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Become a part of Fresno County's transit solution

The Public Transportation Infrastructure Study, known as FastTrack Fresno County, has examined trends in air quality, transit ridership, general plans, zoning, land uses, population growth, demographics and more.

Through community events, public input has been gathered on streetcars, Personal Rapid Transit, light rail, Bus Rapid Transit, housing densities and more.

Some of the best experts in their fields have been a part of the team, helping Fresno City and County prepare for the future. This month, an expert in public transit is coming to Fresno to lend his unique perspective to the discussion.

'Transit guru' coming to Fresno

The presentation featuring international transit guru Jarrett Walker will begin with a transit video at 6:30 p.m. and program at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 27, at the Alice Peters Auditorium on campus at California State University, Fresno.

Walker, who blogs via humantransit.org and has done planning work in the Valley, believes that the key to great transit is not buying cool technologies, or even just in doing great analysis. Rather, it's in figuring out how transit projects reflect the values, hopes and ambitions of a city. In his consulting work, his blog and his forthcoming book, Walker tries to start thoughtful conversations about how transit works and how it can be used to create better cities and towns.

A celebrity of sorts among transit experts, Walker's blog recently hit a record of nearly 4,000 page views in one day. His presentation will address how land use decisions impact the viability of transit and how to balance practicality with vision. In Walker's world, practicality alone results in habit — "more of the same" transit planning. Conversely, vision alone leads to boondoggles and disappointing results.

How do Downtown Fresno specifically and Fresno County as a whole balance practicality with vision? Walker will address these "transit quarrels" between people stuck in the past or stuck in the future and help develop a voice in the middle. Walker's presentation is part of a two-year-long effort to help Fresno City and County plan for the coming population growth, reduce our dependence on the automobile and help improve our air quality.

Study nearing conclusion

One key question challenging the consultant team throughout the FastTrack study has been: What effect does development density and mix of housing and employment have on the way people travel in Fresno County?

To help answer that question, three transit corridors were studied that, with long-term planning, could become high-capacity Bus Rapid Transit corridors designed to encourage greater use of transit, biking and walking.

These high-capacity corridors are:

- Blackstone Avenue from Downtown Fresno to the River Park Transit Center
- Ventura Street/Kings Canyon Road from Downtown Fresno to the edge of development (Clovis Avenue)
- Shaw Avenue from Highway 99 to Fresno State, then north on Highway 168 to a high-density employment destination planned for north Clovis.

Computer modeling programs illustrate how three different levels of housing densities along each corridor could affect travel choices once more people and job centers are located closer together.

What the study has found is that a few well-planned transit corridors can make a big difference in the way people travel. People will walk more, bicycle more and use transit if there are destinations close to where they work and live.

Recommendations will soon be made to elected officials to help guide how Fresno City and County invest in transportation and to guide development patterns in coming years.

Learn more and hear updates on the study at a series of meetings set for the week of Oct. 25. For details, visit FastTrackFresnoCounty.com.

The two-year study will hit several major milestones in coming months as streetcar study results, policy recommendations, and greenhouse gas emissions modeling results and targets will be released for public comment.

The population is coming. How will we manage this growth and how will we work, travel and live in 2035? Get involved in FastTrack Fresno County and be part of the planning — and the solution.

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