

for the long haul

Kern Transportation Foundation

We're Moving Forward

July 2007

KTF to Sponsor Educational Video on Kern's Transportation Infrastructure Challenges

What Does the Future Hold?

KTF is about to launch a proactive new initiative as part of its mission to inform and educate local residents about transportation issues: it will soon be producing a video piece designed to raise public awareness of transportation-related issues and opportunities facing Kern County residents as they seek to maintain their quality of life in the face of the state's population explosion and environmental changes forecast over the next several decades. With support from private funding provided by a number of sponsors concerned with assuring that quality, it is hoped that copies of the proposed production can be ready for general distribution and viewing by late fall 2007.

The video, currently projected to be approximately 10 to 15 minutes in length, will briefly capsulize the current status of the county's transportation infrastructure and suggest related strategies that need to be considered for the future, if Kern's environmental, economic and social needs are to be met and the health and safety of its citizens protected. It will present a vision for an integrated multi-modal transportation solution incorporating not only an essential roadway development and maintenance program but also rail and air strands. Appropriate attention will be paid to public transit, as well.

Under the general direction of the KTF Board, the video production process will be steered by an ad hoc committee of KTF members and knowledgeable community representatives chaired by Dale Mills. The committee expects to contract with Bakersfield's White Bear Enterprises for script preparation and most technical services, although local volunteers with video expertise may lend a hand from time to time.

#####

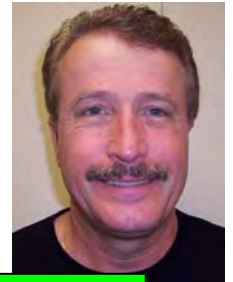
California's Population Predicted To Near 60 Million by 2050

Where Will the Infrastructure Come From?

On Monday, July 9, the California Department of Finance released new forecasts prepared by its demographic unit indicating that the state's population may reach 59.5 million by the year 2050. If accurate, those projections mean that almost 22 million more persons will be resident within the Golden

(Continued on Page 2)

The President's Corner



Gary Blackburn

This edition of the *Newsletter* presents transportation issues from a somewhat different perspective than the norm: we look at transportation infrastructure as just one element of America's corporate infrastructure, which embraces more than a dozen other elements from aviation resources and bridges to public transit and wastewater disposal provisions. Most of them are interrelated, generally dependent upon one another for their functionality and serviceability. This broader perspective is increasingly being adopted by our country's top planners and design professionals, as they attempt to fulfill their roles in the shared task of maintaining the U.S. position in the forefront of the world's developed economies. We discuss the fact that the job they face is more than challenging.

The *Newsletter* also provides an update on the status of budgeting for California's high speed rail initiative; just now the news is not good, although we are still hoping for a last-minute reprieve. However, this edition does contain some positive news about an educational video we are producing and about developments in the Kern Regional Transit program.

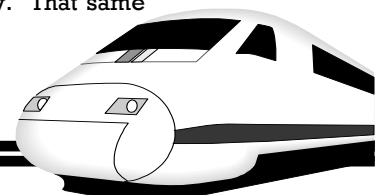
#####

High Speed Rail Initiative Slowing Down

The Budgetary Roller-Coaster Ride Continues

At a time in spring 2007 when a French bullet train was setting a world speed record (*Bakersfield Californian*, April 4) and France and Germany were establishing the beginnings of a long-envisioned Europe-wide high speed rail network from Barcelona to Budapest (*Californian*, May 26), California's political leaders were engaged in a partisan brawl which seems to have once again pushed this state's HSR initiative further off into the future—in fact, some efforts appear to have been made to de-rail it completely. That same

(Continued on Page 5)



State Population—Continued from Page 1

State's borders by mid-century than live here today. Other demographic shifts are indicated in the DOF report, as well: for example, Latinos are expected to become the dominant ethnic group, exceeding in number all others combined; and Riverside will move up in population to rank second only to Los Angeles among the counties. Kern County will not challenge for that leadership, but it is projected to grow from slightly more than 800,000 residents to more than 2.1 million, with about 1.2 million being of Hispanic origin.

All of the DOF demographic statistics have, of course, been recently explored in the print media from a wide variety of physical, economic and social perspectives (e.g., *L.A. Times*, July 10 and 11 editions; *Bakersfield Californian*, July 10, etc.). However, the viewpoint that concerns KTF most is obviously that of California's already inadequate infrastructure, and most particularly, its long-neglected and heavily-overburdened transportation facilities .

If the DOF forecasts are realistic, the predicted population explosion will clearly require enormous expenditures for infrastructure improvements to assure that the education, transportation, energy, water supply, waste disposal and other required support facilities are available when needed. In a state where the legislature and the governor have spent months haggling over arguably necessary reductions in a budget approximating \$140 billion, with many of the proposed cuts being serious inroads on infrastructure investments, the lack of reality prevalent within our Sacramento bureaucracy seems mind-boggling. Despite extreme political rhetoric at the highest levels, an informed observer would be hard-pressed to identify much truly fundamental statewide infrastructure planning past the current budget year, let alone any elements of a long-range, integrated program even remotely capable of responding to the requirements suggested by the DOF forecasts.

With the possible exception of education (from pre-school to graduate studies), a disproportionate share of early media reactions to the DOF report seem to have targeted transportation infrastructure for impact analysis. This circumstance may result from the ready availability of large quantities of transportation-related planning data, or it may be just a reflection of the long-standing love affair between Californians and their motor vehicles. For purposes of this KTF *Newsletter*, it is obviously gratifying to be able to draw upon the efforts of news professionals from across the state writing in our favorite subject area; but it is also to be hoped that energy, water supply and other critical issues will receive their due attention in the future.

A good example of the political unreality mentioned earlier can be drawn from the July 11 *L.A. Times* front-page article entitled "Needed by 2050: decked freeways, tunnels, tolls, trains," where it is noted that "planning studies put the bill for keeping congestion in check at \$140 billion in the next 30 years for six Southern California counties." That total alone—and some experts would suggest that the estimate is too low—just happens to be approximately the same as the entire state budget for the current fiscal year! The counties in question certainly can also look to local and federal sources, as well as state, for needed

transportation funding; and most have already elevated themselves to self-help status by passage of transportation-oriented sales tax measures. All that being said, the total of available dollars still appears to fall very short as compared to the requirements implicit in the DOF forecasts.

The July 11 *Times* article contains a review of various strategies being considered for development of transportation infrastructure in Southern California, many engendered by the scarcity of open land in that portion of the state, including:

- Tunnels through the Santa Ana and San Gabriel mountain ranges routed to skirt difficult local political issues;
- Double-decked freeways in Los Angeles County to avoid additional right-of-way costs;
- Toll roads in high desert areas to create a financial base for borrowing money to construct the highways;
- Light rail and subway extensions in Los Angeles County; and
- Truck toll lanes on existing facilities and a toll road system for trucks to match the huge expansion of cargo movement facilities potentially required to address the state's growth.

It should be duly noted that these strategies relate to hoped-for future construction of facilities most of which should *already* be in place, or should be set in place very soon, to address currently-existing near-gridlock congestion across the region in question. Unfortunately, most are years away from implementation. Talk about reality avoidance!

Despite the existence of the Southern California Association of Governments organization, the large majority of the strategies in question seem to be being considered by individual city or county planning agencies, with only limited gestures toward unified regional or statewide program integration. The same seems more or less true of other highly-developed areas of the state, as each struggles to find locally-focused solutions to complex transportation problems. Planning agencies in rural counties such as Kern, counties typically relatively lightly-populated at present but confronted with the potential for enormous growth and change by 2050, could well be overwhelmed by such challenges—and few of those rural counties have as yet been able to achieve self-help status.

It also seems true that planning agencies in the vast Los Angeles metropolitan complex, as well as much of the rest of the state, take it as a given that most of their transportation ills must be rectified by additional enormous expenditures on infrastructure to support motor vehicle traffic. In the face of growing shortages of fuel and other energy sources, as well as blossoming concerns about impending environmental consequences, the need for a more balanced approach seems crystal clear. It may be time to raise public awareness to the probability that California's heated romance with motor vehicles can no longer be afforded and needs to cool a bit.

In sum, the facts are these:

- Moving people and goods cost-effectively does constitute a critical factor in determining California's economic and social health;
- A balanced, multi-modal approach will be essential to long-term success in achieving the state's transportation

(Continued on Page 4

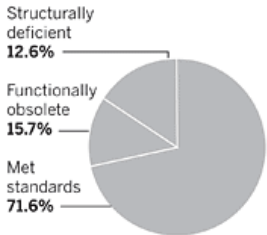


How they measure up

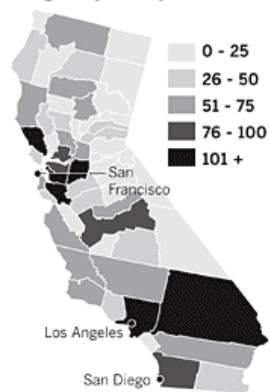
While California transportation officials stress that no bridge in the state is currently considered an imminent danger to drivers, thousands of spans are in need of significant work.

Condition of the state's bridges

In 2006, the federal Department of Transportation counted 23,625 bridges in California. Here's how they measured up by federal standards:

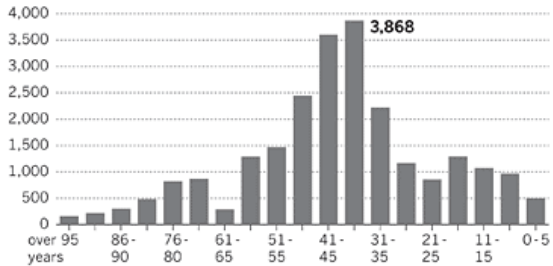


Structurally deficient bridges, by county



Note: Percentages do not total 100% because of rounding.

Number of California bridges, by age groups



Data as of July 13, 2007

Note: Bridge counts for age 71-75 not known.

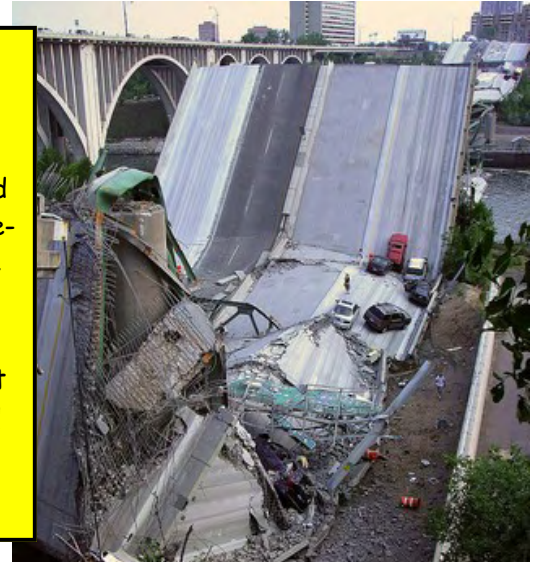
Sources: Federal Highway Administration, Associated Press, Caltrans, U.S. Dept. of Transportation

Bridge graphics from *L.A. Times*

Where Has All the Infrastructure Gone?

With the exception of Solid Waste (C+), ASCE's 2005 Report Card gave Bridges the highest grade = C

"A bridge in America just shouldn't fall down," said Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar

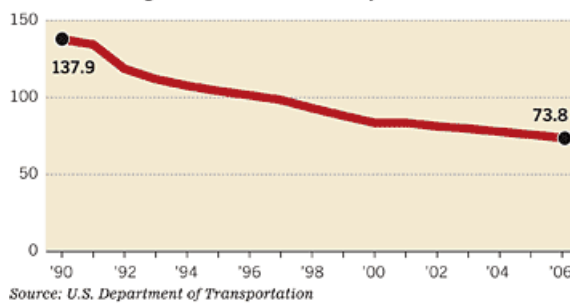


Interstate 35W Bridge Minneapolis

Structural problems

Of the 597,340 highway bridges in the U.S., 73,784, or 12.4%, are considered structurally deficient, meaning they need significant maintenance, rehabilitation or replacement.

Number of bridges considered structurally deficient (In thousands)

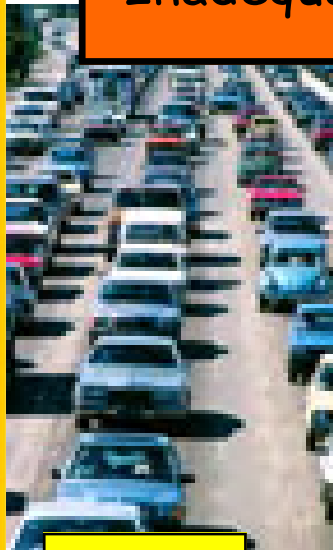


Kern Potholes

ASCE's
2005 Report Card for
America's Infrastructure

Aviation	D+
Bridges	C
Dams	D+
Drinking Water	D-
Energy	D
Hazardous Waste	D
Navigable Waterways	D-
Public Parks & Recreation	C-
Rail	C-
Roads	D
Schools	D
Security	I
Solid Waste	C+
Transit	D+
Wastewater	D
America's Infrastructure G.P.A.	D

Images of Inadequacy



L.A. Freeways



New Orleans After Katrina

State Population—Continued from Page 2

goals, but the components are scattered and currently broken or ignored:

- ◇ Air—Airlines are financially distressed, most offering less than adequate service
 - ◇ Rail—Public passenger service is unappealing, as railroads focus on support for long-haul freight
 - ◇ Highway—Roadways are inadequate and poorly maintained, over-committed to growing truck traffic
 - ◇ Water—California's ports are a success story, but related goods distribution is now a major part of existing highway and rail problems
 - ◇ Other—bicycle and pedestrian transport are not widely accepted, and necessary support resources are emphasized only in some metropolitan areas;
- California's population is notably resistant to mass transit;
 - Many existing transportation modes are significant environmental polluters;
 - State and local leaders are often unwilling to recognize and address real infrastructure issues because of the negative political potential surrounding those issues; and
 - The costs to fix the system will be enormous, but must be confronted.

When one considers these facts, it can be argued that it does not take the proverbial rocket scientist or astrophysicist to understand the urgent need for unified, innovative, out-of-the-box state-wide transportation planning—and the same assertion can be made with regard to all other elements of California's sagging infrastructure. Where will we find the leadership and the selfless political will to set the required goals and see that they are achieved?

#####

Where Has All the Infrastructure Gone?

U.S. Engineers and Other Experts Decry Decaying Investment

The foregoing article in this *Newsletter* edition raises the question as to how California will meet its infrastructure needs in response to massive population growth predicted for the next several decades, not just in the realm of transportation facilities but with regard to all public service infrastructure elements—from aviation resources to wastewater management provisions. A critical concern is that resolution of such problems is not simply a matter of developing strategies for providing additional capacity to supplement existing infrastructure, because that existing infrastructure itself has been neglected so long that it is now of extremely doubtful functionality. An even greater concern is the fact that the neglect has not been restricted to this one state, but is generally prevalent across the entire United States.

The American Society of Civil Engineers, a highly prestigious professional organization and one whose members have broad expertise in infrastructure planning, design, construction and maintenance, has combined with other engineering and technology professionals on a periodic basis in recent

years to create a *Report Card for America's Infrastructure*. The most recent *Report Card* was issued in 2005, with the highest grade being a C+ (A = Exceptional, F = Failing) and the overall G.P.A. a D. ASCE's estimate to rectify this dismal outcome was a total investment of \$1.6 trillion over a five-year period, and only about \$1 trillion was projected as available (USA Today, 7/20/07).

The grade summary for the entire 2005 Report Card is shown on Page 3, and more information on the report and the infrastructure categories considered may be found on the ASCE website at URL:

<http://www.asce.org/reportcard/2005/index.cfm>.

ASCE has not been the only prestigious organization leveling sharp criticism at the decayed state of this country's infrastructure. The Urban Land Institute, a non-profit research and education entity of worldwide scope, has recently published a detailed and compelling report entitled *Infrastructure 2007: A Global Perspective*. The document, funded by Ernst & Young and more than 60 pages in length, paints a bleak picture of infrastructure deficiencies around the planet—with particular emphasis on those confronting the U.S. The data available from ASCE are recognized, and employed as part of the background against which *Infrastructure 2007* is crafted.

While it is true that ULI approaches its analysis from the perspective of the private investor, the presentation in the *Infrastructure 2007* report is highly professional and (unfortunately) very factual. Corporate executives and managers in the U.S. and worldwide are clearly convinced that infrastructure quality is closely linked to a country's economic well-being and quality of life, and that emergency treatment will be necessary to assure continuing prosperity even in some of the world's leading economies. The ULI report can be found under Research/Policy Papers at the organization's website:

<http://www.uli.org/>.

The doubtful state of America's infrastructure has been dramatized recently by a number of front-page newspaper reports. Examples are:

- On August 1, 2007, the Interstate 35W bridge linking Minneapolis and St. Paul was being superficially(?) repaired when it suddenly broke into several pieces during evening rush-hour traffic, sending vehicles and debris into the Mississippi River. At least five persons were killed and several dozen injured. According to one federal database, the 40-year-old span had been rated as "structurally deficient" in 2005, but Minnesota officials have claimed that there was no indication of real danger in that rating and other recent negative technical evaluations.
- Earlier this summer, New York City was jolted by the explosion of an underground steam line installed in 1924; the blast hurled steam and debris hundreds of feet into the air and was responsible for one person's death and some 30 injuries to others. NYC's entire public works infrastructure is approaching the century mark in average age, and is characterized by frequent failures—last year, the antique Queens power grid imploded, leaving many residents without service for more than a week.
- Hurricane Katrina's disastrous impacts on the ancient New Orleans levee system in August 2005 have been documented at length. The storm is now blamed overall for more than

(Continued on Page 5

Decaying Infrastructure—Continued from Page 4

1,800 deaths and \$81 billion in damage across the region where it made landfall, and much of that loss has been attributed to inadequate infrastructure.

- Preliminary results released recently for a 330-city survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Urban Water Council suggest that more than half of the communities tabulated experienced up to 50 water main breaks annually.

Bridges, dams, highways, water lines, levees and all other elements of the public infrastructure—their age, poor condition and increasing rates of failure are now daily fare in the U.S. media.

Residents of Kern County certainly do not have to look far to find local examples of decaying infrastructure—many miles of roadways in the county show signs of severe distress. However, a more pressing concern is Isabella Dam, with its potential for inundating much of the Bakersfield area in about one day should it fail. Isabella has been ranked by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in its top "action class group" along with five other dams nationwide. The top group have the highest levels of concern as compared with 600 dams across the nation. While Corps representatives claim that there is no "imminent" danger of dam failure, they have ordered the storage level reduced to 63% to reduce risk and are conducting studies of existing seepage conditions, spillway size, and recently-identified active earthquake faults in the area. They are also pursuing more than \$10 million in federal funding to address Isabella's problems. Meanwhile, Bakersfield area residents remain nervous.

The companion article already referenced about California's population explosion concludes with an expression of dismay regarding the continuing lack of talented and selfless state-wide leadership in establishing viable strategies for responding to critical existing and future infrastructure needs. Many unbiased observers might express the same sort of concern about the fractionalized and dysfunctional leadership environment so obvious in our nation's capital—and worse yet, the view is no better at the global level.

#####

The Kern Regional Transit Story

A Quiet Success

Kern Regional Transit, now a division of the Kern County Roads Department, has been providing services in the unincorporated areas outside of metropolitan Bakersfield since 1980. In its first year of operation, KRT ridership was only about 37,000, but that number has multiplied over the years to a resounding 450,000 in FY 2006/07—and the gains have been particularly noticeable in the recent past.

In responding to perceived regional needs, Kern Regional Transit has developed several different types of service across the county:

- Local curb-to-curb demand/response (dial-a-ride) transport is provided to both unincorporated communities and to outlying areas around smaller incorporated cities;
- Local and inter-city fixed-route services are offered

throughout Kern County, connecting to various other local systems and with Amtrak, Greyhound, Airport Bus, Metrolink and Inyo-Mono County Transit; and

- Commuter transport is provided between Taft and Bakersfield (Westside Express), among Delano, McFarland, Wasco, Shafter and Bakersfield (North Kern Express), and between Bakersfield and Lancaster's Metrolink—the latter with stops in Tehachapi, Mojave and Rosamond.

The KRT vehicle fleet currently includes 53 units, ranging in size from 15-passenger paratransit minibuses to thirty-two foot, heavy-duty transit buses. A local leader in its concern for air quality, KRT now operates 17 clean-burning compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles on its various routes, and future upgrades and additions will continue to pursue that commitment. The fleet as a whole will operate about 72,000 hours and travel some 1.7 million miles in serving Kern residents during the 2007/08 fiscal year.

Kern Regional Transit continues to evaluate and respond to developing transit needs across the county. Several service expansions are just being completed, and changes planned for the next couple of years will allow residents of most Kern communities to use transit vehicles in commuting to and from Bakersfield for reaching jobs and schools.

Funding for KRT comes from several of sources, including: state Transportation Development Act allocations (1/4 of 1 cent of the 7.25% state retail sales tax); farebox revenues (\$575,000 for FY 2006/07); Federal Transit Administration grants; and miscellaneous other revenues. The proposed KRT Operating Budget for FY 2007/08 is \$7.0 million.

#####

High Speed Rail—Continued from Page 1

leadership is fond of lauding the legendary strength of the California economy and the creativity of its technology complex, but several countries in Europe and Asia already have done what we seem unprepared to do: they have established high-speed rail as an integral and productive component of their overall transportation systems.

Readers may recall the recent history of the initiative, beginning with the state's 2006/07 budget, when the High Speed Rail Authority was grudgingly approved for \$14.3 million by Governor Schwarzenegger after that amount emerged from a major battle in the legislature. The funding was subsequently used to excellent effect by the HSRA in promulgating financial, engineering and environmental studies necessary to move the project toward actual implementation. As the time for consideration of California's 2007/08 budget approached, the Authority requested \$103 million for that fiscal year, some \$66 million to continue engineering and environmental work and \$37 million to buy rights-of-way threatened by other development. Governor Schwarzenegger's innovative response was to slash HSRA's line in his January 2007 budget proposal to \$1.2 million, barely enough to keep the administrative office open.

As the spring months of 2007 passed, considerable political posturing over the HSR initiative and its funding occurred. A particularly classic event was the appearance of a May 5 article in the Fresno Bee authored over the Governor's signature

(Continued on Page 6



High Speed Rail—Continued from Page 5

and avowing his full support for HSR, if only a viable financial strategy could be defined—this despite the fact that such a strategy proposal was on the HSRA's advertised agenda for its May meeting (the specific financial plan was adopted at that meeting, replacing a more general one of long standing). Some cynics were unkind enough to see the gubernatorial timing as an interesting political ploy.

High speed rail funding for 2007/08 has followed a torturous path through the legislative process. A Senate sub-committee reduced the funding amount from \$103 to \$45.2 million in late May, eliminating the possibility of advanced right-of-way purchases but keeping the initiative viable, and the Assembly subsequently targeted a similarly reduced allocation for a considerable time. However, as the budget negotiations advanced past the June 30 deadline for their completion and partisan tensions mounted, the situation began to unravel. Finally, in a pre-dawn "compromise" after an overnight Assembly lockdown on Friday, July 20, a \$1.3 billion raid on state-wide transportation (transit) funding was accepted, including the \$55 million then being carried for high-speed rail. As *Newsletter* readers are probably aware, the Senate version of the budget remains at stalemate, but it appears unlikely at this point that the raid will be reversed.

**Attention: Calendar KTF Forum 2007 Now!
November 7**
More information to come in August *Newsletter*,
or call KTF office at 661.322.2872

Just now, it seems that the best budgetary deal HSRA can hope for is the possible allocation of some \$15 million in bond funding authorized as part of Proposition 116, the Clean Air and Transportation Improvement Bond Act of 1990. The availability of that small amount would allow some minimal progress on the HSR initiative in 2007/08, but would be unlikely to position the program effectively for the November 2008 bond measure anticipated as the system's financial launch vehicle. As a result, Governor Schwarzenegger would almost certainly achieve his apparent goal of pulling the measure off the ballot to concentrate on addressing other pressures, including additional highway infrastructure (*L.A. Times*, May 21; *Fresno Bee*, July 24).

#####

Help Us Do Better

Want to help KTF save money and deliver your Newsletter more quickly and in full color? Request electronic delivery by sending your name, your organizational affiliation and your e-mail address to : ktf@ktfonline.org

Feel free to add others in your organization to our electronic mailing list by sending in the same information items for them.



Kern Transportation Foundation

We're Moving Forward

Phone (661) 322-2872
PO Box 417
Bakersfield, CA.
93302-0417

