

CHAPTER 1

Building a Sustainable System

Introduction

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainability Communities Strategy for 2036 (2016 MTP/SCS) is an important milestone along the path of inclusive, equitable, integrated transportation and land use, performance-based planning that the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and the residents of the region began more than a decade ago. As the Sacramento region's integrated transportation and land use plan, the 2016 MTP/SCS has many beneficial features:

- builds on the guiding principles and high performance of the 2012 MTP/SCS;
- increases investment in maintaining and rehabilitating the existing road and transit system;
- an absolute reduction in the amount of heavy congestion typical residents will experience in their daily lives;
- significant increases in the productivity of the transit system, with more riders and a higher percentage of total costs coming from user fares;
- greater levels of investment in a truly multi-modal transportation system, including complete streets and bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- better integration of future land use patterns, transportation investments, and air quality impacts, including higher levels of development near current and future transit corridors and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) incentives for residential and residential mixed-use projects that produce transportation and air quality benefits;
- continued implementation of the ongoing Rural-Urban Connections Strategy; and
- reductions in per person passenger vehicle greenhouse gas emissions that meet the reduction targets established

for the SACOG region by the California Air Resources Board.

The 2016 MTP/SCS is an implementation-focused plan. It focuses on overcoming challenges to plan implementation and making progress on the policy commitments of the 2012 plan with the goal of accelerating the region's progress toward the transportation, air quality, and quality of life outcomes set forth in 2012. The challenges for plan implementation and meeting the policy commitments outlined in the plan are broadly defined under the following themes:

- **Transportation Funding:** Identify all reasonably foreseeable revenue from all sources local, state and federal.
- **Investment Strategy:** Increase the plan's investment in system maintenance and rehabilitation - "fix-it-first" investments.
- **Investment Timing:** Consider changes to the timing of transportation investments in order to shift funding earlier in the planning period into system maintenance and rehabilitation investments, while maintaining the air quality and travel performance of the transportation system.
- **Land Use Forecast:** Re-examine the economic viability of projected growth in all parts of the region to ensure assumptions about growth are reasonably foreseeable.
- **Plan Effects:** Follow through on the implementation commitments of the 2012 plan to research and develop performance measures to better measure the effects of the MTP/SCS on different people and issues areas.

The 2016 MTP/SCS is an implementation-focused plan.

Foundational Planning Initiatives

The following is a brief summary of the major planning initiatives that have provided the foundation for this plan.

Sacramento Region Blueprint

After a thorough analysis and community discussions about the trade-offs of growing through 2050, according to a business-as-usual pattern versus three alternative scenarios informed by residents, this two-year scenario planning and engagement process resulted in the SACOG board's unanimous adoption of the Sacramento Region Blueprint in December 2004. In many ways, the Blueprint fundamentally changed the region's future.

The Sacramento Region Blueprint planning process was based on two basic strategies: 1) develop the best scientific, objective information available about the cause-and-effect relationships between land use patterns, travel behavior, and external effects such as air quality; and 2) actively engage a broad base of residents and stakeholders with this information and seek their opinions on how they wanted their neighborhoods, communities, and region to grow. This collaborative effort brought together policy makers with residents, community groups, and private business to consider the broadest view of the future needs of the region and needs for

the transportation system. Using these strategies, SACOG quickly earned local, statewide, and national recognition for its best-in-class data and analysis and public engagement techniques.

Much of the analysis and public discussion during the Sacramento Region Blueprint process focused on what types of housing stock the future residents of the region would prefer. A demographic forecast produced the startling finding that two-thirds of the region's growth through 2050 would be in households headed by people 55 years and older. A housing preference survey of current residents concluded that two-thirds of the current population age 55 and older in the region preferred housing options that were scarce in the region at the time—attached for-sale or rental, and small-lot single family detached housing. The Sacramento Region Blueprint also focused on the impacts of integrating rather than segregating different kinds of land uses (i.e., locating housing near job centers, schools, shopping and recreation). Dozens of interactive public workshops with over 5,000 people identified high levels of support for mixed-use development patterns that contained significant amounts of more compact housing patterns. A random sample public attitude survey confirmed these preferences.

As part of this process, SACOG built several project modeling and analysis tools, and assembled the first parcel-level Geographic Information System (GIS) database for the region. The resulting analysis clearly demonstrated that mixed land use patterns, when paired with supportive transportation investments, would significantly reduce the length of vehicle trips; increase transit, walk and bike trips; substantially reduce the conversion of agricultural, natural resource and open space lands to urban development; and result in fewer air emissions than the historical growth pattern. Out of this information-based, inclusive public process, a clear consensus among residents throughout the region and the SACOG Board of Directors emerged to fundamentally change the way the Sacramento region would grow in the future.

In 2004, the SACOG board adopted the Sacramento Region Blueprint map with areas best suited for future housing and employment growth through 2050, as well as future lands needed for growth after 2050, and the following seven Blueprint growth principles:

- provide a variety of transportation choices;
- offer housing choices and opportunities;
- use existing assets;
- take advantage of compact development;

- preserve open space, farmland, and natural beauty, through natural resources conservation;
- encourage distinctive, attractive communities with quality design; and
- mix of land uses.

The Sacramento Region Blueprint is a voluntary growth strategy that the region's 28 local jurisdictions are actively encouraged to use as they make local land use decisions. At the same time the board adopted the Blueprint, a confluence of market changes driven by demographics and land prices, combined with rapidly changing local government land use policies to voluntarily implement Blueprint-consistent growth, created significant changes in the housing market, including significant increases in the number of attached for-sale and rental products as well as small-lot single family products. There were many other indicators that the market and public policy actions began to embrace many of the Blueprint principles very rapidly, including a major increase in housing planned in and around the three largest employment centers in the region and a number of local government initiatives to improve agricultural and natural resources protection in rural areas. For more information about the Blueprint, see Appendix E-1 - Blueprint Special Report.

2008 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Blueprint provided the land use foundation for the subsequent MTP, the MTP for 2035 (2008 MTP). The 2008 MTP was adopted by the SACOG board in Spring 2008 after a two-year planning process that matched the commitment to high-quality information and extensive public engagement used during development of the Blueprint. Based on extensive input, SACOG developed multiple transportation scenarios to test which investments would perform best with a Blueprint-based future land use pattern. SACOG also implemented a more advanced travel demand forecasting tool, SACSIM (an activity-based model that operates at the individual parcel level) to assist the decision making, and added a simpler travel demand model to the land use tool for interactive use in public meetings. The 2008 MTP invested a far greater share of transportation resources in alternative modes and trip reduction than any previous MTP. The balanced transportation investment portfolio also provided for high-occupancy vehicle lanes (i.e., carpool/express bus) on freeways, bridges that shorten distances for motorists and bicyclists, and complete streets that safely accommodate vehicles, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

The performance of this MTP was much better than the prior plan. Per person heavy congestion was still projected to increase through 2035, but at a much slower rate of 19 percent compared to 60 percent. The percentage of trips using alternative modes to the automobile increased substantially, while the average automobile trip length decreased and per capita air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions were less than projected by the prior plan.

State Implementation Plan

SACOG updated the State Implementation Plan for air quality at the same time as the 2008 MTP. This provided opportunities for much closer collaboration between the five air quality management districts in the Sacramento region in the development of the 2008 MTP. Leadership by the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District led the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to allow SACOG to use future MTPs based on the Blueprint land use pattern as the basis for establishing that the MTP met federal Clean Air Act requirements. Several Transportation Control Measures were adopted with the 2008 MTP that committed SACOG to future actions to reduce air emissions from the transportation system, including development of a Rural-Urban Connections Strategy.

Rural-Urban Connections Strategy

In 2008, SACOG launched the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS). The RUCS program is designed to help implement the Sacramento Region Blueprint through finding methods to help ensure the economic vitality of rural areas of the region, including sustainable transportation and land use, agriculture, natural resources and other uses for the rural landscape. SACOG staff began RUCS by developing detailed, parcel-specific data on the cropping patterns on the farms in the region, as well as planning and economic analytical tools to help understand the economics of farming and how infrastructure, land use and market factors affect the ability of farmers to profitably get their goods to market. SACOG has focused both on the substantial part of the region's farm economy that produces food for the nation and world, as well as increasing the share of the region's collective consumption that is grown within the region. The program is ongoing and the findings are reflected in this MTP/SCS through transportation investments and policies and land use patterns that support the rural economy.

For more information about RUCS, see Appendix E-2 – Rural-Urban Connections Strategy.

Senate Bill 375

Six months after the 2008 MTP was adopted, a major state law was passed: Senate Bill 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008). This law was significantly influenced by the Sacramento Region Blueprint and other smart growth scenario planning initiatives in San Diego, the Bay Area, and Los Angeles. The law requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to integrate regional land use, housing, transportation, and climate change planning in MTPs. It requires the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to set performance targets for passenger vehicle emissions in each of 18 MPOs in the state for 2020 and 2035, requires an MTP to include a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that integrates the land use and transportation components, and amends the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to provide incentives for residential and residential mixed use projects that help to implement an MTP/SCS that meets the ARB targets.

SB 375 focuses on integrated planning processes and incentives rather than a traditional regulatory approach. MPOs are not required to meet the greenhouse gas emission targets established by ARB, but if they conclude it is not feasible to do so, they must prepare an Alternative Planning Scenario to demonstrate what further land use and/or transportation actions would be required to meet the targets. The one new mandate in the law is that the Regional Housing Needs Allocation, a required function of the regions under separate state law, must be consistent with the adopted SCS.

The process for preparing the MTP/SCS has been significantly influenced by SB 375. The largest impacts include:

- elevation of greenhouse gas emissions as a performance metric that influences the plan;
- explicit integration of the land use patterns in the plan with associated impacts on Regional Housing Needs Allocations and transportation investments;
- preparation of an Environmental Impact Report under CEQA that thoroughly analyzes land use impacts from the MTP/SCS as well as transportation impacts;
- explicit and thorough documentation of the land use component of the plan so that local govern-

ments can effectively determine which housing and residential mixed-use projects are consistent with the SCS and therefore qualify for CEQA relief from further analysis of regional transportation, passenger vehicle greenhouse gas emissions, and growth-inducing impacts;

- identification and mapping of Transit Priority Areas in the region in using CEQA streamlining benefits under SB 375;
- thorough analysis and consideration of agricultural and natural resource impacts; and
- coordination of the planning processes between the four largest metropolitan areas as they all strive to meet the requirements of preparing a regional transportation plan/SCS under the new SB 375.

One of the primary goals of SB 375 is to enhance California's ability to reach its Assembly Bill 32 (Chapter 488 of the Statutes of 2006; hereafter AB 32) goals and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles. ARB has developed greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for passenger vehicles under SB 375. As provided for in SB 375, the MTP/SCS is designed to provide an incentive-based approach, which provides for CEQA incentives whereby, among other things, the CEQA analysis of greenhouse gas emissions for passenger vehicles can be avoided if a project is consistent with the MTP/SCS. The SCS recognizes and protects local land use authority and does not preclude a local jurisdiction from planning and approving growth that is different in terms of total units or geographic extent. Moreover, the SCS does not establish a threshold of significance under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7 or a legal presumption that a project inconsistent with the SCS does not meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets or AB 32 goals. In short, the SCS is a tool to address greenhouse gas compliance and it provides incentives for development projects that are consistent with the SCS. The law also acknowledges local land use authority and the region's obligation to write an MTP that is consistent with federal law, including requirements that the plan be based on realistic forecasts of future revenues and land use patterns, even if doing so

means the ARB targets cannot be met. Although SB 375 imposed new criteria, the fundamental transportation, land use and air quality integration that SACOG has engaged in for the past several planning efforts comprise the core of its planning.

2012 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2012 plan was the Sacramento region's first MTP/SCS adopted under Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) and the second plan to link a regional growth pattern and smart land use principles to the transportation system. The 2012 plan was the first prepared during a major, sustained national recession that in many ways challenged California and the Sacramento region more than the rest of the country. State budget cuts and the collapse of the residential construction sector severely damaged two of the strongest sectors of the region's economy. The 2012 plan reflected those economic realities in a number of ways, including lower forecasted growth rates and transportation revenues than the prior plan, more attention to land use patterns that optimize transportation performance, and dedicating scarce revenues to those transportation investments that produce the highest performance benefits. In these ways, the 2012 plan sought to turn the short-term recession challenge into a foundation for long-term success for the region.

Related State and Federal Planning Initiatives

California Strategic Growth Council

Another state law, SB 732 (Chapter 729, Statutes of 2008), passed in 2008, establishes an interagency Strategic Growth Council charged with aligning state policies and actions to promote sustainability and administering funding in the form of planning grants for regional and local governments from revenue from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act, also known as Proposition 84. SACOG has been awarded grant funding to provide technical assistance to local governments to complement their implementation of the 2012 MTP/SCS and the Sacramento Region Blueprint.

Work funded by the Strategic Growth Council includes implementing the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy through: a food access assessment, monitoring activities to protect agricultural lands and improve farm-to-market travel, studies to better understand agricultural labor housing needs, and analysis of the public infrastructure needs, including associated costs and revenues, of rural communities.

Strategic Growth Council funding also supported development of a regional climate action plan by SACOG and its planning partners. Focused on the land use and transportation sectors, this climate action planning including a base greenhouse gas inventory, identification of climate risks, identification and quantification of greenhouse gas mitigation measures, potential impacts and adaptation strategies, and setting of regional greenhouse gas reduction targets.

SACOG worked with local jurisdictions to expand regional tools and local guidance for addressing parking standards and complete streets in different contexts in the region, including through road maintenance and rehabilitation projects and approaching streets as vital public spaces. SACOG also coordination with the region's air districts on regional guidance for residential infill development to maximize health benefits and minimize health risks.

Most recently, SACOG has partnered with member jurisdictions to remove critical barriers to local implementation of the MTP/SCS through the following efforts:

- removing regulatory and institutional barriers to revitalization and intensification in Centers and Corridors and Established Communities,
- advancing healthy communities through active design and active transportation implementation, and
- community revitalization and capacity-building in low-income and high minority neighborhoods.

Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities existed between the federal Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Environmental Protection Agency. The partnership focused on promoting the type of inclusive, integrated regional planning that SACOG has committed to over the last decade through grant-making. In 2010, SACOG was awarded a grant to support outreach and analysis for the 2012 MTP/SCS, primarily to assist with activating the CEQA regulatory reform benefits in SB 375 for Transit Priority Projects. SACOG continues to leverage the results of that work both in updating this MTP/SCS and in the SCS implementation activities described above that are funded in part through the Strategic Growth Council.

Senate Bill 391 and the California Interregional Blueprint

Similar to requirements for regional transportation plans under SB 375, SB 391 (Chapter 585, Statutes of 2009) requires the State's long-range transportation plan, the California Transportation Plan, to meet Califor-

nia's climate change goals under AB 32 and Executive Order S-03-05. In response to these statutes, Caltrans prepared a state-level transportation blueprint to articulate the State's vision for an integrated, multimodal interregional transportation system that complements regional transportation plans and land use visions. The California Interregional Blueprint integrates the State's long-range modal plans and Caltrans-sponsored programs with the latest technology and tools to enhance the state's ability to plan for and manage the transportation system. The upcoming California Transportation Plan 2040 (CTP 2040) will demonstrate how major metropolitan areas, rural areas, and state agencies can coordinate planning efforts to achieve statewide goals.

This plan update is the second generation MTP/SCS: it builds upon the strong transportation, air quality and quality of life performance of the 2012 MTP/SCS by strengthening investment strategies and policy commitments that are critical to the implementation of this 20-year plan.

Conclusion

This MTP/SCS is another important milestone in SACOG's commitment to bringing the highest quality data, analysis and modeling tools to an inclusive, integrated, performance-based transportation and land use plan. This plan update is the second generation MTP/SCS: it builds upon the strong transportation, air quality and quality of life performance of the 2012 MTP/SCS by strengthening investment strategies and policy commitments that are critical to the implementation of this 20-year plan.

The title of MTP/SCS is purposeful. SACOG views the SCS not as a separate and distinct element of the plan, but rather as integral to the entire document, influencing the land use patterns which form the foundation for transportation investments, the subsequent Regional Housing Needs Plan, and compliance with federal air quality and state greenhouse gas emissions requirements; identification and consideration of the impacts of the plan on low income and high minority communities, natural resources and agricultural lands; and the action element that determines how the plan will be funded and implemented. All of these features further improve the quality of this plan update compared to prior updates, and further advance implementation of the Sacramento Region Blueprint that the SACOG Board of Directors established over a decade ago.