

City of Taft

Community Outreach – Cycle 2



Kern Council
of Governments

I. Introduction

Directions to 2050 is the public participation program in support of the Regional Transportation Plan update and Sustainable Community Strategy (RTP/SCS) development process. The Directions to 2050 program builds on the Kern Regional Blueprint program to seek consensus in public input for the region's future. The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is working with local communities to identify and prioritize the next steps for the future of the economy, transportation, housing, energy, community services, and open space in the Kern region. The Directions to 2050 program results will be incorporated into the region's plans to achieve the Kern region's mutual vision.

Purpose of Community Outreach in Cycle 2

Directions to 2050's Cycle 2 community outreach events and meetings provided an opportunity for community members to identify transportation project priorities for the future and to better understand the RTP/SCS project. Kern COG hosted booths at three summer festivals (Tehachapi Mountain Festival, Kern County Fair, and Ridgecrest Desert Empire Fair) and presented and solicited input at stakeholder and community organization meetings in several Kern County cities between August 2012 and March 2013.

A second online game was developed for Cycle 2 so that community members could contribute feedback from home. All possible forms of participation in Cycle 2 events were advertised through press releases, local newspapers, -mail blasts, outreach to local organizations, and the Directions to 2050 website. Effort was made to attend at least one meeting of every community group that requested information about the project. Special attention was paid to outreach in underserved or limited-English-proficiency communities. All project materials were made available in English and Spanish.

Outreach Approach

At each of the festivals, Kern COG staffed a fun and engaging booth that included a transportation spending priorities bucket game and a trivia spin wheel (primarily for children). Upon entering the booth, festival attendees were given three poker chips of a certain color (depending on what part of Kern County they live in: Desert, Mountain, or Valley). Then, they were shown five transportation spending options and could place their three poker chips in any of the corresponding buckets to indicate a vote for that project type. Children were involved by answering trivia questions from a spin wheel, while adults placed their transportation project votes.



Kern COG Directions to 2050 – Cycle 2 – Taft

During the community group meetings, participants learned about the Directions to 2050 project and its relationship to the Blueprint Principles for Growth. They also learned about recent studies conducted by Kern COG to prepare for the development of the RTP/SCS, watched a demonstration of the online game, and then played the game in small groups. The game allowed participants to see how different transportation spending scenarios would impact the regional budget and community priorities. Attendees engaged in lively discussion. Participants were encouraged to play the game again at home in order to submit the scenario they support most to the project database.



II. Community Meeting in Taft

On Thursday, November 8, 2012, Kern COG gave a presentation on Cycle 2 of the Kern RTP/SCS at a Chamber of Commerce meeting in Taft. Ten people attended the meeting. All Cycle 2 materials were available in English and Spanish.

In small groups, meeting participants played the online budgeting game. The first step of the game was to select up to six priorities for Taft from the following nine options:

- Energy independence
- Enhanced economic vitality
- Increased public safety
- Reduced household expenses
- Access to community services
- Reduced government regulation
- Healthy lifestyles
- Adequate water
- Improved air quality

Then, as a group, participants developed a transportation spending scenario that would best meet the selected priorities. According to the game, transportation dollars could be spent on the following project types:

- Maintain local streets and roads
- Increase number of bicycle lanes, paths, and sidewalks
- Add highway capacity, primarily for trucks
- Encourage carpools and bus trips
- Transit close to housing and jobs

Key Findings

In Taft, reduced household expenses, improved air quality, and enhanced economic vitality were selected as the top priorities. Participants also supported maintaining local streets and roads and transit close to housing and jobs.

Additional Comments

To close the meeting, participants were invited to discuss why they chose the budget scenarios they did. Listed below are participant comments from the Taft meeting.

- Highways are expensive
- West County has adequate water (good quality water too)
- Endangered Species Act mitigation is expensive, kit foxes procreate under solar panels and cause problems
- There is not enough support for wild animals
- Public safety is great in Taft

III. Conclusion

Directions to 2050 Cycle 2 community feedback results will inform the draft Kern RTP/SCS. The RTP/SCS policies and implementation actions will address the key priorities identified by participants in each Kern County city.

