

## **Kern Economic Development Update**

My office and other county officials are working with Eastern Kern communities and Fresno State University to conduct the East Kern Economic Strategy. At this time, Fresno State has met with stakeholders and has put together a funding strategy for the plan that includes 50% from the participating communities (California City, Rosamond, Mojave, Boron, Ridgecrest) and 50% in the form of an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant from the federal government. Funding from the participants can be actual cash or in-kind. For example, communities could provide meeting space and staff time as a part of the required match to reduce the actual cash requirement. The EDA grant portion will run through the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee. Our Countywide CEDS document, which creates eligibility for EDA funding, was approved by the EDA in June and is valid through June 2015.

Some very exciting Eastern Kern economic development projects that will be studied can be found in Mojave and Ridgecrest. During the last funding cycle Mojave Air & Spaceport applied for an EDA grant to upgrade the rail spur on the airport. The EDA has been conducting follow up efforts with the airport, which is a very good sign, indicating that the airport project is being heavily considered for funding. In Ridgecrest, China Lake Technologies is finishing up their "Strategy Development for the Creation of a Bioproducts Manufacturing Industry in County of Kern, California." This study was also funded by EDA grant funding through a special program--Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP).

The County of Kern continues to make every effort to foster economic development. The Kern County Board of Trade opened the grant cycle for the Tourism and Promotion grant on August 29th and the application period will close on October 24th. The guidelines and application are available at <http://www.visitkern.com/grants/>. The purpose of the grant is to assist communities in their efforts to attract visitors and to promote tourism throughout the county. Tourism is a \$1.3 billion industry in Kern County and is an economic driver for many of our communities. Tourism supports approximately 13,000 jobs in Kern County and contributes over \$17 million in local taxes. I am very excited to see the results of the East Kern Economic Strategy, and to see the results of the grants awarded by the Board of Trade. Eastern Kern is poised to be one of the most dynamic growth areas, not only in Kern County, but in the entire state. Kern's unique location and affordable cost structures, along with our reputation as a county that is very friendly toward business, is attracting new industries, and good paying jobs. It is my hope that all of these studies will add to the economic strength and quality of life we all enjoy here in Eastern Kern.