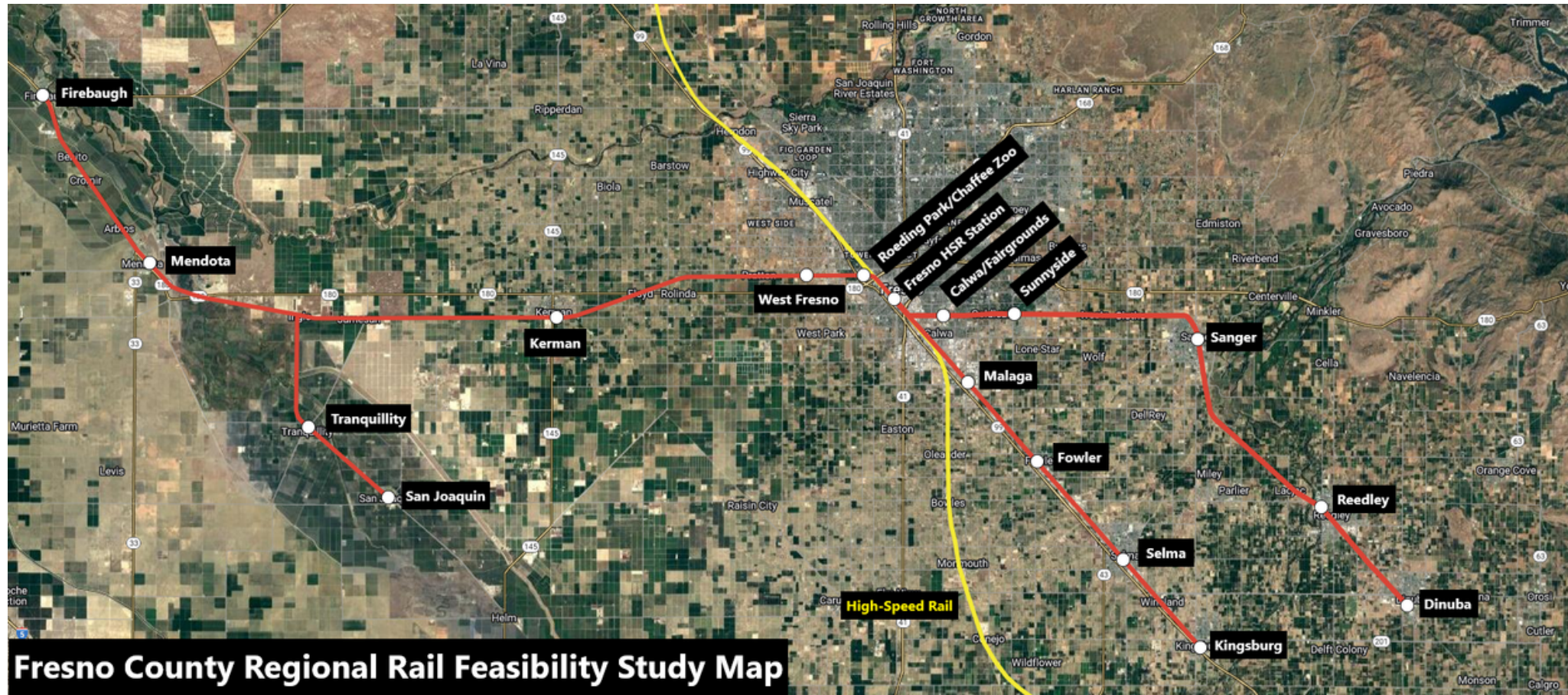


FRESNO COUNTY REGIONAL RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

WHAT WE ARE DOING:

The Fresno Council of Governments, in partnership with the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency, is pursuing a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning Grant to develop the Fresno County Regional Rail Feasibility Study. The study will analyze the feasibility of a zero-emission regional rail network in Fresno County that aims to better connect the County's disadvantaged and underserved rural communities to the future downtown Fresno High-Speed Rail Station. The study will primarily focus on studying a regional rail network on the existing, and currently underutilized, San Joaquin Valley Railroad corridor that runs east-west within Fresno County. The study will include a preliminary operations plan, a zero-emission rail vehicle analysis, a phased implementation plan, ridership and cost estimates, station area layout plans, as well as a robust public engagement plan and stakeholder outreach.





WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Regional rail corridors and stations in under invested areas will support active transportation and complementary transit services to improve health and accessibility. Regional rail also supports transportation solutions that are affordable, reduce greenhouse gases (GHG), vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and improve air quality. As regional rail stations are identified and prioritized through this project, there will be opportunities to integrate Transit Oriented Development into the areas. TOD's can change the community development pattern by incorporating affordable housing and maintaining economic diversity and equitable access to jobs, services, and educational opportunities. They can foster a stronger economy for these neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for its residents.

A regional rail network can address air pollution concerns by offering an alternative mode of travel that relies less on single occupant vehicles and improves connectivity with other public transportation systems, whether that is Fresno's FAX urban public transit network or the future California High-Speed Rail system, providing sustainable intercity and inter-regional transportation for underserved and disadvantaged communities in Fresno County.

Fresno County scores poorly on many of the indexes for identifying disadvantaged communities and the underserved, including over 55% of census tracts above the 75th percentile on CalEnviroScreen 4.0. In addition, the average income is 25% below the state average, meaning over 58% of the residents are in low-income communities. The cost of transportation for low-income populations is significantly higher than for the average households. This burden can be as high as 30% compared to 20% for the average household. Affordable and efficient public transit in some of the disadvantaged communities can be inadequate. By connecting communities through a regional rail network, we can improve regional mobility, reduce environmental impacts of transportation, and increase economic opportunity for those in the most disadvantaged communities in the state.

