

2007

Regional

Transportation

Plan

Tulare County
Since 1852



May 21, 2007
Sixteenth Edition
Final

The preparation of this report has been financed in part by the State of California Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, local transportation funds and in-kind contributions of member agencies of the Tulare County Association of Governments. The Tulare County 2007 Regional Transportation Plan was developed to meet the California Transportation Commission 2006 Regional Transportation Guidelines.

1 **BEFORE THE TULARE COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS**
2 **COUNTY OF TULARE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

3
4 In the Matter of Approving the)
5 2007 Regional Transportation Plan,)
6 2007 Federal Transportation)
7 Improvement Program Amendment) RESOLUTION NO. 1698
8 No. 8, and Air Quality Conformity)
9 Analysis for the 2007 Tulare County)
10 FTIP Amendment No. 8 and)
11 2007 Tulare County RTP)

12
13
14 WHEREAS, the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) is a Regional
15 Transportation Planning Agency and a Metropolitan Planning Organization, pursuant to State
16 and Federal designation; and

17
18 WHEREAS, federal planning regulations require Metropolitan Planning Organizations to
19 prepare and adopt a long range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for their region; and

20
21 WHEREAS, Section 65080 of the California Government Code requires each regional
22 transportation planning agency to prepare a regional transportation plan and update it for
23 submission to the governing Policy Board for adoption; and

24
25 WHEREAS, a 2007 Regional Transportation Plan has been prepared in full compliance
26 with federal guidance; and

27
28 WHEREAS, a 2007 Regional Transportation Plan has been prepared in accordance with
29 state guidelines adopted by the California Transportation Commission; and

30
31 WHEREAS, federal planning regulations require that Metropolitan Planning Organizations
32 prepare and adopt a short range Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) for their
33 region; and

34
35 WHEREAS, the 2007 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) Amendment
36 #8 has been prepared to comply with Federal and State requirements for local projects and through
37 a cooperative process between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit
38 Administration (FTA), the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), principal elected officials
39 of general purpose local governments and their staffs, and public owner operators of mass
40 transportation services acting through the TCAG forum and general public involvement; and

41
42 WHEREAS, the 2007 FTIP Amendment #8 program listing is consistent with: 1) the 2007
43 Regional Transportation Plan; 2) the State Transportation Improvement Program; and 3) the Air
44 Quality Conformity Analysis; and

1 WHEREAS, the 2007 FTIP Amendment #8 contains the MPO's certification of the
2 transportation planning process assuring that all federal requirements have been fulfilled; and

3
4 WHEREAS, the 2007 FTIP Amendment #8 includes projects and financial information for
5 four years of programming; and

6
7 WHEREAS, the 2007 FTIP Amendment #8 includes updates to the Expedited Project
8 Selection Procedures; and

9
10 WHEREAS, projects submitted in the 2007 FTIP Amendment #8 must be financially
11 constrained and the financial plan affirms that funding is available; and

12
13 WHEREAS, the 2007 RTP and 2007 FTIP Amendment #8 do not interfere with the timely
14 implementation of the Transportation Control Measures; and

15
16 WHEREAS, the MPO must demonstrate conformity per 40 CFR Part 93 for the RTP and
17 FTIP; and

18
19 WHEREAS, in accordance with EPA Companion Guidance for the Conformity Rule for
20 multi-jurisdictional areas, TCAG has developed their portion of the PM2.5 regional emissions
21 analysis separately and provided the entire PM2.5 nonattainment area conformity demonstration;
22 and

23
24 WHEREAS, the PM2.5 nonattainment area conformity demonstration is contingent upon
25 adoption by all MPOs in the PM2.5 nonattainment area; and

26
27 WHEREAS, the TCAG has also developed a regional emissions analysis for Ozone and
28 PM-10 for Tulare County; and

29
30 WHEREAS, the documents have been widely circulated and reviewed by TCAG advisory
31 committees representing the technical and management staffs of the member agencies;
32 representatives of other governmental agencies, including State and Federal; representatives of
33 special interest groups; representatives of the private business sector; and residents of Tulare
34 County; and

35
36 WHEREAS, the TCAG Policy Board has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Report
37 prepared for the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan and has certified it as adequate and in
38 compliance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and

39
40 WHEREAS, a public hearing was conducted on April 16, 2007 to hear and consider
41 comments on the 2007 RTP, 2007 FTIP Amendment #8, and associated Air Quality Conformity
42 Analysis and the remainder of the MPOs in the PM2.5 nonattainment area have conducted public
43 hearings as well; and

1 WHEREAS, the TCAG Policy Board has reviewed the Air Quality Conformity Analysis
2 and made a finding that the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan and the 2007 Federal Transportation
3 Improvement Program Amendment #8 are in conformance with the applicable transportation
4 conformity rules for the applicable air quality standards.

5
6 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that TCAG adopts the 2007 RTP, 2007 FTIP
7 Amendment #8, and associated Air Quality Conformity Analysis.

8
9 The foregoing resolution was passed and adopted by TCAG upon motion of Member
10 Link, seconded by Member Norman, at a regular meeting on the 21st day of May, 2007, by the
11 following vote:


12
13 AYES: Ishida, Conway, Cox, Worthley, Ennis, McKittrick, Norman, Boyer, Kimball,
14 Link, Ritchie, McKinley, Zimmerman, Jaramillo

15
16 NOES:


17
18 ABSTAIN:

19
20 ABSENT: Hamilton, Vandegrift

21
22 TULARE COUNTY ASSOCIATION
23 OF GOVERNMENTS

24
25 
26 Allen Ishida
27 Chairman, TCAG
28
29

30 I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution of the TCAG duly adopted at a
31 regular meeting thereof held on the 21st day of May, 2007.

32
33
34 
35 George Finney
36 Executive Secretary, TCAG
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*Exeter Mural
and City Park*

Executive **S**ummary



City of Lindsay Mural

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Location

Tulare County is located in California's San Joaquin Valley. Tulare County is nestled between the Sierra Nevada Mountains on the east and Kings County on the west. The County is situated 180 miles north of Los Angeles and 200 miles south of San Francisco. State Route 99 (SR-99), a major north-south corridor in the State, provides direct access to Los Angeles and Sacramento. State Route 198 (SR-198) provides an east to west corridor between Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and Interstate 5 in Fresno County.

The San Joaquin Valley consists of the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, and Kern. The centralized location and affordable land cost allow Tulare County to attract industries that need efficient access to transportation facilities throughout the state. Tulare County's economic environment is diversified, ranging from agricultural production to manufacturing durable goods. Tulare County supports the economic environment with approximately 420,619 residents (2006 Department of Finance).

The Regional Transportation Plan

The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) developed the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is a 20-year planning document that is consistent with the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) to qualify projects for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The first RTP was written and adopted in 1975 with updates every two years and 1999 California Transportation Commission changed the requirement to every three years and changed it to every four years in 2006 to meet the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient

Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requirements. The last RTP was updated in 2004. The document is based on regional transportation facilities and proposed constrained improvements funded during the time frame of the Plan.

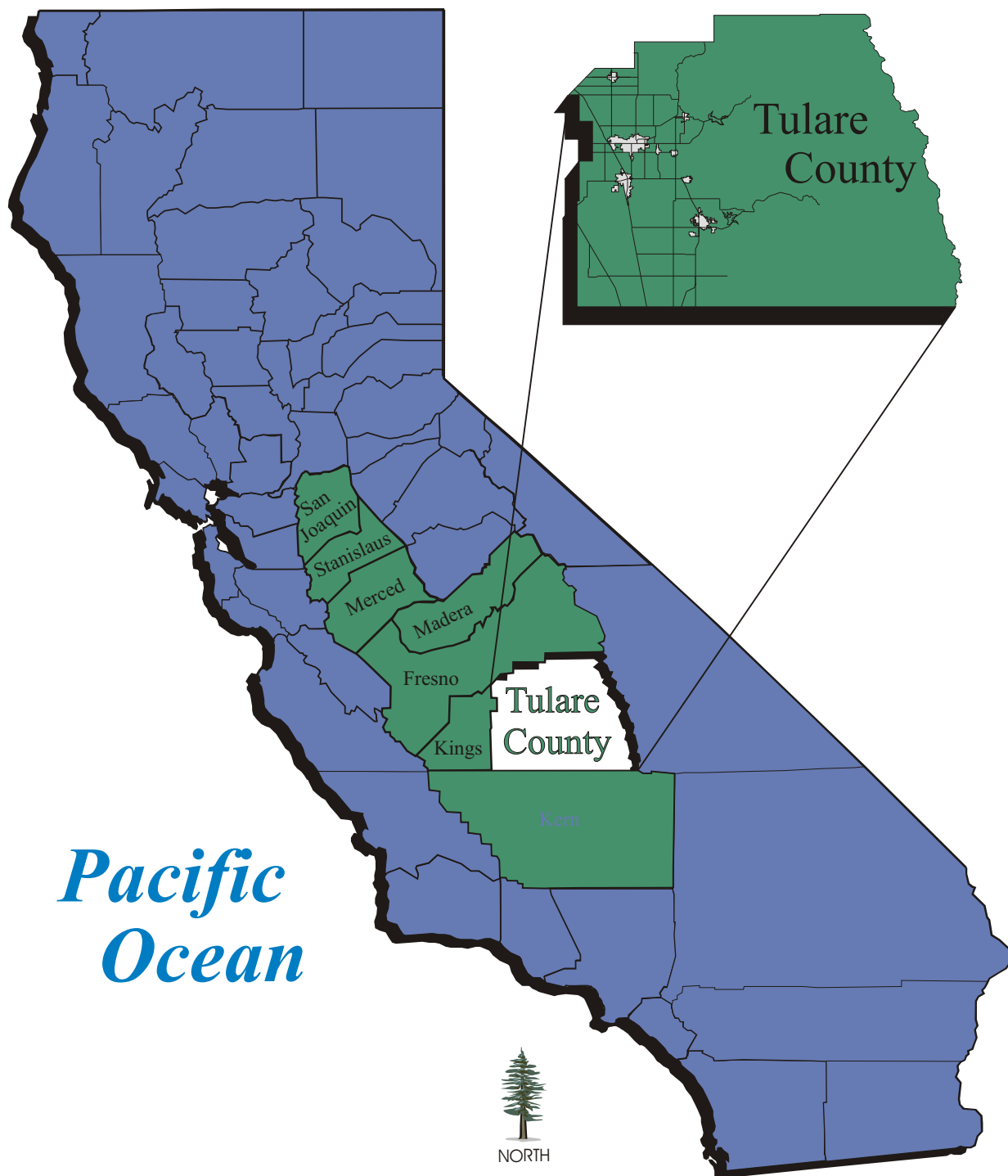
The RTP includes a Valleywide Chapter that is consistent with seven other San Joaquin Valley Counties. The purpose of the Valleywide coordination effort is to address several issues of inter-jurisdictional significance, including air quality, highways, streets and roads, aviation, rail, goods movement and transportation demand efforts.

TCAG represents the Cities of Dinuba, Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, Porterville, Tulare, Visalia, Woodlake, Tulare County, the Tule River Indian Tribe and tribal communities in the transportation planning process. TCAG coordinates with federal, state, regional governments and the Native American tribal government to develop strategies that address transportation issues. The effort promotes direct involvement by the government and interested groups in the transportation planning and project selection process.

POLICY ELEMENT

The Policy Element identifies transportation goals, objectives, and policies that meet the needs of the region. Goals, objectives, and policies are established to determine specific courses of action to guide Tulare County toward implementation of the RTP. The element begins by discussing general regional issues including population growth, development, sources of funding and impact mitigation techniques.

Figure 1-1
Tulare County and the
San Joaquin Valley



REGIONAL ISSUES

Tulare County's steady growth rate is increasing demands on the existing transportation system. In some cases, traffic has exceeded roadway capacity and mitigation measures are needed to relieve congested areas.

Tulare County has increased efforts to expand alternative modes of transportation. In spite of these efforts, the automobile has continued to be the primary mode of transportation in the County. As a result, capacity increasing projects will need to be constructed to relieve congestion, improve air quality and reduce the number of daily trips on our roadways. By utilizing Transportation System Management (TSM), Transportation Demand Management (TDM), and Transportation Control Measures (TCMs), and by encouraging development and improvement of alternate modes of transportation, projections indicate that the circulation system, within Tulare County, will operate more efficiently.

As development within Tulare County intensifies and impacts to the circulation system occur, appropriate mitigation measures become important considerations. Tulare County and the cities continue the development of projects to insure that minimum levels of service on principal arterials (regional road system) are maintained in rural (LOS "D") and urban (LOS "E") areas. For State Highways Caltrans has set a goal of LOS "D."

ACTION ELEMENT

ASSUMPTIONS

The Action Element has been prepared based on the best possible planning assumptions available to TCAG during the preparation of the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan. Unforeseen natural disasters, state financial constraints and cost

increases can affect the projects listed in the RTP. The RTP is prepared assuming current funding levels (see financial element) will remain constant over the next 20 years. Population in Tulare County will continue to grow at more than 2% per year (20 year average). The RTP recognizes that there is a current funding shortfall to cover all transportation needs in Tulare County. Due to the size and number of road miles in Tulare County there will continue to be a deficient regional road system.

In November 2006, Tulare County passed a regional sales tax to help alleviate the financial strain on the Regional Road System (Appendix B). The passage of Measure R (half cent sales tax) in November 2006 is expected to generate over \$650 million in dedicated transportation funding. Measure R will not address all of the transportation needs but it should show positive progress in reducing congestion and attracting new businesses.

Travel demand in Tulare County is determined through an assessment of current and future traffic estimates using field surveys and traffic counts, census data, local plans, land use trends and the Tulare County Regional Transportation Model.

Population

From 2004 to 2006 Tulare County Population has experienced positive 2.24% growth rate as displayed in Table 3-2. As of January 2006, the Department of Finance (DOF) estimates the County population to be 420,619 and the city populations as follows: City of Visalia 111,168, City of Porterville 45,220, City of Tulare 51,477, City of Dinuba 19,578, City of Lindsay 11,185, City of Exeter 10,634, City of Farmersville 10,416 and the City of Woodlake 7,305.

Funding

Transportation funding has traditionally come from federal and California State sources with some funding being generated locally for transportation improvements.

The passage of Measure R will add almost \$650 million over the 30 year life of the sales tax. A positive dedicated source of transportation funds will greatly aid in the delivery of needed projects.

Tulare County receives funds from the following sources: the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) through SB 45, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), congressional or senate legislation for farm to market funds, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds, State bond sources (Proposition 1b) and local developer impact fees.

Even with positive funding accomplishments, Tulare County funds will be insufficient to maintain the current circulation system as well as correct the deferred maintenance issue. The need includes capacity increasing projects as well as maintenance on the existing system. Funding continues to fall short of the needs in Tulare County. However, the agencies in Tulare County have managed to keep the system together with the current funding levels, but are losing ground each year as inflation grows and funding stays constant.

Measure R, State bonds and STIP augmentation funding will assist the local agencies in meeting the transportation needs of the residents.

Projections

Assuming the population continues to grow and the traffic demand continues to increase along with population, improvements on the regional circulation system must be addressed. Unfortunately, not all needs will receive the attention necessary for the

improvements due to funding constraints. While not meeting all needs, Measure R will help alleviate the financial strain on the Regional Road System in Tulare County.

NEEDS AND SCENARIOS

Transportation needs are derived from congestion and circulation conditions that result from development, population growth and roadway characteristics. The County's continual growth has contributed to the need to improve streets, highways, and inter-city transit.

Regional transportation needs for the County have been defined based upon the following programs:

- Tulare County Regional Transportation Model (TP+/Viper);
- State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);
- The 2007 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and Federal TIP (FTIP); and
- Transit Development Plans (TDPs).

The Needs & Scenario element provides a summary of existing and future conditions on the Tulare County transportation system. The analysis is intended to establish a rational process to meet future travel needs. The Element examines the long-term effects on roadway capacities by projecting future traffic levels and improvements that result in increasing traffic volumes. The Element does not address maintenance deficiencies.

FORECASTING

Forecasting is a vital part of planning for future road and transportation improvements that will meet the anticipated deficiencies in the transportation system. Population, households, income, employment and land use are key ingredients in determining future impacts on the circulation system.

Population

Table 3-4.1 displays the population projections for Tulare County and its cities. The future horizon year estimates were developed based on the DOF County Population projections for 2006-2030 and previous transportation model inputs, including the Tulare County General Plan assumptions and trends in population, housing and relationships. All future interim year assumptions are estimated using trend lines associated with DOF's population estimates.

Households

In Table 3-4.2 the 2006 total housing units were developed using official state estimates for January 1, 2006. The data is available by city for single and multiple family units. Tulare County Association of Governments assumed a straight-line growth factor between the 2006 Transportation Model and projections obtained by Woods & Poole data. Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. is a nationally recognized firm that specializes in projections.

Employment

In Table 3-4.3 the 2006 total employed projections were developed using official state estimates for January 1, 2003. The data is available by city for single and multiple family units. Tulare County Association of Governments assumed a straight-line growth factor between the 2006 Transportation Model and projections obtained by Woods & Poole data.

Income

Table 3-4.4 displays the household income projections for Tulare County. The income projections were established by a Woods & Poole database that contains projections out to 2030. The comprehensive database includes detailed population data by

age, sex, and race; employment and earnings by major industry; personal income by source of income; retail sales by kind of business; and data on the number of households, their size, and their income. Woods & Poole developed the regional model that produces the projection component of the database.

Land Use

The predominant land use in the County is agricultural. Exceptions include urban areas and smaller communities that have residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and public facilities. With growth and intensification of land uses in the cities and County, street and highway improvements, as well as public transit expansion must be implemented to accommodate trips generated by proposed developments. All future trip forecasts have been based upon the most recently adopted land use elements of each city and the County.

Traffic (build vs. no build)

Figures 3-4 and 3-5 identify roadway segments that are considered to be at capacity with LOS D, E and F in the rural areas and E and F in the urban areas for 2006. Figure 3-9 displays regional roads at capacity with no improvements being built and Figure 3-10 displays regional roads at capacity with improvements being built. The Tulare County Regional Transportation Model identified these segments.

Environmental Justice

To address the evaluation of environmental justice issues, Table 3-6 includes specific performance measures that were considered as TCAG evaluated all capacity-increasing projects proposed by the local agencies. The performance measure insures that the issue of environmental justice is considered as projects are nominated for inclusion in the RTP. Once a project is included in the financially-constrained project listing, projects will meet the needs of all County residents and will be further evaluated as additional planning, programming and implementation phases are initiated.

ALTERNATIVES

The RTP evaluates each project based on need, safety, level of service, cost and environmental factors. TCAG currently uses the criteria in Table 3-5 as a guideline in selecting STIP projects that will use the limited amount of Regional Improvement Program (RIP) funds available to Tulare County. TCAG will be under less financial stress based on the passage of Measure R, the STIP augmentation and the State bond passage in November 2006. Figures 3-9 and 3-10 illustrate the projects that will be developed under different scenarios.

COST CONSIDERATION

The 2007 RTP is a financially constrained document. All projects listed in the RTP are fundable during the scope of the Plan with exception of the unconstrained projects listed in Tables 3-12 and 3-15. TCAG anticipates there will be approximately \$650 million available in STIP funds. Developer impact fee programs or other local funding sources will likely generate \$150 million in revenue. Measure R is expected to generate over \$650 million, the State bond package will secure \$170 million (\$26 million in CMIA (Corridor

Mobility Investment Account) for SR 198 and \$154 for SR 99) and the STIP augmentation also boosts TCAG spending power over the next 25 years.

Member agencies submitted a list of other desired projects to receive future federal and state funding totaling approximately \$450 million. There is approximately \$135 million available to Transit, \$150 million available in CMAQ for Air Quality improvements, \$14 million available for Transportation Enhancements and a \$25 million open for statewide competition available for bicycle improvements (See Table 4-14 for funding).

SOCIAL IMPACTS

The social impacts from not building and improving the regional road system are lower levels of service and more roads at capacity. Impacts from no improvements also include road deterioration, more deferred maintenance and road surface failure. The impacts affect the mentality of the residents living and traversing Tulare County. Not improving the roads impacts residents who must cope with the already poor condition of roads in the rural areas, and residents who live in the cities will have to cope with longer travel times, increased congestion, and poorer air quality. The cost of fuel affects everyone from businesses to residents which leads to more general financial frustration. The lack of gas tax funds that do go to road improvements, along with the State's General Fund problems causes more dissatisfaction to the drivers and taxpayers of Tulare County. With over 3000 miles of rural roads that are over \$600 million behind in road maintenance, Tulare County faces a unique struggle to maintain the current system as well as to address future congestion.

Other social impacts that may result from poor transportation planning include the development over historical landmarks, Indian burial grounds or camps, and demolishing current homes in the right of ways of new

developments. Every aspect of increasing the highway or road process is thoroughly weighted to minimize impacts on the environment or sacred grounds.

RTP ANALYSIS

To assess highway and arterial needs, TCAG developed a process to evaluate candidate capacity-increasing projects considering performance-based measures and level of service (LOS) analysis.

Project Rankings

According to the RTP Guidelines, each RTP agency (RTPA) should define a set of “program level” transportation system performance measures that reflect the goals and objectives adopted in the RTP. The program level performance measures in the RTP set the context for judging the effectiveness of the RTIP, as a program, in furthering the goals and objectives of the RTP, while the STIP Guidelines address performance measurements of specific projects.

The RTIP is a listing of all transportation projects proposed over a five year period for the Region. The projects include highway improvements, transit, rail and bus facilities, signal synchronization, intersection improvements, freeway ramps, etc. The locally prioritized lists of projects are forwarded to TCAG for review, and TCAG develops the RTIP list of projects based on consistency with the RTP, financial constraint, and the ability to make a conformity determination.

Conformity

TCAG is required to make findings of air quality conformity for both the RTP and the FTIP before the documents are approved by federal agencies.

Regional Transportation Monitoring

Transportation planning for the region requires continually improved and updated information on the condition and utilization of the transportation system.

Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS)

HPMS is used as a transportation monitoring and management tool to determine the allocation of Federal Aid Funds, to assist in setting policies, and to forecast future transportation needs as it analyzes the transportation system’s length, condition, and performance.

Triennial Performance Audit for Transit

State law requires that TCAG designate an independent entity to make a performance audit of its transit activities and the activities of each transit provider to whom TCAG allocates funds. The audit is conducted every three years and must evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of the operation for which the audit is being conducted. TCAG must certify with the Director of the State Department of Transportation that the required audit has been completed in order to receive State transit funds.

Benchmarking

As the designated RTPA, TCAG is required to prepare the RTP using performance based measures that will help decision makers better analyze transportation options and trade-offs.

Environmental Issues

Aesthetics

The portion of Tulare County that is most relevant to the RTP is relatively flat within the Valley region. The Valley area is where the vast majority of the population and road system exists, are met in the east by foothill and mountain ranges and include the Cities of Dinuba, Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, Porterville, Tulare, Visalia, and Woodlake. The aesthetic quality of the County has been affected by transportation for some time. As a result, the existing and planned multimodal transportation system is not considered to have a significant impact on the aesthetic quality in Tulare County.

Agricultural Resources

Located in the world's richest agricultural region, Tulare County is ranked as the second most productive in annual crop values of any county in the world. Tulare also is the number one milk-processing county. Agriculture is one of the primary industries in the County, with much of the level and moderately sloping land used for the production of agricultural crops. Tulare County's agricultural production yields 250 products annually, the top annual products being milk and dairy products, walnuts, almonds, navels and valencia oranges, grapes, peaches, and cattle, are valued at over \$4.3 billion annually.

Air Quality

Tulare County is in the California Air Resources Board-designated San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB). The air basin is an extreme non-attainment area for ozone and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size (PM_{2.5}). The air basin is an unclassified attainment area (federal) and attainment area (State) for carbon monoxide (CO).

Cultural Resources

The prehistoric human occupation of the area now known as Tulare County is evident as traces of existence have been found. There are numerous recorded archeological sites in the County, most of which are located in the foothill and mountain areas. Recorded prehistoric artifacts include village sites, campsites, bedrock milling stations, pictographs, petroglyphs, rock rings, sacred sites and resource gathering areas. Tulare County is home to a significant number of potentially significant historical sites.

Geology & Soils

The Valley is basically a flat, alluvial plain, containing rock and soil derived from the uplift and erosion of the nearby Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges Mountains. Soils and rock in the valley and foothill regions are generally dense and compact, and relatively safe from damage from earthquakes. The San Andreas Fault is the primary earthquake fault of concern for the San Joaquin Valley. The San Andreas Fault lies to the west of the Valley in the Coast Ranges and has produced several large earthquakes in historic times.

Public Services

Various federal, state and local agencies and private companies in Tulare County provide public services. Fire services in urban areas of the County are generally provided by local agency fire departments. Various fire districts, the County fire dept., and/or the U.S. Forest Service and the State Department of Forestry also provide fire suppression services to urban areas, as well as in rural areas of the County and/or in federal and State Park preserve and recreation areas.

Recreation

The eastern half of Tulare County is comprised primarily of public lands that include the Sequoia National Park, Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests, and Mineral King, Golden Trout, and Domelands Wilderness areas. Opportunities for all-season outdoor recreation include: hiking, water and snow skiing, fishing and boating.

Transportation & Traffic

Implementation of the 2007 RTP will result in improvements to existing regional transportation and circulation systems. RTP implementation to the street and highway network will assist in the improvement to airports, mass transportation services and facilities. Identification of additional bikeways and pedestrian improvements, and improved transportation systems that accommodate goods movement will provide region-wide benefits.

LINKAGE WITH VALLEY AIR QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

State Implementation Plan

For many years, the San Joaquin Valley has had bad air quality. An inversion layer sits atop the valley that creates poor ventilation and air stagnation. Other contributors to the deterioration of air quality include: ambient air from costal air basins; agricultural industry; industrial factors; travel characteristics of employees; and vehicle (and truck) trips through the Valley. All of these activities generate pollution. Concentrations of gaseous pollutants are largely generated by identified mobile and stationary sources.

Due to the Basin's light wind patterns and surrounding mountains, air quality problems occur throughout the year. Particulate matter pollution is a problem in winter months as is ozone in the summer.

These conditions, coupled with the continuing increase in population, congestion and existing agricultural production have led to significant air quality problems.

Major elements that contribute to the Valley's non-attainment of air quality standards include: Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), Reactive Organic Gases (ROG), Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x), Sulfur Oxides (SO_x), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ozone (O₃), and Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀).

Particulate matter can be traced to agricultural activities, planned and unplanned fires, and unpaved and entrained road dust (e.g. car brakes and side road dust). Fuel combustion, solvent use, industrial processes, waste burning, petroleum process, landfills, and pesticides generate significant levels of ROG and NO_x that react in the presence of sunlight to create ozone. Ozone and Particulate Matter are two of the major air pollutants found in the Valley.

Federal and State Legislation

Federal legislation requires that the RTP integrate transportation and air quality during the planning process. The 1990 California Clean Air Act (CCAA) amendment requires the stipulations in order to receive federal funding. Failure to meet Federal and State requirements of the CAAA may result in disciplinary actions.

ACTION ELEMENT OVERVIEW

The circulation system in Tulare County plays a significant role in the economy. As a rural region, Tulare County is dependent on local highways, streets, and roads to meet basic transportation needs. Consumers outside of the region that are dependent on the San Joaquin Valley for agricultural goods may have trouble receiving goods if the road network is not maintained. In order to maintain a deteriorating circulation

system, Tulare County, and the cities have implemented programs to reduce congestion, improve efficiency and obtain dedicated funds.

The objective of the highway, streets, and roads section is to identify a regional circulation system. Once the system is determined, the funding to maintain and improve these roadways is identified. The funds available are insufficient to address every regional roadway. In order to provide a balance and maintain an efficient circulation system, a prioritized project list is developed.

Aviation is also available as an option in Tulare County's overall transportation system. In the Cities of Visalia, Porterville, and Tulare, local transit systems provide public access to the airports. The Visalia Municipal Airport, the largest in the County, has provided commercial service to Seattle, Las Vegas, Fresno and Los Angeles. All three airports have services including charters, fixed base operations, avionics, and general aviation.

Other modes of transportation in Tulare County are classified as Non-Motorized transportation. Non-Motorized transportation includes pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities. In Tulare County's populated centers, bicycle commuting is a viable transportation alternative.

Goods movement throughout Tulare County is also an important aspect of the region's circulation system and economic vitality. Goods are moved through the region by both rail and trucks. The addition of rail, bicycle facilities, and existing mass transit will reduce congestion and improve air quality throughout the County.

Long Range Plan

Currently, the Long Range Plan for Tulare County includes \$221 million in locally funded projects and almost \$1.6 billion in federally funded STIP projects. Assuming the financial environment remains consistent these funds will go toward street, roads, and highway improvements over the next 20 years (2030).

Corridor Preservation

The analysis of the regional circulation system in the 2007 RTP emphasizes person movements through transportation corridors. Corridors may be thought of in terms of the number of people or tonnage of freight moved in any particular direction, regardless of the facility.

In Tulare County major travel corridors often closely mirror regionally significant roadways.

Previous Plan Accomplishments

Since the inception of the Regional Transportation Plan, Tulare County has seen several Transportation Projects come to fruition. This is the 16th Regional Transportation Plan prepared by TCAG.

Implementation

TCAG continues to implement the RTP and administer federal finances to the member agencies. Measure R will aid in the implementation and funding of transportation projects. The RTP is a document designed to target future projects and eventually build those projects. The RTP is a guideline to prioritize the list of fundable projects that Tulare County can anticipate to build in the next 10 to 20 years. Assuming financial conditions, the 2006 STIP Augmentation and Measure R; the project listed in the RTP will be built over the next 10 to 20 years.

Air Quality

The Air Quality in the Central Valley remains a top concern for Valley residents. As a severe non-attainment area for ozone and particulate matter, several measures will be placed on local agencies and communities for improving the reduction of emission in transportation, agricultural usage, fireplaces and other activities. Tulare County has had several days (20 to 30) of bad air that exceeded the State and Federal level. The standards are set by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SVAPCD) and must be in compliance during the scope of the RTP. TCAG staff works with all agencies in the County to best address these issues. The Reasonable Alternative Control Measures (RACMs) and Best Alternative Control Measures (BACMs) are being encouraged. TCAG also has encouraged the use of Hybrid vehicles, zero emission vehicles, alternative fueled vehicles and the replacement of Heavy Duty Diesel motors with newer cleaner models.

However, the Air Quality is a regional problem that needs the attention of the 8 San Joaquin Valley counties. Work must be done to conform and meet the State and Federal Clean Air Act requirements. See the State Implementation Plan on page 3-45 for a thorough discussion on Air Quality and measures being taken by Tulare County.

Land Use

Land use in Tulare County is predominately agriculture, and the County is committed to retaining the rich agricultural land. The foothill and mountain regions are controlled predominantly by the State and federal governments. However, as population increases, so does the demand for new housing, retail and commercial space. Agricultural land around the cities is being converted into residential space. Housing, land, employment and economics are balanced to minimize the amount of agricultural land

taken by development. Economic principles tend to take precedence over the conservation of land.

Environmental Issues & Impacts

The RTP has projects, which are planned for development within the scope of the Plan (2030) and will have a certified Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to determine the significant impacts to the environment. The CEQA Guidelines recommend tools for determining the potential for significant environmental effects including:

- *Initial Study checklist [(see the Notice of Preparation (NOP) – Appendix A)];*
- *CEQA Mandatory Findings of Significance (see the NOP, Appendix A);*
- *consultation with other agencies; and*
- *agency thresholds of significance.*

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) determined that a Programmatic EIR is required for the Tulare County 2007 RTP because the Plan would result in significant environmental impacts. The NOP concluded that adoption of the RTP would result in less than significant impacts. See Environmental Impact Report Appendix under separate cover.

New Technologies

TCAG has encouraged the use and replacement of new efficient heavy duty diesel motors in public vehicles and fleets as well as some private. As Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) infrastructure becomes available to the consumer, more CNG use is expected. The Cities of Tulare, Visalia, Dinuba, Porterville and the County currently have or are building CNG refueling facilities. Several transit agencies use CNG to power transit buses,

school buses, fleet vehicles and utility vehicles. Visalia is currently using electric trolleys in the Downtown area that as a free service to downtown patrons and a link to shopping in the area.

Emergency Preparedness

Tulare County has in place the emergency plan to cope with natural disasters that are statewide or happen locally. The County Fire Department and local stationed California Department of Forestry (CDF) are well prepared to fight fires locally as well as statewide. The United States Forest Service (USFS) is in charge of fires that happen in the national parks and Tulare County assists with the fire management process as needed.

Institutional and Legislative Actions

Since the mid 1970s, with the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 69 State law has required the preparation of Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) to address transportation issues and assist local and state decision makers in shaping California's transportation infrastructure.

Senate Bill (SB) 45, signed into law by Governor Wilson in October 1997, made significant changes in the formula for funding State and local projects. AB 1012, approved October 7, 1999, amended SB 45 in funding project delivery.

The current federal transportation reauthorization bill, the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed by President Bush in 2005 and contains funding for a broad range of federal transportation programs through 2009. SAFETEA-LU replaced the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21), which expired in 2003.

One feature of SAFETEA-LU, which has received substantial interest, is the large number of “earmark” projects within the bill. Over 3,000 earmark projects are contained in

SAFETEA-LU, including funding for improving State Route 99 and Farm to Market roads in Tulare County.

Evaluation

Evaluating each project that is considered in the RTP is done through several processes. TCAG staff takes recommended projects and evaluates each one based on adopted guidelines. TCAG Staff reports to the TCAG Board with recommendations and evaluations about Federal Transit Administration funds. Projects are re-evaluated each time the RTP is updated or new projects are identified. The RTP is a plan that determines which projects are eligible for funding, identifies project parameters and schedules an approximate time of construction within the 20 year horizon.

Resource Sharing

Tulare County has partnered with many jurisdictions and agencies in the past. TCAG has partnered on air quality issues, project development, long range planning and other efforts. Past improvements include the cross-valley rail (track upgrade) improvements. Tulare County is in the process of developing the Blueprint Planning Process that consolidates long range planning concerns throughout the Valley.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Tulare County has long been known for affordable housing opportunities. Attraction of the affordable housing is expected to remain the source for much of the County's future population growth. As a result, any major increase in employment within the County will cause increased demands in the housing market.

Considering increased population, expansion of industry and residency throughout the County, the need for compact mixed-use developments, ridesharing and

alternative commuting modes become an issue.

Additional population concentrations of residential, commercial and industrial development will result in more automobiles within the urban areas, more auto emissions and deterioration of ambient air quality. Additional industrial and commercial development may result with increased emissions at and near such sites.

Implementation Strategies

Implementing the 2007 RTP is done incrementally through the development of short range programs. The programs include the 2007 FTIP, 2007 RTIP and FTA requirements for transit agencies. All projects must comply with legislative requirements and must also be included in the appropriate documents in order for the project to receive federal and/or state funding.

Transportation Demand Management

TDM consists of managing behavior regarding how, when and where people travel. TDM strategies are designed to reduce vehicular trips during peak hours by shifting trips to other modes of transportation and reduce trips by providing jobs and housing balance.

Air Quality

Tulare County conforms to all air quality requirements set by the SJVAPCD and the California Clean Air Act as well as the Federal Clean Air Act. For a detailed description on air quality conformity refer to Appendix D – Air Quality Conformity Findings.

Transportation System Management

TSM is designed to identify short range, low cost capital projects that improve operational efficiency of existing infrastructure. TSMs are an important tool

endorsed by the SJVAPCD and state to meet air quality standards and congestion management levels-of-service.

Land Use

Historically, land use in Tulare County has been predominantly agricultural. The agriculture industry, which includes dairies, produce, citrus and livestock, continues to be Tulare County's most intensive land use. The remaining areas are urban communities that include public facilities, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial land uses. As pressures for growth and development of land uses within city and community urban boundaries intensifies, implementation of planned street and highway improvements are imperative to accommodate increased trips generated by development.

New Technology

TCAG member agencies have implemented new technology that includes Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling stations, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and hybrid vehicle purchases. The Cities of Tulare, Visalia, Dinuba, Porterville, Farmersville and the County have constructed or will construct CNG fueling stations and are currently operating the transit fleets with CNG as well as some city vehicles. The Cities of Porterville and Dinuba are currently in the process of enlarging CNG fueling stations to power transit fleets and some city vehicles. The City of Visalia is currently using electric trolleys in the Downtown area. As technology advances and become affordable, TCAG and the member agencies will take advantage of the benefits that come from improving the air quality.

ACTIONS BY MODE

The following modes are the actions that are being implemented by Tulare County and the Cities to improve the transportation on the Regional Road System. The section looks at Highways, Streets, and Roads, Mass

Transit, Non-Motorized, (Bicycle and Pedestrian) Rail, Aviation and Goods Movement.

Highways Streets and Roads

The purpose of the highway, streets and roads section is to identify the existing regional circulation system and determine both feasible short-term and long-range improvements. Tulare County's planned circulation system consists of an extensive network of regional streets and roads, local streets and State Highways. The system is designed to provide an adequate LOS that satisfies the transportation needs of County residents. However, Tulare County has experienced a large increase in population and is beginning to outgrow portions of the circulation system. The need for major improvements to the State Highways, streets and roads network is an important issue.

The existing State Highway system was completed in the 1950s and 60s. The average design life of a State Highway is approximately 20 years and many Tulare County highways were constructed 50 years ago. The agricultural and commercial industries continue to utilize the circulation system to get products to market. With industry intensification and other development, many facilities are beginning to show structural fatigue (e.g., surface cracks, potholes, and broken pavement).

Public Transportation

Public transportation provides an economical and efficient alternative for getting people to work, school and other chosen destinations.

In Tulare County, buses are the primary mode of public transportation. Public transportation also takes the form of shared-ride taxi, automobile and vanpools; dial-a-ride, and specialized handicapped accessible services.

In Tulare County, social service transportation is provided by the following: local transit agencies, demand responsive operators and city/county special programs for senior citizens, mental health organizations and disabled citizens programs. These programs are funded and subsidized through State and federal grants, Local Transportation Funds (LTF), State Transit Assistance Funds (STAF), and local transportation sales tax revenues.

Tulare County Area Transit

TCAT has been providing rural route service between various cities and towns in Tulare County since 1981. Recently, Tulare County retained *MV Transportation* to provide all of its transit services, which includes fixed route and demand responsive services for inter-city and intra-city service in many small communities throughout the County.

TCAT connects with Dinuba Transit, Visalia City Coach, Tulare Transit Express, Porterville COLT (City Operated Local Transit), Orange Belt and Greyhound bus; TCAT is the most extensive transit system in Tulare County.

City of Visalia

Visalia City Coach (VCC), operated by *MV Transportation*, provides both fixed route and demand response service within the Visalia Urbanized Area. VCC began serving Visalia in 1981 and is now providing service for over 111,168 residents. The City of Visalia also operates a dial-a-ride service that began in February 1981. The dial-a-ride system is available to senior citizens and the physically disabled who need basic transportation services to the doctor, shopping, and other destinations.

In 1998, VCC introduced the Downtown Trolley which services the downtown business district with a free transit shuttle. The Downtown Trolley has proven a

real asset to downtown Visalia by allowing people to access downtown businesses without parking an automobile.

In an effort to make transit services even more attractive to riders in Visalia and the surrounding areas, the City has constructed the Downtown Transit Center. The modern, state-of-the-art center serves as a central hub for VCC and other regional services connecting with VCC. The City of Visalia is also doing its part in improving air quality by upgrading their transit fleet with modern CNG buses and in constructing a new CNG fueling station.

City of Tulare

The City of Tulare currently operates a fixed route system, the Tulare Transit Express (TTE), and a dial-a-ride service called Dial-a-Ride Tulare (DART). DART began operations in 1980 while TTE began service in December of 1989. Currently, TTE operates six fixed bus routes that provide service Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

City of Porterville

The City of Porterville transit system, know as the City Operated Local Transit (COLT), began operating a demand responsive service in 1981. The system presently provides fixed route and demand-response service to Porterville and the surrounding urban areas. Tulare County is responsible for reimbursing Porterville for the portion of service provided in the surrounding County communities of Strathmore and Springville. In 2003, Porterville also opened a new transit center. The transit center now serves as the transfer hub for all their buses and minivans, in addition the Tulare County.

City of Dinuba

Public transit service in the City of Dinuba and the adjacent areas is provided through a dial-a-ride system and one fixed

route. The City also operates a free trolley service in the downtown area, with stops at the local Wal-Mart and K-Mart stores. *MV Transportation* provides all of these services under contract with the City.

The City of Dinuba recently upgraded the transit fleet with the addition of two new CNG vehicles and has long range plans for fleet conversion. Dinuba Transit also contracts with Tulare County to provide service outside Dinuba city limits to County residents who live within their service area.

Cities of Exeter and Farmersville

The City of Exeter transit system began in June 1992 as a fixed route service serving over 10,634 residents within the City's urban boundary. Currently, the City of Exeter operates a dial-a-ride service providing transit to local residents on a demand responsive basis.

In 2004 the City of Exeter and City Farmersville became part of the Urbanized Area of Visalia, and VCC began operating fixed route service between the three communities.

City of Woodlake

The City of Woodlake transit system began service in September 1999. Transit service operates on a demand-response service in the community of about 7,305 residents. The buses are fully serviced, fueled and maintained by the City.

Tule River Indian Tribe

The Tule River Indian Tribe provides transit for casino employees and Indian healthcare services for Tule River tribal members and other tribal communities.

Kings Area Rural Transit

Kings Area Rural Transit provides a farmworker vanpool program which extends into Tulare County and is conducting the Southern San Joaquin Valley Rural Vanpool & Rideshare Assessment.

Unmet Transit Needs Process

Every March TCAG holds an "unmet transit needs" hearing as required by the California Transportation Development Act (TDA). If any "unmet transit needs" are found to be reasonable to meet by the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) they must be addressed before Local Transportation Fund (LTF) money can be used for streets and roads improvements. If an "unmet transit need" is found to be unreasonable to meet, it is noted and documented for possible future consideration.

Non-Motorized Transportation

With the advent of programs such as Air Quality Attainment and Transportation Demand Management; transportation planning agencies are taking a detailed look at bicycling as an alternate form of transportation. In the populated areas of Tulare County, bicycles are a particularly viable mode of transportation. Bicyclists enjoy the flat topography and the moderate climate of the area.

One program that has worked successfully in Tulare County is the placement of bike racks on transit buses. This creates an interface between bicycles and transit that broadens the options for commuters to leave their cars at home. Bicycle racks and lockers conveniently located near transit stops make the interface more attractive. The County of

Tulare, Tulare Transit Express, Visalia City Coach and Porterville Transit are all equipped with bicycle racks.

Rail

There are three railroad companies that provide freight service within Tulare County: Union Pacific (UP), Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BN&SF) and the San Joaquin Valley Railroad (SJVRR). The railroads connect the County to all-major west coast markets and destinations. There are rail service spurs and freight terminals throughout the County that serve specific industries.

Light Rail

In 2005, TCAG conducted a light rail feasibility study that looked at service between Visalia and Tulare. The study collected information on preferred routes, cost estimates and future population intensities. The feasibility concluded that residential and commercial densities near the rail line would need to be increased (zoning amendments) to support the cost. Densities and interest will be monitored in the future to determine if a light rail system is feasible.

Passenger Rail Project Priorities

The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) is concerned with the preservation of and continued use of existing rail lines in the region. The San Joaquin Valley Railroad expressed interest in improving a freight rail system to serve the Cities of Visalia, Hanford, Lemoore and Huron. TCAG programmed one million dollars of CMAQ funding to upgrade the existing rails. A second phase would include passenger rail service between the Cities of Huron, Lemoore, Hanford, Visalia, Exeter, Lindsay and Porterville. The route would serve as a link to the Amtrak station in Hanford and could also serve as a link to a high-speed rail station, either in Visalia or Hanford.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority has proposed high-speed train service for intercity travel in California between the major metropolitan centers of San Francisco, San Jose and Sacramento in the north. The service will run through the Central Valley to Los Angeles and San Diego in the south. The system is proposing exclusive tracks for most of the route, alignments will be within or adjacent to existing rail or highway right-of-way and new upgraded stations with connections to local transit routes.

Aviation

Tulare County’s airport system can be subdivided into three components: publicly-owned and operated airports; privately owned airports open to public general aviation use; and private “special use” airfields and airstrips. There are six public airports in operation Countywide. The remaining airstrips that presently exist throughout the County are used for agricultural aviation activities. Out of the airports mentioned above, only Visalia Municipal Airport has regularly scheduled commercial service.

Goods Movement

Planning for rail and goods movement in Tulare County is driven by the free enterprise system. A list of major generators of goods movement in the region include agriculture, but increasingly, a diversified range of raw materials and products are also generating trips on the network and rail system. In an agriculturally based economy, much of the goods movement would be seasonal; in a diversified economy, the flow of goods is year round. The Caltrans report entitled “Truck Kilometers of Travel on the California Highway System 1988-2003” (July 2005) shows truck percentage of total vehicle kilometers traveled:

- SR-63----- 4.1% to 14.5%

- SR-65-----10.0% to 17.6%
- SR-99-----24.0% to 27.0%
- SR-198-----6.0% to 18.0%

The use of rail for goods movement is growing as the number of small rail operators improves efficiency and supply. TCAG supports the use of rail as a measure to alleviate conditions resulting from truck transport. The San Joaquin Valley Railroad (SJVRR) is one rail operator that is serving rail transport needs in the region. SJVRR carries a diversified range of goods including citrus, recycled glass, fertilizer, paper products, lumber and many other products. Train movements are most efficient with durable goods and long distance travel. The service benefits the region by reducing congestion, helping to reduce air pollution and making safe, efficient use of the transportation corridors.

Pass Through Movements

In Tulare County, the corridor that is most impacted by pass through movements is the SR-99 corridor which includes two railroads. Tulare County products are being transported between the Bay Area (including Sacramento) to the Los Angeles and San Diego areas. The movements have a significant impact on local facilities in the form of reduced pavement life, air quality degradation, increased congestion and reduced safety.

FINANCIAL ELEMENT

The purpose of the Financial Element is to provide an assumption of the cost and revenues necessary to implement the RTP. The assumptions include revenue estimates for specific governmental funding programs, local contributions, license and fuel taxes, and development fees. Tulare County recently passed a local sales tax for transportation purposes. Measure R was a great boost for transportation funding within the county. In 2006, California voters approved a STIP Augmentation and a Bond Package that will bring over \$200 million for improvements to SR-99 (\$154 million in Tulare County and SR-198 (\$26 million in Tulare County) widening. The majority of available funds generated from federal and state gas taxes are distributed in a variety of grants and acts. The following provides a summary of funding sources:

State Funding Sources

a.) *State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP):*

The STIP is the document that programs State and federal gas tax funding for highway and commuter rail projects. State law requires the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to adopt a STIP, which allocates anticipated State and federal funding to projects over a given period. Funding is allocated through Senate Bill 45 (SB 45) which distributes funds to Interregional Improvement Programs (IIP) and Regional Improvement Programs (RIP). STIP funds may also be used for Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects.

b.) *State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP):*

The SHOPP program is operated by Caltrans and is taken directly off the top of

STIP funds. Funds are used to maintain existing facilities, make operational improvements (including ITS technologies) and eliminate safety hazards. SHOPP projects are not to be capacity increasing.

c.) *AB 2766 Program:*

AB 2766 funds are available each year through the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). It includes the Reduce Motor Vehicle Emissions (REMOVE) program. Proposals are submitted to the SJVAPCD for approval and funding of State vehicle registration fee money designated for clean air projects and TCMs.

d.) *AB 2928 Program*

California State gas and sales tax revenues were reverted back to the transportation infrastructure in California through AB 2928 (August 2000) under the Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP). TCRP funds were used to purchase right of way (\$15 million) for the SR 198 expansion.

e.) *State Bond Initiation Package:*

On November 7, 2006, the State of California passed Proposition 1B. Proposition 1B includes \$19.9 billion in future bonds for transportation. Proposition 1B contain various categories or parts. One of the categories or fund types is the Corridor Mobility Investment Account (CMIA). Proposition 1B contains language that requires the CTC to adopt the first CMIA program of projects by March 1, 2007. Candidate projects in order to compete should be listed as a corridor of statewide significance and the project must be able to go to construction by December 31, 2012. For Tulare County that includes a portion of SR-99 which will receive \$154 million (Prosperity to Goshen) and SR-

198 which was voted by the CTC in February 2007 to be funded at \$26 million for Tulare County (Hanford to SR-99).

Federal Funding Sources

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides grant funding for improvements in rural and urban transit systems. The FTA funds are as follows:

- a.) *Section 5310 funds:*
Section 5310 funds provides a grant program to States for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and disabled. Service is provided when other transit is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting needs. Funds are apportioned based on each State's share of population for these groups of people.
- b.) *Section 5307 funds:*
FTA 5307 resources are available to urbanized areas for transit capital and operating assistance as well as for transportation related planning. An urbanized area is an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more as determined by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.
- c.) *Section 5311 funds:*
Section 5311 funding to states is for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas of less than 50,000 populations. 5311 funds are apportioned in proportion to each State's non-urbanized population. Funding may be used for capital, operating, State administration, and project administration expenses. Operating projects require a 50% local match. Projects that meet the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or federal CAA are funded locally on a

90%-10% basis, subject to the Secretary's discretion.

- d.) *Section 5311(i) funds:*
The Section 5311(i) program provides capital, planning, bus shelters, joint-use depots, demonstration projects and coordination of rural connections between small transit operations and intercity bus carriers. The funds are competitive and have the same matching criteria as Section 5311.

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

SAFETEA-LU, the new federal transportation reauthorization bill, was signed by President Bush in 2005 and replaced the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) which expired in 2003. SAFETEA-LU provides continued funding for highways, highway safety, and mass transportation projects through 2009.

Annual Listing of Projects of Projects

The Annual Listing of projects was submitted in early 2007. A list will continue to be provided annually that includes obligated bike/pedestrian projects. As an on-going process, TCAG will review with state and public transportation operators on ways to improve the annual process.

Transportation Safety

The 2007 RTP goals and objectives will be reviewed and updated to reflect the importance of transportation safety.

Transit security

In 2001, the Tulare County Association of Governments established a Regional Transit Agency forum that meets on a bi-monthly basis (or more as needed). One of the goals is to improve coordination between transit agencies. Another goal is to provide ideas for each agency on improvement and security.

Fiscal Constraint

The 2007 RTP includes the use of a revised template for revenues and expenditures as desired by FHWA. Revenues and costs associated with maintenance and operations has been reflected in the financial constraint. The operations costs were based on information provided by our member agencies.

Environmental Mitigation Activities

Environmental mitigation activities are part of the 2007 RTP (and prior RTPs) included in the goals and policies section. The EIR will include a section related to the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act of 1969) process. The RTP includes maps related to inventories in the Action Element.

Public Consultation and Cooperation

In August 2006, TCAG Staff met with FHWA as part of a major RTP workshop. At the meeting, TCAG was directed that the adoption of a new public participation policy at the end of the 2007 RTP process would be acceptable for SAEFTEA-LU compliance as long as the policy was applied through the development of the 2007 RTP. Subsequent to the meeting, FHWA changed the opinion and required new adopted procedures prior to initiating the RTP process. This is simply

not achievable. TCAG will proceed with adopting a new Participation Plan as a result of the RTP process and welcome assistance by FHWA.

2007 RTP Outreach Activities

In preparation for the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan extensive outreach was conducted prior to the creation of the draft RTP. Surveys were provided to citizens and over 1,000 preliminary comments were received. In addition, TCAG regularly has a booth at the County Fair. Following the fair, a number of public outreach presentations occur to service clubs, member agencies, professional groups, cities, and any agency willing to hear a presentation on the RTP.

Measure R

While the Sales tax promotion was not a task completed by TCAG or any other government agency, the passage of the sales tax was due to the foundation efforts by TCAG to provide a comprehensive Expenditure Plan that the voters supported. The Expenditure Plan provided an outline of the major (regionally significant) projects (all modes of travel) that would be funded over the next thirty years using State, federal, and Measure R funds. The Expenditure plan includes maintenance, bikes, pedestrian improvements, transit and environmental mitigation.

Nothing could demonstrate more the public understanding of the 2007 Tulare County Regional Transportation Plan than the fact that over 45,000 people (67%) voted for the sales tax. This demonstrates support of the thirty-year vision for Tulare County.

Tribal Consultation

TCAG continues consultation efforts with the Tule River Indian Reservation in Tulare County. We strive to have at least one formal consultation a year and other staff-level or informal meetings as needed. A member of the Tule River Indian Reservation has been on the TCAG Technical Advisory Committee since 2001. Further, TCAG is one of only a few MPOs in the state that has a MOU with a Tribe to develop and construct a State funded transportation safety project. This safety project, for Reservation Rd, will be completed by fall 2007.

Resource Agencies

As stated previously, TCAG has already been involving the resource agencies in transportation planning for over ten years. The Environmental Advisory Committee includes the following agencies: Sequoia National Park, Irrigation Districts, Sierra Los Tulares Land Trust, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Tulare County Redevelopment Agency, County of Tulare, County of Tulare Parks Department, Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, Bureau of Land Management, and Caltrans.

The Environmental Advisory Committee was consulted in January 2007, prior to the release of the 2007 RTP. Further, the Environmental Advisory Committee provided verbal comments on the 2007 RTP Policy Section.

The final 2007 RTP will include an expanded list of agencies, organizations, and stakeholders contacted as part of the 2007 RTP process. The new public Participation Plan will include updated groupings for future outreach activities.

Visual techniques

Large color maps (as appropriate with topography) are used to illustrate the RTP. A separate map is used for each mode of travel. For larger, urban areas separate maps are developed for each city. As with the 2004 RTP, many of the exhibits in the *final* RTP are in color with GIS layers showing topography and waterways. The use of PowerPoint occurs at most if not all of the public presentations. Finally, the RTP (draft and final) is posted on the TCAG website.

Public Transit Element

TCAG will select a consultant to prepare the 2007 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan at the March 19, 2007 TCAG Board meeting. The plan will not be completed prior to the adoption of the 2007 RTP. TCAG plans to adopt the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan as a “stand alone” document and incorporate it into the next RTP update.

List of Agencies contacted

Congestion Management

While TCAG does not qualify as a Transportation Management Area (TMA), the RTP does contain important Congestion Management principles. First, TCAG conducts an annual monitoring program including both corridors and intersections. This monitoring program provides the guidance for short-term funding and has led to partnerships of projects. This year (2007) two regional signals were placed on the SR-198 corridor as a result of the monitoring program. The RTP also contains goals related to congestion.

Local Funding Sources

- State gas tax
- Transportation Development Act (TDA)
- Local Transportation Fund (LTF)
- State Transit Assistance Fund (STAF)
- Transportation Impact Fees
- Certificates of Participation
- Franchise Fees
- Local Sales Tax Revenues

LTF and STA programs are funded by a portion of State gasoline sales taxes and general sales tax revenues. Funds are available for transit improvements first and then for local streets and roads purposes. LTF funds are distributed to each agency based on population. LTF may be used for both transit and streets and roads purposes. However, the use of funds for streets and roads purposes requires that all unmet transit needs be addressed before any money can be expended. STA funds are allocated to the regions on the basis of operator revenues and must be used for transit purposes.

In 2006, Tulare County passed Measure R that will generate over \$650 million over 30 years that will be dedicated to transportation projects. The passage of

Measure R will ensure that Tulare County can meet the expectations of future demand and address deferred maintenance.

Projects

Tables 3-10, 11, and 12 address the Project Purpose and Need, Project Concept and Scope. Tables 3-13, 14, and 15 address the Action or Strategy and Anticipated Funding Source for each of the future short term and long term projects.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

TCAG held a series of public meetings designed to inform and generate feedback for various transportation needs from residents. TCAG participated in the Tulare County Fair operating a booth to educate the residents of Tulare County on Transportation Issues as well as gathering survey information for the RTP and Regional Valleywide Blueprint efforts. TCAG also hosted a Regional Blueprint public workshop in January 2007 to gather public input for housing needs, transportation needs, and quality of life issues concerning Air Quality and urban mobility and growth. TCAG went to several professional and resource clubs throughout the County talking about transportation and mobility for the future by promoting Measure R. TCAG was also the subject of several articles in the local newspapers discussing Measure R and the funding needed to improve mobility and transportation throughout Tulare County. Using published public notices the 2007 RTP was available to the public for comment and an initial public hearing was held during the April 16, 2007 TCAG Board meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The 2007 RTP Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates potential significant impacts that may result from the planning and implementing of the 2007 RTP. The review is consistent with the CEQA and NEPA guidelines. The 2007 RTP EIR focuses on those impacts that were found to be potentially significant on a regional, system-wide level as a result of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment and Impacts Checklist that were prepared.

VALLEYWIDE CHAPTER

The Valleywide Chapter provides a regional perspective to transportation planning in the San Joaquin Valley. The chapter addresses several regional issues including air quality, highways, streets, aviation, rail and goods movement. The chapter provides a regional view on issues. This is the fourth product of a cooperative effort pursuant to a memorandum of understanding signed by the participating agencies.