KERN COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY · PULSE

# Fewer Than One in Five Bakersfield Bus Stops Have Shade

KCMS members are invited to sign a letter to the Bakersfield City Council and the Golden Empire Transit Board.

By Justin Mokri · August 2026




Golden Empire Transit operates roughly 1,045 stops in the Bakersfield area. Fewer than 17 percent have any shade, and the stops with the least shade are concentrated in the neighborhoods with the highest heat exposure and the highest rates of transit dependence. The KCMS Board of Directors voted unanimously this month to support a proposed city shade standard at high ridership stops, and Kern County physicians are invited to add their names to a sign-on letter to the Bakersfield City Council and the GET Board. Adding your name takes about a minute.

California already treats shade as a heat-protection measure. Under Cal/OSHA's heat illness prevention standard, employers must make shade available to outdoor workers once the temperature passes 80 degrees. A Bakersfield resident who works outdoors is entitled to shade on the job site and has no claim to it at the stop where they wait for the bus that takes

them there, at the same hour, in the same heat.
The people waiting are largely people without another option. Riders skew toward older adults, people with disabilities, households without a vehicle, and patients traveling to recurring appointments. Their exposure is not discretionary. Someone going to dialysis three times a week cannot move the trip to a cooler hour, and the wait is not short. Off-peak headways on much of the GET system run 30 to 60 minutes.

Physicians reading this know the clinical course better than I do. The part that gets lost in a budget hearing is that heat illness is a continuum, that once a patient reaches heat stroke the damage is not reliably reversible, and that prevention is most of the treatment. Shade is prevention.

Over the past year I mapped every active GET stop against heat exposure and neighborhood vulnerability data and built a ranked index of where shade is missing against where risk is highest. The two do not offset each other. They overlap.

The Bakersfield Bus Stop Shade and Heat Protection Act is a local ordinance proposal. It would set a minimum shade standard at active stops, phase construction rather than demanding it everywhere at once, and rank stops by ridership, neighborhood heat vulnerability, share of households without a vehicle, and proximity to senior housing, schools, community health centers, and dialysis clinics. Councilmember Arias voiced support when I presented the proposal to the City Council.

A related state bill, AB 1599, the Transit Stop Registry Act, passed the Assembly 74 to 0 and would require standardized statewide data on transit stops and their amenities. It is worth saying plainly that AB 1599 does not build anything. It makes gaps visible. Whether Bakersfield closes the gap at its own stops is a decision for the City Council and the GET Board, and Sacramento will not make it for us.

What the letter asks the City to do is narrow: advance the ordinance for formal review, prioritize the most heat-vulnerable and transit-dependent stops first, and set measurable implementation and reporting standards with GET. What it asks of you is a name and a credential.

Shade at a bus stop gets argued as transportation, capital cost, and right-of-way. It is also a clinical exposure, and physicians are the only people in this conversation who can say so with authority. A letter carrying the names of Kern County physicians changes what the record looks like when this reaches a council vote.

**Read the letter and add your name:**
**https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8J3Y86Y**

Justin Mokri is a Bakersfield resident and a senior at Bakersfield Christian High School. He interns with Move LA, a California transit and climate policy nonprofit, and published a policy brief this year with the UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. Questions or corrections: justin.mokri@gmail.com