

# 2007 Kings County

## *Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan*

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# Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan

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## I. Introduction

The Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG), as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is responsible for transportation planning in Kings County. This includes development and adoption of planning policies and documents, review and coordination of transportation planning, and transportation policy direction. KCAG is the lead agency for the development of a Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) under the direction of the **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)**.

## II. Purpose

On August 10, 2005, President Bush signed into law the **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)**. (Public Law No. 109, August 10, 2005). SAFETEA-LU guarantees \$244.1 billion in funding for highways, highway safety, and public transportation. SAFETEA-LU represents the largest surface transportation investment in our nation's history. The



The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) met the nation's changing transportation needs during the term of their legislation. SAFETEA-LU builds on this foundation by supplying new funding opportunities and building a framework for investments needed to maintain, improve, and grow our transportation infrastructure.

SAFETEA-LU addresses challenges facing our transportation system today. Challenges such as: improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in goods movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting the environment. SAFETEA-LU promotes efficient and effective federal surface transportation programs by focusing on transportation issues of national significance, while giving state and local transportation decision-makers' flexibility for solving transportation problems in their communities.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires all projects involving federal funds be included in a locally developed plan. The primary FTA programs used in Kings County are Urbanized Area Formula (49 U.S.C. Section 5307), Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (49 U.S.C. Section 5310), and Rural General Public Transportation (49 U.S.C. Section 5311).

Development of this plan included participation of the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). The SSTAC consists of members appointed by KCAG representing various groups of underserved transit users as mandated by the Transportation Development Act (TDA). The SSTAC meets, as necessary, to provide recommendations to the KCAG on unmet transit needs, and other transit planning issues.

KCAG is required to prepare a Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) every other year for regionally significant transportation projects, and all projects receiving federal funding over the next three to four years. In the 2007 FTIP, Kings County has programmed \$193 Million in state, regional, and local funding for various forms of transportation in the region.

A HSTCP can be developed separately from metropolitan and statewide transportation processes and then incorporated into broader plans, or it may be developed as part of the statewide transportation planning process. The MPO is responsible for determining that projects selected within the HSTCP are included in the FTIP, statewide transportation plans, and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

FTA proposes that the HSTCP follow update cycles for MPO plans (four years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, and five years in air quality attainment areas). Kings County is situated in the non-attainment area of the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin. The HSTCP will be utilized by KCAG as a framework for administering FTA funds and encouraging coordinated planning.

### III. Demographics

Kings County lies in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The State Department of Finance has estimated the 2007 population of Kings County to be 151,381. Kings County’s largest city is Hanford, with a population of 50,370. The other incorporated cities are Lemoore, Corcoran, and Avenal with populations of 24,098, 25,417, and 16,737 respectively. The remaining 34,759 reside in the unincorporated portion of the county.

While Kings County is slightly below the state and nationwide averages for citizens likely to have transportation needs (shown in Table 1), older adult mobility remains a major challenge for many government, human-service providers, and community organizations. As older adults lose their ability to drive, they also risk losing their vital connections to needed services and community involvement. These issues can be as basic as medical appointments, grocery shopping, or attending religious services. Safe and convenient modes of transportation ensure independence and self-sufficiency and delay costly home care or nursing home services, while reducing demand for community and government services.

**Table 1: Kings County Demographics**

	Kings County	Statewide	Nationwide
Age 65+	8.5%	10.6%	12.4%
Disabled	14%	19.2%	19.3%
Low Income	21.3%	24.8%	21.6%
Under 18 years of age	24.7%	27.3%	25.7%

## IV. Coordination

Coordinated transportation is when multiple organizations work together to their mutual benefit to gain economies of scale, eliminate duplication, expand service, and improve quality of service in order to better address transportation needs of individuals that the agencies serve. Coordinating transportation helps to eliminate gaps in service.

### Coordination Opportunities

Coordination of transit service could include anything from simple sharing of training resources to full integration of services. The appropriate level of coordination must be determined on a case by case basis. In general, there are four levels of equipment and facilities coordination.

1. **Communication:** Involves recognizing and understanding problems, and discussing possible solutions between individuals from various agencies who are in a position to influence transportation developments within their jurisdiction.
2. **Cooperation:** Involves working together in a cooperative way, with individuals or agencies retaining their separate identities. This can be sharing training resources, vehicle procurement or fuel contracts, or arranging a ride for a client using a different service.
3. **Coordination:** Involves bringing together independent agencies to act together to provide smooth interaction of separate transportation systems. Individual provider funds, equipment, facilities, and services are used in concert to enhance delivery and efficiency of services. Agencies retain their individual identities.
4. **Consolidation:** Involves joining together or merging agencies for mutual advantage. This is a fully integrated system, where the individual agencies are no long maintained.

Because each community and region is unique, the appropriate level of coordination is what project partners are comfortable with, and what is best for the customer. Examples of coordinating transportation include:

- Identifying barriers to coordination in the regulatory environment and advocating for change.
- Making greater use of technology to match transportation users to transportation providers and trip scheduling.
- Finding different ways to group riders on the same vehicle even when they are sponsored by different funding agencies.
- Leveraging purchasing power for vehicles, maintenance, or training.
- Sharing training resources.

Regardless of the type of coordination, it should involve consultation with a broad range of stakeholders such as:

- **Transportation providers:** Transit agencies, school districts, social service agencies, transportation brokers, private providers, non-profit providers, and human services agencies.

- **Service providers:** Doctors scheduling medical appointments based on transportation availability, land-use planners, including mobility options as part of zoning decisions, developers building “walkable” communities.
- **People with transportation needs.**

## V. Existing Transit Agencies

### **Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA)**

Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA) is a joint powers agency comprised of the County and the cities of Hanford, Lemoore, and Avenal. The City of Corcoran does not participate in the KART system. KCAPTA oversees the operation of the Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) system. KCAPTA establishes the operating policies and defines the services to be provided by KART including service hours and days, fares, and routes, etc.

### **Kings Area Rural Transit (KART)**

KART began operations in June of 1980 and has seen a steady increase in the number of riders and new services over the past 24 years. Since 2000, KART ridership has increased dramatically as new services have been provided to meet transit needs of the public. KART presently uses a fleet of vehicles ranging in size from a 9-passenger van to a 33-passenger bus to provide transit services. All public transit vehicles in the KART fleet are equipped with wheelchair lifts and bicycle racks. KART offers reasonable fares for all fixed route and demand-response services. In addition to regular fares, there are discount tickets and monthly passes available. The KART system has been, and will continue to be, responsive to its customers needs as stated in its service goal:

*“It is the goal of this agency to provide reliable Public Transportation service that is clean and convenient; focused on that portion of the public which is transit dependent; in a proactive manner, resulting in continued improvements and cost effectiveness.”*

### **Fixed Route**

Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) provides the majority of public transportation services in Kings County. The fixed route service runs throughout the county. It serves the cities of Hanford, Lemoore, Avenal, and parts of Corcoran. Fixed route stops also include unincorporated areas such as Armona, Hardwick and Grangeville. The KART system also provides services daily to

Visalia in adjoining Tulare County and tri-weekly service to Fresno.



## **Demand Response Service**

In addition to the fixed route service, KART also provides demand response service. Demand response (door to door) service is available to residents of Hanford, Lemoore, Armona and Avenal traveling more than 1/2 of a mile from an existing bus route or for those riders certified by KCAPTA as disabled. It is policy that a rider who begins and ends a trip within a 1/2 mile of a bus route is to use the regular route service and not Dial-A-Ride. This policy does not apply to someone who has a documented physical disability and is unable to access the nearest bus route. Seniors may purchase discounted coupon books and monthly passes through the Commission on Aging.

## **Vanpool Program**

KCAPTA also operates a vanpool program. Vanpools provide reliable transportation to and from work at a lower cost than operating a personal vehicle. Vanpool drivers must have a DMV Class B license, pass a required physical and provide a DMV printout showing proof of a clean driving record. All 8 and 15-passenger vans are equipped with a Global Positioning System (GPS), so that KART can locate the driver should an emergency arise. The vans also carry first aid kits, fire extinguishers and roadside safety items. For maximum peace of mind, every van in the program is fully covered by an insurance policy. The cost to the user is based on the number of days and distance traveled. The cost is divided

among the passengers and paid on a monthly basis. The driver collects the payments and forwards them to the Agency. The payments cover the Agency's cost of operating, maintaining, and insuring the vans, as well as the cost of replacing them when they wear out. A cost calculator is provided on the South Valley Rideshare website to help estimate savings.



## **Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS)**

The AITS program was designed to provide qualified agricultural workers in Kings, Kern, Tulare and Fresno Counties with safe, affordable vans they can use to drive themselves and others to work. The program is seeking to reach workers who are having trouble getting to work, or may be paying too much for rides in vehicles that are unsafe. Through radio announcements and information booths, the Agency is actively spreading the word about the program. The AITS program costs employers nothing. It's a non-profit transit organization. Workers pay a modest fee to ride an AITS vanpool. Like the vanpool program, AITS holds drivers to the same qualifying standards. GPS, insurance coverage, and special necessary industry amenities such as water cooler brackets, hitches tool boxes, and floor lining are also provided.

## **Corcoran Area Transit**

The City of Corcoran has provided its own transit service since 1975 for Corcoran residents and for those living in the rural “fringe” area surrounding Corcoran. Initially, the service was only for senior citizens, but in 1989 the service was expanded to include the general public.



Corcoran Area Transit (CAT) is operated by the City of Corcoran. The City Manager acts as the Transit Manager and is responsible for the daily operations and management of the system. A Productivity Improvement Committee is responsible for uncovering and addressing needs of the community which is acted upon by the Corcoran Area Transit administrator and staff. CAT operates the Corcoran Depot and a fleet of five transit buses.

CAT is an on-demand service. Residents may call the local dispatch center for a ride anywhere within the CAT service area. The Corcoran Depot is available to AMTRAK passengers, KART passengers, and Corcoran Area Transit passengers. There is a self-serve AMTRAK ticket dispenser located in the Corcoran Depot for local travelers. The City of Corcoran also offers discounted Amtrak tickets for citizens who need to travel to Hanford. This offer began in 1990 to meet unmet intercity transit needs between Corcoran and Hanford for people needing county services available only in Hanford.

## **VI. Gaps in Service**

Transit services may be lacking in rural areas. People often live in rural areas or edges of cities due to lower-cost housing options. In many communities, a lack of transportation stands in the way of receiving adequate medical attention for some citizens. These persons are often older, disabled, and poor. To provide cost-efficient service to the largest population, transit agencies typically provide more frequent service in urban areas. Even within transit service areas, service levels in some areas may not meet travel needs of people. For example, ADA para-transit service only extends three quarters of a mile beyond the fixed-route transit system. People with special transportation needs that live outside the three-quarters of a mile boundary are unable to obtain service. The senior transportation provider tries to fill these gaps, but cannot provide service to everyone who needs a ride. There are also people who are eligible for ADA para-transit services, but need a higher level of service than the transit agency provides (e.g., door-to-door or door-through-door). Human-service agencies typically provide a higher level of service, but are often designated for a specific target population or specific destination type. KCAG takes public testimony on unmet transit needs in Kings County at the annual Unmet Needs hearing in April and May. There are repeated requests for new public transit service. New service must meet the KCAG "unmet needs" and "reasonable to meet" criteria. There are reoccurring requests for extended evening service and providing service on Sunday. Kings County's TDA-funded transportation providers do not offer service past 11:00 p.m., or on Sunday. KART offers Saturday service with shorter service hours, while CAT does not. Although extended evening service and Sunday service could be a recognized benefit, but there is a low-probability these services would meet the KCAG-established farebox requirements, or "reasonable to meet" criteria.

**Ease of Use.** Once a person figures out how to use a transportation system, whichever system works for them, transportation becomes less challenging. Learning how to use the system may be difficult for new riders due to various reasons such as:

- Different transit systems have different fare schedules, which can be confusing and difficult for riders.
- Riders may require help getting on and off a vehicle, but there is often no one available to help them at transfer points.
- Para-transit systems generally do not provide same day service, which means riders must schedule trips in advance except for returns trips on a given day.

**Operations and Amenities.** Many responses received during the unmet needs process is a request for more bus shelters. Shelters are an important part of the system's attractiveness to both passengers and non-passengers. Shelter is vital to those waiting for buses in harsh weather conditions. They also act as a clear marker for fixed route stops making the system more user friendly.

**Land-Use.** Future land-use patterns will also have a major impact on the mobility of those requiring specialized transportation. Land-use may also act as a physical barrier to public transportation as a result of disconnected, incomplete, or indirect pedestrian, bicycle, and/or ADA-compliant access to transit services. While public transportation funding in California requires all "reasonable to meet" services be provided, land-use characteristics are commonly cited as one reason why critical needs are deemed "unreasonable to meet."

There are many ways communities can be transit friendly:

- Develop high-density, high-quality development within a quarter-of-a-mile walk of a transit station.
- Mix land-uses in close proximity, including office, residential, retail, and civic uses.
- Provide bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized infrastructure for access to transit services.
- Create neighborhood streets with good connectivity.
- Build traffic calming features to control vehicle traffic speeds.
- Limit land devoted to parking in order to bring land-uses closer together.
- Incorporate transit needs in the Kings County Blueprint Planning Process.

Through efficient coordination of transportation, land-use, and economic development, transportation funding can be stretched further to reduce congestion and improve the quality of life.

### **Operation Efficiency, Needs, and Gaps**

**Lack of Funding.** Coordination results in efficiencies, which in turn result in a lower cost-per-unit of service. Building infrastructure for coordination requires an upfront investment. Without this investment, communities cannot do work, invest in technology, or build community infrastructure to realize efficiencies. Effective coordination builds on existing resources and infrastructure utilizing fixed-route transit system as the backbone and filling in transportation gaps with other community transportation services. Funding is insufficient to meet needs for expanding fixed-route service and equivalent para-transit service.

KART's ADA para-transit service is funded locally through TDA and FTA Section 5307 for Urban Area, and 5311 Rural Formula funds. This is a mandated service due to required compliance with civil rights laws. Since this is a required service without a mandated funding, it impacts funding for fixed-route service, resulting in the potential for a decrease in fixed-route service to maintain minimum levels of ADA para-transit service. This discourages expansion of para-transit service beyond the minimum necessary to comply with ADA-laws.

**Duplication and Redundancy.** Various sources of funding restrict different transportation services to specific populations for specific purposes. This results in service duplication and redundancy in multiple areas, including:

- Vehicles from different agencies may be traveling in the same corridor at the same time, but offer different services and may not pick up additional riders.
- Schools, transit systems, and Medi-Cal brokers operate their own training programs for drivers.
- Schools, transit systems, and other transportation providers have their own in-house maintenance programs for vehicles.
- Brokers, transit systems, senior programs, and other agencies each have their own call center for people to call to arrange for transportation.
- Schools, transit systems, and community providers purchase vehicles and equipment individually.
- Each transportation system has different eligibility requirements. A person who may qualify for more than one type of service may need to apply for several different programs with each having different requirements and processes.

## **VII. BARRIERS TO COORDINATION AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **Barriers to coordination of transportation systems**

Major constraints for transit growth are funding, transit costs, limited ridership, and land-use development patterns. Local area plans must comply with federal and state requirements and also meet local needs. More funding is dependent on coordination at planning and implementation stages of transportation activities. Coordination must occur at the service level and at the planning level.

### **Demographics**

Kings County has an average percentage of older-adults. Due to historically lower real estate prices, and lower cost of living, many retirees relocate to Kings County from major metropolitan centers. As this segment of population ages, it is expected there will be increased demand for specialized services for senior citizens.

Possible Solutions:

- Establish driver wellness and training programs to help older adults continue driving safely.
- Inform future residents about limited transportation.
- Ensure that seniors in rural areas are fully informed about available transportation services.
- Utilize senior publications and other media to keep the public informed of current transit resources, projects, and transportation coordination.
- Create volunteer driver programs.

- Increase limited stop and express routes.
- Permit rural transit providers to transport passengers other than persons which meet their passenger requirements.
- Create projects that connect rural areas to regional and local connection points.

### **Land-Use:**

Due to low residential density and a large service area, it is not feasible to expand traditional transit to serve a large service area. New development should incorporate transit-friendly design. Possible solutions to accomplish this include:

- Expand land-use projects that connect to transit.
- Promote pedestrian-friendly communities.
- Promote transit-ready development.
- Develop projects that improve access to medical facilities, employment areas, and social activities.
- Improve facilities and amenities at transfer stations to encourage ridership.
- Expand mobility-training programs.
- Increase use of low-floor buses to expedite passenger loading and off-loading transportation.

### **Service Area Boundaries:**

Service area boundaries differ between human-service programs and public transportation providers.

Possible Solutions:

- Promote projects that establish a centralized and coordinated regional transfer point between service providers.
- Encourage referrals to other agencies.
- Develop a common fare structure among providers.
- Improve local coordination among human-service providers and public transit providers.
- Coordinate with local transit providers to establish a single contact for inquiries about and receiving assistance regarding public and private transportation - "one-stop shopping".

### **Driver Requirements:**

Different agencies have different requirements for vehicle safety, driver training, driver licensing, or other standards.

Possible Solutions:

- Develop vehicle and driver standards that are consistent throughout the region.
- Increase the available pool of qualified drivers.
- Develop centralized driver training programs.
- Pursue grants for small transportation providers to develop programs and training.
- Locate a champion for volunteer driver programs.

**Exchanging Information - Software:**

Transportation providers and brokers use different scheduling, dispatching, and reporting software, which makes sharing information difficult. Transferring regional eligibility and scheduling data between and among ADA para-transit providers, Medi-Cal brokers, school districts, and others is not automated.

Possible Solutions

- Develop a centralized dispatch system.
- Installation of GPS.
- Promote use of smart-card technology to track fares.

**Exchanging Information - Privacy:**

A primary barrier in sharing information has been addressing confidentiality and privacy requirements. Privacy Acts, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) prohibit sharing client information and authorize penalties for offenders.

Possible Solutions:

- Riders or clients sign release forms.
- Utilize technology to share ride data between agencies and non-profits while maintaining rider privacy.

**Funding:**

Due to limited available operational funding, public transit needs to obtain maximum cost-effectiveness.

Possible Solutions:

- Promote transit and human-service provider's participation in the Social Services Technical Advisory Council (SSTAC).
- Support projects that promote ongoing dialog, planning, and decision-making for regional special needs transportation coordination.
- Collaborate with community human service providers to develop programs designed to increase usage of public transportation resources by seniors and adults with disabilities.
- Educate social service case workers about utilizing the lowest cost transportation options for their clients.
- Assist human-service providers in obtaining transit services through coordination of small-scale mobility projects.
- Seek grants and other funding sources to support continued coordinated transportation projects.
- Increase access and outreach on available transportation services countywide.
- Develop new and innovative marketing strategies.
- Increase public awareness of transportation modes.
- Pursue development of shared maintenance facilities.
- Expand joint purchasing programs.

**Liability:**

Indemnification issues prohibit agencies from sharing or loaning vehicles.

Possible Solutions:

- Offer affordable insurance pools for small service providers and non-profit agencies.
- Indemnification for agencies that share or loan vehicles.

**Regulatory Constraints:**

Federal and state transportation funding agencies often make coordination and funding efforts difficult.

**Possible Solutions:**

- Promote regional framework for agencies to work together to resolve transportation, land-use, and other issues of mutual concern.
- Emphasize strong state and regional roles in planning, prioritizing, and funding transportation.
- Encourage active participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.
- Create community and regional partnerships that utilize and build upon assets of our communities.
- Integrate land-use and transportation planning with health and human-services planning to promote service delivery at affordable costs.
- Support legislation that adequately funds a coordinated transportation system for the state and county.
- Increase integration of state and local interest in development and implementation of transportation services and facilities.
- Balance state and local needs in development and implementation of multi-modal transportation projects.
- Reduce delays in vehicle delivery from state procurement contracts.
- Allow depreciation expense on vehicles.

**Reporting Requirements:**

Federal, state, and local agencies that fund special needs transportation have different reporting requirements attached to their funds. Agencies receiving funds from multiple funding sources must set up labor-intensive and costly data collection mechanisms to meet multiple reporting requirements. Staff time to meet such requirements means less money to provide services.

**Possible Solutions:**

- Promote projects that increase coordinated trip scheduling and billing between school districts, transit agencies, and human-service agencies.
- Promote development of standardized reporting requirements.

**VIII. Implementation Strategies and Priorities**

The objective of the Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) is to provide a framework for improvements to current transportation systems. Strategies addressed in this plan are determined to be the most effective way to provide transportation services to those in need, while increasing efficiency and making the best use of available resources. These efforts cannot be accomplished by any one agency - it will require participation by multiple human-service agencies, transit providers, transit passengers, land-use planners, and the community at large to accomplish these objectives. The HSTCP recommends that the KCAG, KART, SSTAC, and human-service providers assist in the implementation of strategies and recommendations contained in this plan.

### **Shared use of vehicles**

A primary goal in SAFETEA-LU is shared usage of vehicles. This practice can cut redundancy in local agencies and encourage collaboration. Sharing vehicles can also reduce cost for agencies.

### **Reduce operating costs**

As stated above, cooperative purchasing programs could help reduce operating costs for transit providers. This type of cooperative purchasing could include contracts with other vendors for operating supplies such as tires and parts. It is recommended that transit providers strive to develop joint purchasing programs for items such as fuel, operating supplies, and other expenses related to vehicle operations.

### **Create transit friendly amenities**

Studies show that older-adults may be more likely to take public transportation if they feel safe walking to a bus stop, and travel information is easy to obtain. Improvements to facilities and amenities at transfer stations can provide a "user friendly" environment for riders. The HSTCP recommendation is for transit providers to identify special needs and incorporate these needs into capital improvements, and facility upgrades such as benches and bus shelters. Joint use and sponsorship of bus shelters should be considered to increase "user friendly" transit stops throughout the county and reduce costs to individual agencies.

### **Increase the availability of qualified transit drivers**

Agencies have different requirements for vehicle safety, driver training, driver licensing, and employment qualifications. Consistent standards could increase the availability of qualified drivers in the region, and eliminate the cost of duplicated training programs.

Transit providers often require a driver to have a Class B driver license for operating a vehicle over 26,000 lbs. The entry level wage for a transit driver tends to be lower than other types of business, making Class B drivers difficult to obtain. Many para-transit operators are purchasing smaller vehicles that only require a standard Class C drivers license, therefore eliminating the need for a Class B license.

### **Increase public awareness of transit through outreach and marketing strategies**

Informing the community on human-transportation and special transportation needs on new ways to market their services to the community. Billboards and websites have been developed to help reach this goal. Other possible strategies for increasing public awareness and outreach may include:

- Accurate service referral assistance to riders and case workers helps riders to choose a transportation mode that best meets their needs.
- Transportation referrals should be available on websites and by telephone contact.
- Transit information should be available at many shopping areas in the community.
- Transit kiosks are another means of providing traveler information and convenient access to general transit information, fares, maps, routes and schedules.

### **Increasing revenue resources**

The core issue for any public or private transit provider is funding. Capital cost for vehicles, passenger amenities, facility improvements, operating equipment, and advanced technology require significant funding. The region benefits from federal and state programs for transit operations and capital. Competitive planning grants are available, but small urban areas find it difficult competing for funds with large metropolitan areas. Grants are available to rural areas with a population of less than **50,000**, but urban areas with a population of **200,000** or less are not eligible for these grants. Small urban areas simply fall through the cracks. It is recommended that KART and other local agencies enlist assistance from transit advocacy groups such as CalAct, United We Ride, and the American Public Transit Association to advocate for new and expanded resources to fund small urban area grants.

### **The growing older-adult population**

In the year **2020**, **10,000** persons will turn age **65** every day (*Community Transportation, Summer 2006*). More older-adults means more persons with disabilities, and more demand for high quality services such as special needs transportation. One option is to keep older-adults driving safely for as long as possible. As a person ages, they undergo subtle physical changes that center on vision, hearing, and general stamina. Impaired hearing constitutes a clear and present danger to drivers of all ages, and it can quickly combine with diminished concentration and lengthened reaction times to put others in harm's way. Driver wellness and training programs could be offered to older-adults, helping them to continue driving safely. AARP offers a driver safety course for drivers age **50** and older. This course is currently available online for a small fee. **55-Alive** is another program that teaches seniors to drive safely. The HSTCP recommendation is for KCAG to contact senior advocacy groups, senior centers, and retirement homes regarding sponsoring driver safety and wellness programs for seniors in our region. KCAG should assist agencies or organizations in seeking funding resources to develop local driver and wellness training programs.

### **Transportation for those who can no longer drive**

Everyone wants to continue driving as long as they can. However, there may come a time when a person must limit or stop driving, either temporarily or permanently. Do individuals in the area know how to get around without a car? What about older-adults relocating to an area that has limited public transportation? Identifying what public, private, and community transportation services are available can help individuals keep their independence. Senior publications or local media may be utilized to fully inform older-adults about available transportation options. Ask members of the SSTAC to attend local senior centers, meetings, organizations, and advocacy groups to provide information about public transit options. Future residents should be informed of transportation options in the area before they relocate. Include the Kings County Board of Realtors, and other land-related agencies in receiving information on available transit options in rural areas.

### **Developing volunteer driver programs**

Many people in outlying areas are without transit service. To provide cost-efficient service to the largest population, transit agencies typically provide more frequent service in urban areas. What happens when an individual living in outlying rural areas can no longer drive? How do they get to medical appointments and other resources? One option is a volunteer driver program. Volunteers escort clients to their appointments and offer support and encouragement. Often they provide the link to a better life by helping them to access the resources that can help them out of poverty or resolve a medical need. It is recommended that KART, KCAG, and SSTAC research resources available to fund volunteer driver programs, and to seek potential agencies to administer a volunteer driver program.

### **Finding a ride online**

In larger urban areas, ride-sharing programs offer trip connection information to individuals seeking to ride-share with others. Interested persons can access an internet website for an instant list of potential carpool partners-people who live and work near them and have a similar schedule. KART has developed SouthValleyRideShare.com for Kings County and the surrounding area. Users can register for free and search listings for a carpool or vanpool. Commuters can also get information on air, rail, bus, taxi, private charter and other transportation services via the KART website. More advertising for this service could be a good way to support coordination on a countywide as well as region wide level.

### **Create "transit-ready" environments**

Land-use patterns also have a major impact on the mobility of those requiring specialized transportation. KCAG has received a Regional Blueprint Planning Grant that will identify land-uses and land-use types supporting community goals related to the regional economy, environment, and social equity. Adoption of the Kings County Blueprint Plan will be incorporated into local general plans, review policies, and the Regional Transportation Plan. The HSTCP recommendation is that the KCAG should encourage local agencies to include Regional Blueprint strategies such as transit-oriented development in their plans.

### **Resolving inter-jurisdictional transportation**

An efficient coordination process must be established and maintained for identifying, reviewing, and resolving inter-jurisdictional transportation concerns in the region. Working in coordination with surrounding counties will help increase mobility and provide for transportation access throughout the region. KART currently provides service daily to the city of Laton in neighboring Fresno County, and the city of Visalia in Tulare County. Service is also provided to the City of Fresno Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday.

### **A ride for everyone**

In areas with limited public transportation, there may be transportation available but transit providers are only allowed to transport passengers that meet their rider criteria. For example, where there is no fixed-route service, the senior transportation provider frequently has requests from individuals that are not seniors for rides. Re-evaluating criteria for riders could prove beneficial.

### **Shared maintenance facilities**

Many small transit providers do not have a maintenance facility and purchase vehicle maintenance service from local businesses. Shared maintenance facilities could reduce the cost of service and facility investments. Smaller service providers could work with KART to access their maintenance facilities.

### **Consolidation of operations and service delivery into one system**

The most comprehensive coordination strategies involve consolidation of operations and service delivery into one coordinated transportation system. A centralized dispatch system, or brokerage, provides better service within communities while connecting neighborhoods to other destinations. The system allows people to make simple connections to more places than is currently possible.

### **Investing in infrastructure**

State and local needs must be considered in development and implementation of multi-modal transportation projects. Two goals of the Regional Blueprint Planning Program are to "reduce costs and time needed to deliver transportation projects through informed early public and resource agency involvement" and "improve mobility through a combination of strategies and investments to accommodate growth in transportation demand and reductions in current levels of congestion." Through collaboration, local agencies can cross local and regional boundaries.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Mobility strategies begin with an understanding and commitment among local community leaders, elected officials, and transportation managers that meeting the needs of older-adults and persons with special needs is critical. Increased mobility increases independence and improves the quality of life for all citizens. The first step to coordination is "cooperation." Cooperation means two or more agencies working together toward a common end. Many transportation providers in the community are already informally cooperating. Some, like the KART, CAT, and SSTAC, are members of committees established by the KCAG as the designated Metropolitan Planning Agency.

Careful planning can allow a community to meet the regulatory, budgetary, and service needs of each participating agency, while improving client and community needs. The investment of time and thought at state, local, and regional levels will result in a lower cost of individual trips, and provide more trips to more places. By working together, we can improve the transportation system and delivery services to our community members.

For any plan to work there must be flexibility to respond to constant change. Successful coordination efforts are those that remain focused and maintain momentum in ever-changing environments. A circumstance can change and require a whole new transportation plan. The Kings County Association of Governments is committed to being an active partner along with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council, transit providers, and human service agencies to implement coordination strategies addressed in this plan.

At this time no new need for coordination was found in surveying social service providers within Kings County and its surrounding areas. KCAG will continue to work with transportation and social service providers to explore coordination possibilities and keep clear lines of communication open between all agencies.

## **Appendix A- Plan Methodology**

The Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) should be developed with input from public, private, non-profit, transit and human-service providers, and the general public. How this input is obtained depends on availability of time, staff, funding, and other resources. Commonly used strategies for engaging the public include:

- Community planning sessions
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Study and analysis of community transportation needs and services

The HSTCP must include the following elements at a level consistent with available resources:

- An assessment of available service providers (public, private, non-profit, and human-service based).
- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older-adults, and people with low incomes.
- Strategies and/or activities to close service gaps.
- Priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies/activities as identified.

### **The Planning Process**

Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG) is the lead agency for the development of this plan. SAFETEA-LU requires that this plan be "developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, non-profit transportation and human-service providers, and the general public. KCAG enlisted the Kings County Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), community groups, and local social service providers for assistance in the development of this plan.

### **Data Collection**

KCAG began the HSTCP development process by identifying organizations that might provide transportation services. These agencies included:

- Adult Day Health Care Nursing Homes
- Assisted Living Homes Public Transit Agencies
- Bus Charters Residential Care Homes
- Churches Retirement Homes
- Disabled Services Schools
- Home Health Care Providers Social Service Agencies
- Tribal Services

Twenty-five human-service agencies and organizations were contacted, either by Telephone, email, or direct mailing, and asked to complete a program profile survey (Appendix B). Of responses received, 3 provide no transportation and 8 provide transportation.

**Appendix B – Social Service Provider Survey**

***Kings County Association of Governments***

**SOCIAL SERVICE TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER**

**COORDINATION SURVEY**

**NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**CONTACT PERSON:**

**PHONE NUMBER:**

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**In order to prepare a comprehensive Coordinated Transportation Plan, please try to answer the following completely and give as much detail as possible. Your help is greatly appreciated.**

**Please give a brief background your organization:**

**Eligibility Requirements:**

**Type and Number of Social Service Recipients:**

**Number of Vehicles and Drivers Available:**

**Service Area and Hours/Days Covered:**

**Average Vehicle Miles Traveled Per Month:**

**Main Funding Sources:**

**Annual Operating, Capital, and Administrative Costs for Transportation Services:**

**Advisory Board Information:**

**Future Concerns for your organization:**

**Coordination Interest:**

**Other Comments:**

## **Appendix C- Social Service Providers**

The following agencies provide social service in Kings County. This list was compiled based on the information collected from the coordination survey. The list is not completely inclusive of all social service providers in Kings County.

**American Cancer Society** is a privately funded organization providing trips to and from cancer related medical appointments in Kings County. They currently have 12 volunteer drivers.

**Amtrak** provides 12 trains daily (6 northbound and 6 southbound) connecting passenger with local transportation across the region.

**Best Care Home Health** provides visits to homebound patients to instruct or provide care. They do not offer transportation.

**Central Valley Regional Center** provides care for persons with developmental disabilities. They currently have one vehicle and driver for those in need of transport to medical facilities. Due to lack of drivers trips must be scheduled in advance.

**Coalinga Transit** provides local transportation Monday through Saturday from 8am until 5:45pm.

**Corcoran Area Transit** provides weekday para-transit service and offers discounted tickets for trips to and from Hanford. CAT employs five full-time drivers and operated 5 passenger vehicles.

**Corcoran Family YMCA** provides growth and developmental activities for children and their families, along with a family resource center. They no longer provide transportation.

**Cornerstone Recovery Systems** is an adult residential chemical dependency treatment program. They currently operate 2 vans with 10 staff members and 3 volunteers as drivers.

**Employ America** provides job placement in Kings County. They currently offer car share programs to clients.

**Kings Area Rural Transit (KART)** provides over 70,000 trips per month operating 22 vehicles and 22 drivers. Buses and para-transit services operate Monday through Saturday. Routes cover all of Kings County as well as Visalia and select service to Fresno for medical trips.

**Kings County Action Organization (KCAO)** provides services including child development, resources and emergency services, and youth services. KCAO currently provides transport in the youth services program mainly for teenage mother's medical appointments.

**Kings County Commission on Aging** is a non-profit organization that provides information, referral services, support, and advocacy for seniors in Kings County. They do not provide transportation, but sell bus passes for Kings Area Rural Transit (KART).

**Kings County First 5** provides families in Kings County with child development assistance. The organization aims to help “children to reach their greatest potential in school and life.” They do not provide transportation services.

**Kings County Health and Human Service Agency/Public Health/Mental Health** provides health services to county residents. They do not offer transportation, but promote the use of KART for their public transit dependent clients.

**Kings County Job Training Office** offers assistance with job search activities including resume preparation, applications, and training. Four county vehicles are available with 19 possible drivers for transport to Kings, Tulare, and Fresno Counties.

**Kings County YMCA** provides growth and developmental activities for children and their families, along with a family resource center.

**Kings Partnership for Children** serves the communities of Home Gardens and lakeside in Kings County. They provide resources for children in lower income families including education, nutrition, and community involvement. They do not provide transportation.

**Kings Rehabilitation Center** provides geriatric consultation services, family support, lifestyle programs, and clinical services. The center enlists volunteer drivers to assist with transportation needs.

**Orange Belt Stages** provides transport throughout the region. All buses are ADA equipped and operated 7 days a week 365 days per year.

**Salvation Army** provides transportation to and from church activities. They operate 1 van and currently have 3 volunteer drivers.

**Santa Rose Rancheria** provides services such as child welfare, education, and recreation within the tribe. They provide their own transport.

**Tri-County Medical Transport** is a non-emergency medical transportation provider. Service is available to Kings, Tulare and Fresno Counties. Trips must be scheduled in advance and are generally prescribed by a doctor.

**Valley Christian Home** is a non-profit assisted living facility that provides residential care for the elderly. They offer transport for medical purposes in their one vehicle with 2 drivers.

## **Appendix D- Planning and Funding Sources**

This plan meets the requirements of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Equity ACT of 2003 (SAFETEA-LU) and enables participating agencies to submit funding requests for projects that meet the regional transportation needs of their communities.

SAFETEA-LU is a six-year transportation reauthorization bill that authorizes funds for fiscal years 2004 through 2009. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires projects funded from 2007 appropriations for the following programs be developed through a regional planning process. Kings County Association of Governments has developed this coordinated human services and public transit transportation plan to be a framework for administering those funds and encouraging coordinated planning.

**49 U.S.C. 5307** -Urbanized Area Formula: Makes federal resources available to urbanized areas and to Governors for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation related planning. An urbanized area is an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more that is designated as such by the U.S. Census.

**49 U.S.C. 5310** - Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program: Provides formula funding to states for assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities when transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of population for these groups of people. Funds are obligated based on the annual program of projects included in a statewide grant application.

**49 U.S.C. 5311** - Rural Formula Program: Provides formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas of less than 50,000 in population. It is apportioned in proportion to each state's non-urbanized population. Funding may be used for capital, operating, state administration, and project administration expenses. Each state prepares an annual program of projects, which must provide for fair and equitable distribution of funds within the states, including Native American reservations, and must provide for maximum feasible coordination with transportation services assisted by other federal sources.

**49 U.S.C. 5316** - Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC): The purpose of this grant program is to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.

**49 U.S.C. 5317** - New Freedom Program: This new program will provide formula funding for new transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond those required by ADA to assist persons with disabilities.

**Appendix E- KART and CAT Fares**

**KART**

<b>Fares</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Monthly Fee's</b>
Downtown Routes	\$1.00	\$30.00
All out of town routes to and from Hanford serving: <b>Armona/Avenal/Corcoran/Fresno/Grangeville/ Hardwick/Kettleman City/Laton/Lemoore/ Lemoore NAS/Stratford and Visalia</b>	\$1.50	\$50.00
Dial-A-Ride	\$2.00	\$40.00

Half price fare on regular fixed routes is available from 9 AM thru 3 PM for eligible seniors 60 and over, ADA and Disabled ID Card holders and Medicare Card holders. Does not apply to Dial-A-Ride service.

**Bus Passes**

<b>Coupon Book</b>	<b>\$10.00</b>	A Monthly Pass allows the purchaser unlimited rides and are valid for 30 days from the date purchased.
<b>Punch Pass</b>	<b>\$5.00</b>	

**Monthly Passes**

<b>Downtown Routes</b>	<b>\$30.00</b>	The \$30 "Downtown Routes" Pass may only be used for the Downtown Routes.
<b>All out of town</b> Avenal/Armona/Grangeville/ Lemoore & NAS/Corcoran/ Visalia/Kettleman City Laton/Hardwick/Fresno and Stratford	<b>\$50.00</b>	<b>To Purchase a Pass:</b> You may purchase Passes from any KART driver.
<b>Dial-A-Ride</b>	<b>\$40.00</b>	<b>Senior</b> Persons 60 and over with a Senior Fast Pass are eligible for discount fares. For information about the Senior Fast Pass, call Commission on Aging: <b>582-3211, ext. 2828.</b>

**CAT - ON DEMAND SERVICE - DIAL A RIDE**

Full Fare - \$1.00

Day Pass - \$2.00

30 – Ride Ticket - \$30.00

Senior Citizens, Disabled Citizens and Children under 9 years

\$.25 or \$.50 for a Day Pass