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**Fresno COG Policy Board
MINUTES
Thursday, January 29, 2026
5:30 PM**

The meeting was held at the Fresno COG Sequoia Room

Members Attending:

Mayor Vong Mouanoutoua, City of Clovis
Mayor Nathan Vosburg, City of Coalinga
Mayor Freddy Valdez, City of Firebaugh
Mayor Juan Mejia, City of Fowler
Councilmember Annalise Perea, City of Fresno
Mayor Rey Leon, City of Huron
Mayor Maria Pacheco, City of Kerman
Mayor Brandon Pursell, City of Kingsburg
Mayor Victor Martinez, City of Mendota
Mayor Alma Beltran, City of Parlier
Mayor Matthew Tuttle, City of Reedley
Mayor Frank Gonzalez, City of Sanger
Mayor Adam Cornejo, City of San Joaquin
Mayor Scott Robertson, City of Selma
Supervisor Garry Bredefeld, County of Fresno
Shane Gunn, Caltrans
Robert Phipps, Executive Director
Doug Sloan, Legal Counsel

Absent:

Mayor Diana Guerra-Silva, City of Orange Cove

Quorum: At the start of the meeting, there were 14 members representing 83.62% of the population. There was a quorum to conduct business. (Clovis, Coalinga, Firebaugh, Fresno City, Huron, Kerman, Kingsburg, Mendota, Parlier, Reedley, Sanger, San Joaquin, Selma). Mayor Bredefeld arrived at 5:37 p.m. Member from Orange Cove absent.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Mayor Beltran (Parlier), Chair.

I. TRANSPORTATION CONSENT ITEMS

A. Executive Minutes of January 7, 2026 [APPROVE]

Mayor Martinez (Mendota) moved and Mayor Leon (Huron) seconded.

Vote: All in favor, none opposed.

Absent: Orange Cove

Motion passed

B. Fresno COG Legal Representation (Robert Phipps) [ACTION]

Summary: Fresno COG’s joint powers agreement and bylaws state that “the Fresno County Counsel’s Office shall provide all legal services to (Fresno COG), the Council and any committees as specified ... except the Council may retain independent legal counsel when it deems appropriate.”

Policy Board leadership has requested that Fresno COG consider using private, outside attorneys for future legal services given actual or potential conflicts with the County Counsel’s office as an agent of the County of Fresno.

While County Counsel services have historically been considerably less expensive than private-sector attorneys, there have been multiple occasions — many of which are associated with Measure C — where the County Counsel has been forced to recuse itself or to recommend private attorneys who specialize in particular legal matters.

Should the Policy Board choose to contract with a private firm for future legal services, Fresno COG staff would conduct a request for qualifications and/or proposals, solicit a scoring committee from among the Board or members of its Policy Advisory Committee and return with a recommendation within approximately three months’ time.

Policy Board discussed:

Scope of any recusal by County Counsel

Whether outside legal counsel should be retained for all matters or only Measure C–related matters

Whether retention should be temporary and tied to the duration of the pending investigation

Fiscal considerations associated with outside legal counsel

Note: The Chair, without objection, moved Item IV.C (Administrative/Action Items) to the beginning of the meeting, where it was considered as part of the Transportation Consent Items.

Amended Motion by Mayor Robertson (Selma) and Mayor Pursell (Kingsburg) seconded.

Motion to retain outside legal counsel limited to Measure C and the pending initiative for 60 days, with the matter to be revisited thereafter.

Amended Vote: 8 yes at 80.03%, 7 no at 19.03%.

Absent: Orange Cove

Motion failed

Mayor Valdez (Firebaugh) moved and Mayor Cornejo (San Joaquin) seconded.

Motion to retain outside General Counsel for all Fresno COG matters for 60 days (through the end of March), with the matter to be revisited thereafter.

Vote: 9 yes at 21.08%, 6 no at 77.99%.

Absent: Orange Cove

Motion failed

No authorization was granted to retain outside legal counsel. The Chair directed that the item be returned at a future meeting.

II. TRANSPORTATION ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Fresno County Comprehensive Climate Action Plan Analysis (CCAP-A) Acceptance (Simran Jhutti) [ACTION]

Summary: The CCAP-A identifies that reducing GHGs will not only address climate change but also deliver co-benefits such as improved air quality, lower household energy costs, and new economic opportunities in clean energy and sustainable agriculture. The plan analysis explores the benefits and outcomes as a result of sector-based strategies. The plan includes near-term (2030-2035) and long-term (2050) scenarios for GHG emission

reductions by sector. The sectors explored include Transportation, Building, Energy, Waste, Industrial, Agriculture, and Natural & Working Lands. The emission reduction measures include:

Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build out the Bike and Pedestrian Network • Promote Carpool, Vanpool, and Shared Mobility Options • Accelerate Zero-Emission Personal Vehicles and Implement the EV Readiness Plan • Electrify Commercial & Public Vehicle Fleets • Advance Zero-Emission Freight Vehicles • Transition Off-Road Vehicles & Equipment to ZEVs
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale Up Waste Diversion and Circular Economy Programs • Develop Landfill Gas Captures and utilization • Clean up Wastewater Facilities
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decarbonize Industry with Efficiency, Electrification, and Clean Fuels
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amp up Alternative Manure Management Program in Livestock & Poultry Operations • Plow the Way to Zero-Emission Agricultural Equipment
Natural & Working Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow the Urban Tree Canopy

Together, these measures provide a roadmap for the County to significantly reduce emissions, protect vulnerable populations, and align with future investment opportunities. These strategies also support job growth in clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and infrastructure sectors, ensuring benefits extend across the County’s workforce and communities. This plan is an exploration of benefits and strategies to be taken to achieve emissions reductions through investments, strategic planning, and developing resilient communities. The document can be found here: [Climate Action Plans – Fresno Council of Governments](#)

Board members questioned the methodology and assumptions used to estimate greenhouse gas emissions and the lack of direct measurement.

Consultants explained that GHG emissions are modeled using accepted activity data and emission factors, while pollutant monitoring criteria indicates long-term air quality improvements.

Clarification was requested regarding total versus net emissions, including treatment of biogenic sources.

Concerns were raised regarding costs, economic impacts, and electric vehicle lifecycle and safety issues.

Staff clarified the CCAP is an analysis only, that acceptance does not constitute adoption, strategies are voluntary and funding-dependent, and implementation authority remains with individual jurisdictions.

Mayor Leon (Huron) moved and Councilmember Perea (City of Fresno) seconded.

Vote: All in favor, none opposed.

Absent: Orange Cove

Motion passed

B. Measure C TOD 14th Funding Cycle Call for Projects (Simran Jhutti) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Measure C’s Transit-Oriented Infrastructure for Infill Development (TOD) program was established as part of the Measure C 2006 Extension Plan. It was designed to boost transit ridership through transit-supportive land uses, such as compact development and mix uses, and other transit complementary infrastructure development and planning activities. It was intended to provide seed money for transit-oriented development in

Fresno County and promote livable, sustainable and healthy communities that are walkable, bikeable and transit friendly.

There are three subprograms under the TOD program:

1. Capital Improvement Program: This program funds capital improvement projects that support transit and encourage walking and biking.
2. Planning Program: This program provides funding for planning activities such as transit station-area planning, transit corridor plans, etc., that will enhance transit and promote transit-oriented development.
3. Housing Infill Incentive Program: This program rewards local governments for encouraging higher-density development with TOD characteristics. Funding may also be used to offset development impact fees or on a capital infrastructure project that would support TOD.

The TOD program is estimated to generate around \$16.9 million over its 20-year lifespan and accrues around \$850,000 annually. The 14th cycle has approximately \$1.4 million available.

The call for projects for the one-time funding opens January 9, and applications are due March 3. The TOD Program policies and guidelines are available at: Fresno County Measure C. The application package is attached to this agenda.

Action: This item is informational. No action is required.

C. Fresno COG 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) / Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Update (Paul Herman) [INFORMATION]

Summary: Every four years, Fresno COG is required to develop and adopt a Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) for the region to stay in compliance with State and Federal law. As part of this process, there are several steps that include: selecting a preferred land-use development scenario, producing an environmental impact report, and adopting the final RTP/SCS. Over the last several months, staff has been updating its activity-based model (ABM) to include more up-to-date data and information to better access the region's ability to hit its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, which were last set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in 2018. That target — a reduction of 13% GHG below 2005 levels by 2035 — is forecast to be achievable for the region after the latest data was provided for the ABM.

Over the next several months, staff will be completing modeling efforts and providing information to the various committees and the public to help guide selection of the preferred scenario. Staff anticipate having several in-person and virtual public meetings in February, and to get guidance from the RTP Roundtable, SCS Subcommittee, TTC, and PAC in February and March, with the preferred scenario selection by the Fresno COG Policy Board at its March 2026 meeting. After the preferred scenario is selected, staff will develop an environmental impact report, in coordination with consultant LSA.

For more updates and information on the Fresno COG 2026 RTP/SCS, please visit planfresno.com

Staff clarified that Fresno COG is not a land use authority and relies on adopted city and county general plans, which are incorporated into the RTP/SCS modeling without modification.

Questions were raised regarding consequences of not meeting the 13% greenhouse gas reduction target, including potential future mandates.

Staff explained that enforcement is primarily tied to eligibility for certain state grant programs, and that an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) may be used if targets are not achieved.

Paul Herman (FCOG) reported on the item. Staff provided an update on the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), a federally and state-required plan necessary to maintain eligibility for state and federal transportation funding.

Board Members asked questions regarding local planning impacts and compliance enforcement. Staff explained the role of the state in incentivizing compliance through grants rather than direct land use authority. Board members asked about city involvement and land use authority, particularly in relation to local general plan updates.

Staff clarified that Fresno COG is not a land use authority and relies on adopted city and county general plans, which are incorporated into the RTP/SCS modeling without modification.

Questions were raised regarding consequences of not meeting the 13% greenhouse gas reduction target, including potential future mandates.

Staff explained that enforcement is primarily tied to eligibility for certain state grant programs, and that an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) may be used if targets are not achieved.

Action: This item is informational. No action is required.

D. Caltrans Report (Caltrans) [INFORMATION]

Staff provided updates on new Buy America requirements, including stricter domestic manufacturing and content rules starting October 2026; Caltrans will provide additional guidance and training to city staff.

Upcoming events: Fresno will host the 5th Annual Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Small Business Summit on March 4, with free registration for attendees and exhibitors, featuring local and state leaders.

Clean California projects updates: SR-41 McKinley Community Garden/Public Art Project nearly complete; Tulare Avenue/Divisadero Interchange sculpture delayed due to weather.

Capital projects updates: Dickinson Roundabout construction planned for fall 2026; Excelsior Expressway construction mid-summer 2026; Shaver Lake Viaduct construction late spring/early summer with temporary traffic controls.

Board and public concerns: Pedestrian safety at Mendota crossings and Highway 33, and community concerns regarding Coalinga roads and bike lanes; staff will follow up with project managers.

This item is informational. No action is required.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT ITEMS

A. One Voice D.C. Advocacy Consultant Agreement (Brenda Thomas) [APPROVE]

Summary: Fresno COG's One Voice D.C. trip is scheduled for March 22-26, 2026. As it has for previous trips, Fresno COG proposes 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 \$22,500 plus related expenses to perform the scope of work outlined above. This is 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 Policy Board authorize the executive director to approve an agreement with Covino, Smith & Simon for One Voice D.C. trip advocacy, planning and implementation services not to exceed \$22,500.

B. San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council - State Advocacy Contract (Robert Phipps) [ACTION]

Summary: The San Joaquin Valley (SJV) Regional Policy Council -- an advisory and advocacy body that includes representatives from the eight metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), the SJV Regional Rail Commission/Joint Powers Authority and the SJV Air Pollution Control District -- have collectively contracted through a member agency with both federal and state advocacy firms for more than a decade. In recent years, both contracts have been administered by the Stanislaus Council of Governments, (StanCOG) based in Modesto.

Over the last seven months, StanCOG has been embroiled in a personnel dispute with its former executive director, resulting in her ouster. This situation led the SJV Policy Council to request that other agencies assume contracts that StanCOG has been administering on the Valley's behalf. Fresno COG was asked to assume the state advocacy contract held by Khouri Consulting, LLC. of Sacramento. Fresno COG already administers one Valleywide contract through VRPA, Inc., for administrative and coordination services.

In his capacity as a state lobbyist, Gus Khouri and former California Transportation Commission Executive Director Mitch Weiss assist the Valley COGs, Rail Commission and APCD on areas of common legislative concerns, report on transportation and housing-related bills affecting Valley communities, serve as Valley representatives to the Legislature in Sacramento and coordinate an annual advocacy trip for the Policy Council in Sacramento. The three-and-a-half-year contract began on Dec.1, 2024 and runs through June 30, 2027, at a cost of \$120,000 in the first year, with a 5 percent increase in each of the two succeeding years.

Under the proposed arrangement, Fresno COG will assume control of the contract retroactively beginning Jan. 1, 2026, and carry it through to completion in June 2027. Contract costs are split evenly 10 ways among all agencies. Fresno COG will bill each agency quarterly. For the remainder of 2025-26, the cost will be \$12,600 annually, per agency. Beginning July 1, 2026, the annual per agency cost rises to \$13,300. The total value remaining in the contract is \$195,300.

Action: Staff recommends that the Policy Board authorize the executive director to approve a contract with Khouri Consulting LLC for \$195,300, the cost of which will be divided evenly among the 10 agencies comprising the SJV Regional Policy Council.

Chair Beltran asked if any member wished to discuss Item III-B.

Supervisor Bredefeld (Fresno County) requested discussion of the item.

Robert Phipps (FCOG) clarified that Items III-A and III-B are separate contracts and actions.

Mayor Martinez (Mendota) moved and Councilmember Perea (City of Fresno) seconded.

Vote: 1 opposed (Kingsburg)
Absent: Kerman, Orange Cove and Sanger
Motion carried

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Fresno COG One Voice D.C. (Brenda Thomas) [INFORMATION]

Summary: One Voice Advocacy trips focus on a core group of regional priorities with a transportation nexus, around which the broadest group can unite. In all, Fresno COG received 14 priorities through the Jan. 15 deadline. A summary matrix showing submitted priorities is attached for preliminary Board member review.

On Feb. 2, COG staff, the D.C. consultant and project proponents will meet via Zoom to review the submitted priorities, assess whether they are a good fit for the One Voice D.C. effort and ascertain how the delegation may be able to move them forward during the March 22-26 advocacy trip. Once the full list has been vetted, staff will place the final recommended priority list and each submittal form on the February PAC and Policy Board agendas for review and Board approval.

For those who wish to attend the trip, the 2026 One Voice DC Delegation information and sign-up forms are also attached. It is imperative that Fresno COG's elected officials participate in the One Voice D.C. effort, meeting with Congressional members, White House staff and Federal agency partners. Fresno COG also welcomes business, transportation and community partners who wish to participate in the trip and advocate for the approved priorities. Delegate forms and initial sign-up fees are due to Fresno COG no later than Feb. 27, while all hotel reservations must be made by March 1, 2025.

Action: This item is informational. No action is required.

B. Measure C Facilitator's Contract - Amendment No. 1 (Robert Phipps) [ACTION]

Summary: In August 2025, the Policy Board approved a \$50,000 contract with Mark Keppler to serve as the facilitator for the 2026 Measure C Steering Committee. The Board reduced the original staff recommendation of \$75,000, which was based on an hourly rate equivalent to the prior facilitator, DKS, for approximately 160 hours following the assumed timeline for completion, estimated to be mid-October at that point in the process.

During the August meeting, Mr. Keppler proposed an arrangement wherein he would track his hours regardless of the budgeted amount in the contract and present those hours to the Board should they exceed the contract threshold. The Steering Committee process eventually trailed into December, culminating in committee approval of the Implementing Guidelines and Expenditure Plan on Dec. 4.

Accordingly, Mr. Keppler has submitted invoices through Dec. 13, 2025, totaling \$95,681.25, or \$45,681.25 beyond the \$50,000 contract.

In weighing the initial timeline that assumed the Steering Committee would adopt an Expenditure Plan by mid-October against Board member statements in August noting Mr. Keppler's long involvement with Measure C as a Steering Committee member, staff is proposing an amendment to his contract returning it to the original \$75,000 not-to-exceed amount. This approach covers an additional \$25,000 of the \$45,681 overage to recognize Mr. Keppler's time in service to Measure C, while also acknowledging his long-standing interest in the Measure as community service.

Action: Staff recommends the Policy Board authorize the executive director to approve amendment No. 1 to Mark Keppler's contract as the 2026 Measure C Steering Committee facilitator, including an additional \$25,000 for a total, not-to-exceed contract amount of \$75,000.

Robert Phipps (FCOG) reported on the item.

Discussion ensued as to whether the contact is deliverables based or hourly-based.

Concern was raised over additional payment

After an opportunity for public comment, Supervisor Bredefeld (Fresno County) moved to cap the contract at \$50,000 with no additional payment to Mr. Kepler. Mayor Pursell (Kingsburg) seconded.

Vote: All in favor, none opposed.

Absent: Kerman, Orange Cove and Sanger

Motion passes

V. OTHER ITEMS

A. Items from Staff

None.

B. Items from Members

None.

VI. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

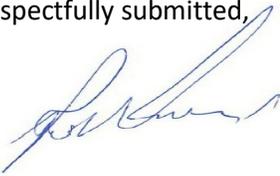
A. Public Presentations

None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert Phipps, Executive Director

Public:

None

Staff:

Mykia Byrd, Robert Phipps, Brenda Thomas, Les Beshears, Simran Jhutti, Paul Herman.