

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Regional Transit Authority Assumes Oversight for Merced County Transit**

**MERCED, Calif., November 25, 2009** – The regional Transit Joint Powers Authority will assume management oversight of the combined transit operation for Merced County on July 1, 2010, following a vote by the Authority yesterday. The 11-member Transit Authority is comprised of one elected official from each of the region’s six cities and one supervisor from each of the County’s five districts.

A Joint Powers Agreement has been in effect since 1995, when individually owned bus service was combined for cost-savings and greater efficiency. For the past 14 years, Merced County Public Works has administered bus service for fixed routes and dial-a-ride.

Due to numerous changes in transit requirements, Public Works Direct Paul Fillebrown, Transportation Manager Rod Ghearing, and Merced County Association of Governments Executive Director Jesse Brown combined efforts over several months to discuss and evaluate the situation. They agreed that a more streamlined transit management organization would be possible by moving management to a regional board rather than continue with just one local government as manager.

“THE BUS has accomplished much over the past years,” says Transit Authority Chair John Pedrozo, also a Merced County Supervisor. He points out that ridership has greatly grown, service levels have increased to hour headways on rural routes and half-hour headways in Merced, there are more buses in the system, and buses are converting to compressed natural gas.

The current transit staff members will become employees of the Transit JPA next year, and maintain their current salaries and retirement benefits. The JPA will continue to contract directly for bus drivers and dispatchers, for transit vehicle maintenance, and lease the current transit office site from the County of Merced.

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