

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015

2015 San Joaquin Valley Fall Policy Conference—a big success!

MCAG was the proud host of the 11th Annual San Joaquin Valley Fall Policy Conference last month at Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite. With more than a dozen sponsors and 150 local government staff, elected officials, policy makers and private sector partners from throughout the region in attendance, the conference served as another successful demonstration of regional collaboration in the San Joaquin Valley.

The two day conference agenda included experts from across the country, local universities, regional and state agencies, and the private sector who contributed to the collective conversation about the state of transportation in the region and the opportunities that will shape how future generations will travel in and around the San Joaquin Valley. Highlights from the program included generational expert Phil Gwoke with BridgeWorks in Minneapolis, Minnesota who gave a dynamic keynote address on how to communicate efficiently and effectively in a multi-generational workplace; Chancellor Dorothy Leland who shared the latest plans for compact campus growth at University of California, Merced; and a panel of local elected officials, including Supervisor Hub Walsh, who spoke to critical issues impacting future opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley.

MCAG would like to once again thank the many sponsors who made the event possible, and for those who attended and helped make the event a great success!



Supervisor Daron McDaniel (left) and Supervisor Hub Walsh (right) at the San Joaquin Valley Fall Policy Conference - October 7, 2015.

Atwater-Merced Expressway Update

Construction activities are continuing on the long anticipated Atwater-Merced Expressway (AME). In early October, traffic was shifted onto the new southbound alignment on Highway 99, keeping the project on schedule to be completed by the end of the year. This project replaced the old Buhach ramps with a new AME interchange, constructed the Green Sands Ave extension from Buhach to Gurr, constructed a new 2-lane expressway from the new interchange to Green Sands, and is making a number of area improvements to enhance safety. This project is being completed through partnership with MCAG, Merced County and Caltrans.



RWA director elected to serve on SWANA board

Brooks Stayer, Director of the Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority (RWA), was elected to serve on the Board of Directors for the Central California Sierra Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). For more than 50 years, SWANA has been the leading professional association in the solid waste field. The association serves over 8,000 members throughout North America with a commitment to advancing the practice of environmentally and economically sound management of municipal solid waste.

A native of Florida, Stayer joined RWA in 2013 and has since been responsible for instituting a number of cost-saving and resource efficiency measures at the two RWA facilities in Merced County. Serving on the Sierra Chapter Board of Directors will provide Stayer with the opportunity to connect RWA to a network of industry leaders and prominent commercial players in California which will provide access to state-of-the-art technologies and the most innovative processes. In addition, RWA will have direct input on SWANA's legislative opinions, giving RWA a voice at the state and national levels.

The Central California Sierra Chapter will be hosting the 2016 Western Regional Symposium in San Luis Obispo, April 11-14, 2016. For more information, please visit: www.swanacal.com. For more information about RWA visit www.mcrwma.org or contact the Highway 59 Landfill at (209)723-4481 x 3.

Free Wi-Fi on The Bus!

The Bus is pleased to announce that state-of-the-art 4G network has been installed on all fixed route and paratransit buses servicing Merced County. Riders now have the convenience of using free Wi-Fi to stay connected while on their commute.



The addition of a high speed Wi-Fi network is just the latest in improvements made to service. In the past year, routes and schedules have been streamlined to make service faster and more convenient for passengers. New stops have been added, weekend service hours have been extended and all buses have been equipped with security cameras. The Bus has also expanded its service area with the addition of direct routes from Los Banos to Merced, and Los Banos to Turlock.

The Bus is the single public transportation service provider for all of Merced County, serving the communities of Atwater, Dos Palos, Gustine, Hilmar, Le Grand, Livingston, Los Banos, Merced, Planada, Winton and also Turlock. For more information, visit www.mercedthebus.com or call (209)723-3100.



Alternative Planning Strategy Update

In March 2015, the MCAG Governing Board appointed 13 community and regional partners and stakeholders to the Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) Steering Committee to provide guidance on the process of developing an APS for Merced County and to help shape the development of the next Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). MCAG is required by law to include a strategy in the RTP that shows how the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2020 and 2035, as set by the state under SB 375, can be met by reducing vehicle miles traveled through alternative development patterns, alternative transportation infrastructure, and/or additional transportation measures and policies.

In August 2015, the Steering Committee recommended that MCAG amend the current RTP to include a strategy that achieves the greenhouse gas reduction targets by assuming a more compact future growth pattern and embracing several transportation measures selected by the committee, such as increased investment in transit, ridesharing and vanpooling, passenger rail and bike and pedestrian projects. Following this recommendation, the MCAG Governing Board directed staff to prepare an amendment to the RTP which is currently underway. An amended RTP that meets the targets will supplant the need to develop an APS.

The draft amended RTP is anticipated to be released for public review in early November with the first public hearing to occur at the November 19th Governing Board meeting. The meeting will be held at the City of Dos Palos, 41546 Golden Gate Avenue, Dos Palos at 3:00pm. Additional informational meetings and public hearings will be held at various locations through the end of the year.

For more information about the work of the APS Steering Committee, please visit www.mcagov.org or contact Matt Fell at (209)723-3153 x 320 or matt.fell@mcagov.org.

NOVEMBER MEETINGS & EVENTS!

Technical Planning Committee Meeting - Nov 5, 2015

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting - Nov 6, 2015

Transportation Expenditure Plan Steering Committee Meetings - Nov 2, 16 & 30, 2015

Technical Review Board Meeting - Nov 18, 2015

Governing Board Meeting - Nov 19, 2015

MCAG Office Closed:

- Nov 11, 2015 in observance of Veteran's Day
- Nov 26 - 27, 2015 in observance of Thanksgiving

[View MCAG Calendar](#) for meeting details and locations.

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MCAG participates in regional advocacy trip to Washington, DC

In September, a delegation of 29 elected officials, COG staff and other regional stakeholders from the Valley, including Mayor Mike Villalta of Los Banos and Merced County Supervisor Daron McDaniel, spent two days in Washington, DC discussing issues of regional significance related to water, goods movement, transportation funding and air quality with federal legislators and agency staff. The delegation met with several Members of Congress, including Congressman Jim Costa and Senator Dianne Feinstein, as well as, staff from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Department of Transportation, and Bureau of Reclamation.

This trip is part of an annual program known as Valley Voice, a collaborative effort that identifies the region's legislative priorities and provides the opportunity to advocate for policies in Sacramento and Washington, DC that will benefit the San Joaquin Valley. For more information about Valley Voice, visit www.sjvcogs.org.



2015 Valley Voice delegation in front of the Supreme Court of the United States, Washington, D.C.—September 9, 2015.

The Bus Announces Songwriting Contest!

Local songwriters and musicians can showcase their musical talent by submitting their original song inspired by The Bus. The winning songwriter will win \$500 in cash and have his or her song produced at a professional recording studio by an award-winning producer.

Songwriters can enter online at www.writeasongforthebus.com by uploading an mp3 of an original song along with a copy of the lyrics or by mailing or hand delivering a CD or DVD and a copy of the lyrics to: Transit Joint Powers Authority for Merced County, 369 W 18th Street, Merced CA 95340. Entries must be received between October 5 and November 16, 2015. Songwriters ages 13 and up are eligible to enter. Children ages 13 to 17 must have written parental consent to participate. For more information and complete contest rules, visit www.writeasongforthebus.com.

The winning song will be selected by December 1, 2015.