

MCAG welcomes CivicSpark fellow Rebecca True



MCAG is proud to announce its participation in CivicSpark—a Governor’s Initiative AmeriCorps program dedicated to building capacity for local governments to address climate change in California.

CivicSpark operates in nine regions throughout California, including the San

Joaquin Valley, with 48 fellows who are launching their careers in sustainability while gaining valuable training at the local level.

As a regional partner in this program, MCAG is hosting fellow Rebecca True for a ten month term of service which began in November. As part of the MCAG team, Rebecca will be working with local governments in Merced County who are interested in developing and implementing climate change projects and programs. MCAG is offering this assistance at no-cost to member jurisdictions in attempt to build local capacity and encourage cities to pursue clean energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and safeguard against climate change impacts.

A Sacramento native, Rebecca spent the last four years studying the environment and public health in Boulder, Colorado. She has a keen interest in sustainable development, particularly in regard to design problems and the built environment, which developed during her study-abroad experience in Sweden. Rebecca pursued the CivicSpark experience in hopes to explore her interests in urban planning and gain more experience in a local government setting. Welcome, Rebecca!

For more information about CivicSpark: civicspark.lgc.org

The Bus honors local veterans in the Merced Veterans’ Day parade



L: Gary Perdew with MID demonstrating the district’s use of GIS technologies with a member of the community. R: Julie Nelson with the City of Merced Planning Department speaks to a Merced College student. November 18, 2015

Community celebrates National GIS Day

MCAG joined the City of Merced, UC Merced SpARC Center, Merced Irrigation District, California Survey and Drafting and Central Cal URISA to celebrate Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Day with an open house on November 18, 2015 at the Civic Center in Merced. This free public event featured live demonstrations of GIS technologies, a map gallery, and discussions with GIS professionals including Natalia Austin, GIS Analyst with MCAG.

“GIS Day is a great opportunity for users of GIS technology to demonstrate real-world applications that are making a difference in our community,” said Austin. “Whether or not they are aware of it, most people use some form of GIS in their everyday lives.”

GIS is a computer system that helps visualize, analyze and interpret geographic data to understand relationships, patterns and trends. This information has wide application across industries and sectors as a tool to help inform decision makers and the public.

Operation Holiday Toy Drive: STUFF THE BUS!

It’s that time of year again! The Bus is partnering once again with the Merced County Sheriff’s Department and Merced County Human Services Agency for Operation Holiday Toy Drive to benefit children in Merced County. The Bus will be located at the Walgreens parking lot on the corner of G and Olive in Merced on Saturday, December 5, 2015 from 8:00am to 2:00pm to collect donations of new, unwrapped toys from the public. While gifts for all ages are needed, there is a growing need for gifts for pre-teen and teenage children. Cash donations, as well as, gift cards, new coats and blankets will also be accepted. All donations will stay in the area and go to children in Merced County.

“We are happy to be part of such a great program again this year,” said Transit Manager Rich Green. “Our goal is to ‘stuff the bus’ with toys and gifts so we can help make this holiday season special for children in Merced County.”

For more information about the toy drive, please contact CJ Jones with Merced County Human Services Agency at (209)385-3000 x 5285.



One Voice delegates meet with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs during the 2015 trip to Washington D.C. in May 2015.

2016 One Voice program underway

The 2016 One Voice program kicked-off in November with a well attended and engaging first meeting of the planning committee which is comprised of elected officials and staff from several cities and Merced County, as well as, partners from the private sector.

The 2016 trip to Washington, D.C. is scheduled for May 10-13, 2016 and will be focused on issues in the areas of transportation, economic development and water. The planning committee meets on a monthly basis with the next meeting scheduled for 3:00pm on December 10th at MCAG. All committee meetings are open to the public and interested parties are encouraged to attend.

One Voice is a legislative advocacy program for the Merced County region that promotes issues of regional significance to federal legislators and agencies through an annual advocacy trip to Washington, D.C. The purpose of the program is to advocate for increased funding and new or amended legislation that benefits the region.

For more information about the One Voice program, visit www.mcagov.org/123/One-Voice or contact Stacie Dabbs at (209)723-3153 x 308 or stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org.

DECEMBER MEETINGS & EVENTS!

- Draft RTP Amendment Public Hearing - Dec 2, 2015
 - Technical Planning Committee Meeting - Dec 3, 2015
 - Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting - Dec 4, 2015
 - Technical Review Board Meeting - Dec 9, 2015
 - One Voice Planning Committee Meeting - Dec 10, 2015
 - Transportation Expenditure Plan Committee Meeting - Dec 14, 2015
 - Governing Board Meeting - Dec 17, 2015
 - MCAG is closed Dec 24, 25 & 31, 2015 and January 1, 2016
- [View MCAG Calendar](#) for meeting details and locations.

Draft Regional Transportation Plan Amendment available for review

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 was released for public review in early November with the first public hearing held at the November 19th Governing Board meeting. Additional public hearings are scheduled for December 1, 2015 at the Merced Council Chambers and December 2, 2015 at the Livingston Council Chambers, both at 6:00pm. To view the draft amended RTP, please visit www.mcagov.org/209/2014-Regional-Transportation-Plan.

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.

Your best Yosemite experience starts with YARTS!

Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) is public transit in the Yosemite region with buses entering Yosemite Valley year-round from Merced and Fresno, and in the summer months from Mammoth Lakes and Sonora, as well as, many different towns along the way.

If you are interested in visiting Yosemite this winter, a round-trip regular ticket fare from either Merced or Fresno to Yosemite Valley is \$25-30 which includes your admission to the park and a seat for a child of 12 years or younger. Reduced fares are available for seniors and persons with disabilities. Save gas, save time, save money and enjoy Yosemite!

Under the management of MCAG, YARTS began service in May 2000 and now provides an alternative to driving to nearly 100,000 riders per year. For more information and to view the winter/summer 2015-2016 schedules, please visit yarts.com or contact Cindy Kelly at (209)723-3153 x 315.