

Policy Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Friday, September 8, 2023
10:00 AM

The meeting was held at FCOG Sequoia Conference Room.

John Holt, City of Clovis
Wilma Tucker, City of Fowler
Greg Barfield, City of Fresno
John Jansons, City of Kerman
Sonia Hall, City of Parlier
Nicole Zieba, City of Reedley
Christopher Xiong, Caltrans District 6
Tony Boren, FCOG
Moses Stites, FCRTA

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Mr. Barfield (Fresno City), Chair. With 6 members present, there was a quorum to conduct business.

JOINT Transportation Technical/Policy Advisory Committee

A. Caltrans Report (Caltrans) [INFORMATION]

Christopher Xiong reported the following:

- Five grants were awarded Fresno County: City of Huron, City of Selma, two for FCOG, and FCRTA .

I. TRANSPORTATION CONSENT ITEMS

A. Executive Minutes of July 14, 2023 [APPROVE]

B. Transportation Development Act (TDA) Claims (Les Beshears)

1. City of Fowler TDA Claim FY 2021-22 (Les Beshears) [ACTION]
2. City of Fowler TDA Claim FY 2022-23 (Les Beshears) [ACTION]
3. City of Orange Cove TDA Claim FY 2023-24 (Les Beshears) [ACTION]
4. City of Firebaugh TDA Claim FY 2023-24 (Les Beshears) [ACTION]
5. City of Mendota TDA Claim FY 2023-24 (Les Beshears) [ACTION]

C. 2023-24 Measure C Claims (Les Beshears) [ACTION]

D. Access for All Update to Allocation (Jake Martinez) [ACTION]

E. Fresno COG Activity Based Model Update - Contract Amendment (Santosh Bhattarai) [ACTION]

- Mr. Barfield called for any items wishing to be pulled by members or the public.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Ms. Tucker (Fowler) motioned, and Mr. Jansons (Kerman) seconded to approve the consent agenda items A-E as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

II. TRANSPORTATION ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2022 RTP/SCS Amendment No. 2 Approval (Pankaj Joshi) [ACTION]

Summary: On July 28, 2022, the Policy Board adopted Fresno COG's 2022 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), which was then submitted to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) for review and

approval. CARB provided comments and suggestions, which has prompted a few revisions and additions to off-model calculations of greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions from some strategies. The changes in off-model strategies are briefly explained below with documents in the attachment for further information, and will help ensure CARB certifies the 2022 RTP/SCS.

i. Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure Program:

Per CARB's SCS Submittal Program and Evaluation Guidelines, the emissions reduction benefits of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure are limited to plug-in, hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) that can access the newly installed EV chargers. Accordingly, Fresno COG's methodology is revised to estimate CO2 emission reductions from PHEV based on estimated average vehicle miles traveled (VMT) shift per PHEV from gasoline to electricity because of increased workplace and public charging stations. Also, in the GHG calculation, the PHEV population projection from the State's air quality model EMFAC 2021 is applied instead of projections from Fresno COG's Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan (EVRP).

ii. Car Sharing:

This strategy is newly added to the RTP. A carshare program is a membership-based service that provides access to shared vehicles for short-term use -- often by the hour -- where fees are typically priced on a per-mile or hourly basis. It is an affordable and convenient alternative to owning a car. A carshare program has the potential to reduce GHG by reducing vehicle ownership rates, reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips, and VMT, as mode choices shift to biking, walking and transit use.

iii. Transportation System Management (TSM)/Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS):

On review, CARB staff pointed out that the calculation for GHG reduction from transportation system management/intelligent transportation systems (TSM/ITS) projects used a different version of emission factors than other strategies. Accordingly, emission factors from EMFAC 2014v is used to determine emission reductions to align with the version used in other strategies for consistency.

iv. Telecommute:

Because the Central California Travel Study (CCTS) provides more reliable data on the population eligible to telecommute, data from CCTS were applied in the GHG calculation in place of assumptions of telecommute-eligible employment sectors.

Action: Staff requests TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board adopt Resolution 2023-28, approving Amendment No. 2 to the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.

- Pankaj Joshi (FCOG) provided an update of the amendment.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Holt (Clovis) motioned, and Ms. Tucker (Fowler) seconded to approve the action as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

B. Potential Highway Fund Sanctions on San Joaquin Valley Transportation Investments (Robert Phipps) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a disapproval of the San Joaquin Valley's State Implementation Plan (SIP) for particulate matter under 2.5 microns in diameter (PM 2.5). Though EPA staff found the Valley's progress with SIP strategies to be acceptable, staff determined that the identified contingency measures were no longer approvable due to recent court cases that invalidated EPA contingency policies.

As a result of inadequate contingency measures, EPA disapproved that portion of the SIP and triggered the sanction provisions of the Clean Air Act. Without an approvable SIP for PM2.5, Highway Fund sanctions would be enacted, starting Dec. 27, 2023.

Staff at the regional transportation planning agencies in the San Joaquin Valley have developed a master project list to help identify risks to projects, which includes federally funded projects led by local agencies, regional agencies, and the State. Projects for the Fresno County region are included in the attached master lists. Specifically, staff considered projects that fell into the following four categories. *The Fresno region accounts for six projects totaling \$102.4 million within the first three categories.*

- **Projects seeking federal approvals prior to December 27, 2023 (i.e., just before Highway Fund Sanctions would be enacted).** Staff estimates approximately \$1.8 billion in transportation projects across the Valley fitting this category.

- **Projects seeking federal approvals between December 27, 2023 and March 31, 2024 (i.e., shortly after Highway Fund Sanctions apply).** Staff estimates approximately \$1.1 billion in transportation projects across the Valley fitting this category.
- **Projects seeking federal approvals between April 1, 2024 and beyond (i.e., after Highway Fund Sanctions apply).** Staff estimates approximately \$3.4 billion in transportation projects across the Valley fitting this category.

The fourth category addresses those **projects seeking federal approvals after Dec. 27 but that are expected to be considered “exempt” from Highway Fund sanctions.** Projects fitting this category will be required to go through an additional layer of screening by EPA and the Federal Highway Administration to ensure that they qualify as “exempt.” At best, this would introduce slight delays due to the added layer of review, and at worst, the review may determine that projects include non-exempt elements, making them unable to proceed. Staff estimates potentially 32 projects totaling \$58 million in the Fresno County region fitting this category and approximately \$2 billion across the Valley.

In total, as much as \$4.5 billion in federal transportation funds in the San Joaquin Valley could be halted, should Highway Fund Sanctions be applied. Given that the affected transportation agencies are not responsible for writing the SIPs necessary to ensure compliance with EPA regulations, Valley transportation agencies are entirely dependent on the EPA and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to come to a consensus on revised contingency measures for the “disapproved” PM2.5 SIP. Valley transportation agencies are regularly briefed on the subject, and understand that the following two plans have been set in motion:

- The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the California Air Resources Board have submitted a “Contingency Measure Supplement” for EPA review. Should this submittal be approved, Highway Sanctions will be avoided. However, neither the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District nor the EPA can confirm when or whether a “Contingency Measure Supplement” approval will occur.
- In parallel, EPA is preparing a Proposed Federal Improvement Plan (FIP), which would be implemented if the Valley’s SIP submittal is not approved by EPA. It would lay out a federal plan for the region to reach NAAQS attainment, which would limit regional and local decision-making power related to transportation investment.

As noted, Highway sanctions are possible on Dec. 27. To defer sanctions, the regional transportation planning agencies of the San Joaquin Valley implore the EPA to approve SIP revisions via the Air District’s “Contingency Measure Supplement” in as expedient a manner as possible.

Action: Information/discussion. The Committee may provide additional direction at its discretion.

- Robert Phipps (FCOG) gave an update on the Potential Highway fund Sanctions.
- This item is informational only. No action is needed.

C. Fresno County Regional Climate Action Plan: Priority Climate Action Plan (Simran Jhutti) [ACTION]

Summary: Fresno COG is serving as grant administrator for the U.S Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) \$1 million Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) awarded to the Fresno Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Although EPA originally identified the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) and the City of Fresno as logical grant administrators, a consensus decision among the three agencies reasoned that because almost 50% of greenhouse gases are produced from the transportation sector; it would make sense that Fresno COG serve as administrator.

However, the decision to not include Fresno COG until late in the process resulted in an significantly compressed delivery schedule and leaves very little time to complete the mandated regional planning process. A Preliminary Climate Action Plan (PCAP) is due March 1, 2024, and a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) is due Sept. 1, 2025. The plan is required to gain access to the \$4.6 billion in Federal funding that will become available to implement GHG mitigation measures.

The first work task within the PCAP is an inventory of GHG emissions by various sectors. The sectors to be inventoried include: transportation, industrial, commercial, agriculture and timber, commercial, residential and electricity generation. Fresno COG staff has the technical ability and tools to handle the transportation sector inventory; however, all the other sectors will require a consulting firm that specializes in developing GHG inventories at a macro level.

Due to the compressed time frame and at the encouragement from EPA, Fresno COG undertook a competitive sealed bid process by conducting phone interviews for a fixed-rate proposal. After solicitation to eight environmental firms, three responded and only two submitted bids. After an exhaustive evaluation of proposals, Fresno COG found that LSA Associates' experience with planning studies/projects has been excellent and that the firm recently served as the prime consultant on the City of Fresno’s 2020 Climate Action Plan, which will be integral in completing the Priority Climate Action Plan, both efficiently and effectively.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board authorize Fresno COG's executive director to contract with LSA Associates for an amount not to exceed \$150,000 to prepare the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) element of the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.

- Simran Jhutti (FCOG) presented the Priority Climate Action Plan.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Ms. Tucker (Fowler) motioned, and Mr. Holt (Clovis) seconded to approve the action as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

D. 2024 State Transportation Improvement Program (Ofelia Abundez) [INFORMATION]

Summary: The California Transportation Commission (CTC) released guidelines and fund balance estimates for the 2024 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) at its August meeting. Approximately \$43 million is available to the Fresno County region for the programming period 2024/25 through 2028/29.

The STIP is a five-year capital improvement program of transportation projects on and off the state highway system, funded from the State Highway Account and other sources. The CTC adopts a new STIP every two years.

As part of the STIP development process, each region must produce a Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). Caltrans is required to produce the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP) for the remaining 25 percent of STIP funding.

Following successful Measure C campaigns, Fresno COG's Policy Board made a long-term commitment to dedicate a minimum of 75% of the RTIP to major projects on the Measure C Tier 1 list. Staff has aggressively pursued this strategy in producing the Measure's long-range program, and over the last 35 years, state routes 168, 41 south of Fresno, 180 and the braided ramp interchanges connecting all three freeways have included significant combinations of STIP/Measure C.

Recent successful RTIP candidates have been SR 180 east to Frankwood, SR 180 West Landscaping, and the new Veterans Boulevard interchange. A recent ITIP local candidate was SR 41 Excelsior, to widen the bottle neck gap on SR 41 between Fresno and Kings County.

On the south end of Fresno lies a series of obsolete, "half" freeway interchanges, where the off-ramps are connected to north\south arterials but the on-ramps are connected to separate east\west arterials.

In the 2018 STIP, FCOG was awarded \$3 million in RTIP funds to environmentally clear the North Cedar and American Avenue interchanges on SR 99. In the 2020 RTIP, FCOG programmed \$43 million for construction of the North Cedar Interchange. Construction was initially anticipated in 2023-24; however, the project has been delayed due to a lawsuit concerning the environmental document. The next logical candidate for RTIP funding is the American Avenue interchange, with construction costs estimated at \$51 million.

The latest STIP estimate makes approximately \$43 million available for the programming period 2024/25 through 2028/29. Staff will coordinate with Caltrans to develop the application and anticipates bringing it to the Policy Board for authorization in November so the RTIP can be submitted to the CTC by the Dec. 15 deadline. The CTC will then conduct public hearings and adopt the STIP in March 2024.

ACTION: Information/discussion. The Committee may provide additional direction at its discretion.

- Ofelia Abundez (FCOG) gave an update on the State Transportation Improvement Program.
- This item is informational only. No action is needed.

E. Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element Update (Juan Ramirez) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Fresno Council of Governments and 15 of the 16 member jurisdictions of Fresno County are in the process of completing a Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element (MJHE) for the region.

The Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element covers the planning period 2023-2031 and must be adopted and submitted to HCD for certification by Dec. 31, 2023. Five jurisdictions are in review with HCD. Seven jurisdictions will be submitted to HCD in September and three in October. Of those jurisdictions that have submitted to HCD, one has received HCD’s review findings letter with comments and suggestions.

Prior to completing the housing element, the consultants undertook a regional public outreach program that outreach that included a joint hearing presented to each jurisdiction’s planning commission and city council or board of supervisors. In addition, each jurisdiction also completed one community workshop.

The housing element is one of eight required elements of the general plan and the only element that is required to be approved/certified by the state. The housing element allows local governments to adequately plan the housing needs of the community, including the most disadvantaged.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) oversees reviewing housing elements and ensuring that they comply with state law. Before a housing element is adopted into a general plan, it must receive approval from HCD.

To date, the PlaceWorks consultant team has conducted regional public outreach as well as created regional documents for the 15 participating jurisdictions of Fresno. These documents cover the housing element on a regional level and give an overview of the regional needs/action plans.

Each jurisdiction is responsible for completing its own housing element as an appendix to the regional documents. The housing element is specific to each jurisdiction and includes an action plan, sites inventory, fair housing analysis, housing constraints, and public outreach.

Once completed, State law requires a 30-day public review before it is submitted to HCD. HCD will then conduct an initial review of 90 days and provide corrective action. The second draft after corrections is reviewed for 60 days and the adoption review period from HCD will last an additional 60 days.

To complete the Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element by the Dec. 31 deadline, it is critical that the participating jurisdictions provide the necessary information to the consultant team.

Jurisdictions may be required to make changes to their zoning codes. Jurisdictions that do not have a completed housing element by the deadline are at risk of not being eligible for future HCD housing grants and other state-funded grant programs.

Placeworks is working closely with each jurisdiction and finalizing the housing elements for HCD review. HCD will provide corrections jurisdictions will need to work with the consultants to ensure that each housing element is approved before it is included in the final document. The HCD review schedule is provided below.

HCD Review Schedule

City	Admin Draft	Public Review Draft	Submit to HCD	Notes
Coalinga	Completed	May 10	June 14	HCD Review due Sept 12 th
Firebaugh	August	August	Sept	

Kerman	Completed	May 17	July 5	HCD Review due Oct 3 rd
Huron	Completed	Sept	Oct	
Sanger	Completed	Aug	Sept	
Selma	Waiting on info	Sept	Oct	
Kingsburg	Completed	April 30	June 5	HCD Review due Sept 1 st
Reedley	Completed	April 13	May 25	HCD Review due August 23 rd
Fresno County	Completed	Aug	Sep	
Fowler	Completed	June 20 th	Late Aug	
Mendota	Completed	June 20 th	Late Aug	
Parlier	In progress	Aug 30 th	Early Oct	
Fresno City	Completed	July 17	End of Aug	
Orange Cove	In progress	August	Sept	
San Joaquin	Completed	June 30 th	Aug 7 th	HCD Review due Nov 3 rd

Action: Information/discussion. The Committee may provide additional direction at its discretion.

- Juan Ramirez (FCOG) gave an update on the Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element.
- This item is informational only. No action is needed.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT ITEMS

A. Regional Clearinghouse Calendar (Ofelia Abundez) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Your agenda package includes the month's Clearinghouse Calendar containing "Project Notification and Review Reports" for grant proposal.

PROJECT NOTIFICATION AND REVIEW REPORT	
Regional Clearinghouse Number:	RCH #286-08-2023
Project Title:	Tranquility Complete Streets
Applicant Agency:	County of Fresno
Contact Person:	Erin Haagenon
Address:	2220 Tulare St, 6th Floor
Phone:	559-600-9908
Federal Catalog#:	10.766
Status:	New
Area of Impact:	County of Fresno
Federal Funding Agency:	USDA Rural Development

Applicant	Federal Funds	State Funds	Local Funds	Total Funds
County of Fresno	\$1,000,000.00	\$3,000,000.00	\$105,826.00	\$4,105,826.00

The Regional Clearinghouse is a process of informing local agencies of federal grant requests, providing an opportunity to comment, and potentially avoid duplication of effort. Clearinghouse items are brought before the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and, if appropriate, the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) for review and comment. Any resulting TTC/PAC comments, and any comments received from other agencies as a result of the Clearinghouse notification process, are noted on a monthly report brought forward to the Fresno COG Policy Board.

COG Policy Board action would be to authorize staff to forward any comments received or any Board comments to the State Clearinghouse and other appropriate agencies. The applicants have been notified of this meeting. While participation by the agency is optional, they have been personally requested to attend the Policy Board meeting in case there should be any questions. It should be noted that if in the event any of these items should be pulled from the consent calendar, that discussion and comment by the Committee/Board members and the public will be taken. Project notification and review reports describing these projects are attached.

Action: Per Board procedure, unless an item is pulled from the Consent Calendar, tacit authorization is given for staff to forward any comment(s) received, or any Committee/Board comment(s) generated as a result of this informational item, to the appropriate agency. It is understood that if in the event this item should be pulled from the consent calendar, discussion and comment by the Committee members and the public will be taken.

B. Federal Grant Opportunities (Robert Phipps) [INFORMATION]

Summary: A listing of upcoming Federal grant opportunities available to member jurisdictions.

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a joint notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for the 2023 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant Program, which supports community-centered transportation connection projects that enhance access to daily needs, promote equitable development and restoration, and restore community connectivity by removing, retrofitting, and mitigating transportation facilities that have created historical barriers to mobility, access, and economic development.

There is \$3.553 billion in total program funding, including \$198 million for the RCP Program and \$3.155 billion for the Neighborhood Access and Equity Program. The application deadline is **Sept. 28, 2023**.

Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART)

The Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program support demonstration projects involving smart city and community technologies or systems that will improve transportation network safety and efficiency. There is \$50million in total program funding. Award sizes range from \$250,000 to \$2 million each. DOT expects to award up to 30 grants with a project period of up to 18 months. The application deadline is 5 p.m. Eastern Time on Oct 10.

FY 2023 Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning

The Federal Transit Administration is providing funding under the 2023 Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning (TOD Pilot Program) to support comprehensive and site-specific, transit-oriented development (TOD) planning for new fixed guideway and core capacity improvement projects. Eligible deliverables include comprehensive plans, strategic plans, revised zoning codes and resolutions, financing evaluations, policies that spur affordable housing, and other policies that encourage TOD.

There is approximately \$13.5 million in total program funding. For context, FTA awarded 19 grants in the last round of the program totaling approximately \$13.1 million with a minimum size of \$240,000 and a maximum size of \$1.6 million. The deadline is Oct. 10.

Action: Information. The Committee may provide additional direction at its discretion.

- Mr. Barfield called for any items wishing to be pulled by members or the public.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Holt (Clovis) motioned, and Mr. Barfield (Fresno County) seconded to approve the consent agenda items A-C as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2024 "One Voice" Advocacy Program - Washington D.C. (Robert Phipps) [ACTION]

Summary: Prior to 2020, Fresno COG staff routinely spearheaded an annual program to address multiple policy issues and/or funding requests as part of its signature "One Voice" advocacy program. This effort brought together multiple agencies, jurisdictions and transportation stakeholders to rally around an approved list of policy issues and/or funding requests among the Fresno region's Congressional delegations, as well as Federal agencies.

In November 2020, staff formally requested the Policy Board indefinitely suspend the One Voice trip, owing to the COVID outbreak and a lack of specific, transportation-related proposals, grant applications or other legislative requests that made it difficult to justify planning the program, especially given previous Board direction that the trip maintain its transportation focus.

In the intervening four years since the last trip, individual Board members and some partnering agencies, including the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission and the Workforce Investment Board, have expressed an interest in reviving the annual program, which staff would normally begin planning in November of each year.

For 2024, there are two emerging transportation issues in which Fresno COG has a particular interest that may justify bringing the program back.

1.) In August, Fresno COG and the Fresno County Transportation Authority jointly submitted a \$25 million grant application through the Federal Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program for the State Route 99 South Fresno Interchanges project. This project includes reconstructing two half interchanges into full interchanges: Cedar North in South Fresno and American Avenue in unincorporated Fresno County. A One Voice contingent could request support for that grant application (and others that may have been submitted by individual jurisdictions) to the region's Congressional delegation and to the Department of Transportation.

2.) A recent mark-up of the annual Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill in the House of Representatives proposes a 38 percent funding cut to transportation funding approved under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the most recent, comprehensive transportation bill. Should this bill be approved, staff would recommend advocating to restore the funding.

In addition to these two priorities, staff would distribute a call for policy issues to partnering agencies, member jurisdictions and stakeholders to help craft the full list of policy priorities around which the One Voice contingent would rally. The trip would most likely be targeted for a late spring 2024 date.

To be clear, the One Voice trip requires significant staff and agency resources to plan and implement, with time and travel expenses potentially reaching \$45,000. Contract expenses for policy advocates to set up the meetings, locations and itinerary are an additional cost. Attendees other than staff and the Policy Board chair are required to pay for all their own expenses.

Action: Staff requests the PAC and Policy Board provide direction on whether to execute a call for policy priorities and a subsequent One Voice trip for 2024.

- Tony Boren (FCOG) provided information on the One Voice Program.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Holt (Clovis) motioned, and Mr. Barfield (Fresno County) seconded to approve the action.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

V. OTHER ITEMS

A. Items from Staff

- Tony Boren (FCOG) introduced FCOG staff member; Jennifer Rodriguez, Assistant Planner.

B. Items from Members

- None.

VI. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

A. Public Presentations

- None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Tony Boren

Public:

None.

Staff:

Stephanie Maxwell, Simran Jhutti, Robert Phipps, Janelle Del Campo, Shichen Fan, Pankaj Joshi, Brenda Thomas, Les Beshears, Ofelia Abundez, Juan Ramirez, Kai Han.