

Policy Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Friday, February 16, 2024
10:00 AM

The meeting was held at FCOG Sequoia Conference Room.

John Holt, City of Clovis
Pio Martin, City of Firebaugh
Wilma Tucker, City of Fowler
Nicholas Mascia, City of Fresno
John Jansons, City of Kerman
Nicole Zieba, City of Reedley
Elizabeth Cabrera, City of San Joaquin
David Padilla, Caltrans District 6
Robert Phipps, FCOG
Moses Stites, FCRTA

The meeting was called to order at 10:14 a.m. by Mr. Jansons (Kerman), Chair. With 7 members present, there was a quorum to conduct business.

JOINT Transportation Technical/Policy Advisory Committee

A. Caltrans Report (Caltrans) [INFORMATION]

David Padilla reported the following:

- Clean California April 10-22nd.
- Kerman round about to be completed March 2024.
- Received 15 applications for grants, 9 of them from the Fresno region.

I. TRANSPORTATION CONSENT ITEMS

A. Executive Minutes of January 12, 2023 [APPROVE]

B. Second Quarter Work Element Report FY24 (Les Beshears) [INFORMATION]

C. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Local Transportation Fund (LTF) Preliminary Estimates (Les Beshears) [INFORMATION]

D. Fiscal Year 2024-25 State Transit Assistance (STA) Preliminary Estimates (Les Beshears) [INFORMATION]

E. Fiscal Year 2024-25 State of Good Repair (SGR) Preliminary Estimates (Les Beshears) [INFORMATION]

F. Direct Pay Provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (Robert Phipps) [INFORMATION]

G. 2023/24 Obligational Authority and Project Delivery Update (Matthew Shimizu) [INFORMATION]

H. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Unmet Transit Needs Assessment Update (Harold Sobrado) [INFORMATION]

I. Reappointment to the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (Harold Sobrado) [ACTION]

J. Microtransit Feasibility Study (Paul Herman) [INFORMATION]

- Mr. Jansons called for any items wishing to be pulled by members or the public.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mrs. Zieba (Reedley) motioned, and Mrs. Cabrera (San Joaquin) seconded to approve the consent agenda items A-J as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

II. TRANSPORTATION ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. California System Investment Strategy (Matthew Shimizu) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Caltrans' System Investment Strategy is intended to implement the California Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure's (CAPTI) vision and goals. Sinara Pheng and Hunter Owens with Caltrans will provide a presentation on CSIS, which includes an updated Project Initiation Document (PID) flowchart for compliance going forward.

CSIS is envisioned to be an investment framework that will guide how Caltrans should invest billions of dollars of highly competitive funding programs to address transportation deficiencies. Through continuous collaboration between districts and their partner agencies, districts will submit nominations of their priority conceptual projects for development with a State-sponsored PID for program eligibility. The basis for scope, cost, and schedule shall be documented in a PID for all major projects on the State Highway System (SHS). The ultimate objective of CSIS is to prioritize infrastructure investments with projects that include multimodal transportation options to expand mode choices and reduce transportation-related emissions.

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

- Matthew Shimizu (FCOG) provided an update of the investment strategy.

This item is informational. No action is needed.

B. Fresno County Regional Active Transportation Plan Update (Simran Jhutti) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Fresno COG developed a Regional Active Transportation Plan (R-ATP) to provide a comprehensive document outlining the future of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in Fresno County. The R-ATP was developed in coordination with Fresno COG's member agencies, the general public and stakeholder groups, such as local bicycling groups, walking advocates, educational institutions and disadvantaged communities.

The R-ATP is intended to help Fresno COG's member agencies better compete for funding sources that support ATPs and to satisfy California Transportation Commission (CTC) requirements. The cities of Clovis, Fresno, Selma and Reedley have recently prepared or will soon complete their own ATPs; conclusions from those plans are incorporated into this R-ATP. The participating agencies for this update are: Firebaugh, Fowler, Huron, Mendota, Orange Cove, Coalinga, Kerman, Kingsburg, Parlier, Sanger, San Joaquin, and the County of Fresno, each of which can rely on the R-ATP to satisfy CTC requirements.

One of the project's main goals is to detail a potential network of safe and attractive trails, sidewalks and bikeways that connect Fresno County residents to key destinations -- especially local schools, parks and transit. The networks include: shared-use paths, bike lanes and routes, sidewalks and crosswalk improvements. Other goals are to create a network of regional bikeways that allow bicyclists to safely ride between cities and other regional destinations, and to increase regional walking and bicycling trips by creating user-friendly facilities. The draft Regional ATP is now available for public comments, which will be incorporated into the final plan to be adopted in April 2024.

Due to the file size, a link to the Draft Fresno County R-ATP Update can be found here:
<https://www.fresnocog.org/project/active-transportation/>

The first four chapters contain:

1. Introduction
2. Existing conditions
3. Planned networks and program
4. Implementation

Chapters 5–16 are devoted to each jurisdiction's status and future plans. Chapter 17 includes community connections that describe the conditions and future plans for walking and biking connections among incorporated and unincorporated communities in Fresno County and with other counties.

The Appendix contains:

- (A) Plan conformance with the CTC's ATP guidelines
- (B) Public participation

- (C) Relationship to other plans and policies
- (D) Projects, priorities, and cost estimates
- (E) Funding sources
- (F) Fact sheets **
- (G) Safe routes to school inventory
- (H) Jurisdictional resolutions *

* Jurisdiction resolutions are one of the ATP components the CTC requires. Fresno COG staff will follow up with city and county staff on this matter.

** Fact sheets will be included in the final draft

The initial study/negative declaration, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) along with the final Regional Active Transportation Plan will be presented to TTC/PAC and Policy Board in April 2024. The presentation from the Fehr & Peers team will outline the framework of the Fresno County Regional Active Transportation Plan.

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

- Simran Jhutti (FCOG) introduced Rod Brown, Fehr & Peers; who gave a presentation to the board.

This item is Informational. No action needed.

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

Summary: Fresno COG developed a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), which is the first component of the Regional Climate Action Plan required under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. The PCAP includes: a regional greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory, a public outreach process, priority GHG emissions reduction measure identification and quantification, a benefit analysis for low-income and disadvantaged communities, and identification of implementation authorities.

Fresno COG staff used a three-pronged approach to developing the PCAP. First, a public outreach process with a multi-media platform, especially targeting low-income and disadvantaged communities. As a parallel process, a Stakeholder Steering Committee provided input and guidance on the overall process. The third and final step was to present the PCAP to Fresno COG's three standing committees, including the Transportation Technical Committee, the Policy Advisory Committee and the Policy Board, for final approval.

The PCAP was the first regional climate action planning effort addressing multiple economic sectors in Fresno County, and provided valuable educational experience to the region's communities and municipal staff on climate action planning. However, due to its constrained timeline (five months), the process for many components was shortened or simplified. The next step is to develop a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) that will build on the PCAP. Significantly, \$4.6 billion in federal funding is available to implement GHG mitigation measures, and only regions with an established PCAP are eligible.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board approve the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) for submission to EPA through Resolution 2024-07.

- Simran Jhutti (FCOG) gave a presentation with Kristine Cai, LSA on the Priority Climate Action Plan.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mrs. Cabrerra (San Joaquin) motioned, and Mr. Martin (Firebaugh) seconded to approve the action as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

D. 2024-25 Overall Work Program and Budget (Robert Phipps) [ACTION]

Summary: The fiscal year (FY) 2024-25 Overall Work Program (OWP), totaling \$45.2 million is submitted for Board and public review. A summary memorandum is attached to this annotated report. In short, the proposed budget decreased \$12.6 million from last year. Operational revenues remain intact and reserves are adequate.

The largest part of the decrease is attributed to \$9.6 million in one-time anticipated funding from the Regional Early Action Plan (REAP) 2.0 funds provided by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, California Air Resources Board, Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the Strategic Growth Council. Another \$3,734,971 decrease reflected draw down of cash match from Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) as it constructed its Selma maintenance facility. These were one-time grants that are largely spent down and have no effect on normal operating expenses.

Federal revenues increased a net of 7 percent or \$938,161; however, the largest increase of \$1.7 million resulting from another round of bus procurements through the FTA 5310 program offset several decreases from revenue sources that were drawn down from one time projects.

State revenues decreased 34 percent, (\$9.7 million) primarily due to the REAP 2 grant.

Local revenues decreased 25 percent (\$3.8 million), resulting from the FCRTA drawdown.

Fresno COG added an accounting position in 2024, which is jointly shared 70/30% with FCRTA; however, high employee turnover resulted in lower salary and benefit rates. Contingencies are carried for merit-based salary increases, as well as for anticipated health insurance increases. The overall proposed budget for salaries increased by 2 percent and benefits by 1 percent.

The overall consulting budget is \$22.1 million, which decreased \$5.7 million.

The OWP and budget will return for final approval in April.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board release Fresno COG's draft 2024-25 Overall Work Program and budget for public review, with final approval scheduled for the April Board meeting.

- Robert Phipps (FCOG) provided background information on the OWP.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mrs. Tucker (Fowler) motioned, and Mr. Mascia (City of Fresno) seconded to approve the action as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

E. Government Emergency Telecommunications Service, Wireless Priority Services and Telecommunications Service Priority (Robert Phipps) [INFORMATION]

Summary: The Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CSIS) Emergency Communications Division manages multiple programs to ensure public safety, emergency preparedness and communications communities have access to priority telecommunications and restoration services. These services are free of charge and only require enrollment from eligible public agencies to ensure priority placement for landline, cellular and Internet service in the event of an emergency.

Former Kingsburg Councilmember and Mayor John Wright will offer a short presentation on these services and how local jurisdictions can best access them.

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

- Robert Phipps (FCOG) introduced John Wright to present on CISA Government Emergency Telecommunication Services.

This item is Informational. No action needed.

F. Regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program (Paul Herman) [INFORMATION]

Summary: SB 743 requires that level-of-service (LOS), used in measuring transportation impacts in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), be replaced with vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

Fresno COG developed its SB 743 Implementation Regional Guidelines in 2020, which provided tools for local governments to implement SB 743, should they decide to institute the recommendations. However, due to a lack of clear guidance, VMT mitigation remains an outstanding issue within SB 743 implementation. Projects with significant VMT impacts can't move forward due to a lack of defined, quantifiable and feasible mitigation measures.

It is believed that a regional-level VMT mitigation program will be most effective in providing the pathways for VMT reduction. In 2023, Fresno COG finalized the Regional VMT Mitigation Program Feasibility Study that explored options such as VMT mitigation bank, VMT mitigation exchange, regional VMT impact fees, etc., and identified pros and cons for the various techniques. The study outlined a framework for potential implementation of such a regional VMT mitigation program.

The study evaluated potential regional VMT mitigation programs to meet the CEQA transportation mitigation needs for the 16 jurisdictions comprising Fresno COG. Existing VMT mitigations that often rely heavily on existing transportation demand management (TDM) options are inadequate to fully mitigate many of the planned land use and transportation projects. As such, the study considered whether a programmatic approach, primarily through fee assessments to pay for VMT-reducing projects, is a feasible solution to address transportation-related CEQA mitigation needs within the Fresno region.

Several programmatic approaches to VMT mitigation, including VMT banking, VMT exchanges, and VMT mitigation impact fee programs were considered and analyzed. After completing the project analyses, outreach, framework evaluations, and reviewing all considerations, the study determined that a fee-based VMT mitigation program is a feasible option for the Fresno COG region, and that VMT banking would be the most appropriate initial program framework.

Implementing a fee-based VMT mitigation program adds a new fee that may further increase the cost of housing and other development, as well as increase the cost of any capacity-enhancing projects. However, in the absence of more VMT mitigation solutions, significant uncertainty will remain for many projects, including those that might align with other plans and programs, continuing to impede their ability to progress. This regional program will be adopted by individual jurisdictions at their discretion and does not exclude them from doing their own VMT mitigation program.

As a follow up to the feasibility study, staff are recommending a Regional VMT Mitigation Program Implementation Plan which seeks to establish a regional VMT mitigation program in Fresno County.

The overall efforts of this program are consistent with the RTP/SCS goals of VMT/GHG reduction and will further the state's climate goals and the other overarching goals in the California Transportation Plan. When clarity is provided to developers and stakeholders regarding VMT mitigation, a path for projects to move forward is made possible. The plan seeks to develop and establish a VMT mitigation program to provide certainty for developers and project sponsors on their CEQA mitigation plans during the environmental clearance process of their projects.

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

- Paul Herman (FCOG) gave an update on the VMT Mitigation Program.

This item is Informational. No action needed.

G. Regional Early Action Planning Grant Program (REAP 2.0) Funding Recommendations (Juan Ramirez) [ACTION]

Summary: The Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 grant program was included in the 2021 State budget and seeks to accelerate infill development, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and increase housing supplies at all affordability levels.

Fresno COG was originally awarded \$13.5 million in REAP 2.0 funds; however, Gov. Newsom's most recent budget proposal in January anticipates cutting the program in half, leaving the region with \$6.5 million to award through a competitive application process.

REAP 2.0 is primarily administered through the California Department of Housing and Community Development, working in conjunction with the California Air Resources Board, the Governor's Office of Planning and Outreach and the Strategic Growth Council.

On Dec. 1, 2023, Fresno COG received eight project applications from member jurisdictions seeking a collective \$21 million. On Jan. 17, 2024 a scoring committee comprising 11 representatives from various agencies, including three of the State agencies administering REAP 2.0, met to discuss and rank the projects.

Committee members scored the projects based on Fresno COG's guidelines as approved by the State's administering agencies. Of the eight applications, the City of Firebaugh's Downtown Infill Initiative and the City of Fresno's Blackstone Betterment project received the highest scores. Based on the anticipated cuts, staff recommends the City of Firebaugh receive its full \$1.5 million request, while Blackstone Betterment receive the remaining \$5 million against a \$10.6 million request.

Importantly, should REAP 2.0 funding be restored, Blackstone Betterment could be funded at its full request and the City of San Joaquin could also be awarded \$1 million for its proposed new trail system and public park -- components of an already-approved housing development on three parcels in the City.

The attached spreadsheet displays the project rankings and two possible funding scenarios.

ACTION: Staff and the REAP 2.0 scoring committee request that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board approve the funding recommendations for the 2023-24 Regional Early Action Planning (REAP 2.0) grant program.

- Juan Ramirez (FCOG) provided an update on the funding recommendations.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mrs. Zieba (Reedley) motioned to fund Firebaugh and San Joaquin with Fresno getting the remainder of the funds. Mrs. Tucker (Fowler) seconded to approve the motion.

Vote: 6 All in Favor, 1 opposed.

Motion passed.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT ITEMS

A. Staff Hourly Rate Adjustment for Modeling Services (Santosh Bhattarai) [ACTION]

Summary: Fresno COG has been providing modeling services to private consultants and developers using its activity-based model (ABM) since 2019. Before 2019, COG used a traditional four-step model to provide this service.

The travel demand model is used in traffic impact studies (TIS) and corresponding vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analyses from proposed residential and commercial developments within the Fresno County region.

This service is provided to support land use and transportation-related projects; however, during regional transportation plan development, the modeling staff is overwhelmed with hundreds of model runs, which make it challenging to dedicate significant hours to the traffic and VMT analyses requests. To resolve this issue, in 2021 staff selected four firms identified as "preferred consultants" that provide the same kind of modeling services.

COG charges developers its staff time for TIS and VMT analyses, which is solely the hourly employee rate without any profit or overhead charges. This is significantly less than the preferred consultant firms and results in their underuse. To mitigate this issue, staff proposes adjusting Fresno COG's hourly rate, which has been in place since 2010. This adjustment will make COG's hourly rate comparable to that of the preferred consultants.

COG compared two approaches to set a reasonable hourly rate. First, using inflation approach, COG calculated the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from State of California's inflation calculator. The difference in the index values between 2010 and 2023 came out to be 48.5%, which means that \$125 in 2010 was equivalent to \$186 in December 2023.

The second approach was the competitive market rate. COG collected the hourly rates from all the preferred consultants, which range between \$160 and \$270, with an average of \$218. Staff believes that \$215/hour will be a competitive and reasonable rate that will help to balance the number of modeling requests between COG and its preferred consultants.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board approve the adjusted hourly staff rate for providing modeling services, increasing it from \$125 to \$215 per hour.

B. Fresno County Microtransit Feasibility Study Contract Extension (Paul Herman) [ACTION]

Summary: Fresno COG and Via Mobility LLC are requesting a time extension to the Fresno County Microtransit Feasibility Study contract, from March 31 to June 30, 2024. Staff anticipates a final plan and presentation to TTC/PAC and Policy Board in April 2024. The extension will cover any additional invoicing requirements. The study is within budget and there is no need for additional funding. The study is funded by Caltrans SB 1 Sustainable Communities formula funds.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board authorize the executive director to approve a contract amendment with Via Mobility LLC for the Fresno County Microtransit Feasibility Study to extend the contract from March 31 to June 30, 2024.

C. Multijurisdictional Housing Element-City of Fresno (Juan Ramirez) [Action]

Summary: The City of Fresno has asked Fresno COG to amend its Multijurisdictional Housing Element contract with consulting firm Placeworks to address a potential funding shortfall related to public comment responses and revisions requested by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

Placeworks subcontractor Ascent, which is developing the City of Fresno's housing element, is requesting an additional \$64,282 to account for anticipated overages on the project. This amount is beyond the \$90,000 in Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) funds already included in a November 2023 contract amendment. City of Fresno staff propose using the City's own Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) funds to cover this second contract amendment. Attached is the proposed scope of work.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board to authorize the executive director to approve amendment No. 2 to the Placeworks Multijurisdictional Housing Element, for an amount not to exceed \$64,282. that will be paid for by the City of Fresno and cover City of Fresno's costs.

- Mr. Jansons called for any items wishing to be pulled by members or the public.
- Mrs. Zieba (Reedley) pulled item III. A for discussion.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mrs. Tucker (Fowler) motioned, and Mrs. Cabrerra (San Joaquin) seconded to approve the consent agenda items B & C as presented.
- Item II. A, after an opportunity for public comment, Mrs. Zieba (Reedley), and Mrs. Cabrerra (San Joaquin) seconded to approve consent item III. A.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- None.

V. OTHER ITEMS

A. Items from Staff

- None.

B. Items from Members

- None.

VI. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

A. Public Presentations

- None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Phipps", written in a cursive style.

Robert Phipps, Interim Executive Director

Public:

None.

Staff:

Denise Flores, Robert Phipps, Simran Jhutti, Juan Ramirez, Jennifer Rodriguez, Jeff Long, Kai Han, Paul Herman, Matthew Shimizu.