

# for the long haul

Kern Transportation Foundation

We're Moving Forward

April 2008

## KTF Video Production *CRISIS AT THE CROSSROADS* Near Launch

The KTF Board of Directors is pleased to report that its long-awaited video production *Crisis at the Crossroads* has been completed and will soon be ready for distribution in DVD format. The production has been developed by the Foundation to highlight the urgency of transportation issues now confronting Kern County residents. While respecting its role as a non-profit public benefit corporation, KTF works with state and local government agencies and private sector organizations as appropriate to develop planning strategies and find funding solutions to meet Kern County's present and future needs. *Crisis at the Crossroads* has been produced to emphasize the vital importance of those efforts.

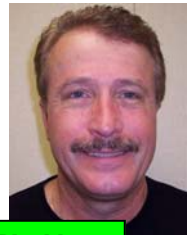
One of the Foundation's primary purposes is to educate and inform our citizens about the many benefits a modern, balanced, multi-modal transportation system can provide in enhancing our local quality of life and supporting the economic vitality of Kern County. *Crisis at the Crossroads* reviews prevailing inadequacies in the county's transportation systems and the extreme challenges which must be overcome if those systems are to be properly updated and improved as we grow further into the Twenty-First Century. The video reminds us that our regional population is exploding, the county itself is geographically situated at a key crossroads location for traffic and goods movement within California, and significant human and technological resources exist locally that can be productively mobilized.

These circumstances guarantee that Kern County cannot expect to continue the status quo, while assuring us that the means are at hand if we seek to pursue a vision of better transportation systems in the future. However, that vision cannot be achieved by waiting for action from bureaucrats in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. KTF believes that local citizens must grasp available opportunities and find the sustained political will to assure the solution of local problems.

The Foundation asks that you help us give *Crisis at the Crossroads* the widest possible dissemination to Kern County residents. We hope that, having seen and heard its message yourself, you will share the urgency we feel to reach out to all appropriate groups and individuals. Copies of the DVD are to be available without charge upon request, but if you would prefer to have a KTF representative present the video and answer questions, we are developing a speaker's bureau for that purpose. To obtain the video or to make arrangements for a speaker, please contact the

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## The President's Corner



Gary Blackburn

"The times they are a-changin'" is an old folk saying and also the title of a recent Broadway production, but whatever their source, the words convey a message that seems highly descriptive of the current operation and utilization of our nation's struggling transportation systems and services. For example, the steep rise in fuel costs has been reflected in wrenching adjustments in the airline industry, in large increases in transit ridership, both inter- and intra-city, in discussions in the automobile industry about reducing the production of larger passenger vehicles, and in renewed interest in energy-efficient engine design and alternative fuel sources. Many such changes are being forced upon us by external pressures we cannot control, while others result from emerging concerns about the sustainability of our environment and quality of life—and a considerable number are reactive and unplanned, not necessarily always productive.

Considering the circumstances prevailing world-wide, change—even rapid change—appears inevitable. However, Americans must remember that mobility has been an inherent part of our national character and a primary factor in developing and maintaining the strength of our economy. To assure that the American Dream can remain an attainable vision for generations to come, we must be prepared to do the planning and make the required investments, perhaps at some financial sacrifice, to guarantee that this country is served in the future by the superior, multi-tiered transportation network we need. Through its educational and informational ventures, KTF expects to continue to do its part in attaining that goal.

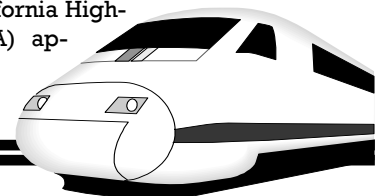
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### High-Speed Rail May Finally Leave the Station

#### Funding Picture Looks Bright for FY 08/09

After limping through the 2007/08 fiscal year on a small fraction of the \$103 million in state funding originally requested to support environmental and engineering studies and purchase critical right-of-way, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) ap-

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## High-Speed Rail—Continued from Page 1

pears on the brink of a major programmatic break-through: Governor Schwarzenegger's "May Revise" of his proposed budget for next year now contains \$42.9 million for Authority operations; and the long-awaited \$9.95 billion bond measure to jump-start the project seems set for the November 4, 2008 statewide ballot.

The Governor's Budget revision went from a mere \$1.2 million in January to the new figure, suggesting a major attitudinal change—possibly an emerging realization of the HSR system's great potential for reducing gridlock, exhaust emissions, loss of agricultural resources, and our state population's dependence on foreign oil. The bond measure, enacted by the California Legislature and signed by Governor Davis in 2002 as the "Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (SB 1856, Costa), has been deferred for some six years, allegedly to await better fiscal times. Unfortunately, the state's fiscal situation has worsened, with skyrocketing energy prices and global warming concerns adding to an already stressful mix. Alternative transportation options proven elsewhere on the planet to provide economically and environmentally sound solutions can no longer be discounted or ignored.

Part of state government's hesitation to commit to the high-speed rail investment is obviously engendered by the high stakes involved: the full system being studied, including ultimate links to Sacramento and San Diego, carries an estimated price tag of some \$40 billion. Just the initial segment connecting Anaheim and the San Francisco Bay Area through the San Joaquin Valley has a projected cost approximating \$30 billion. These are not small numbers, even to a state like California renowned for its resilient economy; and leadership fears that poor HSR system planning and implementation might lead to a financial disaster are more than understandable. Such issues were reviewed in an April 20 editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle* ("High-speed rail hurtles forward"), a newspaper retaining some skepticism about the proposed project, but the conclusion reached was "...the rail system is a risk we can't afford not to take."

A significant concern long expressed by Governor Schwarzenegger and other leaders in Sacramento is that California taxpayers should not be expected to foot the entire bill for the development of high-speed rail state-wide. Schwarzenegger has strongly espoused the public-private partnership concept, as elucidated in the most recent edition of his *Strategic Growth Plan* (<http://gov.ca.gov/issue/strategic-growth/>), which reads in part:

"...These partnerships lower costs for taxpayers and improve service to citizens by combining (i) the advantages of the private sector (e.g., dynamism, access to finance, knowledge of technologies, management efficiency, and entrepreneurial spirit), (ii) the benefits of competition and (iii) the social responsibility, environmental awareness, local knowledge, transparency, safety and job generation concerns of the public sector.

"Referred to variously as public-private partnerships (P3), private finance initiative (PFI), alternative finance and procurement (AFP) or performance-based infrastructure (PBI), these arrangements must not be confused

with privatization. Privatization means transferring a public service or facility to the private sector, whereas PBI-type arrangements constitute a way of introducing private management into public service."

The High-Speed Rail Authority has agreed with the Governor regarding the value of public-private partnerships as a funding vehicle for the proposed system, and that agreement is reflected in the current version of the Authority's financing strategy (for more information, see HSRA website at <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/>, "Financing High-Speed Trains with Public-Private Partnerships"). It is expected that about one-third of the \$30 million cost of the project's initial segment would be supported from the bond measure proceeds, another third would be derived from federal matching funds, and the final third would be invested from the private sector.

In February (2008) Assembly members Galgiani and Ma introduced AB 3034, a bill to amend Senator Costa's 2002 "Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" legislation yet again (it was previously amended in 2004 and 2006), but now with the intent to remove all possible political and legal roadblocks to effective utilization of the proposed bond funding. The amendments would include:

- References to system construction would be updated to be consistent with HSRA's certified EIR of November 2005;
- Route corridor descriptions would be revised to agree with current planning;
- Excess revenues from HSR operations would be used to finance further construction of the system, with any remaining revenues to be deposited in the General Fund;
- Not more than 10% of the bond proceeds could be used for environment studies, planning, and preliminary engineering;
- The Authority would be required to have a detailed and solvent financial plan for each system segment before awarding a construction contract for that segment;
- Not more than 50% of the track and station costs for any system segment could be supported from bond proceeds; and
- The Authority would be obligated to give priority to segments requiring the least amount of bond funds in proportion to construction cost.

AB 3034, as amended, also includes detailed requirements for system configuration and performance. As of this writing, it has just emerged from the Assembly Appropriations Committee with unanimous "do pass" support.

Federal matching funds for California's HSR initiative are projected to come from U.S. Senate bill S. 294, the "Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act" (PRIIA), which is a six-year reauthorization (FY 2006-11) of existing legislation. While primarily focused on Amtrak's capital and operating needs, S. 294 creates a new inter-city passenger rail capital grant program for the states. The federal match could be as much as 80%, with projects selected by the Secretary of Transportation based on economic feasibility, expected ridership and other factors. The bill passed out of the Senate in October 2007 with considerable bipartisan support, and is now awaiting action in the House of Representatives.

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It is obvious that the HSRA will need to clear numerous



# American Society of Civil Engineers

## 110TH CONGRESS INFRASTRUCTURE SCORECARD

LEGISLATIVE ACTION STEP  
TO HELP RAISE THE GRADES

	H	S	E
<b>National Infrastructure</b>			
National Infrastructure Improvement Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Infrastructure Bank Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Aviation</b>			
FAA Reauthorization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Bridges, Roads and Transit</b>			
SAFETEA-LU Guarantees for FY2008	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SAFETEA-LU Guarantees for FY2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highway Trust Fund Fix	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Brownfields</b>			
Brownfields Revitalization Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Dams and Levees</b>			
Dam Rehabilitation & Repair Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dam Safety Act—Full Funding for FY2008	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dam Safety Act—Full Funding for FY2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small Watershed Dam Rehabilitation Funding FY2008	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Small Watershed Dam FY2009 funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Levee Safety Program Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Drinking Water and Wastewater</b>			
Water Quality Financing Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe Drinking Water Act Reauthorization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Inland Waterways</b>			
Water Resources Development Act (WRDA 2007)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
WRDA 2008	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

H = House S = Senate E = Enacted



**Fueled by Junk Food—  
The “Fried Ride”**



**High-Speed Rail—  
Dare We Hope?**

### Transit Going Green

Despite apparent foot-dragging and confusion on the part of some national leaders, the United States now seems to be moving quickly towards joining other progressive countries worldwide in seeking ways to reduce energy consumption—particularly energy generated by heavy dependence on fossil fuels. Terms like “Greening America” and “Carbon Footprint” have become a significant part of the nation’s lexicon, and serious attention is being given to related issues. Interestingly enough, much of the impetus for this attention has come from Corporate America and from state and local governments, the latter frequently attempting to initiate action programs more stringent than those generated at the federal level. This situation has resulted in considerable bureaucratic backlash and legal saber-rattling, but progress has been made, as well.

In the public transportation realm, mass transit systems across the U.S. have demonstrated particular initiative and innovation in energy conservation programs, and the systems in Kern County have been active participants. The July 2007 edition of this KTF *Newsletter* included an article on the important emerging services being offered by the Kern Regional Transit division of the Kern County Roads Department. That article noted that about one-third of the division’s (then) 53-unit vehicle fleet were powered by clean-burning com-

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## High-Speed Rail—Continued from Page 2

political, bureaucratic and financial hurdles if it is to successfully launch a high-speed rail system for California. The means now seem available, and the benefits of such a system seem more than apparent—but it remains to be seen if the HSR initiative's leadership can maintain the patience and determination to see the program through to a positive conclusion.

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### What Happened to the Infrastructure Issue?

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#### Not Fixed, But Off the Front Page... Some Experts Have Longer Memories

August 2008 is fast approaching, a month that many persons in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area will remember as the one-year anniversary of the disastrous Interstate 35W bridge failure, some remembering also family members or friends lost or severely injured in that catastrophe. In Louisiana, such memories will go back a bit further, to August 2005 and the even greater list of casualties resulting from Hurricane Katrina and the related failures in the New Orleans levee system.

Both disasters were alike in that they highlighted significant deficiencies in elements of this country's public service infrastructure. Various other large-scale and dramatic failures occurred in that same general timeframe—the underground explosion of an ancient steam line in New York City, for example—leading Americans to an emerging realization that their bridges, dams, highways, water lines, levees and essentially all other infrastructure elements had been neglected far too long. The Interstate 35W bridge failure seemed to crystallize such concerns, and for a considerable time thereafter, the age, poor condition and increasing rates of failure of such facilities were a central focus in the U.S. media. As noted in the July 2007 KTF *Newsletter*, involved professional and technical organizations such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) weighed in heavily on the problem. Bureaucrats at all levels of government felt the heat from their constituencies, and scrambled to respond.

Sadly, the disgraceful condition of America's public service infrastructure now seems to have lost much of its impact on the collective public mind and its allure as a media focus. This change probably cannot be viewed as a media-generated event, but rather as a product of the seeming tendency by U.S. taxpayers to "prefer sound bites to substance." Whatever may be the cause, news coverage related to infrastructure problems generally seems to have been crowded off the front page by issues apparently considered of more immediate concern, such as the impending election, the housing crisis, recession, and rising food and energy costs. The latter are clearly urgent issues for this country and need to be given attention, *but the quality of our country's investment in public infrastructure is likely to be an important determinant in achieving resolution of all of them—and after decades of inattention, that quality has diminished to the vanishing point.*

It certainly can be argued that considerable media attention is still given to infrastructure issues. The condition of Isabella Dam obviously is covered in frequent detail for citizens of Bakersfield and Kern County; the possibility of levee failures in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta area is almost daily fare for

local residents there; and a May 8, 2008 article in USA TODAY even addressed the concerns posed by failures of aging sewer systems in municipalities across the U.S. However, except for primary news coverage in the locale most immediately impacted by a particular problem, the attention given elsewhere is now commonly less than first-tier ("back page" would be the newspaper term—the USA TODAY article was buried near the center of the Newline section, for example).

The fact is that concerns about the national infrastructure must be represented and resolved in an holistic and integrated manner, and the understanding of that fact apparently developing after August 2007 appears to be slipping away. Broad-scale strategic planning encouraged and facilitated by strong leadership at the highest levels will obviously be required. Partisan politics—business as usual—simply will not get the job done for this country; the exercise of unified and sustained political will must be viewed as essential to success. Instead, problems are now all too often presented in discrete, localized terms, and solutions then pursued through any convenient bureaucracy in similar fashion, frequently with recourse to "pork-barrel" politics. The result is a loss in clarity of national focus and the creation of a potpourri of patchwork outcomes not necessarily cost-effective or sustainable for our country.

Fortunately, not all parties concerned with infrastructure have moved on to other issues. ASCE—as well as the engineering profession in general—has remained steadfast in its advocacy on the subject. During the furor following the Minneapolis/St. Paul bridge failure, the ASCE-sponsored *Report Card for America's Infrastructure* last prepared in 2005 was frequently referenced. That *Report Card* was devastating, with the highest grade in the categories assessed being a C+ (A = Exceptional, F = Failing) and the overall G.P.A. being a D. ASCE's estimate to rectify the situation was a total investment of \$1.6 trillion over a five-year period, with only about \$1 trillion projected as available. The figures underlying this estimate are still often quoted as an authoritative source in those instances where media coverage or political debates regarding infrastructure issues do occur.

ASCE has followed up tenaciously on its 2005 *Report Card*. While emphasizing that the U.S. must take vigorous steps to find long-term solutions, the organization has prepared a list of small steps that the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress could take to begin addressing the situation immediately. The list, entitled by ASCE as *An Action Plan for the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress*, may be found at <http://www.asce.org/reportcard/2005/actionplan07.cfm> on the Society's website. A *Score Card* graphic summary is included, as a sort of companion piece to the *Report Card* graphic prepared for the 2005 infrastructure assessment. In brief, the *Score Card* program includes the following "Action Steps":

**National Infrastructure**—The House must enact the National Infrastructure Improvement Act to establish the National Commission on Infrastructure of the United States, and Congress must enact the National Infrastructure Bank Act to finance infrastructure projects;

**Aviation**—Congress must reauthorize funding for the Airport and Airway Trust Fund and enact an increase in user fees as necessary for continued funding of the Airport Improvement Program;

**Bridges, Roads and Transit**—Congress must fully fund surface transportation programs authorized under SAFETEA-LU, invest all funds that accumulate in the Highway Trust Fund in

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## **Infrastructure—Continued from Page 4**

the U.S. surface transportation program, fix the shortfall in the Trust Fund itself, and enact the National Highway System Bridge Reconstruction Initiative to repair and replace aging bridges;

**Brownfields**—Congress must reauthorize the Brownfields Revitalization and Environmental Restoration Act of 2002 to provide continued federal support for the redevelopment of brownfields sites;

**Dams and Levees**—The Senate must enact the Dam Rehabilitation and Repair Act to address the most critical non-federal dams, and Congress must enact a national levee safety program, including a nationwide inventory of levees and mandatory inspection requirements;

**Drinking Water and Wastewater**—Congress must enact the Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 to provide essential federal aid through the State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) program, and also authorize \$1 billion in annual funding for the Safe Drinking Water Act State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF); and

**Inland Waterways**—Congress must enact a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) requiring a more comprehensive approach to water resources projects constructed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and also ensure the integrity of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund.

As of this writing, ASCE has acknowledged some congressional successes in completing elements of the *Score Card*: SAFETEA-LU funding guarantees; Small Watershed Dam funding; and enactment of the Water Resources Development Act. Other elements have seen some action, but overall much remains to be done.

Feeling that the information used to generate the 2005 *Report Card* might be at too high a level for complete accuracy, the Society is encouraging its sections and branches across the U.S. to conduct more detailed state and regional assessments in the *Report Card* format. Many of these are already summarized on the ASCE website, and more are in preparation. Locally, the Southern San Joaquin Branch of ASCE's Los Angeles Section has recently volunteered to assess public service infrastructure in Bakersfield and the surrounding region. It is expected that the report will be forthcoming by October (2008), and the results will certainly be summarized in a forthcoming *KTF Newsletter*.

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## **Green Transit—Continued from Page 3**

pressed natural gas (CNG), and that future upgrades and additions to the fleet would further that commitment.

Even more impressive is the fleet operated by the Golden Empire Transit District (GET) serving metropolitan Bakersfield, which includes more than 80 standard and about 20 GET-A-LIFT buses all fueled with CNG. On April 6, 2006, the District was the recipient of an award from the Greater Bakersfield Vision 2020 Committee recognizing GET for its dedication to clean air and the environment.

Kern Regional Transit and Golden Empire Transit are joined to a considerable degree in their use of CNG buses by many of the K-12 school fleets across Kern County. The Coalition for Clean Air has indicated that substituting a natural gas-fueled bus for a diesel bus is roughly equal to eliminating the smog

and soot from 17 to 33 passenger cars. Statistics indicate that diesel engines produce nearly 20 percent of the total nitrogen oxides in outdoor air and are a major contributor to ozone production and smog.

Nationwide, mass transit systems are finding a multitude of ways—some significant, some much less so—to reduce their energy utilization and their carbon emissions while still providing service to growing ridership. Some of these strategies were recently summarized in a May 8, 2008 article in *USA TODAY*.

Probably the most comprehensive effort reported has been mounted by New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the country's largest public transit agency. Its network of commuter rail lines, buses and subways carries more than 8.5 million riders a day, and in large part because of that huge people-moving resource, per capita energy consumption by New Yorkers is only about a quarter of the national average. Even so, a commission was appointed in September 2007 to develop an environmental plan for the MTA, and the resulting recommendations are aimed at reducing the agency's energy use by at least 15% by 2015. The proposed program to achieve that goal is wide-ranging, including such measures as: using turbines in the East River to power a subway station on Roosevelt Island; changing the incandescent light bulbs in Manhattan's Grand Central Station to fluorescent; and even asking employees to drink tap water instead of bottled water (the agency provided 1.6 million gallons of bottled water to employees in 2006). A key element in the program is to completely re-think methods for powering MTA trains, combined with a move to digitally-controlled signals.

Oregon's Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (TriMet, which includes Portland) currently is the largest purchaser of diesel fuel in the state—6.5 million gallons a year. TriMet has initiated an effort to achieve as much as 15% higher fuel efficiency by more conservative operation of transit vehicles. The district is adjusting the automatic transmissions in those vehicles to reduce fuel consumption, as well as encouraging drivers to turn off heating or cooling equipment while idling.

St. Cloud State University in Minnesota has initiated the "Husky Fried Ride" by fueling a public bus ferrying students between their apartments and the campus with a mixture of diesel oil and the vegetable oil reclaimed from its use in cooking french fries and chicken fingers. About 150 gallons a week of unrefined, but filtered, used fryer grease from SCSU campus dining services are utilized in this local demonstration of the possibilities inherent in viewing waste products as a possible fuel source. The St. Cloud Metro Bus System, which has a ridership exceeding 2 million trips a year, will be seeking ways to make additional conversions of similar nature in the future.

In April, the city of North Miami, Florida, began offering its 550 employees a deep discount on monthly bus passes for the countywide transit system. City workers can now obtain a pass normally valued at \$75 for a mere \$12.50, an incentive of rapidly growing interest in an era of exploding gasoline prices and rampant growth in traffic congestion.

Metro Transit, the integrated bus and train transportation network serving the Minneapolis/St. Paul Twin Cities metropolitan area, plans to add 170 hybrid

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**Green Transit—Continued from Page 5**

electric buses to its fleet by 2012. To emphasize the potential of transit in the “greening” process, the agency has placed a carbon counter on its website showing how much emissions are reduced when commuters take advantage of their available transit resources. In an additional effort to entice motorists to consider commuting alternatives, Metro Transit is about to offer a program of personalized biking plans, since all agency vehicles feature bicycle racks.

The *USA TODAY* article includes a reference to information from the American Public Transit Association (APTA) indicating that members of households closest to public transportation drive an average of 4,400 miles a year less than those who aren’t near bus or rail lines. It is estimated that this reduction shaves carbon emissions in the U.S. by 37 million metric tons a year—equal to the electric power used by 4.9 million households.

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**Video—Continued from Page 1**

Foundation office at (661) 322-2872.

This video production was funded through the generous contributions of a number of individuals and organizations in the private sector that share the Kern Transportation Foundation’s conviction concerning the criticality of improved local transportation systems in assuring Kern County’s economic health and

quality of life for the future. No public monies were used to support the cost of developing *Crisis at the Crossroads*. Among the contributors were:

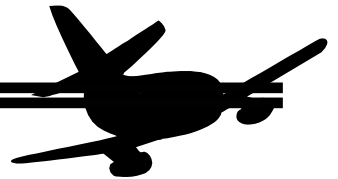
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- David Couch
- Granite Construction Company
- Griffith Company
- Hawley Mills Secor Consultants
- League of Women Voters

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