The 2014 Regional Transportation Plan for San Joaquin County invests $282 million dollars in “active transportation”, a substantial increase (78%) compared to the previous plan. What does that mean for the San Joaquin Region and why is it important?
Active Transportation is a means of getting around that is powered by human energy, primarily walking and bicycling. Often called "non-motorized transportation," the term "active transportation" better expresses the key connection between healthy, active living and our transportation choices.

Recently a greater emphasis has been placed on transportation projects that provide infrastructure not only for vehicles, but enhance conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians as well. These projects include measures such as bike lanes, shared use paths, and streetscape enhancements such as lighting, street furniture, signage, and traffic calming measures.

Bicycle infrastructure in particular comes in a variety of forms. A Class I Bike Path is a shared use paved path usually 8 feet wide with two foot compacted shoulders for pedestrians that is separated from vehicle traffic. A Class II Bike Lane is a painted four foot wide one-way facility on a street running with the direction of traffic. A Class III Bike Route consists of signage and shared-lane pavement marking sharrows on roadways that are too narrow to be striped with bicycle lanes.
**Walking and Bicycling** are not commonly used for commutes to work in the Central Valley. Figure 1 presents a comparison of biking and walking rates across San Joaquin County as well as the cities of Sacramento, Modesto, Turlock, and Fresno. Lodi has the highest rate of bike and walk commuters in the county, but its number of these commuters is less than a third of Stockton’s. Tracy and Manteca have the lowest rates and counts, but they also have some of the largest inter-county commuting shares and labor forces in the county.

San Joaquin County has mirrored the nation with a declining share of commuters walking to work. In San Joaquin County, 3.5% of commuters usually walked to work in 1980, but in the 5 year period to 2012 that share had declined to 1.7%. Nationally, biking commuters have increased in the past decade from 0.4% of commuters in 2000 to 0.6% of commuters in the 5 year period to 2012. However, San Joaquin County has seen its share of biking commuters consistently declining from 1.02% of commuters in 1980 to 0.46% of commuters according to 2008-2012 American Community Survey census data.

Sacramento’s rates of active transportation commuters are noticeably higher than those of San Joaquin County’s and the other Central Valley cities. The concentration of employment in downtown Sacramento, particularly State workers, and nearby residential housing is an important contributing factor for these contrasting rates. Another significant influence would seem to be Sacramento’s comparatively developed active transportation infrastructure.

In this context it is interesting that Davis, California which has a long and significant biking culture has also seen a decline in its share of biking commuters. In 1980, 28% of all commuters in Davis biked to work but that share had dropped to 14% in 2000 although it has since recovered to 19% according to 2008-2012 American Community Survey census data.

**Active Transportation in San Joaquin County**
- Women walk to work slightly more than men:
  - 1.9% of women usually walk to work
  - 1.7% of men usually walk to work
- Men bike to work more than women:
  - 0.7% of men usually bike to work
  - 0.2% of women usually bike to work
- Young workers more likely to walk to work:
  - 28% of walkers are under 25 years old, but only 13% of all workers are under 25 years old
- Those in service occupations more likely to walk to work:
  - 27% of walkers are in service occupations, but only 19% of all workers are in service occupations
- Walkers typically have short commutes:
  - 63% of walkers have commutes less than 10 minutes, but only 14% of all workers have commutes less than 10 minutes
The recently adopted 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for San Joaquin County forecasts $282 million being available for Active Transportation Projects between 2014 and 2040. This is a 78% increase over the previous 2011 RTP, and is a result of changing priorities in the jurisdictions and a greater emphasis on sustainability aspects.

One of the funding sources for Active Transportation Projects in the RTP is the new Active Transportation Program. This is a statewide competitive program with approximately $180 million available in 2014 for projects that support biking and walking. Five cities and San Joaquin County submitted 29 applications to compete for funding at the state level. Those applications not funded at the state level will compete for $2.97 million available at the local level. A selection of these projects are highlighted below.

**Stockton: Miner Avenue Complete Street**

Miner Avenue fell into disrepair as Stockton’s urban core declined. The City’s core is emerging again, with recent multi-million dollar investments in the new Banner Island Ballpark, Stockton Arena, and full restoration of the SPRR Depot as the Cabral Rail Station, an important commuter rail hub. Miner Avenue links these investments, and revitalizing the 10-block corridor will help restore economic growth to Stockton’s downtown.

This project proposes to reduce the number of vehicle lanes from four to two, add landscaped medians, and a separately striped bicycle lane. The reduction in lanes will allow for wider sidewalks, curbside planters, and designated sidewalk areas for potential café seating in the future. These improvements will provide balanced transportation opportunities for all modes and improve safety for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
Lodi: Century Blvd Bike & Pedestrian Bridge

**Century Boulevard** in Lodi currently does not extend across the Union Pacific Railroad mainline tracks. Many students cross the railroad track at this location because it is a shorter route to school even though it is not the safest route.

Providing a pedestrian and bicycle connection between the east and west sides of Century Boulevard will improve travel time and safety for the students that are currently biking and walking to school, encourage more student to walk and bike to school, improve rail safety, air quality, and roadway circulation.

Tracy: South West Park School Sidewalks

**South West Park Elementary School** is one of the oldest schools in Tracy. Portions of Mt. Diablo Avenue, Mt. Oso Avenue, and C Streets around the school have unpaved shoulders that lack sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. Eliminating gaps in the pedestrian infrastructure will encourage students walk to school. This will also encourage residents to walk downtown businesses and use public transit at the Tracy Transit Center.
Growing research has linked elevated chronic and preventable disease risks to ecological factors that include the designated use, layout, and design of a community’s built environment. The decisions we make regarding aspects of planning such as land use, vehicle circulation, zoning and street design are all elements that influence human behavior; the opportunities for physical activity (e.g. walking, bicycling and recreation); the amount of time we spend in our cars driving; the foods we consume (e.g. fast food vs. fresh produce); the quality of air we breathe—are all contributing factors to our health outcomes.

A 2013 report that provided a community health assessment for San Joaquin County revealed obesity and chronic disease were consistently identified as significant health issues by residents. That sentiment is supported by data, as 68.1 percent of San Joaquin County adults, ages 18-64, were identified as overweight or obese; a figure much higher than the statewide rate of 58.9 percent, as reported in 2009. According to the California Department of Public Health, San Joaquin County age-adjusted death rates due to lung cancer, diabetes, and heart disease are well-above state average and rank as some of the worst percentages found in the state.

Investing in active transportation is particularly important as the rate of residents walking and biking in San Joaquin County has trended downward the past three decades. Inferences may be drawn from this as asthma, obesity rates, and incidences of diabetes have all increased in the county over the past decade.

The San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) recognizes the importance of expanding and enhancing the bike and pedestrian environment within the county, and delivering projects that are valued throughout the region. In 2012, SJCOG adopted the Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Safe Routes to School Master Plan. The plan was developed for the purpose of increasing commuter walking and bicycling, and to support active and safe transportation to and from school. With the support of voters, SJCOG will continue to deliver projects through funding from Measure K and the Active Transportation Program.
Commute Connection, a program of SJCOG, partners with local jurisdictions and employers to promote Bike to Work Week across San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced Counties annually in May. This event is part of a nationally celebrated campaign established in 1956 to promote bicycling and walking as healthy, pollution-free and efficient forms of transportation. As Bike to Work Week grows each year, it has become a key way in which Commute Connection can motivate and support commuters in making the transition from driving alone to a sustainable commute alternative. Bike to Work Week is promoted throughout the region with a series of pledge drives, community events, contests and public outreach efforts.

For the 2014 Bike to Work Week events there was a 37% increase in participants across San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced Counties. These 873 participants rode an average of 2.94 days a week for a distance of 7.6 miles roundtrip, and 64.7% of them have continued to bike or walk to work after the event ended. Through these efforts over 15,000 vehicles miles travelled were eliminated, with the result of preventing 12,172 pounds of CO\textsuperscript{2} emissions, and saving 630 gallons of gasoline. Participants identified health as their primary motivation for participation, followed by the environment and saving money.
The San Joaquin Council of Government serves as the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for San Joaquin County. Under that umbrella, SJCOG also serves as the Census Data Center for the county and partners with the University of the Pacific’s Business Forecasting Center to provide data and analysis of a variety of socio-economic issues relevant to the San Joaquin region.