

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) 2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) guides a path towards a more sustainable future for the Madera County region by the year 2046. The 2022 RTP/SCS considers changing factors and conditions between person and place. The plan considers important strategies to meet an array of local, regional, state, and federal goals. The plan is designed to ensure all of those who live, work, or visit Madera County have safe, accessible, and reliable transportation options.

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), MCTC is required to prepare a long-range transportation plan with a planning horizon year of no less than 20 years. The RTP/SCS is the culmination of an extensive coordinated effort involving many public stakeholders, the City of Chowchilla, the City of Madera, Madera County, the California State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD), local and regional transportation providers, and multiple other state and federal agencies.

The RTP/SCS considers the regions continued growth in population, housing, employment, and the diverse transportation needs of Madera County’s transportation system. The plan outlines how, even as the region grows, environmental impacts related to future transportation per-capita will improve versus past conditions.



Madera County

Madera County is situated in Central California encompassing 2,147 square miles, the County is situated in the geographic center of the state. Figure 1-1 shows its position in the State of California. The county can be generally divided into three general topographical areas: a valley area to the east within the rich agricultural lands of the San Joaquin Valley; a foothill region east of the valley area with many small, rural communities; and a mountain region east of the foothills at the doorstep of Yosemite National Park within the Sierra National Forest. The San Joaquin River forms the south and west boundaries with Fresno County. To the north, the Fresno River forms a portion of the boundary with Merced County. Mariposa, Tuolumne, and Mono Counties form the remainder of the northern and eastern boundary in the mountains. The crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains forms the eastern boundary with Mono County. The county includes two incorporated cities (Madera and Chowchilla), both located along State Route 99 (SR 99), and several rural unincorporated communities in the valley as well as throughout the foothills.



Figure 1-1 Madera County within the State of California

The Valley area contains approximately two-thirds of the County’s population and includes the cities of Chowchilla and Madera, illustrated in Figure 1-2, as well as the unincorporated communities of Fairmead, Madera Ranchos, La Vina, Ripperdan, Eastin Arcola and Bonadelle Ranchos. A well-developed agricultural economic base characterizes this area.

The foothill area contains the remaining one-third of the County population residing in the unincorporated communities of Oakhurst, Ahwahnee, North Fork, Coarsegold, Bass Lake, Raymond and Yosemite Lakes Park.

The agricultural base in this area is primarily grazing. Much of the area’s employment base is involved in the tourist-related and government services with a significant commuter component going to Fresno, Madera and other valley employment and service centers.

The mountain area is essentially uninhabited with most of the land located in the Sierra National Forest, Yosemite National Park, Devils Postpile National Monument, and the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wilderness Areas. Historically, the national forest area has supported a strong lumber-based economy; however, this has been seriously curtailed by recent environmental actions.

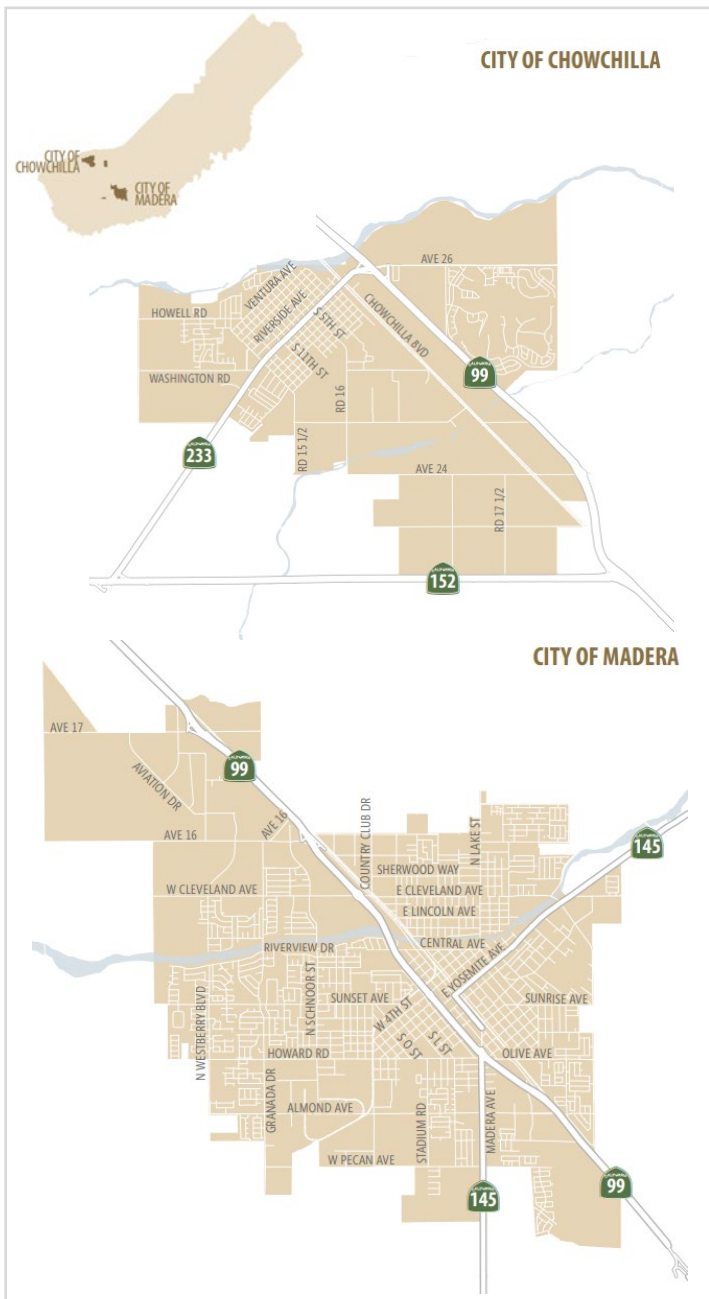


Figure 1-2 City of Madera and City of Chowchilla

Regional Planning in Madera County

MCTC is responsible for fostering intergovernmental coordination; undertaking comprehensive regional planning with an emphasis on transportation issues; providing a forum for citizen input into the planning process; and providing technical services to its member agencies. In all these activities MCTC works to develop a consensus among its members with regards to multi-jurisdictional transportation, housing and land use issues.

MCTC is organized into a Board of Directors supported by the Policy Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee.

- Board of Directors is comprised of three (3) members from the Madera County Board of Supervisors; two (2) members from the Madera City Council; and one (1) member from the Chowchilla City Council.
- Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) has the same membership as the Board with the addition of one (1) person representing the Caltrans District 6 Director.
- The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) includes the County of Madera, City of Madera, City of Chowchilla, Tribal Governments, and one representative from Caltrans District 6.

Key Planning Documents

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

The RTP is a long-range transportation plan providing a vision for regional transportation investments over at least a 20-year period. Using growth forecasts and socioeconomic trends, the Plan considers the role of transportation including economic factors, quality of life issues, equity, and environmental factors. The RTP provides an opportunity to identify transportation strategies today that address mobility needs for the future. The RTP is updated every four years to reflect changes in economic trends, State and federal project and funding requirements, progress made toward project implementation, and current socioeconomic trends. Transportation projects must be included in the RTP to qualify for federal and State funding. The last RTP was adopted by MCTC's Policy Board in August 2018 and was last amended in March 2019. The next RTP Update will be due in 2026.

The SCS is element of the RTP that will demonstrate the integration of land use, transportation strategies, and transportation investments within the RTP. This is the third SCS prepared for Madera County to address requirements set forth with the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 375, with the goal of ensuring that the MCTC region can meet its regional greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board (ARB). In 2018, the ARB issued emission reduction targets to each of the eight (8) Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the San Joaquin Valley, including MCTC. The targets included a percentage reduction of GHG emissions from 2005 of 10% by the year 2020 and a reduction in GHG emissions of 16% by the year 2035. Developing the SCS requires meaningful collaboration with each of the

three (3) local governments, as well as stakeholders to identify land-use and transportation opportunities around the region that will address the needs of the growing population and ensure compliance with State and federal requirements.

Program Environmental Impact Report

Following the provisions and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), MCTC has prepared a programmatic environmental impact report (PEIR) for the 2022 RTP/SCS that describes strategy level mitigation measures, which could avoid or minimize significant adverse impact of implementing the 2022 RTP/SCS. In doing so, the 2022 RTP/SCS PEIR identifies measures that will restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the RTP/SCS to the maximum extent feasible. The adopted mitigation measures are typical for transportation and development projects and have been demonstrated to be effective.

Corresponding Air Quality Conformity Analysis

The Federal Clean Air Act mandates that MCTC must demonstrate that the 2022 RTP/SCS conforms to the applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP) to enforce the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). This process is described in the Federal Transportation-Air Quality Conformity Rule. The purpose of conformity is to ensure that regional transportation planning and programming remain consistent with state and local air quality planning efforts.

The Draft PEIR and Draft Conformity Analysis can be accessed on the MCTC website: maderactc.org

Regulatory Setting & Planning Requirements

Federal

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act required federally designated MPOs, such as MCTC, to develop regional planning documents that establish a performance- and outcome-based program, known as “Performance Based Planning,” with the objective to invest in projects that will make progress toward the achievement of the national goals for transportation. MAP-21 was enacted in 2012 and was meant to address transportation challenges in the U.S.

The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) was enacted in 2015. The FAST Act replaces MAP-21 and continues the performance-based planning and programming stipulations enacted in MAP-21, which requires MPOs to implement a performance-based planning approach in the scope of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning process. The FAST Act funded surface transportation programs through the years 2016-2020 and added new performance measures in addition to the 2014 federal planning factors.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), was signed by President Biden on November 15, 2021. The IIJA will provide funding for a variety of existing and new programs. These programs cover transportation infrastructure such as roadways, bridges, public transit, rail, airports, and other types of infrastructure such as electric grid, water systems and broadband internet service.

Currently, federal agencies are developing guidelines that will introduce new policy priorities for the IIJA. Key among these new priorities is to provide infrastructure that will protect the environment and public health by decreasing air pollution and GHG emissions and improving water quality.

Federal Clean Air Act

The Federal Clean Air Act Section and Environmental Protection Agency transportation conformity regulations require that each new RTP and transportation improvement plan (TIP) demonstrate to conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) before the RTP and TIP are approved by the MPO or accepted by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). This ensures that federally supported highway and transit project activities will not cause new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant NAAQS standards.



“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program of activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in all federal activities. This law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin by recipients of federal funds such as state and local government agencies. Additionally, Title VI imposes obligations on recipients of federal funds to take affirmative action to assure, among other things.

These prohibitions were later supported by state and federal action, including Presidential Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice (EJ), which requires federal agencies and recipients of federal funding to “identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations.”

Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance on EJ requires that the MPOs ensure that traditionally underrepresented groups are engaged in the regional transportation planning process and demonstrate how their influence and feedback impacted development of the RTP/SCS. This guidance also requires an evaluation of the adopted plan to ensure that there is no disparate negative impact borne by low-income or minority communities.

State

Senate Bill 375

SB 375 requires that California’s 18 MPOs, including MCTC, incorporate an integrated SCS as part of the RTP. Specifically, SB 375 requires the alignment of three major components within the regional transportation planning process – land use planning, transportation planning and funding, and State housing mandates – to reduce GHG emissions from cars and light trucks. The SCS is required to be based on ambitious but achievable planning assumptions; consider adopted general plans and spheres of influence; and consider natural resources and farmland. The SCS must be consistent with both the transportation and financing elements of the RTP, and the adopted Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), available in *Appendix Q*. Finally, the SCS must be able to achieve the GHG reduction targets established by the ARB.

Senate Bill 743

Senate Bill 743 (SB 743) was established in 2013. The bill fundamentally changed how transportation impacts from land use development are analyzed in California. Level of service (LOS), which measures traffic congestion, had previously been used for years as a metric for measuring the impacts of transportation. SB 743 required the governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to amend the CEQA guidelines to provide an alternative to LOS for evaluating transportation impacts. This alternative must “promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses.” The intent of SB 743 is to better align CEQA practices with state greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, required by SB 375 through alternative transportation strategies.

California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32) and 2016 (Senate Bill 32)

California Assembly Bill (AB) 32 requires that GHG emissions within California must be at 1990 levels by the year 2020. AB 32 identifies GHGs as specific air pollutants that are responsible for global warming and climate change, and it directs ARB to implement the regulatory and market mechanisms necessary to achieve the specified GHG emissions reductions. These efforts include reducing emissions through land use and transportation planning. Senate Bill (SB) 32 extends the reductions of GHG emissions required by AB 32 by specifying a GHG reduction of at least 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030. SB 32 also authorizes ARB to adopt rules and regulations to achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG emissions reductions. ARB is directed to carry out the process to achieve GHG emissions reductions in a manner that benefits the state's most disadvantaged communities.

California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) directs governmental agencies to consider cumulative regional impacts and analyze the environmental consequences of proposed projects. Development of an RTP/SCS requires a program-level Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) be prepared to consider the collection of projects it contains. MCTC is designated as the lead agency to prepare the environmental review associated with this RTP/SCS.

Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure

On March 10, 2021, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) unveiled the draft Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI). The plan details how the state recommends investing billions of discretionary transportation dollars annually to aggressively combat and adapt to climate change while supporting public health, safety, and equity. CAPTI builds on executive orders signed by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2019 and 2020 targeted at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in transportation, which account for more than 40 percent of all emissions, to reach the state's ambitious climate goals.

CalSTA developed the draft CAPTI through collaboration with many different state agencies, along with extensive outreach and engagement with hundreds of stakeholders, during the past 18 months. The draft was available for public feedback through May 19, 2021. In response to public feedback, CalSTA released the CAPTI Revisions Memo, which outlines how the Final CAPTI addresses the feedback that has been received. The Final CAPTI was adopted on July 12, 2021.

To underscore the state's commitment to aggressively addressing the climate crisis, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a series of Executive Orders focused on the transportation sector:

- *Executive Order (EO) N-19-19* empowers the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to leverage discretionary state transportation funds to help meet the state's climate goals.
- *Executive Order N-79-20* moves the transportation sector toward a zero-emission future by requiring all new cars sold in the state to be zero-emission by 2035 and all commercial trucks sold to be zero-emission by 2045. EO N-79-20 also reiterates the message of EO N-19-19 and emphasizes the urgency of CalSTA's implementation efforts.

These Executive Orders laid the groundwork for the CAPTI Plan. Specifically, several discretionary state funding programs are to be restructured so they may better adhere to CAPTI's overarching goals. They include:

- Active Transportation Program (ATP)
- Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP)
- Local Partnership Program (LPP)
- Solutions for Congested Corridors (SCCP)
- State Highway Operations & Protection Program (SHOPP)
- Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP)
- Transit & Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)

California Transportation Plan 2050

Under the delegation of the CalSTA, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has completed the California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050. The CTP 2050 is the State's statutorily fiscally unconstrained long-range transportation roadmap for positive change that:

- Provides a unifying and foundational policy framework for making effective, transparent, and transformational transportation decisions in California;
- Addresses the varied transportation needs of urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities; and
- Emphasizes implementation and identifies a timeline, roles, and responsibilities for each plan recommendation.

The CTP does not contain projects, but policies and strategies required to close the gap between what the regional transportation plans aim to achieve and how much more is required to meet 2050 goals.



Madera Success Stories

Esperanza Village

The City of Madera, in partnership with The Pacific Companies, MORES, and the Madera Chamber of Commerce, hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, March 22nd at 3:30 pm to celebrate the completion of Esperanza Village, a new downtown housing project located at 125 N. C Street.



Esperanza Village is a 48-unit affordable housing development located in the heart of Downtown Madera. In 2019, the City of Madera, in collaboration with The Pacific Companies and MORES, obtained an \$11.3 million grant for the project from the California Strategic Growth Council's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program. Construction for the project concluded in the fourth quarter of 2021, and all units are now fully occupied.

The project sites were formally underutilized parking lots granted to the project from the City's former Redevelopment Agency. Approximately \$3.8 million of the total award will go directly to the City of Madera for transit, pedestrian, and bike improvements throughout downtown, including 27,000 linear feet of new sidewalks and an adult bike share program to be implemented by the Madera Police Department.

Downtown Madera

Veterans and Family Housing



Figure 1-3 Esperanza Village Design Profile

Oakhurst Midtown Connector

In February of 2022 the River Parkway Road (Midtown Connector) project was completed in the mountain community of Oakhurst. The project broke ground in November of 2020 and serves as a new access route for the community of Indian Springs, several area churches, Oakhurst Elementary School, Oak Creek Intermediate, and Yosemite High School, providing important egress to residents at risk from wild-fires and alleviating daily bottleneck congestion on High School Road.



The project provides new bike lanes and sidewalks, along River Parkway Road, safety amenities for neighborhood students and new and improved pedestrian crossing on State Route 41.

This was a Tier One regional project in the Madera County Measure T ½ cent transportation sales tax program, the \$12 million project was eligible and awarded \$5 million in funding from the Local Partnership Program.

Amtrak Station Relocation

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority has been awarded funding through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program To relocate the Madera Amtrak Station. The new site offers improved accessibility for riders by being located on Avenue 12 adjacent to the Madera Community College. Avenue 12 is the busiest east-west corridor for interregional travelers in Madera County, raising its potential to attract new riders. The area is served by both city and county public fixed-route transit services and has easy access to State Route 99 at the southern portion of the City of Madera.

Additionally, this site shares its location with the future Madera County High Speed Train Station. The Amtrak service will turn over to the High-Speed Train once service is initiated towards the end of the decade. Local agencies have thought proactively, and in 2022 Madera County was awarded a sustainable planning grant from Caltrans to develop a Transit Area Specific Plan around the new station area. Figure 1-4 details the construction timeline.



Figure 1-4 Madera Station Relocation Timeline

State Route 99 Trade Corridor Enhancement Program Grant

On November 16, 2020, the California Transportation Commission unanimously approved MCTC's recommendations for State Route 99 with Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP) funding. Widening this section of State Route 99 from Avenue 7 to Avenue 12 is needed to enhance freight mobility, preserve acceptable facility operation, improve safety, and reduce congestion. The proposed 6-lane freeway would improve the flow and travel-time reliability along this segment of State Route 99 for current volumes of traffic and provide enough capacity to manage the projected increases to both passenger and freight vehicle volumes. The segment is already beginning to break down and operate at unacceptable levels. Adding capacity to State Route 99 will allow the region time to plan and raise funds for alternate north/south roads connecting Madera and Fresno counties.

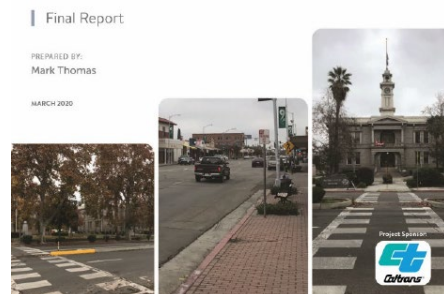
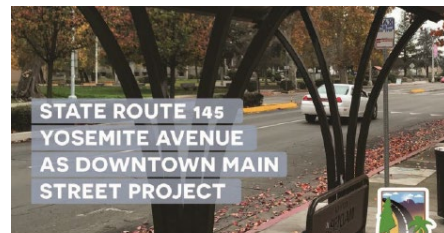
North Fork Roundabout Project

The North Fork Roundabout is a single lane roundabout at the intersection of Road 225 and Road 274 near the community of North Fork, it was completed in 2020. The roadways have concrete islands/medians separating direction of travel within the roundabout approaches and departures. The center within the circulatory paths have reinforced concrete contrast surface treatment for the truck apron and center island with minor raised slopes to accommodate oversized, overweight, and variance load large truck vehicles. This efficiently accommodates mobile heavy equipment and tractor trailer movement by forestry and wildfire response personnel. This was demonstrated specifically during the Creek Fire of 2020 which impacted 380,000 acres in the surrounding area. The project was built for \$1,670,000.



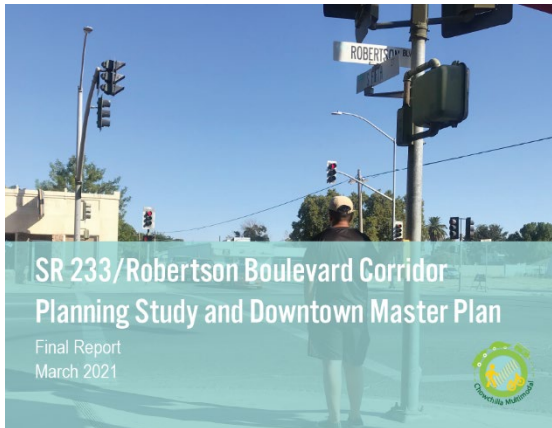
State Route 145 Downtown Madera Complete Streets Project

In March 2020, the City of Madera completed the State Route 145 Yosemite Avenue as Downtown Main Street Project. The plan was developed as a downtown masterplan, beginning with a focus on State Route 145 (Yosemite Avenue) as the roadway traverses downtown. Complete Street elements were included in the project, including a possible Road Diet. This would include reducing lanes from four to two lanes, adding Class II bike lanes, bike parking, transit stops, bulb outs, and other similar elements.



Senate Bill 1 Planning Activities

SR 233/Robertson Boulevard Corridor Planning Study and Downtown Master Plan

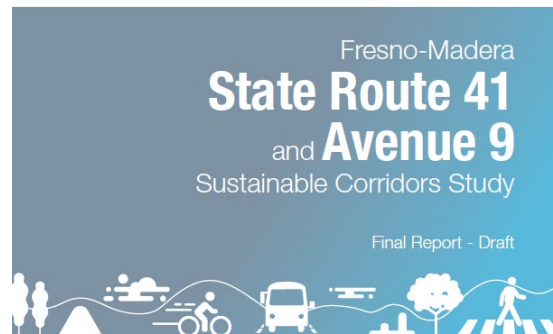


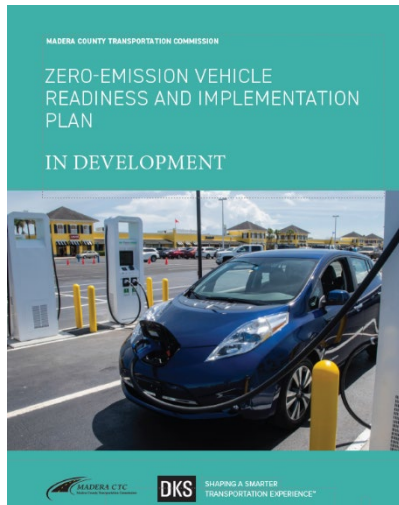
The SR 233/Robertson Boulevard Corridor Planning Study and Downtown Master Plan aimed to encourage local and regional multimodal transportation and land use planning that furthers the region's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy (RTP/SCS), contribute to the State's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets and other State goals. The project endorsed the use of active transportation, recommended traffic calming solutions to enhance safety for all modes of transportation, recommended bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities improvements along SR-233 Robertson Boulevard, attempted to improve traffic operations and reduce

congestion along the corridor, addressed the transportation needs of the community, and attempted to improve public health and enhance community livability. The study analyzed existing conditions for all modes of transportation, gathered stakeholder and community input, and developed conceptual design alternatives for SR 233.

Fresno-Madera State Route 41 and Avenue 9 Sustainable Corridors Study

This study was prepared by the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG) in partnership with Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) to determine State Route 41's future transportation needs and analyze future transportation needs along the Avenue 9 corridor. The study recommended sustainable improvements to address residents' transportation needs in both counties for issues such as: mobility, access, safety, and connectivity for all modes of travel, including automobiles, transit, walking, and cycling. A bi-county model was built to forecast future travel conditions. The model was an extension of Fresno COG's activity-based model utilizing data from MCTC's four-step model. Base future conditions were based on currently adopted transportation plans and programs from the two regions.





MCTC 2021 Project Prioritization Study

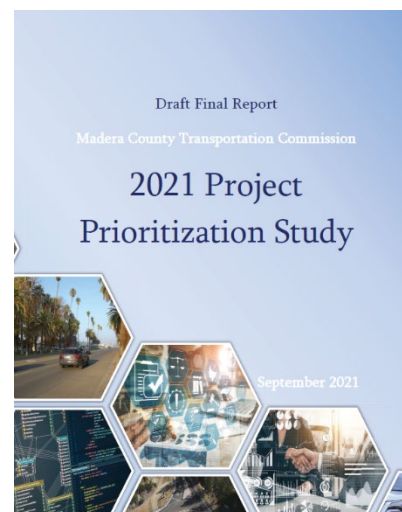
In partnership with the City of Madera, City of Chowchilla, County of Madera, and Caltrans District 6, MCTC developed a Project Prioritization Study (PPS) for the Madera County Region. The outcome of the Study was a process to create prioritized lists of projects and programs to address traffic congestion, facilities maintenance, transit needs, aviation improvements, and active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and programs) to be implemented in the Madera County Region.

The goals of the PPS were to identify and prioritize transportation projects that serve the region and help MCTC meet various goals related to Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction (as mandated by SB 375), reducing vehicle miles traveled (as mandated by both SB 275 and SB 743), better accommodating diverse modal choice, increasing traffic safety, supporting economic vitality, and decreasing adverse health effects related to travel throughout the Madera Region. The overall process was designed to advance MCTC's overarching goal of further promoting social equity in transportation project delivery.

A project database was created to help project managers track project details and progress. The database can award prioritization scores to the projects contained within it. Over 800 projects have been input into the database.

Madera County Zero-Emission Vehicle Readiness and Implementation Plan

MCTC is in the process of developing a Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) readiness and implementation strategy for the region. This plan will assess the existing ZEV infrastructure environment, recommend infrastructure improvements and investments, identify implementation strategies and policies to promote ZEV infrastructure adoption in the short- and long-term, identify key community challenges and barriers to advancement, and provide stakeholders with tools to procure, site, and install various ZEV infrastructure. This plan will primarily address conventional ZEVs including battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs).



The Plan Composition

Chapter 1 Introduction – Introduces the setting and purpose of the RTP/SCS, the key guiding regulations, previous regional milestones, and preview of the plan contents.

Chapter 2 Policy Element – a comprehensive listing of goals, objectives, and strategies that identifies the necessary steps to implement the RTP/SCS.

Chapter 3 Sustainable Communities Strategy – A detailing of the collaborative process behind the creation of a planning scenario able to achieve the goals of SB 375 for the Madera region.

Chapter 4 Action Element – Describes the regional assumption, transportation system and how needs are addressed across various modes.

Chapter 5 Financial Element – Outlines the projected revenues for the region and expenditures to implement the RTP/CS.

Chapter 6 Environmental Justice – Environmental Justice and Equity Analysis for the 2022 RTP/SCS.

Appendices – A collection of documents providing supporting information for the contents of the plan.