

## Clean Mobility Options Voucher Pilot Program (CMO)

### Community Transportation Needs Assessment

#### Summary Report:

Fresno EOC conducted the Community Transportation Needs Assessment for rural Fresno County, targeting the communities of: Parlier Del Rey, Fowler, Mendota, Kerman and Firebaugh. A lack of reliable, accessible transportation is one of the many issues that is both a result of and a contributing factor to poverty. According to a 2015 Harvard study, the relationship between transportation and social mobility is stronger than other factors such as prevalence of crime, school test scores, or rate of two-parent households.

#### Section I: Summary of Analysis and Methods used to Conduct Community Needs Assessment.

A description of the methodology used by the Resource Development Department to conduct the Transportation Access Data Analysis. This will include the data sources used.

Fresno EOC staff analyzed demographic data to measure the salary and job availability growth rate. According to the data collected, an on-demand type ride would best fit the needs of the six rural communities assessed: Kerman, Firebaugh, Mendota, Parlier, Del Rey, and Fowler. The average cost of a new vehicle is \$40,000 and of a used vehicle is \$25,000. With the average wage of \$40,000, it can be assumed that the average family only has one vehicle, which they use for commuting to and from work. When comparing these costs with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data on average industry wages in Fresno County, as well as the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 average income projection of \$25,757 countywide, it is clear that many families cannot afford a vehicle, or at least one that is reliable and will last for many years.

Fresno County Industry Wages (2020)

Industry	Employed	Avg Wages	1 yr Growth
Accommodation and Food Services	26,906	\$ 21,066.00	0.90%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,894	\$ 29,503.00	0.80%
Other Services	16,623	\$ 33,243.00	0.90%
Retail Trade	38,368	\$ 34,552.00	0.00%
Admin, Support, Waste Services	19,494	\$ 35,539.00	0.90%
Transportation and Warehousing	20,048	\$ 46,091.00	0.60%
Ag, Forest, Fish and Hunt	42,554	\$ 47,345.00	0.80%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5,693	\$ 49,588.00	0.20%
Health Care and Social Assistance	72,657	\$ 50,220.00	2.10%
Manufacturing	26,059	\$ 50,231.00	0.10%
<b>Average</b>	<b>27,230</b>	<b>\$ 39,737.80</b>	<b>0.73%</b>

## Fresno County Industry Growth Rates

Industry	Average of ↓↑ Empl	5 yr Change	Annual Growth Rate
Health Care and Social Assistance	72657	11348	3.50%
Ag, Forest, Fish and Hunt	42554	-6889	-3.00%
Retail Trade	38368	-299	-0.20%
Educational Services	37285	613	0.30%
Accommodation and Food Services	26906	-1329	-1.00%
Manufacturing	26059	268	0.20%
Public Administration	25637	2980	2.50%
Construction	20701	3575	3.90%
Transportation and Warehousing	20048	6479	8.10%
Admin, Support, Waste Services	19494	-1342	-1.30%
<b>Averages</b>	<b>32970.9</b>	<b>15404</b>	<b>13.00%</b>

This needs assessment also includes an analysis of data from the AllTransit Fact Sheet that provides insight into the needs of commuters. On an accessibility scale of 0 to 10, which takes into consideration connectivity, access to jobs, and frequency of transit service in a given area, all five target communities scored a 1.5 or lower, with Del Rey and Mendota scoring a 0.0 and 0.1, respectively. These figures mean that a negligible number of people use transit options for commuting, with the highest percentage of residents commuting via transit in a target community at 2.9% in Del Rey. Firebaugh currently has the highest number of transit routes (2 routes) and transit trips (56) per week available within a half mile for the average household, but 0% of commuters use these services (AllTransit, 2021).

In addition to this data, Transit Systems also analyzed US Census Bureau data from 2019 that shows the inflow and outflow counts of primary jobs in each of the target communities. Every community showed a substantially higher number of people commuting for work than those who are employed in the community. In the city of Parlier for example, over 4,000 people commute to other places for work while only 581 are employed locally. Interestingly, in some of the target communities there was a similar number of people commuting into the area for work as there was people commuting outside for work. This means that many of the job opportunities available in the community are not suitable for the employment needs of most workers who live there.

### [A description of Community Engagement efforts, including how and why Fresno EOC utilized community forums, focus groups, resident surveys, and website/social media.](#)

Fresno EOC Communications staff designed and executed a social media campaign reaching approximately 11,730 Fresno County residents. This campaign included six paid ads targeting each of the six rural communities identified in the needs assessment (Kerman, Firebaugh, Mendota, Parlier, Del Rey, and Fowler). The ads ran from May 27, 2021 through June 3, 2021, and resulted in a total of 183 engagement clicks. Each ad was tailored for the particular rural community and started with the city's name, for example "Fowler, you are a priority to us!" The ads were targeted in the middle of each community with a 3-to-6-mile radius (depending on the size of the city), making every possible attempt not to overlap into neighboring towns. The ads directed people to the survey.

The survey consisted of questions about residents' travel behaviors and preferences for future transportation enhancements and projects. The surveys also collected data on demographics, education level, employment status, income levels, and household size.

Fresno EOC also conducted focus groups between March 10, 2021 and April 2, 2021 as part of its

strategic planning process, and incorporated a specific focus on transportation needs in rural communities.

As the final component, Transit Systems coordinated with Fresno EOC's Resource Development Department and Food Services to collect resident input through surveys administered at Fresno EOC Food Distribution events in the targeted rural communities. In total, 177 residents completed the survey that asked about transportation habits and the current gaps in service provision.

[A discussion of how Fresno EOC can leverage the Community Needs Assessment for project preparation and design as it relates to the Clean Mobility Options Voucher Program.](#)

Fresno EOC will use the findings to design a program that responds to the needs reflected in the data from the community feedback. Knowing that the community has specific transportation needs like greater flexibility and ease of access tells indicates that an on-demand program model may be best suited to address these needs.

## Section II: Findings and Results of Needs Assessment.

### A description of how many residents were engaged including general demographics.

Fresno EOC's Resident Survey received 30 responses from the target rural communities, and the 13 focus groups were attended by a total of 84 residents. In the follow up survey of Food Distribution clients, 177 residents provided their input.

Of the residents who completed the first survey, 71% indicated that they primarily speak English and 28% indicated primarily Spanish. Residents who completed the second survey were 54% primarily English-speaking and 46% primarily Spanish-speaking. Of the total surveys administered, 49% had annual household incomes below \$25,000 and 25% had between \$25,000 - \$34,999. The majority (23.86%) lived in households of four people.

### A description of event details including location, time, information about meeting notices, collaboration with local groups, etc.

Fresno EOC held 13 focus groups between March 10, 2021 and April 2, 2021 ranging from 2 to 11 attendees. Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, focus groups were held via Zoom and were scheduled for varying days of the week and time to accommodate different schedules and availability to allow for maximum participation of residents. The groups were also offered in Spanish, Hmong, and English to address potential language barriers to participation.

Participants were invited through a variety of methods including through social media, flyer distribution. Other Fresno EOC programs including WIC, Head Start, LIHEAP and others invited their clients to participate in the focus groups. Participants pre-registered to attend the zoom focus groups.

In collaboration with Fresno EOC Food Services, Transit Systems conducted a survey of residents in the targeted rural Fresno communities through Food Distribution events. Event staff passed out hard copies of the survey, which were then entered into SurveyMonkey for analysis. The survey was completed by 177 rural community members, who were asked about key demographic information, transportation habits and expenses, and transportation needs.

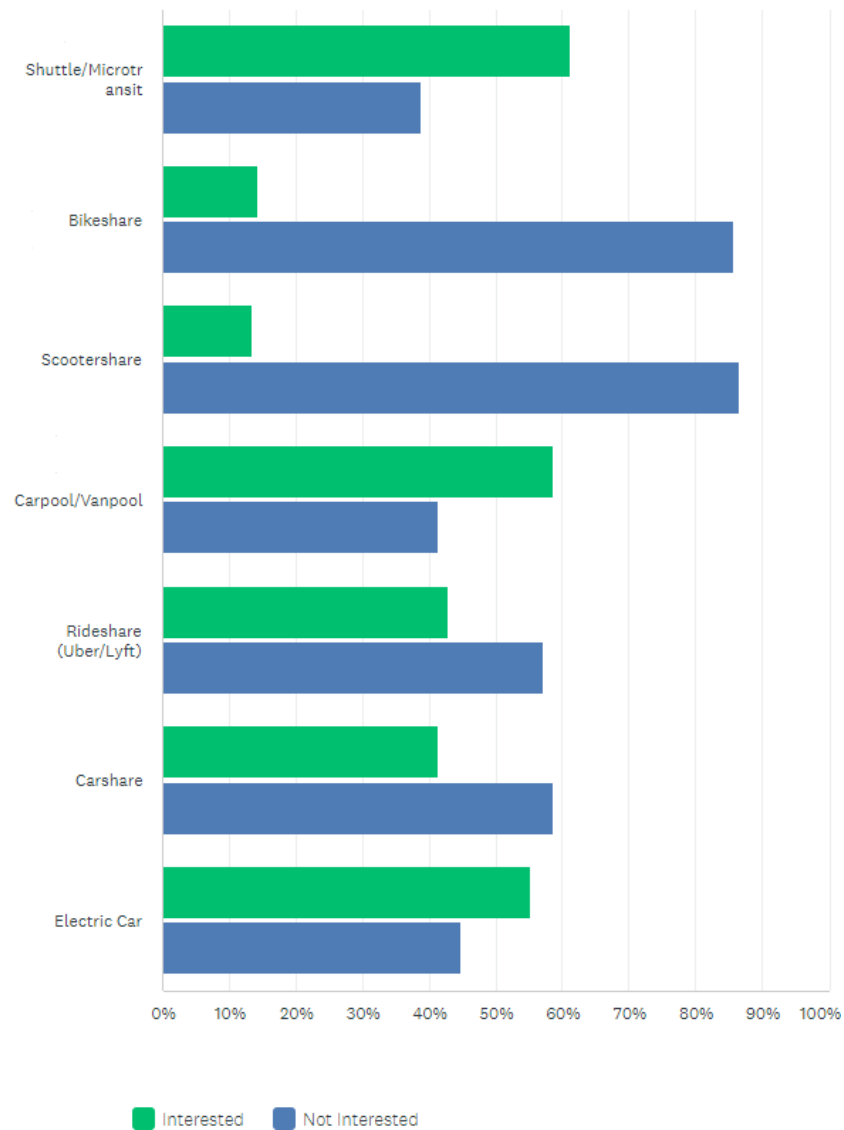
### Detailed survey and community event findings and key takeaways, including but not limited to:

#### A description of travel behavior, including how and where residents travel to access medical care, employment, education, and shopping.

Of those who completed the survey, 96% responded that they would be willing to try new modes of transportation they currently do not use, in particular smaller and more flexible options like rideshares, as well as greener options. Seventy-three percent primarily use a debit card, followed by 42% who primarily use a bank account.

## Which of the following would you be interested in using?

Answered: 177 Skipped: 40



### A description of main underlying causes in transportation gaps and challenges in the project area.

When asked about the immediate unmet needs facing their communities, participants in 9 of the 13 focus groups shared that insufficient transportation, particularly in rural Fresno County, is a widespread issue that they would like to see addressed. Residents reported that the public transportation options in their communities do not meet their needs, due to limited and infrequent routes. Rural residents also shared that they have difficulty obtaining bus passes.

The biggest need identified through the assessment is a need for on-demand transportation in rural areas. If that is the case, it will also give the opportunity to shape what an on-demand

service in rural communities might look like. Fresno EOC's has heard that there are unmet transportation needs in the following four categories in rural areas: trips for medical care, rides for school and educational opportunities, access to work sites and rides for shopping. The community transportation needs assessment will help gauge the accuracy of that as well as what the unmet need is in each of those categories. If that bears out to be correct, what would make more sense than buses that would likely have large amounts of unused seating capacity would be to have a fleet of smaller, more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles to address the need while simultaneously working to improve the community air quality.

## Section II: Next Steps

### Main factors that are, or could, contribute to successful transportation options in the project area.

One of the primary factors that will impact the success of this project is the flexibility of service for rural residents, which is a consistent challenge of providing transportation services in communities where residents often have to travel longer distances for appointments and other needs. Both the frequency of service and the hours of operation will affect whether residents will feel like they can rely on the proposed service. One feature of the service that could increase flexibility and encourage more ridership is a driver being able to wait on a passenger for a short period of time (e.g., 5 or 10 minutes) if that allows a rider to make multiple stops in one trip.

Other factors that will contribute to success are the cost of the service, the size of the vehicles used and how many passengers can be transported at one time (including car seats for children), and the availability of cargo space for riders who may have groceries or other items they need to bring with them.

### Any additional assessments and measurements that could be conducted to better understand some of the issues raised upon completion of the assessment.

The proposed service will eventually benefit from a greater understanding of rider behavior and travel patterns in order to better tailor the service to the needs of these communities. For example, using data about the times where the service was in greater demand to identify key times, days of the week, and even times throughout the year where the service could increase its capacity. This would allow the program to grow by accommodating more residents and even becoming a more flexible service while also remaining cost effective to operate.

### List of actions that could be taken to enhance clean mobility in the project area.

1. A countywide, on-demand social service transportation program would help fill the gaps in families' transportation needs such as getting to doctors' appointments, transporting children to school, picking up groceries, and running other necessary errands. Rides would be available within 15-30 minutes of the request. The targeted populations that would benefit from this service would include elderly, disabled, and low-incomes families and individuals. A scheduled or on-demand transportation option would allow many people to take advantage of the programs and services that are already available to them, such as a physical health program for seniors. This program would mirror Fresno EOC Transit System's current Taxi Scrip service and would leverage the agency's existing resources, programs, and staff to expand services and meet these needs. Drivers and vehicles will be shared and shifted between programs, and Fresno EOC will utilize on-board technology to accurately delineate costs between different

contracts. Ultimately, this will result in a more sustainable scaling of the provision of transit services to meet different community needs.

2. Buses should run more frequently than every 30 minutes.
3. Transportation should be provided to school, trainings and other continuing education-opportunities.
4. We would like to see more funding for on-demand transportation options for rural communities.
5. Provide transportation to assist people going back to work.

#### A description of whether:

- [Community members are supportive of solutions that are eligible project models for Clean Mobility Options Voucher funding.](#)

Many local agencies, organizations and other stakeholders in Fresno County have been advocating for green solutions to the gaps in transportation, such as the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which has offered vouchers for the purchase of electric vehicles and charging stations. The City of Huron, in rural Fresno County, has also demonstrated that rural communities are invested in supporting these types of projects through their implementation of the Green Raiteros program (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0c6CB5oGmVI>).

Fresno EOC's survey of rural residents has also demonstrated this support—of survey respondents, 72% stated that they are open to trying new methods of transportation and the majority indicated that they would be interested in trying greener forms of transportation.

- [There are any small, simple, inexpensive projects that could be implemented to immediately improve the quality of transportation in the community.](#)

There are many opportunities for tactical urbanism projects surrounding bicycle infrastructure in rural Fresno County. These low-cost changes such as painting bicycle lane lines could be used to test out and demonstrate the need for increased bicycle infrastructure.

- [There are any entities with whom this information could be shared to help promote transportation planning needs.](#)

Fresno EOC will be able to share information with local stakeholders and members of the transportation network including CalTrans, the City of Fresno, the County of Fresno, Fresno County Rural Transit Authority (FCRTA), and the Fresno Council of Governments (COG) who conduct an unmet transit needs assessment each year. The needs assessment data and analysis can also be shared with the rural cities which will be targeted with the proposed service.

- [A description of how any clean mobility that is implemented as a result of the assessment will be monitored over time.](#)

Fresno EOC will monitor the mileage of new green vehicles and compare the carbon footprint to that of a typical gas vehicle, and factor in any ridesharing component that decreases the number of vehicles on the road by transporting multiple residents at once. It will also be

important to monitor the maintenance time and costs of these green vehicles compared to gas vehicles.

[A plan to follow-up and continue engagement with attendees and community members.](#)

As part of the survey, Fresno EOC asked respondents if they would be interested in being updated about any future projects related to increased transportation options for their communities. Almost 20% said they would like to receive future updates, and provided their contact information.