

## **Spotlight – Fresno Council of Governments (from the February 2013 CSDC Network News)**

The Fresno Council of Governments (COG), created in 1967, is one of California's 38 regional planning agencies. Fresno County is located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley with just under a million residents. The Fresno COG undertakes comprehensive planning with an emphasis on transportation for Fresno County. Some of the Fresno COG's activities include:

- Preparation of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that looks 25 years into the future, and sets policies for a wide variety of transportation options and projects. It guides how and where people and goods will travel by identifying both existing and needed transportation facilities.
- Preparation of the region's Federal Transportation Improvement Program, a four-year program of financially-constrained transportation projects consisting of highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects that are selected through an approved project selection process.
- Implementation of Measure C projects funded by a half-cent transportation sales tax including the Carpool Incentive Program, the Commuter and Farmworker Vanpool Subsidy Programs, the Taxi Scrip Program for seniors, and the Regional Transportation Mitigation Fee Program.
- Administration of two federal program funds (Regional Surface Transportation Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program), administration of the federal portion of the Transportation Enhancement Program, and administration of two state program funds (Local Transportation Fund and State Transit Assistance Fund).
- Administration of a Travel Demand Model, a state-of-the-art computer software package that replicates the "real world" transportation system (roads, intersections, congestion delay, use of transit systems, etc.). By simulating the current roadway conditions and the travel demand on those roadways, deficiencies in the system can be identified, helping to plan future network enhancements and analyze currently proposed projects.



- Provision of current and consistent data on county traffic through the COG's Traffic Monitoring Program. Selected sites are monitored through traffic counts, and the traffic volume results are used by member agencies in their operations and by Fresno COG to support the travel demand model.
- Hosting of the [www.valleyrides.com](http://www.valleyrides.com) website that provides free computer matching for individuals and companies interested in carpooling and vanpooling in/from Fresno County. The program supports and promotes transportation options such as transit, bicycling and telecommuting.
- Administration of the Freeway Service Patrol, a joint project of Fresno COG, Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol. Through this service, a private tow truck company provides patrol service Monday through Friday during morning and evening commute hours with either free, on-the-spot quick fixes or towing services to stranded motorists.
- Administration of the Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Program, which reimburses Fresno County's local agencies for costs incurred in the removal of abandoned vehicles in violation of local

ordinances. This program is funded by an additional \$1 vehicle registration fee, exclusively for Fresno County.

- Compliance with SB 375, a law requiring California's Air Resources Board to develop regional reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions, and prompts the creation of regional plans to reduce emissions from vehicle use. Fresno COG has been tasked with creating a regional plan or "Sustainable Communities Strategy" for Fresno County that will integrate land use and transportation planning and demonstrate an ability to attain proposed reduction targets by 2020 and 2035.
- Preparation of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan for Fresno County. Local agencies must then accommodate the housing allocation defined by the plan within their own housing elements.
- Participation in several San Joaquin Valley-wide activities such as the regional Blueprint project, air quality conformity, transportation and air quality modeling, Valley Voice advocacy activities, 99 business plan, and greenprint.



Kathy Chung

#### About the Fresno COG staff:

The Fresno COG has been an affiliate agency for the California State Data Center since 1994. Kathy Chung is the lead affiliate center staff for Fresno COG. She obtained her degree from Fresno State in mathematics. She worked for the City of Fresno Planning Department for 22 years and has worked for Fresno COG for 19 years. (Yet magically, she's only 35 years old! As a mathematics major, she uses a "special formula" to calculate her age.)

Kathy's tip for obtaining data is to learn how to use American FactFinder. It is much more challenging to use than the previous, legacy American FactFinder, but it is well worth the effort considering the data it provides. Another tip is to put the most requested data on your agency's website. This is a great timesaver as you can always refer users to your website and this satisfies most data needs.

One of the Kathy's challenges to providing information is the lack of economic data since the decennial census no longer contains that information and American Community Survey data have large margins of error, especially for small geographic areas.

Kathy's funniest experiences are when people accidentally call her "Connie Chung," confusing her with the news reporter. One day, Kathy got to meet Connie's husband Maury Povich at a celebrity pro/am golf tournament and had an amusing talk with him about the name mix-up.

In her spare time, Kathy plays the piano and loves working on puzzles such as crosswords, Sudoku and KenKen.

If she could live any place in the world, Kathy would choose where she lives now—in the San Joaquin Valley. She was raised in the small valley town of Livingston in Merced County before moving to Fresno to attend Fresno State University. She loves to travel and visit places, but the San Joaquin Valley will always be her home.