

Bakersfield rolls out new e-bike partnership with Spin

By Perry Smith

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The city of Bakersfield rolled out its newest effort to increase residents' mobility Monday, with the addition of 125 new e-bikes in its latest partnership with Spin.

The e-bikes, which help riders along with pedal-assisted rechargeable electric motors and therefore the ability to go farther, represent an advance of the city's plan to make navigating the city easier, safer and more accessible, according to city leaders.

In November, the city piloted a similar app-based program with Spin scooters.

City Councilman Andrae Gonzales, who took a brief test ride of an e-bike Monday on Truxtun Avenue in front of City Hall, said the bicycles are the "next step," and that he also hopes the new rides will make the city's transit system easier to use.

"It gives people the opportunity to use public transportation and then come downtown and take the bike and use it for the last mile," Gonzales said, "getting from the bus stop to wherever they're trying to go to for their final destination."

It's also to provide another mode of transportation to encourage people to explore different parts of the city, he said, noting not everyone can afford one of the e-bikes, which generally start at around \$1,000 and quickly increase in price depending on the options available.

The city's tab for the deal with Spin is covered by an Active Transportation Program grant, according to a city news release.

"The \$701,000 state grant is the only money the city is providing to Spin as part of this agreement," city spokesman Joe Conroy confirmed Monday via email. "That will be for some maintenance and operating costs, as well as the subsidy for the student and low-income discounts."

For the average user, the cost is \$1 to unlock each bike, plus 39 cents per minute to ride, according to a city news release. Low-income residents who qualify will be able to use the bikes for half that rate.

As part of the new deal, the city is terminating a pilot program with Spin that involved the scooters, which was always part of the plan, according to Chris Grant, senior operations manager for Spin in Southern California.

"So the one benefit is that these are going to give you a little bit more range," Grant said. "The scooters have about a 30-mile range, whereas these have about a 100-mile range. It's a sturdier ride and we found it to be safer as well."

A couple of other advantages over the scooters include the pedal assist that will let the user go up to 12 mph, which Grant said might increase to 15 mph at some point. It also offers a basket on the front intended to carry up to about 20 pounds of cargo.

Cindy Parra of Bike Bakersfield, the local mobility advocacy group, was excited about the opportunity for city riders, noting the new wheels would be especially helpful in the northeast part of the city, where the riding can be a little hillier and tougher to navigate.

"These are perfect," she said, adding she's used Spin bikes in other cities, and this is something her group has wanted in Bakersfield for a while. "They're heavy duty, but lightweight at the same time. It's easy maintenance and it has tubeless tires. I just think this is going to be a good fit."

Anyone looking for more information about the bikes or to apply for the discounted rate can call 1-888-262-5189.

Microgrids grant could put Kern ahead of energy curve

By John Cox

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For all its bulk and diversity, one element Kern County's energy industry will probably need a lot more of in the years ahead is resilience, not only for protection against wildfire-related power shutoffs but also to cover daily gaps between supply and demand for renewable electricity.

Massive energy storage projects proposed locally would help fill the need on a large scale. Even if they get built, though, researchers say there's special value in also installing smaller-scale solar and battery systems that can independently power a business or even a neighborhood in a way that increases local resiliency and cost efficiency.

Last week, hopes rose that Kern will soon become a specialist in such technologies — microgrids, they're called — thanks to a federal grant awarded last week to the city of Bakersfield in partnership with the Kern Community College District.

Researchers with the U.S. Department of Energy will provide technical assistance on siting, designing and operating systems that generate, store and direct power for use on independent networks of different sizes. Agricultural and industrial applications are envisioned as being part of the effort.

People involved say the federal grant, together with follow-up work planned at a countywide level, are likely to expand Kern's profile as a hub of conventional and renewable energy innovation.

There are also expectations a sustained emphasis on microgrants would lead to more good jobs and a more diverse county economy, to the benefit of local consumers and industry alike.

Bakersfield's economic and community development director, Paul Saldaña, said microgrids offer solutions for residents as well as industry. Because it's a growing sector, there's a chance to advance the technology locally, he said, adding that local students might be able to get in at the ground level.

"We hope that through our partnerships with the Department of Energy and the community college district and Cal State Bakersfield and others that we can help to nurture this industry and really be a proving ground, if you will, for how microgrids and this technology can really help save energy and power the community," Saldaña said.

Kern County also received a technical assistance grant from the Department of Energy. Its work will focus on carbon capture and sequestration — gathering up greenhouse gas and burying it deep underground indefinitely. CCS is a developing technology that has recently been proposed for local deployment on a large scale.

Recent years have seen technical advancements and large investments in microgrids that generate electricity primarily using photovoltaic solar arrays. They store the power in batteries connected to computer controls designed to maximize efficiency of power delivery.

The first commercial-scale microgrid to receive public attention in Kern was built at a cost of \$12 million at an 1,100-employee baby-potato plant in Arvin.

Owner Tasteful Selections contracted Salinas-based Concentric Power Inc. to set up a 5-megawatt solar, natural gas and battery system expected to reduce the company's power bill by about 40 percent, and at the same time keeps on lights and refrigerators when the power goes out.

The Mojave Air and Space Port is working on plans for a microgrid it expects will save its tenants money on their power bills and allow them to keep working if power from outside shuts off.

CEO and General Manager Todd Lindner said during an energy webinar Bakersfield College hosted Tuesday, the day Bakersfield's federal grant was announced, that the air and space port recently bought 67 acres north of the facility for placement of a solar array that will serve the microgrid.

At the same virtual event, Vice Chairman Siva Gunda of the California Energy Commission said the state will need to quickly ramp up its investments in building energy storage and microgrids if California is to meet its goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2045. He noted the agency has already doled out \$136 million for 45 different microgrid projects across the state.

Microgrids will also become more important as wildfire interrupts power delivery, as happened over two days in August 2020, Gunda said, when the loss of nearly 4,000 megawatts of electrical transmission caused rolling blackouts.

The systems come in different sizes and configurations, and different potential ownership structures, Gunda noted, adding that it may be possible to power microgrids with biogas from local bio digesters and wastewater plants.

A priority identified by Bakersfield and the college district will be the equitable sharing of microgrid benefits. KCCD Chancellor Sonya Christian said the systems will be deployed throughout the region, especially in low-income and communities with a heavy energy burden.

As part of that, local leaders of the effort will work with industry leaders to deepen the district's curricula and, she said, recruit underrepresented and incumbent workers.

Executive Director Camila Chavez of the Dolores Huerta Foundation said by email that when it was invited by the college district to participate in the project, "we saw it as an opportunity to have true community engagement in conversations that will have a director impact on disadvantaged communities."

"We want to be at the table and work alongside them and the Department of Energy to ensure there is equitable access to new energy technologies," Chavez wrote. "We also want to be a conduit to communities who need to understand these technologies and how they will impact our lives."

Community Action Partnership of Kern wrote a letter of support for the city's microgrant application because the organization supports helping people become energy independent, spokesman James Burger said.

Although CAPK doesn't work with microgrid technology, it does help county residents with utility costs and weatherization projects, and so in that way, Burger said microgrids are "right up our alley." The organization also supports the technology as an economic development priority, he added.

"We know that Kern County is going through a transition with energy, and we want to do the best we can to support people as we go through that transition because we need to follow a path that protects people that are lower on the economic ladder," he said. "Those are our people."

Dave Teasdale, executive director of KCCD's economic and workforce development programs, said construction jobs are likely to come of the microgrid focus, but not to the exclusion of computer-related work.

"We think there's an opportunity for cross-training and upscaling folks that may be working in construction to be able to actually work on the control parts of it, maybe learning a new skill," he said.

Teasdale also expects the work to attract manufacturing and consulting businesses. He said the county has an advantage because of its real-world testing environment, and that could lead to an entrepreneurial ecosystem that would benefit from the college district's existing relationships with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Colorado and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the Bay Area.

The plan is to bring in additional money and expertise, he said, and to learn from businesses that have had experience with microgrids.

[Fresno Bee, Valley Voices, Saturday, April 2, 2022](#)

A trade port in the San Joaquin Valley means 100K new jobs, cleaner air, better shipping

By Congressmen Jim Costa and David Valadao

The California Inland Port is a project that enjoys bipartisan support — something rare in these hyperpartisan times. It is a global model for supply chain efficiency, clean logistics and economic development. This project would mean cleaner air, less greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), reduced traffic, and 100,000 new jobs in the San Joaquin Valley. The project is a paradigm shift for how we move cargo in California. The equivalent of more than 1.1 million container boxes are moved annually through the San Joaquin Valley, to and from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. That is more than all the cargo that moves through the Port of Miami. Approximately half of that is inbound cargo, mostly consumer goods; the other half is outbound cargo, mostly agricultural products. About 40 percent of the cargo moving north ends up in the Bay Area through distribution centers located in the northern part of the Valley.

Today, all of this cargo moves via diesel-powered trucks. Consumer goods arrive at the ports in containers which are unloaded, then moved north. Agricultural exports move to the ports via truck, where they are containerized for export. As we painfully discovered over the past two years, tremendous port congestion has disastrous consequences for our supply chain and the ability to get essential goods to the American people. Working in tandem with the Southern California ports, Inland Port proponents envision cargo being moved in containers to and from trade ports in the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento, thereby reducing congestion at the coastal ports; and inbound cargo would then move to its final destination via trucks.

This can be done by incorporating rail, electric and hydrogen-powered trucks, and other evolving fuel technologies with the existing truck force that relies on traditional fuels. Having a diverse approach would greatly reduce Valley air pollution as well as GHGs. The analysis from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District shows that the project could reduce nitrogen dioxide pollution by 84 percent and GHGs by 93 percent. That is welcome news for Valley residents, industry, and agriculture. The California Inland Port is envisioned not just as a comprehensive north-south goods movement system, but also as an economic game-changer for the San Joaquin Valley. Four major trade ports would house multi-modal goods movement facilities and serve as private sector investment magnets with distribution facilities, e-commerce operations, durable and non-durable goods manufacturing, workforce training centers, research facilities, and retail operations to serve the tens of thousands of workers at each port. Concentrating all of this industrial and distribution activity in a few sites, and ensuring efficient design throughout, will reduce the need to build fragmented industrial sites adjacent to centers of population.

The system also envisions six to eight satellite ports, smaller facilities to help consolidate goods movement and enhance economic competitiveness in virtually every county in the Valley. Total projected investment in the system is forecast at about \$15 billion, with about 1 percent of that in catalyst infrastructure funding by the public sector, and the rest of it coming from the private sector.

There are still many phases and hurdles this project must overcome before it becomes a reality for the Central Valley. So, why are we writing this now? Given the severe national supply chain issues we are facing, the critical need to improve our air quality and reduce emissions, and the urgent need to expand economic opportunity for Valley residents, we support fast-tracking construction of the backbone of the system. We envision this as a system that would include two initial trade ports, one in the north and the other in the center of the Valley, to become operational in 2024, with the rest of the system to be built-out over the ensuing years. Seldom do we see a project with so many benefits for the Valley, the state and the nation. We should approach it with a sense of urgency.

Jim Costa is a Democrat representing Fresno, Madera and Merced; David Valadao is a Republican representing Hanford and parts of Kern, Tulare and Fresno counties.