

CHAPTER 2 – PURPOSE AND NEED

INTRODUCTION

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the counties of Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba, and for Placer and El Dorado Counties except for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Federal metropolitan transportation planning regulations set forth in the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU), require that SACOG, as an MPO, develop a long-range transportation plan with no less than a twenty year planning horizon at least every four years. The regulations also require that the transportation plan include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand. (23 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450.322 (a) (b))

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for 2035 is proposed to chart a 28-year course for transforming region's transportation system by identifying various problems on the metropolitan transportation system, and proposing solutions that address those problems. The MTP 2035 includes proposals for new and improved transit options, safe and well connected bicycle and pedestrian facilities, a network of high-occupancy vehicle lanes to efficiently move express buses and carpoolers throughout the region, and real-time information about conditions on every highway and transit route in the region. SACOG's purpose in proposing the project is to provide a strategy to approach the many challenges faced by the Sacramento region as the population grows and the region expands over the next few decades.

The MTP 2035 is intended to set policies to guide transportation decisions, proposes a program of capital, operational, and management improvements needed by 2035, and recommends a package of revenue measures to fund the proposed program. The MTP 2035 is proposed to provide a critical foundation for the decisions made by the SACOG Board of Directors and establishes the reasons for moving forward with their actions. It is intended to provide the basis for reasonable evaluations and comparisons among alternative regional strategies.

BACKGROUND

To address concerns about regional growth, SACOG launched the Blueprint Transportation/Land Use Study in 2002. The results of forecasted transportation demand modeling demonstrated that implementing Smart Growth principles would shorten commute times, reduce traffic congestion, lessen dependence upon automobiles as the primary mode of travel, and provide housing choices more aligned with the needs of the population. The Blueprint was based upon these Smart Growth principles, including:

- **Transportation choices**

Community design can help encourage people to walk, ride bicycles, ride light rail, take the train or carpool. Community design can encourage people to make trips closer to home, making walking or biking easier. As more people walk, bike, or ride the bus, congestion and air pollution are reduced.

- **Housing choices**

Providing a variety of places where people can live – apartments, condominiums, townhouses and single family detached homes—creates opportunities for the variety of people who need

them—families, singles, seniors, and people with special needs. By providing a diversity of housing options, more people have a choice.

- **Compact development**

Creating environments that are more compactly built and use space in an efficient but more aesthetic manner can encourage more walking, biking and public transit use.

- **Use existing assets**

Focusing development in communities with vacant land or intensifying development of underutilized land can make better use of public infrastructure, including roads. Building on existing assets can also mean refurbishing historic buildings or clustering buildings more densely in suburban office parks.

- **Mixed land uses**

Building homes together with small businesses or even light industry is called “mixed-use” development, and it has proven to create active, vital neighborhoods.

- **Natural resources conservation**

To ensure healthy and attractive natural environments, we must reserve and maintain our open spaces and the most productive farmland and conserve energy, water and other important natural resources. Community design can help accomplish this by encouraging more compact land use patterns, especially where there is the potential for infill and redevelopment, energy-efficient design, water conservation and storm water management, and the planting of shade trees to reduce ground temperatures in the summer.

- **Quality design**

How projects are developed, how they are oriented in relationship to the street, how well designed their facades are, if they have setbacks and where their garages are placed, all combine to a community’s attractiveness. This also influences how much people like to walk or bike and contributes to community pride and sense of ownership.

In December 2004, the SACOG Board of Directors adopted the Blueprint Preferred Scenario, a bold vision for growth that promotes compact, mixed-use development and more transit choices as an alternative to low density development. Since then SACOG has been working with its member jurisdictions and tracking market trends to forecast what level of growth in employment and dwelling units to expect in the Sacramento region, this forecast forms the basis for the land use allocation that underpins the MTP for 2035. Federal transportation planning regulations require that the MTP be valid and consistent with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends. (23 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450.322 (c)) The SACOG Board of Directors adopted a regional employment, population and housing growth forecast in September 2005. SACOG staff then allocated the employment, population and housing growth to specific geographic locations using recent growth trends, planned projects (both adopted and in-process) in each jurisdiction, planning-related issues such as flood control, habitat and infrastructure, and the long-range planning projects of jurisdictions. The land use allocation emphasizes the Smart Growth principle of concentration of new and intensified development in already-developed areas and the contiguous expansion of the metropolitan area’s developed edge and identifies areas that might be appropriate for development through the year 2035. Based upon this voluntary long-range Smart Growth strategy, the MTP 2035 will be the first MTP for the Sacramento region to pro-actively link land use, air quality, and transportation needs.

NEED FOR THE MTP

The MTP 2035 is intended to address the many transportation needs in the six-county region, including:

- There are insufficient resources within the region to meet all of the maintenance, preservation, and improvement needs of the regional transportation system;
- Travelers within the region are experiencing ever increasing amount of congestion and often have no alternatives to avoid congestion;
- An insufficient supply of pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- Limited public transit service and insufficient pedestrian and bicycle access to transit;
- The existing transportation system requires additional maintenance and improvement of access for regional and inter-regional rail, truck, air and marine freight to accommodate projected growth and reach its destination with limited delay;
- Existing street designs do not currently safely accommodate all forms of travel;
- The region lacks Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and demand management strategies that would improve how the system operates.

MTP 2035 is needed to provide a strategy to approach the many challenges faced by the Sacramento region as the population grows and the region expands over the next few decades. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

Roadways

Much of the region's existing roadway network was built in the 1950s & 1960s. Since 1970, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) nationally have increased by 190%, and population has increased by 110%. (U.S. DOT, FHWA. 2005.) The number of vehicle miles traveled in California has also increased, by 170% since 1970 (Sacramento Transportation & Air Quality Collaborative, 2005). These trends inevitably lead to increased congestion. In 1993, during peak periods, drivers faced daily congestion on 17% (27 out of 160 miles) of greater Sacramento urban freeways but 38% (61 miles) of freeways are congested today.

The large majority of trips in the Sacramento region are made in private vehicles. During peak commute hours, when congestion is highest and the transportation system is used at greatest capacity, 92% of person-trips are made in private vehicles (either by a single occupant vehicle or a carpool/vanpool) and 82% of person-trips are made by people driving alone. Sharing a ride is more common in off-peak periods. Travel by public transit is highest in the peak periods, but still not even 3% of total regional peak period trips. (SACOG, 2005)

Transit

Within the region, transit currently carries less than 1% of all daily trips, about 4% of commute trips, and 20% of commute trips into downtown Sacramento. (SACOG, 2005) Anecdotal evidence indicates that the region's transit system has perhaps 30% unused peak capacity, little of it found on routes attractive to choice commute riders, and with available off-peak capacity. Many peak hour runs operate full, some with standees, particularly those oriented to commuting to and from downtown Sacramento, but some others run less than half full at all times.

Bicycling and Walking

Bicycling and walking are slightly lower during the peak period, but used by more commuters than public transit. Currently in the Sacramento region out of 9 million daily trips, 100,000 (1%) are bicycle trips and 450,000 (5%) are walk trips. By the year 2035, bike and walk trips will have increased to over 1 million. (SACOG, 2007)

Congestion

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2025 forecasted 40% more trips by auto by the year 2025. (SACOG, 2002) Truck trips are growing three times faster than auto, and that rate seems likely to continue. As auto trips continue to increase, it will make a big difference where on the system they go, and whether people drive alone or travel in carpools, but clearly at least in certain locations road system expansion will be called for.

Increasing traffic congestion is an inescapable result of robust economic activity and life in modern metropolitan areas, but it is not an economic benefit. Sacramento, with a population greater than 2 million, has reached the size and activity level where congested auto travel would be the expected norm, and accessibility replaces mobility as a transportation objective. U.S. 50 east of downtown Sacramento now carries more traffic outbound in the morning peak than inbound, and has become the region's first section of freeway with two-way congestion both morning and afternoon. Some of Sacramento's worst congestion occurs on crosstown suburban arterials: Watt Avenue, Sunrise Boulevard, Florin Road, and Douglas Boulevard. Stop and go traffic results in higher carbon emissions per mile than free-flowing traffic.

Freight Traffic

Interstate 5 is considered the "backbone" of the state's highway system, providing a link between the Central Valley and the nation's largest international gateway to trade – the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. It is also the West Coast's only north-south truck thoroughfare, linking Seattle with Los Angeles. Interstate 80 provides the main corridor for goods movement between the Bay Area, Sacramento, and the areas east of the Sierra. Nevertheless, over 80% of truck trips in our region have either an origin or a destination (or both) within the region. Some 20% or fewer truck trips are just "passing through" the region.

The region's highways were primarily constructed in a radial pattern: to connect the central city to the suburbs. In the absence of a network of inter-suburban highways, more and more truck traffic is being moved onto arterials. This has become even more pronounced as manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution centers move to the suburbs, and as new developments appear in areas with limited highway or freeway access and no rail access. All trips with an origin or destination in the region must typically utilize a truck for the "last mile" of a trip, and must typically use a local street or arterial for some -and in many cases all- of that trip. This becomes more of an impact on smaller, older streets that were not designed for today's larger trucks, and also becomes more noticeable on roadways where trucks must compete for limited capacity with commuter traffic.

Interregional Travel

A 40% increase in interregional auto trips in the Sacramento region is expected by 2035, driven largely by external factors such as Bay Area and Central Valley population growth and the failure to provide a balance between affordable housing and jobs. Interregional travel to, from, and through this region amounts to almost 400,000 people daily, with almost 90% traveling by auto, 9% by air, and about 1% by train and bus. (SACOG, 2005) The seven major state highways collectively carry an estimated 350,000 people daily in and out of the region (290,000 total daily traffic, not counting trucks, estimating average auto occupancy at 1.2 people); I-80 West and US50 East operate at capacity during peak hours when people are traveling to major recreation destinations, and I-5 South, I-80 East, and Route 99 South operate near capacity at times, while I-5 and Routes 99/70 North operate at about 50% of capacity at peak use today. Interregional freight to, from, and through the region is estimated to be the equivalent of 75,000 truckloads daily, with 60% actually on trucks, 40% in railroad cars, and a small fraction by air and sea. (Caltrans, 2005)

Air Quality

Due to its geography, California's Central Valley has the greatest potential to develop air quality problems of anywhere in the nation. The Coast Range on the west and the Sierra on the east, combined with the summer inversion layer that rests on top of the region, all contribute to trapping air pollution in the valley. However, in spite of a substantial increase in population over the last two decades, the Sacramento region's air quality has continued to improve.

Progress has been made, even as standards have tightened. The region is designated as a non-attainment area for the federal standard for ozone and particulate matter (PM10) and for the more stringent California standard for ozone, particulate matter and fine particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5). With a projected population increase of another million over the next 25 years, the region will continue to face an enormous challenge in meeting and maintaining state and federal health-based air quality standards. Failure to do so will have a significant impact on the region's quality of life and economy.

Sources of air pollution must be reduced in order to improve air quality in the region. Mobile sources contribute about two-thirds of the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions, while stationary sources contribute about 12% of VOC emissions and 30% of NOx emissions. The Sacramento region has relatively few "smokestack" industries compared to the Bay Area and Southern California.

PURPOSE OF THE MTP

The MTP for 2035 outlines the region's transportation needs, sets goals and objectives, and proposes solutions to meet them. It is a program of related actions designed to coordinate and manage future transportation improvements among the various counties and agencies operating within the region. The MTP covers a wide range of transportation issues, including development of multiple modes of transportation, air quality, rush-hour congestion, special needs of people with limited mobility, goods movement, and long-distance travel between the SACOG region and other areas. The MTP for 2035 is designed to guide future transportation investment decisions in a balanced manner, sufficient to make needed improvements in all modes of surface transportation, within the limits of resources. To receive federal or state funding, projects nominated by cities, counties, and agencies must be consistent with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Under SAFETEA-LU, a new MTP must now be adopted every four years. The MTP 2035 will succeed the 2006 MTP. The next MTP is expected to be adopted in 2011. New federal requirements due to the passage of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Transportation, Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005 also need to be incorporated into the MTP.

SACOG's mission is to "Deliver transportation projects, providing public information and serving as a dynamic forum for regional planning and collaboration in the greater Sacramento Metropolitan Area." In developing the MTP for 2035, the SACOG Board of Directors has defined specific principles, indicators and performance measures upon which to base the MTP and to use for decision-making, as it pertains to the agency's mission. They have been designed to pursue and assess the effective management of planning, programming, and transportation funding, which are integral to delivering transportation projects. The intent of the MTP 2035 is to accommodate the expected growth in demand for transportation in the region through a multi-modal approach intended to achieve the following principles:

1. Access & Mobility

Improve opportunities for businesses and citizens to easily access goods, jobs, services and housing.

2. Equity & Choice

Provide real, viable travel choices for all people throughout our diverse region.

3. Economic Vitality

Efficiently connect people to jobs and get goods to market.

4. Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Minimize direct and indirect transportation impacts on the environment for cleaner air and natural resource protection.

5. Financial Stewardship

A transportation system that delivers cost-effective results that are feasible to construct and maintain.

6. Smart Land Use

Design a transportation system to support good growth patterns, including increased housing and transportation options, focusing more growth inward and improving the economic viability of rural areas.