



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR THE KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2022 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the *State CEQA Guidelines* § 15087 (d), the Kern Council of Governments (COG), as the Lead Agency, has prepared a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) that identifies and evaluates the environmental impacts of the below-named Project.

1. PROJECT TITLE

2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) (State Clearinghouse # 2021050012)

2. PROJECT LOCATION

Kern COG is an association of city and county governments created to address regional transportation issues. Its member agencies include the County of Kern and the 11 incorporated cities within Kern County including Arvin, Bakersfield, California City, Delano, Maricopa, McFarland, Ridgecrest, Shafter, Taft, Tehachapi, and Wasco. The Kern COG Board of Directors is comprised of one elected representative from each of the 11 incorporated cities in Kern County, two Kern County Supervisors, and two ex-officio members representing Caltrans and the Golden Empire Transit District. **Figure 1, Map of the Kern COG Region**, illustrates the Kern COG region.

Kern COG is officially designated by federal law as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Kern County region. Additionally, under state law, Kern COG is designated as a Council of Governments (COG). As such, Kern COG has several formal authorities and responsibilities, including:

- Conducting continued, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning and programming processes that result in a Regional Transportation Plan and a Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) for the region. Together these documents serve as the legal basis for transportation decision making in the region.

- Preparing a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) in accordance with the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375), as part of the RTP/SCS. If the SCS does not meet greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets, Kern COG would prepare an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) which would show how the GHG emission targets would be achieved through alternative development patterns, infrastructure, or additional transportation measures or policies. It is Kern COG's intent to achieve the targets with the SCS.
- Preparing a Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) Plan in which Kern COG identifies areas within the region sufficient to house an 11-year projection of the regional housing need. Additionally, the RHNA allocates housing units within the region consistent with the development pattern included in the RTP/SCS. In September 2014, the California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) approved the 2013- 2023 RHNA Plan, and another Plan is currently underway for the 2023-2032 cycle.
- Conducting a comprehensive environmental planning process, including a Program EIR for the RTP/SCS and conducting inter-governmental review for all projects of regional significance.
- Determining, pursuant to the Federal Clean Air Act, the conformity of Kern COG RTPs and FTIPs to air quality planning requirements.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Pursuant to the federal FAST ACT authorization, Kern COG must prepare and update a transportation plan for its metropolitan planning area every four years to ensure that the plan adequately addresses future travel needs and is consistent with the federal Clean Air Act. Kern COG's last RTP/SCS was adopted in 2018. The 2022 RTP/SCS is the culmination of a multi-year effort with the intent to improve the balance between land use and transportation systems. Kern COG is required by federal law to develop an RTP/SCS that determines the needs of the transportation system and prioritizes proposed transportation projects. The RTP/SCS is also necessary to obtain and allocate federal funding for regional transportation projects. Kern COG does not implement individual projects in the RTP/SCS; these projects will be implemented by local jurisdictions and other agencies. FAST ACT modifies existing state and MPO transportation planning processes and requires discussion of the types of potential environmental mitigation activities. Consultation activities are a part of the 2022 RTP/SCS and PEIR development processes.

Regional Transportation Plan

The RTP/SCS defines the region's mobility needs and issues through 2045, sets forth an action plan of projects and programs to address the needs consistent with the adopted policies, and documents the financial resources needed to implement the plan. Regional transportation improvement projects proposed to be funded, in whole or in part, in the state transportation improvement program must be included in the adopted RTP/SCS.

The development of the 2022 RTP/SCS has already been initiated by Kern COG. The Kern COG board adopted the 2020-2050 regional growth forecast that provides a long-range projection for countywide total population. The population total is used to develop housing, employment, school enrollment, and income forecasts. The forecast is also used for local transportation and air quality planning, as well as for a variety of long-range planning activity, such as the 2022 RTP/SCS.

Sustainable Communities Strategy

The requirement of an SCS under SB 375 more closely ties regional transportation planning with regional housing planning under the RHNA. The SCS will coordinate planning for land use and transportation at a regional scale, with the goal of reducing the amount that people must drive and associated GHGs. The SCS is required to:

- Use the most recent planning assumptions considering local general plans and other factors;
- Identify the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region;
- Identify areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region;
- Identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight-year projection of the regional housing need;
- Identify a transportation network to service the transportation needs for the region;
- Gather and consider the best practically available scientific information regarding resource areas and farmland in the region;
- Consider the state housing goals;
- Set forth a forecasted development pattern for the region;
- Comply with Section 176 of the federal Clean Air Act;

- Consider spheres of influence that have been adopted by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) within the region;
- Quantify the reduction in GHG projected to be achieved by the SCS; and
- Consider any adopted multiregional goals and policies.

Hazardous material sites, per Government Code Section 65962.5, are addressed within the Draft PEIR. The following Department of Toxic Substances Control Cleanup Sites are located within the Project Area:

- Addition to Bakersfield High School
- Brown and Bryant-Shafter Facility
- Chemical Waste Management Inc.
- Clean Harbors Buttonwillow LLC
- Crane's Waste Oil, Inc.
- Delano PCE Plume
- Environmental Protection Corp - Eastside
- Eastside Disposal Farm
- Former National Cleaners
- Heritage-Crystal Clean LLC
- KW Plastics of California
- Oak Lane Cleaners
- Oasis Cleaners
- San Joaquin Drum Company
- Sandoz Corp Protection Inc.

4. ANTICIPATED SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Based on the analysis in the Draft PEIR, the Project would result in significant impacts in the following categories:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gases
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Wildfire

5. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

The Lead Agency invites public comment on the Draft EPIR and alternatives in response to this NOA. A 45-day comment period will begin on May 2, 2022 and end on June 16, 2022.



The Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) is available online at:

<https://www.kerncog.org/category/docs/rtp/>

A hard copy of the Draft EIR is available for review at 1401 19th Street, Suite 300, Bakersfield, CA 93301.

Written public comment on the Draft EIR may be submitted between May 2, 2022, and June 16, 2022.

Please submit comments on the Draft EIR by June 16, 2022, at 5:00 PM via:

Email: bnapier@kerncog.org

Mail: ATTN: Becky Napier, Deputy Director
Kern Council of Governments
1401 19th Streets, Suite 300
Bakersfield CA 93301

The Lead Agency has scheduled public hearings at the time indicated below. The purpose of the public hearings is to receive verbal and written input on the technical adequacy of the Draft PEIR and alternatives. The Lead Agency will consider all comments, written and oral, during the preparation of the Final PEIR.

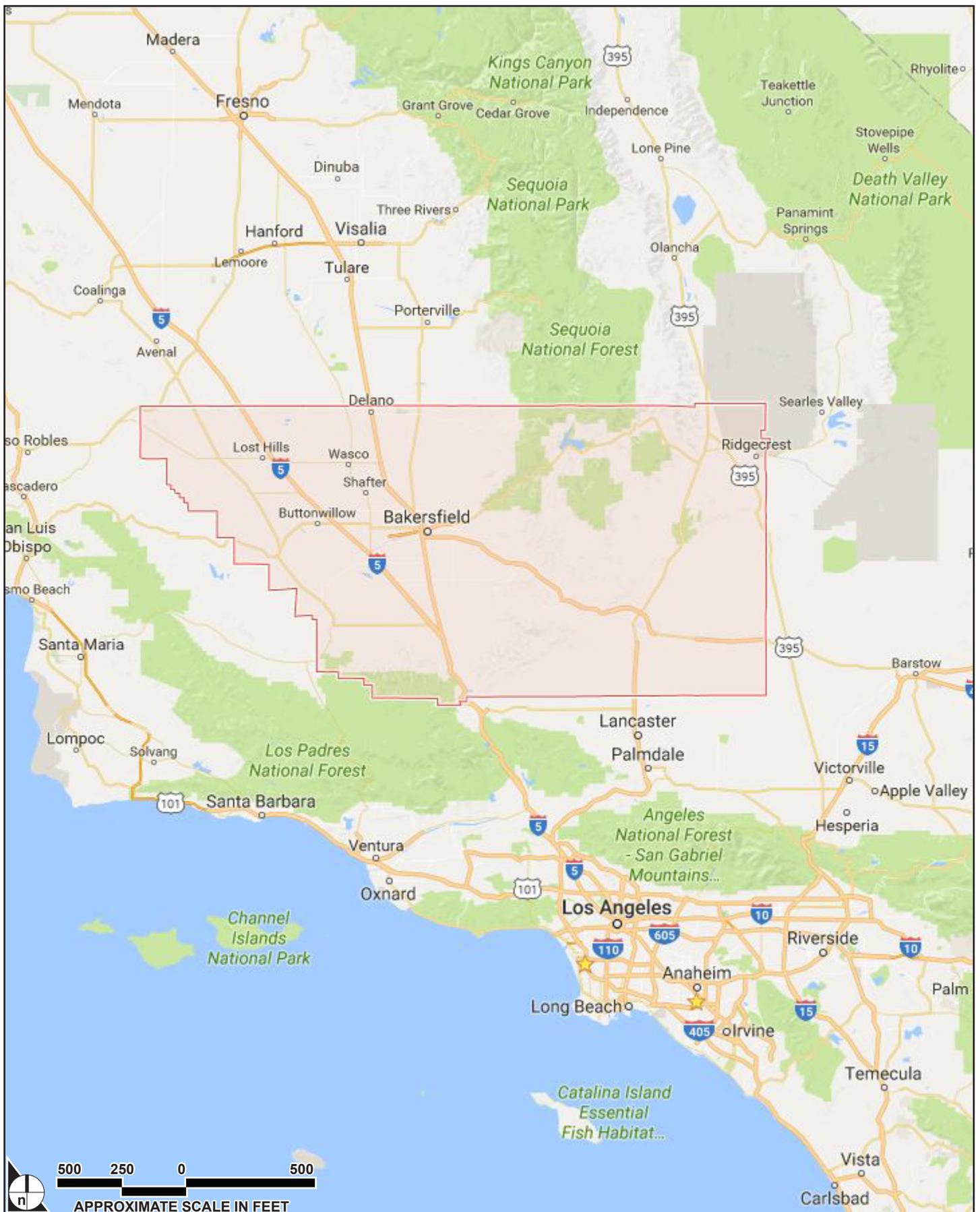
Public Hearings

Date: May 17, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Location: City of Shafter Council Chamber, 336 Pacific Ave, Shafter, CA 93263

Date: May 19, 2022 at 6:30 PM

Location: Kern Council of Governments, 1401 19th Street, Suite 300, Bakersfield, CA 93301



SOURCE: Google Maps, 2021

FIGURE 1