCS process.

The 2014 Regional Transportation Plan was the first RTP adopted by the COG that addressed land use and air quality considerations with consultation from the California Air Resources Board. The City of Fresno General Plan, adopted in December 2014, enabled the 2014 RTP-SCS to meet its vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction targets. Fresno COG serves in an advisory role with regard to land use development in the region.

The 2014 RTP-SCS contains four main elements: the Policy Element, the Action Element, the Financial Element, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy. In addition, appendices include an RTP checklist, Valleywide Information, Program Environmental Impact Report, Congestion Management Program, Environmental Justice Report, and SCS reference materials.

The COG invested significant funding in modeling to comply with SB 375 for the RTP update in 2014. The resulting Sustainability Communities Strategy serves various purposes and mandates including better linkages between regional housing needs with general plan housing elements. Mini-grants of about \$3,000 per grant are awarded to local coalition groups to hold workshops about the RTP update. The mini-grants are leveraged by the grantees, who recruit their own personnel for the workshops.

The roundtable organized for the 2014 RTP is composed of 35 divergent organizations, including the Sierra Club and developers. The RTP Roundtable serves as an emissions target setting group, among other duties. The COG is considering this group as a candidate to be a standing committee in light of new RTP guidelines driving the need for further collaboration and stronger linkages between land use and transportation.

Transportation Improvement Program

Fresno COG is responsible for preparing both the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) for Fresno County projects that have been approved for federal and state funding. The FTIP is a listing of all federally funded and regionally significant projects spanning a four-year period; it is updated every two years during even numbered years to demonstrate consistency with the RTP. The listing of projects includes transit assets and other related needs funded by federal grants and identified in each operator's Short Range Transit Plan (SRTTP). This document is also used to make a finding of air quality conformity with the applicable State Implementation Plan before any federal funds may be expended on transportation projects. The Policy Board adopted the 2013 FTIP in July 2012 and the 2015 FTIP in June 2014.

Fresno COG prepares amendments as needed and works with state agencies, other regional agencies, and local agencies to coordinate implementation of the RTP through the FTIP. Federal regulations require that all projects funded with federal funds and regionally significant projects (state or locally funded projects) be included in an FTIP in order to receive the funds. As outlined in federal transportation law, MPOs such as Fresno COG publish an annual listing of projects for which funds have been obligated in the preceding year. The COG provided evidence of publishing this list in December of each audit year.

The development of the RTIP is guided by principles established by SB 45, which provides for mainly local control over the programming of projects for state and federal funding. The plans are financially constrained, meaning that only those projects with expected available funding could be included. Federal fund sources during the audit period that Fresno COG allocates include Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, Highway Priority Projects, Regional Surface Transportation Program, Highway Bridge Program, and Transportation Enhancement Activities funding, along with Federal Transit Administration funds. State fund sources include the Proposition 1B Bond, SB 821, State Transit Assistance, and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Regional Improvement Program funds. The 2014 RTIP was adopted in October 2013.

Due to a funding shortfall in the STIP, the SR 180 Extension had to be reprogrammed to the year 2019. The deficit in the STIP resulted in \$14 million being cut from the SR 180 project as well as cuts to the SR 269 bridge reconstruction project in Huron and work along Golden State Boulevard. The COG has been seeking to save up to \$42 million toward the programming of projects.

Fresno COG uses web-driven software data management to enhance the programming of projects with its local jurisdictions. Local jurisdictions are able to view and track their programmed projects online and use query tools to review projects using customized views. When an amendment to a project is needed, the local jurisdiction would contact Fresno COG to make the adjustment in the data system. The software system ties the project with funding and provides the common platform and up-to-date information for all affected jurisdictions.

Transit Planning Including Performance Monitoring and the Short-Range Transit Planning Process

Fresno COG has undertaken several efforts in guiding the development and coordination of the region's transit infrastructure. Active monitoring of transit operators is via the annual Transit Productivity Evaluation report released each January by the COG. This report meets the COG's obligation under PUC Section 99244 and provides an overview of the four Fresno County transit systems, together with service changes and performance indicator data. The evaluation report is a valuable tool in supplying comprehensive data about the recent activities of each transit operator and their relative performance toward goals and objectives.

In-depth transit planning is incorporated in the short-range transit plans. Several short-range transit plans were updated by the public transit operators during the audit period. The Short Range Transit Plan for the Fresno-Clovis Urbanized Area, 2014–2018, was adopted in June 2013 and examines the service provision of the urbanized area operators including FAX and Clovis Transit. In addition, the Fresno Area Express Short-Range Transit Plan, FY 2016–2020, was adopted in June 2015. The Short Range Transit Plan for the Rural County Area, 2016–2020, was adopted in June 2015 and examines the service provision for the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA). The plans are updated every two years and are the basis for funding and operational goals over a five-year period.

Fresno COG has undertaken a comprehensive planning effort to develop public transit services from the Fresno-Clovis area to the three national parks in the region: Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia. The planning process included coordination efforts with multiple regional partners including the National Park Service, Madera County, and multiple municipal jurisdictions along the proposed transit corridors. Fresno COG was able to assemble grant funding to fully fund the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) service for the first two years of operation. The other transit service, Big Trees Transit, serves Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks and is administered through FCRTA. The National Park Service contributed \$345,000 toward the services. The COG administers the service but contracts with the Merced County Association of Governments (MCOG) for day-to-day administration. MCOG in turn contracts with VIA Trailways for service operations. Fresno COG's Joint Powers Agreement was amended to accommodate this role.

Ridesharing and Commuter Initiatives

Fresno COG has been proactive in helping the region reduce its commute trips. As part of the Measure C Extension, the agency has been promoting commuter and farmworker vanpool programs. These programs offer subsidies and reimbursements for existing and new vanpools. The Measure C Farmworker Vanpool Program offers vouchers to help farm laborers pay for their transportation to various job sites when they ride in an approved farmworker vanpool. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis until the program funds are exhausted. All groups interested in participating in the Farmworker Vanpool Program are required to use an authorized vanpool provider or form an employer-sponsored vanpool.

The COG hosts a website for commuters at www.valleyrides.com in partnership with the Fresno County Transportation Authority. The site has contact information on air, rail, bus, taxi, and other transportation services, and downloaded maps of nearby bicycling and walking trails. The site also offers free computer rideshare matching for those interested in carpooling or vanpooling in/from Fresno County. A user simply types their email address, along with the starting point and destination information, and their standard work or class schedule. Valleyrides.com will then supply a matchlist of compatible commuters who have also registered for this service. Incentives are offered, such as \$1,000 monthly cash giveaway.

Fresno County Freeway Service Patrol

Fresno COG administers the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) in cooperation with the California Highway Patrol and Caltrans. The FSP provides quick motorist assistance on freeways during peak traffic conditions to remove minor incidents rapidly, thereby reducing congestion from backups and potentially secondary accidents. The FSP assists with changing a flat tire, jumpstarting a car, refilling a radiator and taping hoses, and supplying fuel. Should further help be warranted, free towing is available to the nearest CHP-identified location off the freeway.

The FSP operates along an estimated 21.4 miles of State Routes 41, 99, 168, and 180 in the city of Fresno. A private tow truck company is contracted to patrol the routes Monday through Friday during morning and evening commute hours. Program operation began on September 1, 1993, and completed a twenty-second year of operation in June 2015.

Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Program

Fresno COG previously served as the local Abandoned Vehicle Abatement (AVA) Service Authority. The AVA Program was funded by an additional \$1.00 vehicle registration fee exclusively for Fresno County, and local agencies were reimbursed costs incurred in the removal of abandoned vehicles, which are in violation of local ordinances. Reauthorization of the program failed to receive a two-thirds majority vote during the primary election held June 3, 2014. The program was phased out at the end of June 2014.

Air Quality

The COG has performed an important service by defining air quality issues and is viewed by many as the collective voice of the community on air quality. Moreover, Fresno COG is recognized for serving in a leadership role among its peer agencies in the San Joaquin Valley and for ensuring that adequate attention is being given throughout the Valley to the issue of air quality, especially as it relates to transportation.

The RTP-SCS is closely coordinated with the state air quality implementation plan prepared by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The RTP must be consistent and in conformance with the air quality plan to comply with both state and federal regulations.

Because the eight San Joaquin Valley counties share a common nonattainment air basin, the counties have coordinated their respective RTPs to clearly distinguish all issues that are valleywide in scope, with the issues are presented consistently. Current air quality issues include the need to address particulate matter (PM) levels which the Valley experiences during the winter months.

Fresno COG has long served as the lead in the area of air quality modeling and conformance for the San Joaquin Valley transportation planning agencies. Fresno COG has issued RFPs over the past few years to retain consultants to assist with technical modeling. RFPs have been issued for such projects as short-term model improvements and a preliminary long-term model improvement plan for the eight San Joaquin Valley MPO traffic models to meet the requirements of SB 375, and for the continued development of the Fresno San Joaquin Valley Model Improvement Program (MIP) four-step mode choice model and the MIP activity-based model.

The COG led an effort to upgrade the model into a uniform platform that could be used valleywide. With the completion of Phase 2 of the Valley Model Improvement Program, Fresno COG has been able to revalidate the model to the base year 2014. In addition, COG staff used the Envision Tomorrow visioning tool to help test various land use scenarios for SB 375 target setting and the 2014 RTP-SCS. Envision Tomorrow is a suite of urban and regional planning tools used to design and test land use decisions and their effect on transportation and air quality.

The Model Steering Committee meets regularly to discuss modeling issues and is recognized by the valley planning agencies as the body which addressed regional air quality impacts. The valley coordinated effort is in concert with the activities of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District as well as Caltrans.

TDA Claimant Relationships and Oversight

As the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency, Fresno COG is responsible for the administration of the TDA program. This functional area addresses the COG's administration of the provisions of the TDA. The sub-functions described include administration of the program, provision of technical and managerial assistance to operators, transit coordination, TDA claims processing, and the conduct of the unmet transit needs process.

Fresno COG Administration and Planning

The uses of TDA revenues apportioned to Fresno County flow through a priority process prescribed in state law. Prior to allocation of funds to the member jurisdictions, a very small portion (less than 1 percent) is allocated to the Fresno County Auditor-Controller for administration of the revenue. The LTF allocations are then distributed to the jurisdictions based on the latest population figures from the California Department of Finance. In order of priority, LTF funds are allocated as follows:

- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities (2 percent)
- Consolidated Transportation Service Agencies (5 percent)
- Regional transportation planning (3 percent)
- Public transit
- Streets and roads

Prior to apportionment of funds to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program and the transit operators, Fresno COG is able to claim TDA revenues for administration of the fund and for transportation planning and programming purposes. During the audit fiscal years of 2013 through 2015, Fresno COG claimed the amounts shown in Table IV-1.

Table IV-1
Local Transportation Funds (LTF) Allocated for Fresno COG Administration and Planning and Programming

Fiscal Year	Administration of TDA	Planning and Programming	Total
2013	\$133,000	\$764,360	\$897,360
2014	\$133,000	\$792,290	\$925,290
2015	\$100,000	\$835,107	\$935,107

Source: FY 2013–2015 Fresno COG Annual Financial Reports, Schedule of Disbursements by Purpose

In FY 2013, the amount of Local Transportation Funds claimed by Fresno COG was equal to about 2.5 percent of total TDA apportionments countywide. The amount was 2.4 percent for FYs 2014 and 2015. These amounts are in line with industry trends to administer the fund.

The TDA administrative responsibilities of the COG are described in the Overall Work Program for which funding is claimed. These responsibilities include compliance with TDA statutory requirements such as the apportionment, allocation approval process, conduct of unmet transit needs hearings, maintenance of financial records, and contracting of required audits.

Technical and Managerial Assistance to Operators

The COG’s Director of Finance is the primary contact for providing TDA assistance to the claimants and transit operators, including issuing the annual TDA claim forms and distributing TDA revenues to the transit operators for operating cost and capital purchases, and to the cities and the County for use on streets and roads and pedestrian and bicycle projects. During the audit period, many day-to-day TDA responsibilities such as bookkeeping, distribution of funds, and communication with the transit operators and local jurisdiction claimants were delegated by the Finance Director to the Assistant Accounting Manager, who is involved in the allocation process. The chart of accounts was developed with further segregation by specific expenditure categories that are consistent with the allowable uses specified by law. This customized system for the TDA program has enabled Fresno COG to effectively manage the revenues and offer technical assistance to the operators.

TDA Claim Processing

On an annual basis during this audit period, Fresno COG was responsible for managing the apportionment of between \$30.4 and \$33.6 million in Local Transportation Fund revenues and between \$5.4 and \$5.8 million in State Transit Assistance funds (annual financial report audited figures). The LTF revenues have increased from the last triennial cycle as shown in Table IV-2.

**Table IV-2
Total TDA Funding Apportionment**

Fiscal Year	Local Transportation Fund (LTF)	State Transit Assistance (STA)	Total
2013	\$30,404,870	\$5,810,598	\$36,215,468
2014	\$32,188,595	\$5,785,241	\$37,973,836
2015	\$33,613,079	\$5,421,441	\$39,034,520

Source: FY 2013–2015 Fresno COG Annual Financial Reports, Schedule of Apportionments by Purpose

Fresno COG prepares and distributes several documents during the TDA claims process. The documents include the initial and final estimates of apportionment to each jurisdiction and a packet providing claimants with the necessary forms and funding information needed to prepare TDA claims. The County projects initial revenue in January, with final revenue estimates prepared in early May. The COG Finance Director fills in available information such as the claim amount to assist each claimant.

TDA claims can be submitted electronically using an Excel spreadsheet. Paper copies are also submitted. The claims review is shared among the COG’s TDA staff to ensure the integrity of the process. Transit claims under Articles 4 and 4.5 are generally reviewed and processed first, followed by other claims for funds such as for streets and roads. Fresno COG has streamlined the TDA claims requirements by allowing the claimants an option to provide a continuing resolution from their respective council or board approving their annual submittal

of the claim to COG. Previously each claimant would need to obtain an annual resolution prior to submission of the claim, which could at times delay its processing. A continuous resolution bypasses this routine action for the claimants. The City of Clovis and FCRTA continue to adopt resolutions on an annual basis. Fresno COG now requires that FAX adopt a new resolution should its operating budget exceed 15 percent over the prior year's budget pursuant to PUC Section 99266.

There are flow-through agreements between claimants where service areas overlap. For instance, Coalinga shares its LTF allocation with the County for service provided to Pleasant Valley State Prison. In addition, there are flow-through agreements between the City of Fresno and the County of Fresno and the City of Clovis.

TDA claims are typically received by the COG beginning in spring through early fall. The COG indicated that the City of Fresno has been submitting its claim later, resulting in approvals for disbursement occurring later in the claim year. The claims are prepared by the transit operators, Consolidated Transportation Service Agencies, and the cities and the County. Article 4.5 claims by the CTSAs (Fresno EOC and Clovis Transit) are based on approved operations and planning budgets for the urban and rural areas.

As a priority, about one-quarter of the annual transit claims are paid first to the transit operators before revenues for streets and roads are paid to the local jurisdictions. Both State Transit Assistance funds and Local Transportation Fund revenues are claimed under the same funding form and comply with procedures and formulas established in the TDA statute. Each claimant also prepares a contingency claim for any surplus funds from the prior year, which are distributed for both transit and streets and roads purposes. Given the claims process implemented by the COG, each jurisdiction receives its fair share of TDA revenues according to statutory provisions.

The operator claims must include supplemental information of a number of TDA requirements, including attachment of specific documentation such as the budget, prior year revenues and expenditures, CHP terminal inspection certification, and transit efficiency calculation if the operator chooses to use STA monies for operations.

The standard assurances form includes elements contained in the compliance matrix in the transit operator performance audits. Each submitting claimant certifies that all conformance requirements are satisfied to receive both LTF and STA funds. Examples are the timely conduct of the annual state controller and fiscal audits, and full use of available federal funding. The attachment of CHP compliance certificates to the claim is another example of a standard assurance. The purpose of the list is to hold the operators accountable for compliance with certain TDA provisions to be able to receive the funds and as an annual reminder of these provisions.

Unmet Transit Needs

Unmet transit needs hearings are required by the TDA where claims can be made for streets and roads. TDA funds are used exclusively for public transit in the city of Fresno. Fresno COG conducts the annual unmet transit needs process both in the rural areas of the county and in the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area to allow the rural and urban transit operators to plan for future services. There are three information-gathering meetings: one held in the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area, one in western Fresno County, and one in eastern Fresno County. As an example, the most recent unmet needs meetings were held in Clovis (metropolitan area), Reedley (eastern Fresno County), and Firebaugh (western Fresno County). Meeting announcements are made in both English and Spanish.

Staff prepares a report and discussion of the unmet needs process and a resolution approving the annual unmet transit needs findings. Recommended findings by the SSTAC are included in the staff report. Each year, Fresno COG reaffirms the adopted definition of unmet transit needs and reasonable to meet.

Pursuant to Resolution 1990-15, adopted on June 28, 1990, Fresno COG has defined unmet transit needs as:

Those public transportation or specialized transportation services that are identified in the Regional Transportation Plan and/or documented through the COG's Annual Unmet Transit Needs Public Hearing Process that have not been implemented or funded.

Reasonable to meet is defined as follows:

Those public transportation services identified in the Regional Transportation Plan, or proposed amendment thereto, which meet the following criteria:

- 1) Services which, if implemented or funded, would not cause the responsible operator or service claimant to exceed its appropriations limitation as set forth by Proposition 4 (Gann Limit).
- 2) Services which, if implemented or funded, would not cause the responsible operator to incur expenditures in excess of the maximum amount of:
 - a) Local Transportation Funds and State Transit Assistance Funds which may be available for such operator to claim;
 - b) Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) funds or other support for public transportation services which are committed by Federal and/or State agencies by formula or tentative approval of specific grant requests; and
 - c) Farebox and local funding in compliance with PUC Section 99268 et seq.

The fact that an identified need cannot fully be met based on available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet.

- 3) Services which, if implemented or funded, would result in the responsible operator or service claimant meeting the farebox recovery and local support requirements as set forth by PUC Section 99268 et seq. Evaluation of existing operators shall be based on records provided to COG by operators pursuant to the Transit Productivity Evaluation Process (PUC Section 99244).

Evaluation of proposed new service shall be based upon a feasibility analysis that includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Forecast of anticipated ridership if service is provided.
- b) Estimate of capital and operating costs for the provision of such services.
- c) Estimate of fares and local support in relation to estimated operating costs for providing such services.
- d) An estimated fare which the COG Board would determine to be sufficient to meet farebox recovery requirements, but would not be so high that it would pose a financial burden on transit dependent patrons.

For the three-year audit period, Fresno COG staff made findings, with SSTAC recommendations, that there were no unmet transit needs which were reasonable to meet. A formal resolution is considered and approved by the COG Policy Board with findings from the unmet needs process.

Upon the conclusion of the unmet needs process, Fresno COG submits all documentation to Caltrans, Division of Mass Transportation, as evidence of conducting the hearings and incorporating the recommendations of the SSTAC. Transit-dependent population analysis is not included in the Unmet Transit Needs report. It is suggested that the COG include such analysis its annual unmet transit needs findings.

Public Information and External Affairs

Fresno COG has continued to enhance and augment its public outreach program. As part of its public information and marketing efforts, Fresno COG uses a number of approaches that involve more focused strategies. There has been a greater reliance on electronic media than on print publications and collateral. Fresno COG's principal electronic portal continues to be its website (www.fresnocog.org). The goal of the Fresno COG website is to:

- Provide a simple and intuitive electronic portal to access public services;
- Provide easy electronic access to public information for use by the target audience;
- Serve as an electronic communications tool;
- Reduce transaction costs for the COG, its member agencies, and citizens; and
- Streamline business operations.

Recent enhancements include an online survey tool. Online video presentations of the August RTP-SCS community workshops were available online with an SCS survey opportunity. There were 46 survey responses received. The COG has planned a \$25,000 upgrade of its website.

With the recent adoption of social media engagement, Fresno COG is seeking to develop a social media policy that addresses content and protocol. The COG currently has a Facebook page and a Twitter account. Periodic updates are made to its Facebook page, and updates on the 2015 One Voice trip were posted on Twitter. Another up-and-coming social media platform that COG may want to consider in the expansion of its online presence is Nextdoor, which is a neighborhood-based social network.

The monthly electronic newsletter titled “Coming Up...at Fresno COG” is sent to subscribers and is available on the COG website. The newsletter provides updated information on news and activities pertaining to the COG including a calendar of events, new RFPs, progress on studies and projects, legislative actions, and public workshops. Because the newsletter is published regularly, COG activities are highlighted to the communities while soliciting public input and participation.

Fresno COG adopted a Public Participation Plan (PPP) in March 2012, which was used for the extensive outreach undertaken for the 2014 RTP-SCS update. The PPP serves as a guide for meeting the public participation requirements for MPOs. During the audit period, the COG was engaged in an update of the PPP that was adopted in July 2016. The PPP update includes a reference to the recent federal transportation reauthorization bill, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, as well as to other federal and state legislation addressing public engagement and redress. The FTIP section was updated to reflect recent administrative modification changes.

A significant effort is made to promote the involvement of the communities in each RTP update. With the 2014 RTP breaking ground on new required elements in the plan, significant outreach is undertaken to educate the public and request input in shaping the RTP and choosing among SCS alternatives.

Fresno COG implemented a new public outreach strategy during development of its RTP-SCS. In lieu of holding community open houses and workshops, the COG made available \$3,000 community outreach mini-grants each to seven agencies to host 10 RTP-SCS community workshops held during the spring of 2013 throughout Fresno County, including presentations in five different languages. The COG released an RTP-SCS mini-grant application packet in November 2012 seeking proposals from community-based organizations, schools, etc., to solicit public input into key activities associated with the preparation of the RTP and SCS scenarios. The RTP-SCS community workshops attracted 250 participants.

In addition, the COG extended three mini-grant agreements for assistance in hosting six RTP-SCS community workshops throughout the county during the months of August and September 2013, which attracted 302 participants.

With regard to outreach on behalf of public transportation, in its efforts to foster interagency and intermodal transportation within the county, Fresno COG changed the format of the Fresno County Transportation Guide to a folded pocket guide. The guide was published in a bilingual (English/Spanish) format and included basic information about transit services, contact phone numbers, and website links. In the FY 2014–15 OWP, the budget for program-specific printing costs decreased \$24,400 to reflect elimination of publication of the Transportation Guide, which is available online.

One Voice Program

Fresno COG, working in conjunction with private sector groups, has taken the leadership role in creating the One Voice program, which involves annual advocacy trips to Washington, DC, and Sacramento. The objective of the program is to inform Fresno County’s congressional and state assembly delegations, legislative committee staff, agency administrators, and others of the Fresno community’s priority programs and projects for the year. Only local funds are used, with no state or federal contributions.

One Voice unites Fresno County communities and regional interests in a voluntary and collaborative effort to seek federal and state support through policy changes, legislation, and funding. All priorities chosen contribute to an improved quality of life throughout Fresno County. The COG solicits projects for the legislative trip through a “call for projects” application effort and using select criteria in determining the priority of projects advanced for discussion.

Three annual One Voice trips were undertaken during the audit period to Washington, DC, and none undertaken to Sacramento during the period. The Washington trips generally take place in the spring. The regional priorities raised during recent visits have included STIP funding, water allocation and drought relief, agricultural support, air quality, workforce development, and high-speed rail support.

A resource Briefing Book with pertinent information, key talking points, and trip logistics is prepared by COG staff for each participant, both in hard-copy and electronic formats. The COG develops the prioritized list of projects after soliciting input from various public and private sector organizations in the county. While the focus of the program is transportation projects, other programs and projects may be included as well. At the end of the prioritization process, the stakeholders, because of the outreach process, are in a position to join with the COG to speak with “one voice” on the priority transportation needs of Fresno County when they travel to Washington, DC.

Also, on a valleywide level, the eight San Joaquin Valley RTPAs have united through the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council to build consensus on advocating for projects and legislative priorities at the state and federal levels. Together, through their own lobbying efforts, the termed “Valley Voice” takes the Valley’s councils of governments and their respective elected officials to Sacramento and Washington, DC, on an annual basis. A Valley

Voice trip was undertaken to Washington, DC, in September 2014, composed of a 30-member delegation made up of elected officials and RTPA staff.

Grant Application and Management

Fresno COG serves as the clearinghouse for federal grant applications that are reviewed to determine whether there is any duplication of effort among agencies and that there is no conflict with local plans and policies. The COG's role for the Fresno County is to review and be an integral component in state and federal funding assistance that promotes inter-jurisdictional coordination. The COG Accounting Manager oversees and manages grants.

The COG assists the transit operators with obtaining federal grants from the FTA by ensuring the programming of resources and projects in the appropriate federal implementation plans such as the FTIP. Federal grants have played an important role in funding continued operations of and capital replacement for the transit operators. Three of the four operators (FAX, Fresno EOC, and FCRTA) that receive TDA revenues have also acquired federal grant funds, whether for operations or for capital purchases. The fourth operator, Clovis Transit, has not elected to apply for federal funding. The operators do not compete for the same pot of funds, as each operator is eligible for different federal grant programs based on its status as an urban, rural, or nonprofit operator.

As a direct recipient of FTA Section 5316 and 5317 grants, Fresno COG administers a Call for Projects for Jobs Access and Reverse Commute, and New Freedom projects. A call for projects during the audit period occurred in early 2013. Staff indicated there is a limited pool of applications that qualify for these funds, namely from the transit operators. Applications were graded by a scoring committee and all applications were funded.

Under MAP-21, the FTA Section 5317 program was consolidated into FTA Section 5310 in July 2012 to create the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. Vehicles and other related equipment formerly funded under the previous FTA Section 5310 Program are referred to as Traditional Capital projects. The former New Freedom projects are referred to as Other Capital and Operating projects. The Governor has designated Fresno COG as the designated recipient in Fresno County of FTA Section 5310 grants.

The COG released the FTA Section 5310 Program Management Plan in February 2015 and issued a call for projects for the Fresno Large Urban Area FTA Section 5310 funding allocation. The available funding for the Fresno Large Urban Area was \$1,035,403 for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013–14 apportionments for which five applications were received requesting \$1,380,817 in total funding requests. In April 2015, a volunteer scoring committee made up of SSTAC members convened to review, evaluate, and rank the project applications. The committee's recommendations were then reviewed by the entire SSTAC in May 2015 and received unanimous approval.

Section V

Findings

The following material summarizes the major findings obtained from the triennial audit covering FYs 2013 through 2015. A set of audit recommendations is then provided.

1. Fresno COG has continued its management of the TDA program in a competent, professional manner. This is shown through the COG's satisfactory compliance with most state legislative mandates for Regional Transportation Planning Agencies. The COG was in partial compliance related to the timely submittal of all TDA fiscal and compliance audits of the transit operators.
2. Fresno COG has fully implemented the two prior performance audit recommendations that help strengthen the agency's administration of TDA.
3. While able to maintain staffing levels during the audit period, the COG experienced staff turnover and the retirement of several senior staff, including the Deputy Director. The staff separations and new hires have resulted in the composition of COG staff trending younger. The COG makes a point to recruit early enough so that new hires can receive training and shadow departing senior staff to ensure a smoother transition.
4. The COG has acted in more of an advisory role with regard to land use development in its member jurisdictions to ensure compliance with state mandates pursuant to AB 32 and SB 375. For instance, Fresno COG has retained consultants to assist local agencies to comply with state air quality and smart growth initiatives through the commissioning of climate action plans.
5. The 2014 RTP-SCS was adopted in June 2014 and guides the development of transportation in Fresno County over a 25-year horizon. Key elements of the RTP-SCS included adoption of goals, objectives, and performance measures and development of a list of RTP projects and project evaluation criteria for prioritizing project funding in the plan. The former Deputy Director oversaw the entire RTP-SCS process.
6. Fresno COG implemented a new public outreach strategy during development of its RTP-SCS. In lieu of holding community open houses and workshops, the COG made available \$3,000 community outreach mini-grants each to seven agencies to host 10 RTP-SCS community workshops held during the spring of 2013 throughout Fresno County, including presentations in five different languages.
7. Fresno COG adopted several key programming documents on schedule, including updates to the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) in July 2012 and June 2014, and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) in October 2013.

8. Fresno COG has undertaken a comprehensive planning effort to develop public transit services from the Fresno-Clovis area to the three national parks in the region: Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia. The planning process included coordination efforts with multiple regional partners including the National Park Service, Madera County, and multiple municipal jurisdictions along the proposed transit corridors.
9. Fresno COG prepares and distributes several documents during the TDA claims process. The documents include the initial and final estimates of apportionment to each jurisdiction and a packet providing claimants with the necessary forms and funding information needed to prepare TDA claims.
10. The COG has streamlined the TDA claims requirements by allowing the claimants an option to provide a continuing resolution from their respective council or board approving their annual submittal of the claim to COG. The City of Clovis and FCRTA continue to adopt resolutions on an annual basis. Fresno COG now requires that FAX adopt a new resolution should its operating budget exceed 15 percent over the prior year's budget.
11. The One Voice advocacy program unites Fresno County communities and regional interests in a voluntary and collaborative effort to seek federal and state support through policy changes, legislation, and funding. The regional priorities raised during recent visits have included STIP funding, water allocation and drought relief, agricultural support, air quality, workforce development, and high-speed rail support.

Recommendations

1. Include an analysis of transit-dependent populations in the annual Unmet Transit Needs report.

Working in conjunction with the SSTAC, Fresno COG has developed a fairly thorough unmet transit needs process. Staff prepares a report and discussion of the unmet needs process and a resolution approving the annual unmet transit needs findings. Recommended findings by the SSTAC are included in the staff report. Each year, Fresno COG reaffirms the adopted definition of unmet transit needs and reasonable to meet. However, an analysis of the transit-dependent population is not included in the findings.

Pursuant to PUC Section 99401.5, groups that are transit-dependent or transit-disadvantaged are to be identified as part of the annual unmet needs process. Such analysis could draw from data compiled in the Gap Analysis and Title VI plans developed during the audit period. Fresno COG includes transit-dependent and transit-disadvantaged groups in its Title VI plans and should include a similar detailed analysis in the unmet needs process and findings.

2. Evaluate opportunities to increase rural county representatives on the SSTAC.

The SSTAC plays an important role in decisions surrounding the provision of public transportation. While the SSTAC membership meets the requirements of state law, the majority of current members (10 of 13) are residents of the city of Fresno. Remaining members (one each) are from Clovis, Sanger, and Firebaugh. Because the SSTAC is charged with making recommendations on countywide transit services during the unmet transit needs process, a wider representation of residents from throughout the county should be evaluated for the SSTAC.

Fresno COG has initiated discussions with the SSTAC to see if expanded membership is warranted. Under consideration is expanding membership to include interested rural cities and citizen stakeholder advocates. The SSTAC convenes six to eight times a year with SSTAC meetings generally held at COG offices in downtown Fresno. Discussions are underway to evaluate the feasibility of conducting SSTAC meetings at rural locations as a mean to further promote interest and involvement from other communities. These meetings would be in addition to those rotated by SSTAC throughout the rural areas during the unmet needs process. A complimentary transit pass can be offered to members as an incentive to travel to meetings. As member terms expire or through an expansion of membership, Fresno COG could also partake in active recruitment by advertising openings to different communities, reaching out to specific agencies, and placing an application on the COG website for easy and convenient electronic access.

3. Continue active promotion of technology development with regard to transit data coordination.

Fresno COG has demonstrated its competency with regard to transit data coordination. Its efforts to foster interagency and intermodal transportation within the county have been through the Fresno County Transportation Guide. The printed, folded pocket guide was published in a bilingual (English/Spanish) format and included basic information about transit services, contact phone numbers, and website links. This information is now available on the website with a recommendation to continue the active promotion of transit information through technology channels in partnership with the transit operators.

Fresno COG encourages the transit operators to make operating schedules as accessible to the public as feasible while acknowledging certain barriers for developing single integration of regional transit data on platforms such as a mobile app. A third party entity, such as Google Transit, is an avenue to make transit information from all agencies accessible by the public. FAX and FCRTA are currently registered with Google Transit and Clovis Transit is planning to join later this year. As the transit agencies update their technological capabilities, bus information will be more easily attainable, including real time passenger information and service alerts. For example, FAX has partnered with ScholarDev to develop such an application, but at this time, it is limited to scheduled information only. The COG should continue promoting this expansion of technology among the transit operators and lend assistance such as identifying grant funds to digitize information that enhances the visibility and customer experience from using transit.