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**Policy Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Friday, March 14, 2025
10:00 AM**

The meeting was held at FCOG Sequoia Conference Room.

Andrew Haussler, City of Clovis
Thomas Gaffery, City of Fowler
Jennifer Clark, City of Fresno
Virginia Penaloza, City of Huron
John Jansons, City of Kerman
Alexander Henderson, City of Kingsburg
Encarnacion Shun Patlan, City of Orange Cove
Nicole Zieba, City of Reedley
Matthew Flood, City of San Joaquin
Fernando Santillan, City of Selma
David Deel, Caltrans District 6
Robert Phipps, FCOG
Moses Stites, FCRTA

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Mr. Jansons (Kerman), Chair. With 10 members present, there was a quorum to conduct business.

JOINT Transportation Technical/Policy Advisory Committee

A. Caltrans Report (Caltrans) [INFORMATION]

David Deel reported on the following:

- Thanked FCOG for submitting their 25/26 OWP. The comment letter and Certification and Assurances documents will be sent out soon.
- Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 8 applications due April 21st.

I. TRANSPORTATION CONSENT ITEMS

A. Executive Minutes of February 14, 2025 [APPROVE]

B. City of Selma FY 2024-2025 TDA Claim (Les Beshears) [ACTION]

C. City of Selma FY 2023-2024 TDA Claim (Les Beshears) [ACTION]

D. City of Selma FY 2022-2023 TDA Claim (Les Beshears) [ACTION]

E. 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy Legal Services (Paul Herman) [ACTION]

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

**All in Favor, no opposed.
Motion passed.**

II. TRANSPORTATION ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. **Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area Managed Lane Study Consultant Selection (Pankaj Joshi) [ACTION]**

Summary: Managed lanes help reduce traffic congestion, lower Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and improve safety on urban freeways. These lanes are common across the State and include express lanes, carpool lanes (HOV), toll lanes (HOT), lanes for clean air vehicles, and park and ride lanes.

In the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area (FCMA), there are four main freeways: SR 99, SR 41, SR 168, and SR 180, serving over 700,000 residents. Traffic congestion on these routes is increasing, leading to more air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and less reliable transportation. When highways are full, VMT and greenhouse gas emissions rise. Managed lanes are a useful, and sometimes the only, option that meets federal air quality standards for expanding road capacity in non-attainment areas like Fresno.

In January 2025, Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking consultants to study managed lanes as a solution to reduce highway congestion in the FCMA. The selected consultant will assess current data and upcoming projects, establish goals and objectives, identify managed lanes strategies, create an implementation plan, engage with the public, and produce a final report.

Two proposals were received in response to the RFP. Kimley-Horn, scoring highest among the proposals received, was selected. Kimley-Horn has extensive experience in development, delivery, and knowledge regarding managed lanes strategies, including prior collaboration with Fresno COG on various projects including the Regional VMT Mitigation Program Study.

This study is expected to be completed within a year.

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board authorize the executive director to enter a contract with Kimley-Horn for the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area Managed Lane Study for an amount not to exceed \$200,000.

- Pankaj Joshi (FCOG) reported on the Lane Study Consultant Selection.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Henderson (Kingsburg) motioned, and Mr. Santillan (Selma) seconded to approve the item as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

B. **2024-25 Obligation Plan for Project Delivery (Ofelia Abundez) [INFORMATION]**

Summary: On Feb. 27, Fresno COG staff submitted its federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024/25 obligation plan to Caltrans' Office of Project Management Oversight Division of Local Assistance. This plan documents Fresno COG's estimated project delivery for the remainder of 2024/25. The obligation authority (OA) target for 2024/25 is \$32,698,654. (Attached to this agenda item)

As of Jan. 31 \$1.5 million or 7 percent of the federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program and Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding has been obligated, leaving the region with an OA balance of \$20.7 million. Based on projects programmed in FFY 24/25 of the 2025 FTIP, Fresno COG's projected OA delivery is \$24.2 million, excluding projects that may be expedited to obligate this Federal fiscal year. The obligation plan outlines approximately \$8.4 million in additional, combined CMAQ, CRP, and STBG.

The Federal fiscal year ends Sept. 30; however, as of March 15, Federal funds may become available to the rest of the state on a first-come, first-served basis if OA use is below 35 percent. It is the state's goal to exceed the OA target and, in August, receive additional federal funds redistributed from other states to projects pending authorization. Fresno COG encourages all agencies to continue submitting their requests for authorization as soon as possible to ensure they are queued up for the funds that will become available. If projects do not receive authorization approval after August, they will be delayed until October, the beginning of the next federal fiscal year.

Please keep Fresno COG staff updated on any changes that could impact the region's project delivery plan. Contact Ofelia Abundez at 559-233-4148 ext. 205 or Blake Rincon at 559-233-4148 ext. 203 with any questions regarding fiscal year deadlines or the process of obligating project funds.

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

- Ofelia Abundez (FCOG) reported on the 2024-25 Obligation Plan for Project Delivery.

This is an informational item, no action needed.

C. Senate Bill 375 Reform Initiative (Robert Phipps) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Senate Bill 375 (2008) required metropolitan planning organizations, such as Fresno COG, to include a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) within each update to the federally required Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The SCS is intended to demonstrate how the region will meet greenhouse gas reduction targets, established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), through land use decisions — as expressed through local general plans and such strategies as infill and other, denser development patterns.

Failure to meet the GHG targets can result in a region's disqualification for multiple State funding sources, including certain transportation and housing-related grant programs.

Though not specifically stated in the law, the implication is that GHG targets should be achieved by wholesale reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), or more specifically, the number of single-occupant vehicle trips occurring on a daily basis. The correlating assumption is that denser development patterns would encourage less driving and more bicycling, walking and transit use, as well as other alternative transportation options for commuters.

In 2013, SB 743 further codified VMT as an alternative metric to level-of-service for roadway capacity projects when considering transportation project expenditures. Under this law, jurisdictions are required through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to determine whether adding capacity to a roadway would encourage VMT growth, and if so, to mitigate for that additional VMT.

As a result, VMT has become the primary metric for meeting GHG targets under SB 375, and while VMT did diminish temporarily during the COVID-19 pandemic, its growth — via single-occupant vehicle trips — has rebounded above levels previously seen in 2019. This is despite continued and increased investment in transit capital and operations, as well as active transportation projects such as bicycle lanes, paths, sidewalks and trails.

This fact, combined with variables such as lower population growth projections, a growing electric vehicle fleet, and reduced housing production, among others, have transportation models throughout California showing that regions will face considerable difficulty meeting their CARB-prescribed GHG targets for the next SCS update.

Consequently, MPOs throughout the state have begun calling for administrative and/or legislative solutions to reform SB 375, primarily by adjusting its focus on VMT as the sole metric for GHG reduction.

Since SB 375 was first enacted nearly 18 years ago, California has endured a staggering housing and homelessness crisis, mandated its passenger vehicle fleet convert to EV by 2035, and centered multiple policy initiatives on equity considerations. SB 375 author Darrel Steinberg could not have conceived of any of these developments when writing and negotiating this law.

Fresno COG staff are participating in a working group along with multiple State agencies, including CARB, to determine administrative and potentially legislative solutions to these concerns. Simultaneously, SB 486 (Cabaldon, 2025) is the first bill aiming to address comprehensive SB 375 reform. Staff will continue to update its standing committees and Policy Board as this situation develops.

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

- Robert Phipps (FCOG) reported on the Senate Bill 375.

This is an informational item, no action needed.

D. 2026 Measure C Renewal Update (Robert Phipps) [INFORMATION]

Summary: In February, Fresno COG and Fresno County Transportation Authority (FCTA) staff held its kick-off meeting with facilitator and program manager Kendall Flint with consulting firm DKS to review expectations and approaches to forming the Measure C renewal committee and how it will operate. To date, Fresno COG has received more than a dozen “expression of interest” forms from different stakeholders and stakeholder groups to serve on the committee.

In the interim, DKS has begun setting up one-on-one meetings for me with all 15 City Managers and mayors as well as the county administrative officer and Board of Supervisors/FCTA Chairman Buddy Mendes to discuss strategy regarding appointments/selections for each representative on the committee. The goal is to have these completed over the next two weeks. DKS will review the proposed names/selections with the goal of final selection by March 24.

In addition, DKS’ graphic services team has developed some updated logos for consideration, and FM3 has provided a preliminary approach to the focus groups. Staff, DKS and outreach consultant Tripepi Smith are also reviewing the revised MC3 website to consider access, content and incorporating tools from FCOG’s Public Input platform and/or DKS’ Social Pinpoint

Finally, DKS is finalizing the master calendar, which includes proposed timing for focus groups, presentations, events – everything for the path forward in 2025, as well as a draft of talking points.

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

- Robert Phipps (FCOG) gave a Measure C Renewal update and introduced Kendall Flint who answered questions via Zoom.

This is an informational item, no action needed.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT ITEMS

A. One Voice Advocacy Consultant Contract (Brenda Thomas) [APPROVE]

Summary: Fresno COG’s One Voice D.C. trip is scheduled for April 28-30, 2025, not including travel days. As it has for previous trips, Fresno COG is proposing to contract with Covino, Smith & Simon to provide representation at the Federal level, advocate before the executive and legislative branches, and serve as our liaison to the Administration, members of Congress, and other stakeholders in Washington, DC.

In operation since 1987, Covino, Smith & Simon (formerly Simon and Company, Inc.) is a boutique intergovernmental affairs firm based in D.C. that specializes in federal representation for local government including cities, counties, and other public agencies. The firm provides expertise across public policy areas.

Simon and Company’s primary responsibility for the One Voice trip will be to support the mission of Fresno COG by working to advance legislative, regulatory, and funding priorities identified and approved by the “One Voice” delegation, working in partnership with the Administration and our Congressional delegation. In that regard, they have the responsibility to undertake the following activities on our behalf:

1. Developing a Federal agenda
2. Enhancing intergovernmental relationships
3. Advocating for legislative interests
4. Identifying Federal funding
5. Monitoring regulatory actions

At Fresno COG’s request, Simon and Company has proposed a professional services agreement of \$15,000 to perform the scope of work outlined above. This is a proposed as a sole-source contract due to the short timeline and the fact that the contract is not subject to Federal procurement rules.

Action: Staff requests that the PAC recommend the Policy Board authorize the executive director to approve a contract with Covino, Smith & Simon for One Voice D.C. trip planning and implementation services not to exceed \$15,000.

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

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. One Voice D.C. Advocacy Trip Update (Brenda Thomas) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Fresno COG staff is strongly encouraging Policy Board and PAC members to join Fresno Council of Governments staff and its stakeholders – other elected officials, public administrators, and private business executives – as part of the 19th annual One Voice D.C. delegation from April 27 to May 1, 2025.

Historically, the program's success has hinged on presenting the One Voice priorities to Fresno's Congressional delegation, Federal agencies, and White House staff as a regionally united, Central California cohort led by our elected officials. Elected leadership and solidarity is crucial as the delegation engages with those in the highest levels of the Federal government.

Fresno COG's "Fruits of One Voice" summary document outlining the history and many successes of the long-standing Federal advocacy effort is attached for review.

Attached also is the One Voice sign-up forms due to Fresno COG by April 1, and the One Voice D.C. information needed to register for the trip and make a room reservation at the hotel by April 6.

The trip deadlines are as follows:

April 1 – Delegate form and fees due to Fresno COG

April 6 – Hotel reservation deadline to be included in our block

April 15 — Sponsorship deadline

April 27 – Travel to D.C. (Recommendation: Washington Reagan airport rather than Dulles)

April 28 at 5 pm – Mandatory delegates meeting/dinner

April 29 & 30 – One Voice priority meetings in D.C.

May 1 – Travel back to Fresno

View and download the trip information, forms and list of priorities at the following link: Fresno COG Legislative Advocacy Trips – Fresno Council of Governments

Contact Brenda Thomas for more trip or sponsorship information at bthomas@fresnocog.org or 559-233-4148, ext. 219.

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

- Brenda Thomas (FCOG) gave an update on the One Voice D.C. trip.

This is an informational item, no action needed.

V. OTHER ITEMS

A. Items from Staff

- Robert Phipps (FCOG) announced the Federal IJA Program project by project review to ensure consistency. The Trump administration has issued a potential for some projects to be pulled if not already obligated.

B. Items from Members

- Nicole Zieba (Reedley) congratulated Thomas Gaffery on his promotion.

VI. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

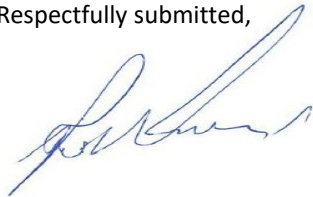
A. Public Presentations

- None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Phipps', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Robert Phipps, Executive Director

Public:

None

Staff:

Denise Flores, Robert Phipps, Brenda Thomas, Janelle Del Campo, Ofelia Abundez, Blake Rincon, Pankaj Joshi, Paul Herman, Moses Stites.