

COS FRESNO STATE NUMBERS SHOW DECLINE: At the May 10 joint meeting of the Visalia City Council and the College of the Sequoias Board of Trustees, COS President Bill Scroggins gave an update on the status of the Fresno State University Center at COS. Enrollment has declined 36 percent in the last two years, falling from a peak enrollment of 402 students in 2007-08 to 259 this year. Scroggins said a four-year memorandum of understanding between COS and Fresno State is set to expire, and officials worry the program may be vulnerable. Students at the Center may pursue undergraduate or graduate degrees from Fresno State, and courses offered this semester include criminology, English, psychology, and music. Council Members agreed that the city, COS and the Visalia Unified School District should lobby for the center’s continued presence at COS, and Scroggins agreed to spearhead the effort.

UPDATE ON MOONEY BOULEVARD: The City’s improvements include the widening of Whitendale and Walnut Avenues on the east and west sides of Mooney Boulevard with new dual left-turn lanes to increase the capacity. The Walnut intersection will also include the undergrounding of low voltage electrical and communication lines and placing the high voltage lines on 85-foot tall steel poles. The new undergrounding district will also prohibit future overhead lines within the district. The engineers estimate for both projects is about \$4.3 million, including the utility undergrounding. The design of these two projects has been completed and the necessary right-of-way has been obtained. Construction will begin in early summer and is scheduled to be completed by November 1st.

PLANNING GRANT TO FUND STUDY TO IMPROVE TRANSIT BETWEEN VISALIA, TULARE: On April 1, TCAG filed an application with Caltrans for a planning grant to prepare a Visalia/Tulare Community Transit Study to improve transportation opportunities between the two communities over the next five years. Specifically, this study will be focusing on the needs of COS students attending either the Visalia campus or the new campus in the City of Tulare; and students from outlining communities in Tulare County. Staff expects to hear from Caltrans regarding this application to identify transit options sometime during the summer. The Transit Division has been working with the City of Tulare and COS to prepare for the expansion of the campus into Tulare and the anticipated increase in demand for transit service. The scope of the application was expanded to include consideration of the feasibility of providing a reduced cost option for COS students, and COS has expressed a willingness to consider implementing a student fee of \$1-2 per student per semester that would cover some or all of the cost of implementing such a reduction. Preliminary estimates indicate that this fee would generate less than the cost of current bus passes purchased by COS students; additional funding sources will need to be identified to provide significant long term student discounts. The grant cannot be used to pay for the subsidy directly, only to determine the options and feasibility for doing so.

PHASE II OF SPORTS PARK KICKS OFF WITH DEDICATION: The Riverway Sports Park Phase II Dedication, organized by the Visalia Parks and Recreation Department, will take place from 4:30 to 9 p.m. Saturday June 5th, at the Park. This year’s dedication will include activities featuring live “music”, home run derby, fastest kid in Visalia, bounce houses, City championship game and much more. Local business can set up booths in the park, for a small fee, to display their programs and services and provide information to the large (and growing) youth population of Visalia. Requests for booth space must be received before May 28, in order to be guaranteed a location. For information, call Ramon Sanchez at 713-4277.

DARE TO SPARE CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION UP 50%: This year’s second annual Dare to Spare Challenge proved to be a huge success with a 50% increase in participating teams. Each team was charged to do things that spared our air and each team was awarded points for their task. Collectively, the Dare to Spare teams:

- Carpooled 91 times
- Trip-linked 107 times
- Rode Visalia Transit 53 times
- Rode The Visalia Towne Trolley 10 times
- Walked over 113 miles
- Biked over 279 miles

In addition to the great response, this challenge gave credit to people currently riding public transportation and enticed non-riders to try public transportation. The two winning teams were Team Eco Supreme from CSET in Visalia, earning 3,705 points, and Team United Way from Tulare, earning 510 points.

MAY IS WATER AWARENESS MONTH: May was first declared Water Awareness Month in California during the drought of 1989. While every month is Water Awareness Month in the City of Visalia, May is the time when residents need to be reminded of the importance of using water wisely, especially outdoors. While we are fortunate that the Sierra snowpack and rainfall have been above normal this year, it is not enough to recover from three straight years of drought and groundwater levels remain low. Citizens are encouraged to practice water conservation every day and be mindful of the City’s water conservation ordinance. To learn more, visit GoGreenVisalia.org for water saving tips and information on the water conservation ordinance, and SaveOurH2O.org, the state “Save Our Water” website.

BOOK NOW FOR SEQUOIA SHUTTLE’S FOURTH SEASON: Sequoia Shuttle starts its fourth season of public transportation from Visalia to the majestic Sequoia National Park on May 27th. To date, the partnership service between the City of Visalia and the National Park Service has transported close to 15,000 patrons. The \$10 roundtrips, for trips taken before June 11th (not including weekends and holidays), is perfect for those looking for an easy get-away from the heat for themselves or their families. For the remainder of the season, which ends on September 20th, the cost is only \$7.50 each way. Groups of eight or more can get discounted seats for \$6 each way but will need to book by calling Transit Analyst Gamaliel Anguiano at 713-4594 for the discount. Scheduled pick-up times are easy and convenient. Visit www.sequoiashuttle.com for more information and booking arrangements.

POPULATION POINT OF INTEREST: The City of Visalia, with a population of 125,971, is now the 46th largest city in the state, according to the City/County/State Population estimates recently released by the State’s Department of Finance. Visalia was also the seventh fastest growing city with populations under 300,000 based on its numeric population change of 2,498, or 2% from January 1, 2009 to January 1, 2010.