

AGENCY ADVISORY GROUP | MEETING #2 NOTES

FRESNO COUNTY REGIONAL TRAILS PLAN

Fresno Council of Governments and County of Fresno

October 8, 2020 | 2:00-3:30PM | Virtual meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kristen Lohse, Consultant Project Manager, welcomed attendees and thanked them for attending the 2nd Agency Advisory Group meeting for the Fresno County Regional Trails Plan (Plan). Kristen Lohse then provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda and asked that the Project Team and Agency Advisory Group members introduce themselves. A complete listing of meeting attendees can be found below.

Name	Agency/Organization
Peggy Arnest	Fresno Council of Governments
Brian Spaunhurst	County of Fresno
Gloria Hensley	County of Fresno
Mohammad Alimi	County of Fresno
Chris Bernal	County of Fresno
Michelle Zumwalt	City of Fresno
Lachea Deamicis	City of Fresno
Renee Mathis	City of Clovis
Stan Bulla	City of San Joaquin
Karl Schoettler	City of Firebaugh
Pedro Ramirez	Caltrans
Kristen Lohse	Toole Design
Megan Wooley-Ousdahl	Toole Design
Hector Guerra	VRPA Technologies, Inc.

2. Regional Trails Plan Refresher

Kristen Lohse explained that the intent of the Plan is to address the gaps in the Fresno County Regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP). This is being achieved through collaboration with partners across Fresno County to identify opportunities for new trail connections.

The focus of the Plan is on recreation trails, which include paved shared-use paths (Class I), and unpaved trails on County-owned land and County “islands.” These trails are mainly used for hiking, walking, off-road biking, and horseback riding. The Plan will emphasize making connections to recreational facilities, and providing opportunities for people to be active outside.

To guide the development of the Plan, goals were developed and supported by attendees at the first Agency Advisory Group meeting. These goals include:

- **Livability:** Enhance livability by integrating trail systems into community activity.
- **Connectivity:** Develop trail connections to important destinations in urban, rural, and open spaces.

- **Mobility:** Create active transportation options for recreational and utilitarian trips.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborate with local jurisdictions, organizations, and communities to plan, coordinate, implement, maintain a countywide trail system.
- **Economic Development:** Leverage economic development opportunities for local businesses and tourism by increasing the use of trails.

3. What We've Been Working On

Kristen Lohse explained that the Project Team conducted a field inventory by visiting over 20 trails in Fresno County to assess trail characteristics. This led to the development of a trail classification system, which includes the following classifications:

- Sidepath
- Shared-Use Path
- Off-Road/Multi-Use
- Off-Road/Single-Use

The Project Team has developed a set of recommendations for trails throughout the County, which includes approximately 375 miles of new proposed trails. The proposed trails include both new trails and the closure of gaps between existing trail segments. The Project Team has also identified a general location for a potential mountain bike park, based on input received from the community.

When developing the proposed trails, the Project Team attempted to strike a balance between both practical and visionary recommendations. Therefore, some of the proposed projects may be implemented in the near-term, while other projects are more visionary and will take longer to implement due to the funding that is needed.

All of the proposed trails connections have been placed in an online map, which will allow users to view the recommended trails in Fresno County. The Project Team is requesting that the public and Agency Advisory Group members identify the top 5 recommended trails in Fresno County that they think should be developed in the next 5 years.

4. Discussion

Megan Wooley-Ousdahl led a group discussion with Agency Advisory Group members, asking several questions designed to solicit input on the Fresno County Regional Trails Plan development process. Responses to the initial set of discussion questions were provided via Mentimeter, an online polling platform, and included the following questions and answers:

What makes a trail important to the countywide trail system?

- Connectivity
- Access to beautiful places
- Exercise
- Not far from home
- Scenic, water features
- If far, accessible by public transit
- Scenic
- Providing a vista of a unique or unusual area, such as a river or waterway
- Safe
- Access and connectivity
- Trees...greenery

- Access to nature
- Good access and nice scenery

What is the best path towards implementation of the recommended trails?

- Political will/stewardship
- Funding
- Collaboration between the County and other agencies
- Perhaps having the bike park include an entry fee that can be used towards development and maintenance of trails throughout the County
- Community involvement
- A comprehensive planning effort that you are doing here (outreach, planning, then funding)

Megan Wooley-Ousdahl then asked Agency Advisory Group members to provide any thoughts that they made have on topics covered during the meeting, or on the Fresno County Regional Trails Plan development process as a whole. Responses from meeting participants are noted below.

- **Chris Bernal**
 - County parks don't have a lot of trail access.
 - The San Joaquin River has a lack of connectivity in certain areas.
 - There is a need for more access to the public.
- **Karl Schoettler**
 - Would like to know if the trail connecting Firebaugh to Mendota is via the San Joaquin River, or along State Route (SR) 33 or the railroad tracks?
 - What are the chances of new trails happening in Firebaugh given that the City's population is so small?
- **Lachea Deamicis**
 - The Lewis S. Eaton Trail is heavily utilized, especially during the pandemic, and this provides an excellent opportunity for public outreach.
- **Michelle Zumwalt**
 - Would prioritize a trail from Woodward Park to Lost Lake, or along Friant Road, due to recent accidents involving cyclist.
- **Mohammad Alimi**
 - The County does not have a lot of funding for trails.
 - Explore what the County's partners can "bring to the table" to help build the trails system.
 - The County's highest trails priority is a segment between Lost Lake Park and Friant Cove.
- **Pedro Ramirez**
 - Would have questions on environmental constraints when it comes to the unpaved trails in the County.
 - How would proposed trails cross State Routes? Would they be marked, have signals, go underneath, etc.?
 - There is also the question of trail maintenance, because when a trail is not maintained it can detract people from using it.
- **Renee Mathis**
 - The City is very active in the design and development of metropolitan trails.

- There are gaps in the City's trails system for trails that run outside of the City and into the County.
- For potential trails identified along the canals, it is important to get that particular irrigation district's buy in.
- **Stan Bulla**
 - The City of San Joaquin has started its own trails projects and would support trails that interconnect with other cities, but understands that this is likely unfeasible given the City's large distance to the nearest city.

The final questions asked of Agency Advisory Group members was, "What should be the most important factor when considering prioritization?" Responses to this discussion question are noted below.

- **Stan Bulla**
 - Accessibility would be tops.
 - Amount of use and best "bang for your buck" would also be important.
- **Pedro Ramirez**
 - If it is nearby residents.
 - Using existing infrastructure/right of way.
- **Mohammad Alimi**
 - Highest priority is getting the biggest "bang for your buck."
 - Feasibility is also a consideration.
- **Renee Mathis**
 - High use areas where a lot of activity is anticipated.
- **Karl Schoettler**
 - Some "easy win" projects that the public would be able to latch on to.
 - Also important are projects that benefit the most people in a given area.
- **Lachea Deamicis**
 - The user experience and connecting with nature.
- **Chris Bernal**
 - Ease of maintenance.
 - Connectivity and access are also important.
- **Michelle Zumwalt**
 - Connecting existing trails and trying to create loops.
 - Prioritizing communities that lack outdoor recreation should also be prioritized.

5. Next Steps

- Agency Advisory Group members are encouraged to visit the online map (fresnocog.org/project/active-transportation/), provide input, and share the map link with at least three friends, colleagues, or neighbors
- The online map will be open through December
- The third Agency Advisory Group meeting will take place in Spring 2021