

CHAPTER 3

THE POLICY ELEMENT

I. OVERALL GOAL; PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

This chapter seeks to establish a central goal to guide the Regional Transportation Plan and to define objectives and policies needed to meet the goal and to respond to the issues that KCAG must consider. State guidelines require RTPA's and MPO's to develop realistic goals, policies, and objectives to guide state and local planning efforts. The following definitions are prescribed:

A goal is the end toward which effort is directed; it is general and timeless.

A policy is a direction statement that guides present and future decisions on specific actions.

An objective is a result to be achieved by a stated point in time. It is capable of being quantified and realistically attained considering probable funding and political constraints. Objectives are successive levels of achievement in the movement toward a goal, and should be tied to a time-specific period for implementation.

In compliance with these guidelines and the SAFTEA-LU Planning Factors as outlined in 23 U.S.C. §134(h), an overall goal is presented to cover all aspects of KCAG's transportation planning endeavors. The goals, objectives, and policies found in this plan were developed from a number of sources: the various editions and supplements to the Kings County Regional Transportation Plan; general plans of the cities and county; and the comments of the KCAG Transportation Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council.

A. OVERALL GOAL

To develop a transportation system that encourages and promotes the safe and efficient development, management, and operation of surface transportation systems to serve the mobility needs of people and freight (including accessible pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) and foster economic growth and development, while minimizing transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollution.

B. PROGRAM POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Policy

Continue making full use of KCAG's decision-making forums, including their regular meetings, to examine alternative solutions to transportation needs and problems.

Objectives

1. Transportation decisions shall be made on the basis of the broadest range of Kings County area public interests.
2. KCAG shall provide clear and firm guidance to the California Transportation Commission, Caltrans, and local agencies on all transportation matters affecting Kings County.
3. Transportation decisions shall include Transportation Systems Management (TSM) evaluations.

4. Public safety, retention and maintenance of the existing system, and system efficiency shall be used as criteria in evaluating projects.
5. Total route or system development shall be considered when selecting projects.
6. Funding sources for all transportation modes shall be identified, evaluated and developed. With these, a complete system that is accessible, safe, and efficient shall be built.
7. Public and private transportation facilities shall be planned and developed consistent with overall growth and development policies contained in city and county general plans.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Policy

The environmental consequences of transportation project shall be taken into account. Of particular importance are impacts relating to air quality, energy use, noise, and changes in land use.

Objectives

1. Using TSM evaluations, consider those alternative solutions that lessen environmental problems, yet serve transportation needs.
2. Seek to mitigate unavoidable adverse impacts associated with selected alternatives.
3. Use environmental documents such as Initial Studies and EIRs as decision-making tools.
4. Coordinate transportation control measures with the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District and the latest air quality attainment plan for the San Joaquin Valley.
5. Consult with lead agencies on projects having environmental effects, of statewide, regional, or areawide significance on transportation facilities.
6. Maintain modeling capability that will respond to state and federal reporting requirements and the need for accurately projecting travel demand in future years.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Policy

Transportation facilities and services should meet the needs of all segments of the population. KCAG employs an environmental justice approach to its public participation policy and procedures and welcomes community comment and guidance in its transportation planning and decision making process.

Objectives

1. Continue building an active citizen participation forum.

2. Seek representation from the entire community, including the elderly, poor, persons with disabilities, and the census-identified environmental justice areas of Kings County.
3. Hold citizen meetings at convenient times and places.
4. Seek citizen comments early in the planning process, preferably in the problem-identification stage of project preparation.
5. Work to create an atmosphere that encourages the expression of all viewpoints, allowing both obvious and latent issues to be brought into the open.
6. Explore alternative methods of obtaining the public's views. Use surveys, make presentations to special interest groups, etc.
7. Keep local media informed of transportation issues and encourage their attendance at public meetings held by KCAG.

II. REGIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM GOALS, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

A. HIGHWAY SYSTEM GOAL, POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

Maintain, upgrade and complete a regional system of roadways which is convenient, safe, and efficient, and which serve the needs of all its users.

Policy

Maintenance shall be continuous to keep the regional highway system from falling further into disrepair. The system shall be upgraded and completed as revenues allow.

Objectives

1. Maintain and rehabilitate the regional system; reconstruct deteriorated road sections.
2. Provide safety improvements to reduce the number, severity, and probability of accidents.
3. Undertake new construction projects to upgrade and complete the regional system, and to close gaps in local and state highway systems.
4. Implement operational improvements (such as road widening, relief of parking congestion, traffic signals, passing lanes, and turn lanes) to maximize service and efficiency.
5. Carry out landscaping and maintenance projects to help make highways compatible with their surroundings.
6. Enforce local ordinances regulating oversize truck terminal access.
7. Work with Caltrans and local agencies to obtain right-of-way dedications at designated future interchanges and along mainline portions of state highways within the regional transportation system.

8. Petition the California State Legislature and the California Transportation Commission to adopt equitable laws and policies for apportioning fuel taxes and funding highway projects. Ensure that Kings County receives its fair share of available transportation dollars.
9. Work more closely with other Regional Transportation Planning Agencies in the area to foster coordinated highway facilities planning.

B. HIGHWAY SAFETY POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Policy

Improve routes of regional significance to promote the safe operation of vehicular traffic, especially during high accident probability times such as times of heavy winter fog, night, etc.

Objectives

1. Assist night and especially fog driving by providing and maintaining highly reflective "fog" or edge striping, and center divider lines on routes of regional significance.
2. Provide adequate shoulder areas on all state highways and rural regional routes.
3. Install traffic control measures on roads and at intersections when such measures are deemed necessary in accordance with the FHWA Uniform Traffic Control Device Manual.
4. Improve and maintain regional route road surfaces and drainage.
5. Widen or rehabilitate bridges where needed.
6. Provide adequate railroad grade protection devices.
7. Encourage the enforcement of posted speed limits.

III. GOODS MOVEMENT POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

A. Policy

Support the efforts of the trucking and rail industries to transport commodities safely and efficiently.

Objectives

1. Designate and maintain regional and local truck routes to prevent major pavement deterioration on local streets and roads that are not designed for heavy truck traffic.
2. Where needed, widen regional highways to accommodate them to heavy truck traffic.
3. Support enforcement of local truck route ordinances.
4. Develop plans to mitigate congestion on local streets and at intersections where heavy truck traffic occurs.

5. Support efforts to require all trucks carrying hazardous materials to have a manifest, including identification and instructions for handling materials in case of spills. Also support efforts to improve hazardous waste containers so that spillage or leakage does not occur.
6. Support truck weight fees that equitably provide for the highway maintenance costs resulting from heavy trucking.
7. Encourage the improvement of railways with the end purpose of increasing the efficiency of goods movements.
8. Support the installation of automatic grade protection devices at all grade crossings in urban areas.
9. Improve rail grade crossings that impede traffic flows.
10. Encourage the efficient movement of goods through California ports.
11. In concert with Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol, and local jurisdictions, restrict roads available for hazardous waste trucking to mitigate potential adverse affects associated with transportation.

IV. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

A. Public Transit Policy

Provide public transit services for those needs defined as "Unmet Transit Needs" which are "Reasonable to Meet".

Objectives

1. Continue operating the Kings Area Rural Transit and Corcoran Dial-a-Ride systems to provide dependable services for those living in Kings County's urbanized areas who have "unmet transit needs" which can be met at a cost KCAG determines to be reasonable.
2. Provide assistance to social service agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of coordinated transportation services for their clients.
3. Encourage transit operators to minimize transit system operating costs by increasing ridership through the following examples.
 - a. Implement route and schedule modifications.
 - b. Implement equipment and maintenance improvements.
 - c. Implement an aggressive marketing program to improve the image of public transit.
 - d. Follow up on comments of the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council.
4. Follow recommendations of the KCAG 2008 Kings County Transit Development Plan.
5. Assist all eligible claimants, both public and private, in applying for federal transportation grants.

6. Encourage the practice of ridesharing/vanpooling as an alternative to single occupant vehicle commuting.
7. Utilize the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council to identify unmet transit needs of the transit dependent.
8. Promote the coordination of transit with other transportation modes.
9. Encourage and support the enhancement of transit services as a transportation control measure to improve air quality.
10. Support the coordination and consolidation of transit services where appropriate through the development and implementation of the Action Plan and Inventory of Social Service Transportation Providers.

B. Intercity Rail and Bus Policy

Preserve an effective and convenient intercity public transportation system of regularly scheduled bus and rail services.

Objectives

1. Monitor and respond to all legislation that could impact bus or rail services in Kings County. Continue the use of KCAG as the forum through which public discussion on bus and rail matters is formalized into public policy recommendations.
2. Work with adjacent RTPA's and Caltrans to unify regional support for keeping and upgrading intercity bus and rail services.
3. Continue Federal and State support of the Amtrak San Joaquins trains.
4. Support aggressive marketing programs for Amtrak trains and intercity buses.
5. Seek to coordinate local transit service schedules with those of intercity modes.
6. Support the programming of grade crossing improvements to increase the speeds of intercity rail services.
7. Support state efforts to implement a high speed rail corridor in the San Joaquin Valley.

V. AVIATION GOAL, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

A fully functional and integrated air transportation and airport system that is complementary to the regional transportation system.

A. Policy

Work with local agencies to ensure compatible land uses around existing airports to reduce noise conflicts.

Objectives

1. Support the Kings County's Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and the local airports in their efforts to ensure compatible land uses around airports.
2. Support the local airports in their attempts to acquire the land surrounding the airports.
3. Support noise abatement procedures around the local airports.

B. Policy

Maintain alternative modes of transportation to and from the Hanford Municipal Airport and the Corcoran Airport.

Objective

1. Support local transit service to and from the Hanford Municipal Airport and the Corcoran Airport.

C. Policy

Promote the development and maximum utilization of public and private airports to provide for county and regional general air transportation needs.

Objectives

1. See that the existing county wide airport system is maintained and upgraded. Where warranted, use federal, state, local, or private funds to carry out improvements.
2. Ensure that public expenditures for airport development are consistent with demonstrated public demand.
3. Support the retention of scheduled passenger air service at Fresno and Visalia to provide convenient and dependable links to major commercial airports.
4. Airport improvements, in particular at the Lemoore Naval Air Station, shall be protected by coordinated city or county land-use regulations in aviation easements. Such easements should be used to minimize the nuisance effect of airports on their surroundings, and to prevent the encroachment of uses that are incompatible with air operations.
5. Follow the recommendations of the Kings County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and the Hanford Municipal Airport Master Plan.
6. Recognize and allow airstrips necessary for servicing agricultural needs.
7. Explore the feasibility of establishing public airports in Avenal and Corcoran.
8. Support increases in aviation capital improvement funds and sources for rural general aviation public use airports.

VI. NON-MOTORIZED POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

A. Policy

Improve the existing transportation system to better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians as well as automobiles and trucks; improve public awareness of and competence in bicycle use; and improve public and private sector responsiveness to bicycle and pedestrian transportation.

Objectives

1. Provide a well-developed, safe and convenient, intermodally-connected system of bikeways complete with support facilities.
2. Ensure that future development supports and facilitates the expansion, improvement, and maintenance of the bikeway system.
3. Provide on-going bicycle safety education and information programs.
4. Implement bikeways that will connect major employers, educational facilities and recreational areas.
5. Encourage partnerships between private, non-profit, governmental and citizens groups to implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
6. Fund road maintenance that will also provide better roads for bicycles.
7. Correct roadway surface and hazards on bikeways.
8. Provide theft-resistant parking facilities at high-use destinations.
9. Eliminate physical barriers to bicycle travel.
10. Encourage enforcement of bicycle traffic laws.
11. Keep State Route 198 closed to bicycles to prevent children from playing on the freeway. However, KCAG staff should investigate the feasibility of issuing permits to touring cyclists to allow temporary access on SR 198.
12. Start public awareness programs to increase acceptance of the bicycle.
13. Integrate bicycle and pedestrian considerations into local planning agendas.
14. Encourage local jurisdictions to implement complete streets and other multi-modal concepts as outlined by the California Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB 1358), as well as Caltrans Deputy Directive 64-R1 (DD-64-R1).
15. Encourage the use of bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation to enhance air quality and improve human health.
16. Implement the projects identified in the "2005 Kings County Regional Bicycle Plan".
17. Utilize the Bicycle Advisory Committee in the prioritization and programming of bicycle improvements.

VII. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

State planning guidelines suggest that TSM objectives be time-specific and quantified. This is to allow year-by-year analysis of progress toward TSM targets. These requirements apply to Transportation Management Agencies (TMA). Kings County (KCAG) is not a TMA and is not required to participate in the Congestion Management Program (CMP). Because of this distinction, the objectives in KCAG's program are not themselves quantified or time-specific. Staff acknowledges that Kings County, although considered a small urbanized area based on population, is very rural and its transportation improvements are small in scale compared to those of larger urbanized areas. While Kings County's size does not preclude TSM planning, it does make it hard to set realistic or meaningful target figures. The attainment of TSM objectives can be documented by periodic studies of the effectiveness of TSM measures in future RTPs.

A. Policy

Maintain and improve the quality of the existing transportation system.

Objectives

1. Shorten the travel time required to move people and goods on the existing system.
2. Lower travel costs required to move people and goods on the existing system.
3. Increase the safety of the existing system.
4. Improve the personal security of persons using the existing system.
5. Improve the comfort and convenience of the existing system.
6. Enhance the reliability of the existing system.

B. Policy

Increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system.

Objectives

1. Seek to reduce dependency upon the automobile for single occupant vehicle commuting by encouraging carpooling.
2. Encourage use of Kings County's transit system.
3. Facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel.

C. Policy

Minimize the costs to improve the quality and efficiency of the existing transportation system.

Objectives

1. Find cost-effective ways to upgrade the existing system.
2. Minimize the operating costs of the existing system.

D. Policy

Minimize the undesirable environmental impacts of existing transportation facilities and services.

Objectives

1. Reduce noise and vibration caused by the existing system.
2. Reduce air quality impacts caused by the existing system.
3. Reduce the amount of energy consumed by users of the existing system.

E. Policy

Promote desirable and minimize undesirable social and economic impacts of the existing transportation system.

Objectives

1. Provide adequate transportation services to the disadvantaged and transit dependent at a reasonable cost.
2. Provide reasonably priced public transit.
3. Minimize neighborhood impacts caused by transportation improvements.
4. Complement the long-range land-use policies of local general plans.