

Understanding SB 375:

Opportunities to Engage the Public
In Regional Planning

 INSTITUTE FOR
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

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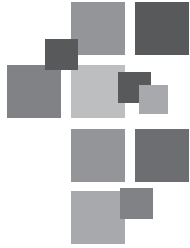


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I. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide offers local officials an overview of the benefits and opportunities for effective and inclusive public engagement in regional transportation planning in California, especially with regard to the preparation of sustainable communities strategies required by SB 375. The guide contains approaches that go beyond the minimum public participation requirements, because plans based on full and effective public engagement will more likely be responsive to local and regional needs and have public support.

The term “public engagement” describes a broad range of approaches through which members of the public may be informed about and directly contribute their views and recommendations to regional transportation plans and decision-making.

Local officials can play a critical role in encouraging the engagement of community leaders, residents, other local officials and other stakeholders whose participation will help ensure successful policy development and implementation in this complex, challenging arena.

This publication focuses on several topics relevant to regional planning, SB 375 and public engagement:

- Chapter II provides background on the responsibilities and roles of local officials in regional planning;
- Chapter III explains how SB 375 affects local communities;
- Chapter IV summarizes the benefits of engaging the public in regional planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Chapter V explores approaches to help ensure effective and inclusive public engagement design and outcomes;

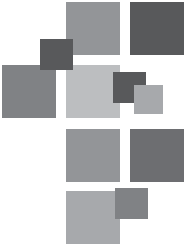
ABOUT SB 375

SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) directs the California Air Resources Board to set regional targets for metropolitan planning organizations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. SB 375 aligns the regional allocation of housing needs and regional transportation planning in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicle trips.

SB 375 relies on regional collaboration by local officials to address California’s goals for reducing the portion of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from automobile travel. The law creates a new integrated planning process (more detail is provided on this in Chapter III).

More About SB 375’s Public Participation Requirements

Information on the minimum public participation requirements that regional and local agencies must meet in developing their transportation and housing plans under SB 375 can be found in a companion Institute publication, *Understanding SB 375: Public Participation Requirements* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/understanding-sb-375-public-participation-requirements).



- Chapter VI provides outreach strategies to inform and engage residents in regional planning;
- Chapter VII covers the challenges of dealing with deeply held concerns or challenges to the planning process;
- Chapter VIII lists additional resources and opportunities for further reading; and
- Chapter IX offers a glossary of common terms associated with SB 375 and regional planning.

More About SB 375 and Regional Planning

More information on regional planning can be found in a companion Institute publication, *Understanding SB 375: Regional Planning for Transportation, Housing and the Environment* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/guide-regional-planning-transportation-housing-and-environment).

II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES OF LOCAL OFFICIALS IN REGIONAL PLANNING

Local officials have many responsibilities. One is to make decisions on plans and proposals for future growth, development and investments in infrastructure. They do this through their local general plans, specific plans, capital improvements programs and other local planning and land use decisions.

However, local officials' decisions on these issues are not limited to actions within a particular jurisdiction or community. City and county officials also have leadership responsibilities in developing regional plans that address shared issues of cities and counties. Examples include regional plans for transportation, housing, improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions — issues that cross individual city and county boundaries.

Regional decisions can have profound effects on local communities. For instance:

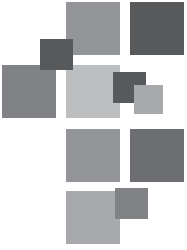
- Regional transportation plans influence the level of traffic congestion on highways and arterials, the speed and volume of traffic on neighborhood streets and the availability of travel options such as transit, walking and bicycling;
- Regional plans for housing affect where residents can live, the cost of housing, which public facilities and services are needed and where they are located; and
- Regional plans for air quality influence the health of residents, especially people vulnerable to air pollution such as children, the elderly and people with respiratory, circulatory or other health conditions.

Local officials are key decision-makers in many aspects of the regional planning process. Local elected officials from the cities and counties within a region govern the regional

agencies involved in these planning efforts. Appointed city and county officials and staff serve in a number of important process planning roles as well.

Local officials play a variety of roles in the regional planning process:

- Local elected officials serve on the governing boards of the metropolitan planning organizations. The metropolitan planning organizations have final responsibility for adopting the regional transportation plan. This includes adopting the sustainable communities strategy prepared under SB 375 or the alternative planning strategy if one is required as part of the regional transportation plan. (For more information, see the section on the sustainable communities strategy and alternative planning strategy on page 5.)
- Local elected officials serve on the governing boards of the councils of governments that have final responsibility for approving the regional housing needs allocation to each city and county within the region. (In most regions, the metropolitan planning organization and the council of government are the same organization. See page 29.)
- Local elected officials serving on city councils and county boards of supervisors are responsible for developing and adopting their respective local general plans. Neither the sustainable community strategy nor the alternative planning strategy developed under SB 375 will supersede the general plan or other planning policies or authorities of a city or county; nor must a local agency's planning policies be consistent with either strategy.¹



- Local city councils and county boards of supervisors will determine to what extent they wish to align their local general plan and local development projects with the region's sustainable community strategy. Residential development or transportation projects that are consistent with the sustainable communities strategy or alternative planning strategy can qualify for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining incentives included in SB 375.²

In addition, many local appointed officials and staff serve on advisory boards, committees and task forces involved in developing regional plans and policies for transportation and housing.

A NOTE ON SB 375 TERMINOLOGY AND ACRONYMS

SB 375's planning process involves a number of terms of art, which are typically condensed into acronyms by those familiar with the process. While these terms have the benefit of providing shorthand for important and technical concepts, they are likely to be unfamiliar and therefore off-putting to the public.

To maximize the effectiveness of informational public engagement efforts (see pages 19 to 21), use language that the target audiences are likely to be familiar with and understand. This includes minimizing the use of jargon and, when technical terminology is unavoidable, offering plain-language explanations. For example, a glossary of terms is provided on page 29 and is also available at www.ca-ilg.org/sb-375-resource-center.

III. HOW SB 375 AFFECTS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

California’s population — estimated at 38 million in 2010³ — is expected to grow to nearly 60 million people by the year 2050.⁴

Two recent laws, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32)⁵ and the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375),⁶ have important implications for local officials’ roles and responsibilities.

Transportation is a key focus of California’s effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Cars and light trucks account for about 30 percent of California’s greenhouse gas emissions.⁷ When all types of vehicles are included transportation overall accounts for 36 percent of California’s greenhouse gas emissions.⁸

SB 375 relies on regional collaboration by local officials to address California’s goals for reducing the portion of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from automobile travel. The law creates a new integrated planning process by coordinating the three planning activities that produce:

- The regional transportation plan;
- The regional housing needs allocation; and
- The updated housing element of local general plans.

SB 375 applies to jurisdictions in California’s 18 metropolitan planning organizations. These are the regional planning entities in the more urbanized regions of the state. Each organization has been assigned a goal by the California Air Resources Board for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2020, and for greater reductions by 2035. SB 375’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction provisions do not apply to regional transportation planning agencies typically found in largely rural counties. (For more information about SB 375, see www.ca-ilg.org/sb-375-resource-center.)

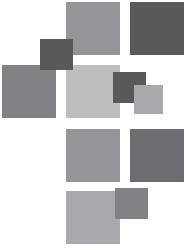
SB 375 includes provisions that provide opportunities to involve cities and counties in developing effective regional plans for achieving the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. To increase public participation and local government input, the law augments existing requirements for public involvement in regional planning. For more information about these requirements, see *Understanding SB 375: Public Participation Requirements* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/understanding-sb-375-public-participation-requirements).

What is a Sustainable Communities Strategy?

Under SB 375, the regional transportation plan prepared by each metropolitan planning organization must incorporate a sustainable communities strategy, a regional growth strategy that provides the foundation for transportation investments in the region. The sustainable communities strategy’s goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks in California’s regions through better alignment of transportation and land use plans and investments to reduce the average length of vehicle trips (often referred to as “vehicle miles traveled” or VMT).

To do this, the sustainable communities strategy identifies the “general location of uses, residential densities and building intensities” within the region, including areas sufficient to house all economic segments of the projected regional population, while meeting the region’s greenhouse gas emission targets set by the California Air Resources Board. A sustainable communities strategy must be based on “current planning assumptions.” Transportation decisions in the regional transportation plans must be consistent with the sustainable communities strategy.

If the sustainable communities strategy falls short of meeting the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, the region must prepare an alternative planning strategy that, if implemented, would meet the



targets. The alternative planning strategy can include a combination of alternative development patterns, infrastructure investments, or additional transportation measures or policies beyond those contained in the sustainable communities strategy. Unlike the sustainable communities strategy, the alternative planning strategy is not formally a part of the regional transportation plan. As a consequence, the regional transportation plan is not required to be consistent with the alternative planning strategy, although it must be consistent with the adopted sustainable communities strategy.

More information on regional planning can be found in a companion Institute publication, *Understanding SB 375: Regional Planning for Transportation, Housing and the Environment* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/guide-regional-planning-transportation-housing-and-environment).

How Does a Sustainable Communities Strategy Affect Local Communities?

Because individual cities and counties within a region are linked economically, socially and environmentally, actions by one jurisdiction can have profound effects on neighboring communities and the region as a whole. The sustainable communities strategy adopted in each region by the local officials serving on the respective metropolitan planning organization board can have a significant influence on where, how and when growth, development and redevelopment are likely to occur within individual communities.

This is because the sustainable communities strategy reflects the regional long-range vision for land use and housing development that the transportation investments included in the regional transportation plan are intended to serve. Billions of dollars in transportation investments will be based on the regional land use patterns outlined in each sustainable communities strategy. This creates a strong incentive for individual cities and counties to align their local development plans and projects with the regional vision contained in the sustainable communities strategy.

This incentive to align local plans with the regional growth strategy is reinforced by other provisions of SB 375. For example:

- Each city and county is responsible for updating the housing elements of its general plan to comply with the regional housing needs allocation. SB 375 lengthens the cycle for these updates but also requires them to be tied more closely to the sustainable communities strategy. SB 375 also requires the housing element to be based on the land-use patterns established by the sustainable communities strategy.
- SB 375 provides opportunities to streamline and limit the scope of environmental review for certain types of projects. Such projects must be consistent with a regional sustainable communities strategy that achieves greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

IV. WHY ENGAGE THE PUBLIC IN REGIONAL PLANNING TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS?

While not an exhaustive list, the following reasons suggest the range of benefits that can result from engaging the public in developing regional transportation plans and sustainable communities strategies.

Residents and other stakeholders are affected by regional plans.

A key reason that local officials may want to promote greater participation in the development of regional plans is that residents and organized stakeholders within their community are likely to be affected by that plan's vision for growth and development. Important stakeholders include:

- Local agencies, whose plans and investments for community development may be influenced by the type and level of transportation funding included in the regional transportation plan;
- Local businesses, whose plans for opening, expanding or relocating their business operations may be affected by transportation and other decisions reflected in the sustainable communities strategy and the regional transportation plan;
- Local community members, whose opportunities and choices related to employment, housing, transportation and other quality-of-life issues may be impacted by the land use decisions and transportation investments reflected in the sustainable communities strategy and the housing element of the local general plan; and
- Residents who may be disproportionately affected by poor air quality, limited transportation options and fewer housing options. These are often lower-income individuals, families and seniors.

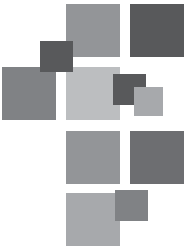
Many members of the public have strong views about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

Public concern about climate change has increased in recent years. In California, a growing number of local communities are developing climate action plans. Many individuals are taking steps to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions, while others question the premise of climate change and see the steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as unnecessary and unwise. These divergent views on the subject suggest the need for well-planned public engagement strategies.

Engaging the public can help inform regional planning and build support for local action.

By engaging the public in regional planning, local officials can help their communities understand how regional plans and investments are connected to local needs and priorities. Regional plans influence how communities grow and determine when and where certain regional facilities (such as highways, railway lines and transit stations) will be provided to serve the community's present and future needs.

When local officials and residents participate actively in regional planning processes, these regional decisions are more likely to take local priorities and preferences into account. Local engagement in developing regional plans such as the sustainable communities strategy can also help get good ideas on the table and build agreement on the community's vision for the future. This in turn can provide a foundation for greater consensus on subsequent local planning, land use and other decisions. This is particularly important for decisions that require the approval of local voters or property owners.



SB 375 is attracting new participants to the regional table.

SB 375 brings together planning for transportation and housing with strategies to reduce vehicle travel in order to address climate change. Consequently, a larger number of residents and stakeholders have an interest in the outcomes of the regional planning process than in the past. In addition to the increased numbers, the range of issues now taken up as part of regional planning suggests that participants will have a very broad spectrum of interests, concerns and perspectives. This includes those interested in the environment, public health, economic development and other topics, as well as those with views about the role that government should or should not have in these matters.

At the same time, many of these stakeholders are unfamiliar with regional planning and the requirements and opportunities for public participation. Local leaders can help educate and engage these individuals, especially those from communities that may be traditionally disadvantaged, disengaged or hard for regional and local agencies to reach.

Active participation in regional planning can position local communities to attract additional resources and investments to achieve local goals.

Regional plans (such as the regional transportation plan) influence the allocation of billions of dollars in state and federal funds for transportation and other

purposes. A number of other federal, state, regional and private funding sources may also be available to help communities plan and implement local improvements.

Examples include:

- Federal funding for high-speed rail, sustainable community development and safe routes to schools;
- State grants for sustainable community planning and urban greening projects; and
- Philanthropic grants to local community-based organizations to foster greater public understanding and participation in regional and local planning efforts.

There are legal requirements for participation.

Federal law requires metropolitan planning organizations to develop and use participation plans.⁹ These plans must define a process for providing reasonable opportunities for all parties, including the public, to comment on and be involved in the metropolitan planning process.

SB 375 adds to these requirements. For more information, see *Understanding SB 375: Public Participation Requirements* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/understanding-sb-375-public-participation-requirements).

V. QUESTIONS TO HELP GUIDE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DESIGN

To successfully engage residents and others, it is useful for public participation planners to ask three clarifying questions to help determine the most appropriate public engagement approach or approaches. It is important to ask them in this particular order.

1. What is the purpose of your public engagement effort (what information is needed from the public)?
2. Who should participate?
3. What is the most appropriate public engagement approach (or approaches)?

Determining public engagement purposes and then identifying the desired participants will help participation planners select the best approach or approaches to ensure effective and inclusive processes and to meet their goals.

What is the Purpose of Your Public Engagement Effort?

Too often, public engagement planning begins with a discussion about the type or number of public meetings or other participation processes to be offered rather than first identifying the kind of information that is needed to help decision-makers and the community successfully address the issue at hand. A good first question in designing a public participation activity is, “What sort of information is needed from the public so decision-makers can make the most informed and best plan or decision?”

This is *not* asking, “What do we want the public to recommend to us?” but rather:

- What information do we need that only the public can contribute?; and
- What degree of specificity and/or agreement among participants do we want the public engagement effort to generate?

Accurately framing the central public engagement questions is critical to success. This means translating planning goals into clear, focused public engagement goals.

For instance, a *planning* goal may be an informed, responsive and publicly supported regional transportation plan that meets all the appropriate state and federal requirements. However, *public engagement* goals could be:

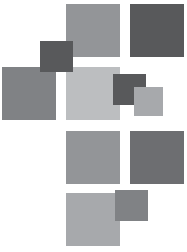
- Organized community stakeholders who are more aware of the transportation challenges and choices facing the region;
- A better understanding by a regional planning agency of the public’s general views about regional growth and development; and
- Specific transportation-related (and greenhouse gas emissions reduction) priorities and recommendations, developed by groups of residents through facilitated back-and-forth (deliberative) discussions.

There is no right or wrong to any of these public engagement goals. *Each may be a goal within a certain phase of an overall public engagement plan.* But achieving each respective goal requires different public engagement methods.

Who Should Participate?

Answering the first question about the information needed from the public leads to a second question. To ensure broad representation of participants and viewpoints, who needs to be involved?

In the book *Regional Planning in America: Practice and Prospect*,¹⁰ authors John Fregonese and C.J. Gabbe encourage strategic thinking about *whom* the agency is trying to engage. They suggest that every major planning process should begin with development of its



communications strategy. Furthermore, planners should think in terms of a pyramid that segments audiences into four primary categories, with the first category being the top of the pyramid:

1. Motivated citizens;
2. Fans of planning;
3. The interested public; and
4. The uninterested public.

The idea is that recognizing distinctions between those who are initially interested and uninterested will help develop effective communication and engagement approaches. Fregonese and Gabbe also encourage the involvement of residents and stakeholders who have different opinions as well as critical voices and those who may not have been engaged previously. They note that the best regional ideas will probably emerge from the broadest engagement of all those interested and affected. Even if final plans do not meet the complete aspirations of all involved, participants may well recognize that “they have been a part of an inclusive conversation and have had an evident impact on the final product.”

Typically it is also important to ensure participation from each local political jurisdiction and across urban, suburban and rural areas.

In addition, distinguishing between the involvement of the general public as opposed to more organized stakeholder groups is essential. Both are important and will contribute to effective regional planning, but one is not a substitute for the other.

Organized stakeholders may include committees or entities affiliated with regional planning organizations and groups from various sectors, such as business, professional,

environmental or faith-based organizations. Stakeholders may also include statewide groups that focus on affordable housing, social equity or environmental justice; such groups are often supported by private foundations.

Ensuring broader inclusion in public engagement can take many forms. Addressing demographic and economic diversity is one important component. This may include special efforts to engage lower-income residents, immigrant community members, young people, renters or other populations that are frequently less engaged in local and regional planning.

To successfully encourage and support more inclusive participation, look for partners. Effective partnerships may be established with intermediary organizations and groups, including congregations, service clubs, community organizations, tenant or homeowner associations, ethnic media and others. All can be helpful in identifying, reaching and engaging desired participants. It is very useful for staff (and consultants) who are planning public participation efforts to identify and make early contact with such groups and involve them in the overall public engagement strategy development.

All public engagement processes should be broadly accessible in terms of location(s), time(s) and language(s). Such processes should also support the participation of residents with limited English proficiency and people with disabilities.

RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

See tips for more inclusive engagement, including strategies to encourage greater participation by immigrant residents, at www.ca-ilg.org/immigrant-engagement-integration.

PARTICIPANT OUTREACH/INVITATION OPTIONS

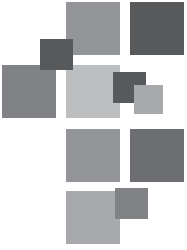
It is important to identify public engagement participants in ways that are consistent with your purposes and participation goals. Generally speaking, participants in public engagement processes are identified in one of these four ways:

- 1. Self-selection.** This results from an open and broad invitation to participate asking that anyone interested come and take part.
- 2. Sponsor invitation.** This can be an “open but targeted” recruitment, inviting general participation, that also includes some special efforts to solicit the engagement of a broad spectrum of participation, including often under-represented groups; or a “stakeholder-oriented” recruitment that identifies specific participants who represent and can speak for organized groups or interests.
- 3. Representative selection.** Through goal-setting and extensive, focused outreach efforts, this approach systematically identifies and recruits participants in an effort to reflect the breadth of views and demographics among the affected population.

- 4. Random sample.** This is a more rigorous and sometimes costly process often associated with polls or surveys. Generally the intent is to identify a sample of the population that accurately reflects, to the standards of social science, the chosen criteria, such as gender, ethnicity, age, etc.

Please note that some regional planning agencies have attempted to “cap” meeting participation in order to ensure space and the opportunity for facilitated small group discussions. This has generated some public concern as it appears to limit the option for public voice in these planning processes. If there are to be limits to the number of people able to participate, ensure transparency and early communication about attendance-related processes and decision-making. Furthermore, if attendance at meetings will be capped, it may be necessary to increase the number of meetings so that all who wish to participate can be accommodated.





Most regional planning efforts will want to take into account the particular impacts of transportation, housing and air quality on low-income or vulnerable populations and communities and involve these individuals and communities in regional planning processes. Therefore, fostering partnerships with community advocacy and leadership organizations can be especially helpful. Conducting discussions with these groups early in the process can be useful not only to identify and support inclusive participation but also to solicit their input on planning assumptions and content.

The process of planning communities capable of supporting a high quality of life in the future requires striking a balance between environmental, social and economic considerations. Members of the public interested in participating in regional planning may perceive only one of these considerations as a priority. More effort may be necessary to ensure all three perspectives are well represented and that individuals who generally have less of a voice are given an opportunity to meaningfully participate.

Thinking first about the broader purpose(s) of the intended public engagement activity — and then about the intended participants (especially those who may not readily participate) — can help public engagement planners determine the most appropriate and successful participation processes and activities.

What is the Most Appropriate Public Engagement Approach?

The specific public engagement approach(es) selected should be consistent with identified public engagement purposes and should also help achieve your specific participation goals (see previous section). These processes must also be consistent with relevant legal requirements (see “More About SB 375” on page 1).

In general, the public engagement activities of cities, counties and regional planning agencies fall into one or more of three broad categories:

1. Public information approaches;
2. Public consultation approaches; and
3. Public deliberation approaches.

Elements of each category may be a part of an effective overall public engagement strategy. However, each category suggests different public engagement design and process choices, which will shape the kind of public information or input that is generated.

While this guide explores a number of approaches, it emphasizes the more deliberative avenues of engagement that have particular potential — often in tandem with other approaches — to inform and shape regional transportation plans in general and sustainable communities strategies in particular.

Public Information Approaches

A public information approach to public engagement typically involves one-way communication (from a public agency) to inform the community about a problem, issue or policy matter. It may also help explain the role or actions of government in certain areas.

The goal of a public information approach is generally to provide information to residents and others through one or more communication channels. This may be information that provides substantive knowledge about an issue, explains or encourages public engagement, and/or reports on the progress toward a local or regional agency action or decision.

In regional planning, this may include information about:

- The purpose and general content of a sustainable communities strategy or alternative planning strategy;
- Relevant regional transportation planning in general; and
- Specific opportunities for the public and organized stakeholders to participate in the regional planning process.

Public information may take the form of:

- A special newsletter or website;
- Online or organizational video presentations;
- Informational meetings with interested and/or targeted groups and organizations in one or more sectors; and/or
- A broad-based communication and media strategy entailing many approaches.

For example, the San Diego Association of Governments prepared materials to help educate the public about the 2050 regional transportation plan, including a fact sheet and multimedia presentation. The materials provided information about the regional transportation plan and its components, the planning process and how members of the public could get involved.

Such “one-way” engagement can be very helpful in raising awareness and creating more informed residents and groups, which is an important component of any public

engagement process. However, without complementary efforts it does little to:

- Increase a regional agency’s understanding of the public’s views and recommendations; or
- Foster stakeholder “ownership” in the regional plan.

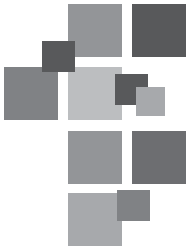
Public Consultation Approaches

Public consultation involves asking members of the public for their individual — or sometimes organizational — views on ideas or recommendations that are often already on the table. This also typically provides opportunities for questions from participants and responses from the appropriate public officials present.

Public consultation approaches may include:

- Polls and surveys;
- Public hearings and comment periods;
- Individual conversations with key and interested groups and individuals, including local officials;
- Public meetings that use primarily a question and answer approach; and
- Input from existing advisory groups, policy bodies and technical committees affiliated with regional planning organizations or other local or regional public sector entities.

Conversations may involve formal stakeholders as well as grassroots and community leaders and organizations.



ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

For more information about a range of public engagement strategies, especially as applied to local agency decision-making about affordable housing, see *Building Support for Affordable Housing: A Toolkit for California Officials* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/building-public-support-affordable-housing-toolbox-california-officials).

The goal of most public consultation processes is for decision-makers to respond to questions and to solicit individual or organized stakeholder views — often with the intent of asking for feedback on a proposed plan, policy or other recommended action.

Such consultations can provide a useful and relatively inexpensive “snapshot” of public views and opinions and are part of most regional public engagement efforts. They may also be useful when there is a need to respond to substantive public questions and concerns.

These more “consultative” approaches typically result in sets of different views from individual residents, advisory bodies or stakeholder groups. Such processes typically offer fewer opportunities (than more deliberative models discussed in the following section) for people with various perspectives to jointly discuss their views, consider alternative scenarios and develop common recommendations. Therefore they may be less useful in determining a common direction or plan among competing choices or developing greater consensus.

However, consultation approaches can be a useful first step to help identify areas of greater or less agreement.

Such approaches can also lay the groundwork for more deliberative approaches.

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments held a series of public meetings to give residents up-to-date information and receive comments on the metropolitan transportation plan and sustainable communities strategy, transit priority area case study selection process, the regional plan for sustainable development, and the draft environmental impact report.

Similarly, the local Metropolitan Transportation Commission (which covers the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties) and the Association of Bay Area Governments asked the public to help shape the region’s draft 2035 transportation plan. This was done through a series of workshops designed to obtain feedback on preferences about planning choices and transportation investments.

Public Deliberation Approaches

Much of the public engagement that is legally required for the development of regional transportation plans (and sustainable communities strategies) uses the public information or public consultation approaches described earlier. However, more deliberative approaches can add significant information and value to such plans.

Public deliberation occurs when the public is asked to engage in constructive back-and-forth discussions that result in jointly prioritized or agreed-upon ideas or recommendations to policy-makers. These processes often involve a cross section of residents who gain a better understanding of the issue, grapple with value or policy options and work through their differences to develop common recommendations. Such deliberations often evolve through repeated large and/or small group meetings. These can take a variety of forms ranging from one-time forums to a series of community conversations held face to face and/or online.

REACHING OUT TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

The Association of Bay Area Governments, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission are collaborating in an effort to produce an integrated land-use and transportation plan in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area region.

As part of this effort, 14 community-based organizations throughout the Bay Area were asked in March 2011 to help involve the public and reach out to underserved communities with a combination of grassroots, traditional and modern forms of public engagement. The goal was to:

- Gather input from a variety of communities about land use, transportation spending, transportation policy and future planning; and
- Provide a summary of community outreach efforts.

During the two-month engagement process more than 1,600 Bay Area residents ages 24–64 were contacted and surveyed through a combination of door-to-door interviews, event participation, community meetings, radio announcements, on-site interviews at community events and public transportation hubs and on public transit. The outreach engaged a wide range of ethnicities and mid- to low-income, typically under-represented communities.

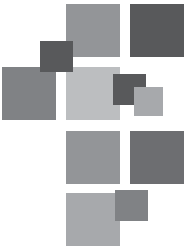
The goal of a public deliberation process is to engage a generally representative sample of the public in informed and reasoned discussions, both early and throughout the decision-making process, that generate collaboratively developed ideas and recommendations.

Public deliberation offers an array of approaches that can be applied to the development of sustainable communities strategies (and alternate planning strategies). These approaches give participants a chance to become more informed and engage in back-and-forth discussions that result in the development of collective visions and recommendations. Deliberative forums often yield more complete and useful public ideas. In addition, they help focus a community's attention, generate new ideas and create support for the plan that is developed.

Many observers have noted that the best ways for people to deliberate and provide input into regional transportation plans and sustainable communities strategies are by identifying community values and by considering and prioritizing the available choices.

Models overlap in their approaches, and there are far too many to mention them all. However, it may be useful to consider the following:

- **Visioning (or scenario thinking).** This language is imprecise, as many local and regional entities as well as consultants use these terms to mean different things. Nevertheless, the basic idea is to involve the community in an orderly process of “thinking ahead” by identifying criteria, strategic directions and preferred scenarios. Many regional “blueprint” planning processes are seen as visioning work, in which participants study and create a preferred scenario or scenarios for land-use patterns and identify their impacts on transportation, air quality, housing, open space, etc.



- **Charrettes (or design charrettes/workshops).** Charrettes are workshops intended to visually educate people about design and development choices and solicit their views in an interactive way. Charrette facilitators typically use detailed drawings, photo simulations or three-dimensional computer visualizations to demonstrate plans or plan scenarios that can be “walked through” and adjusted to reflect new input or ideas. Charrettes provide a way to generate a design solution while integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of people.
- **Large and small group deliberative forums.** In general, deliberation is an approach to public decision-making in which residents and other stakeholders consider relevant information from multiple points of view, discuss options, enlarge their perspectives and opinions and, where possible, make collective recommendations to decision-makers. In the development of sustainable community strategies, community members may be asked to participate in shorter sessions that focus on broader interests, values and preferences, or in longer — perhaps multiple — sessions that allow for more informed discussions, a greater attention to more detailed scenarios, and time for participants to reach collective judgments or recommendations. Keypad polling and other technology aids, including online games, may help support deliberative discussions and choice-making among larger numbers of participants. (For more about keypad polling, see “Using Technology to Enhance Public Participation” on page 17.)

A number of shorter discussions conducted throughout the community or region may suggest ideas, interests and preferences that can help determine the agenda for a more in-depth public process.

Process planners/organizers may develop a small set of scenarios (frequently a set of three) that participants can discuss and choose among. This is useful and probably essential for large groups. However, the scenarios have to embody real differences or they may be perceived as artificial and impede authentic deliberation.

- **Agency-affiliated committees.** Regional planning agencies frequently have affiliated committees or task forces, often with multi-agency or multi-stakeholder membership, that are asked to comment on new or existing planning strategies, review plan elements or drafts, suggest adaptations, and/or document lessons relevant to current and future regional planning efforts. They may also assist with monitoring and assessment. Participants are often — but not exclusively — representatives of stakeholder groups. Their discussions typically have the characteristics of deliberation, although their agenda may be set by the planning agency.

Whatever the approach or approaches, it is important to be responsive to how the intended audiences want to be engaged. The public increasingly values having a choice in how they provide their input.

Regional planning agencies are likely to be more successful if they offer options for how individuals and groups can be involved in developing sustainable communities strategies or other regional plans. These may include face-to-face as well as online avenues for engagement, culturally informed and appropriate options, and approaches that respect the different amounts of time that individuals and groups have to participate.

Staff members from several regional planning agencies have noted that such efforts are generally more successful when they ask community groups to host meetings where

group members can interact with agency staff. Asking the public to attend a meeting hosted by the agency alone is typically less successful.

Finally, engagement activities that are interactive, interesting and creative will likely be the most enjoyable and rewarding for participants. Authors Fregonese and

Gabbe suggest that “fun, hands-on, map-based exercises are useful to give members of the public and stakeholders a canvas for exploring a variety of options.”¹¹

USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Leverage the Internet, social media and new technologies. New technologies offer tools that can bring more people into the conversation, increase transparency and help create stronger plans. While not everyone has online or social media access, these tools can be used in conjunction with printed materials, such as newsletters, inserts in utility bills and newspaper sections to provide an overview and direct readers to more detailed information posted online. Creating and posting short informational videos about plans and planning can also encourage public participation.

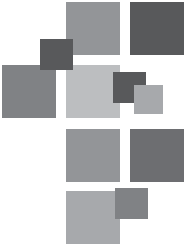
Use visualization tools. Visualizations use two-dimensional and/or three-dimensional representations to show the differences and trade-offs between planning alternatives. These tools typically show “before” and “after” images of the proposed project or plan elements in a very realistic way.

User-friendly geographic information system (GIS) software and other computer graphics applications now allow residents to see the consequences of different choices and scenarios in their communities. This interactive visual experience can be very important in helping people make more informed decisions about the future.

Current software applications offer visual representations of how different choices and scenarios might play out in the future. Several metropolitan planning organizations in California have used this type of software to simplify scenario planning options and allow residents to see how current planning patterns or alternative planning scenarios would affect many aspects of their community. Trained facilitators can use visualization software to help participants see the outcomes of different planning options in three dimensions (3-D) and adjust the assumptions used in the model to fit their preferred framing.

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USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION *(continued)*

Local and regional agencies have used visualization software to help residents better understand the positive and negative impacts of various planning and development scenarios. In addition to using such tools as part of a group public engagement activity, these types of software can also allow residents to interact with and make choices using these web-based maps at home or at work on their own time.

For example:

- The San Diego Association of Governments has created an interactive site to educate the general public about transportation planning issues and challenges. Envision 2050 (<http://envision2050sd.com/>) employs a visual step-by-step approach that allows the public to select their own priorities from an animated wheel of options;
- The Sacramento Area Council of Governments uses scenario planning software (www.sacog.org/services/I-PLACE3S) for a variety of land-use options, which are considered by the public and objectively evaluated against quantifiable criteria; and
- The Federal Transit Administration's Public Transportation Participation Pilot has created a web portal, Choosing Visualization for Transportation Knowledge Sharing (<http://choosingviz.org/>), to help agencies find the most effective visualization tools and techniques for their individual needs.

Consider Keypad Polling. Many metropolitan planning organizations report that they are now using keypad polling, which uses small handheld numeric keypads commonly known as “clickers” in public meetings to quickly aggregate and display results. “The rapid feedback is key. They are also effective and fun and keep people engaged,” reports a Caltrans staff member familiar with many regional planning efforts.

Keypad polling has become increasingly accessible and somewhat more affordable. Its advantages include the ability to quickly collect and share feedback from a large group and to allow less vocal residents to make their priorities known. As with any tool, this technology should be used for real purposes and not as a distraction. Some users have reported that keypad polling technology has paid off in terms of higher satisfaction among meeting participants and in better, more complete data. For more information, visit www.ca-ilg.org/post/using-keypad-polling-enhance-public-meetings.

VI. OUTREACH STRATEGIES TO INFORM AND ENGAGE RESIDENTS IN REGIONAL PLANNING

Local and regional agencies seeking to engage residents in long-term regional sustainable planning face significant challenges. Whether the intent is to inform residents, respond to questions, solicit individual input or spark constructive dialogue about regional efforts to address to climate change, engaging an audience broader than just regional planning stakeholders alone is both important and difficult.

Regional planning often involves:

- Complex and technical language and concepts;
- A typically long-term horizon for implementation; and
- Potential controversy.

All of these can impede the general public's interest in participation. However, involving those who are *not* often heard from on most planning issues can result in more useful and more broadly representative ideas to inform plans. It can also produce greater community understanding and support for the plans that are made.

This chapter shares the experiences of metropolitan planning organizations from throughout California and offers advice about effective messages, the use of cross-sector partnerships and other strategies to inform and attract the public to a regional planning effort.

Developing Effective Messages

Two basic challenges face public agencies in developing effective messages. First, the messages must help the general public understand how regional planning decisions affect them. Second, the messages must also attract participation in regional planning opportunities. As one metropolitan planning organization staff person said, "We need to learn how to frame and present this to the public

so it seems relevant to their lives — and not just because there was state legislation passed to address an intractable problem that they can't relate to."

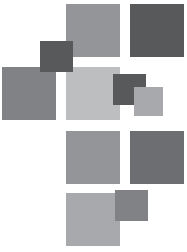
A survey of Fresno-area residents found that "a meeting topic that affects me directly" was the thing most likely to encourage residents to participate in a meeting about regional transportation issues.

There is no "one size fits all" message. For some people, a message about improving the lives of their children may be most persuasive. For others, a message asking residents how they would chose to spend millions of transportation dollars may spur participation.

In instances where people may be skeptical of regional planning efforts (perhaps related to differing opinions about climate change), it may be helpful to use messages that highlight the potential economic benefits of reducing energy usage or the health-related advantages of more walkable communities.

Meeting early with community groups and leaders from the faith, nonprofit, business and service sectors to better understand peoples' concerns and how they prefer to be engaged is key to developing appropriate messaging. Conducting formal and informal focus groups can also be helpful in this regard.

Metropolitan planning organizations have invited community advocates, planners and other stakeholders to advise them on how to attract more resident participation through forums held at various locations and by using mailed and online surveys. Others have developed resident advisory committees to support public outreach around their regional transportation plans.



Once the appropriate messages are developed, they need to be broadly and effectively disseminated.

Methods may include:

- Press releases sent to local newspapers, radio and television stations;
- Notices posted at libraries;
- Educational presentations at regularly scheduled organizational meetings; and
- Information posted on agency websites and in social media.

Using a wide variety of methods to deliver these messages is essential to reach a broad cross section of affected residents. Following up is also critically important, especially when sending press releases to local media.

Enlisting local leaders who can convey to community members the importance of regional transportation and sustainability planning can be particularly effective and can help target outreach to specific communities.

Forming Cross-Sector Partnerships to Achieve Broad Participation

Cross-sector partnerships offer another way to engage more than the “usual” participants in regional sustainability planning efforts. In addition to developing a locally relevant message, the message should be delivered by a person or organization that people know and trust.

Partnering with a variety of community organizations that have complementary goals and diverse membership is a key to effective outreach. As one experienced consultant pointed out, most people haven’t heard of their respective regional planning organization, so they prob-

ably won’t care if it is holding a workshop. But if their congregation, service club or community group asks them to participate, or if the process is incorporated into a meeting they regularly attend, then more people will participate — and you’ll see new faces at your meetings.

Many directors of local and regional planning efforts reach out to a diverse network of community, environmental, economic development and issue advocacy organizations to weigh in on planning issues. These groups help to broaden public outreach and input. Their participation can also demonstrate to elected officials that the issue, policy or plan under consideration has broad support.

Local organizations can provide a wealth of information about relevant messaging and appropriate outreach strategies. Staff of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (based in the San Francisco Bay Area) have sought the input of community-based organizations in their region to help better understand what aspects of potential plans are most important to their respective communities. These groups have also helped the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to communicate more clearly to the public about these issues. In another region, Shasta County’s metropolitan planning organization was able to involve traditionally underserved populations in its regional transportation planning, due in part to a strong working relationship with local public health officials who had contacts for outreach in traditionally hard-to-reach communities.

Partnerships with local media, including those in foreign languages, allow conveners to keep the public informed about regional planning efforts and opportunities to participate. Shasta County’s metropolitan planning organization staff reached out to their local Public Broadcasting Service station to produce and air two one-hour television programs for a nominal fee that very effectively informed the general public about regional planning

efforts and solicited participation in an online survey. Staff also met frequently with local television reporters and newspaper editorial boards, which resulted in free publicity throughout the process. In Fresno County, home to the second largest Hmong population in the United States, metropolitan planning organization staff worked with a local Hmong radio station to help reach this significant minority population.

Three metropolitan planning organizations have successfully used small grants to foster working relationships with community organizations serving traditionally under-represented groups. The James Irvine Foundation provided larger grants to four community organizations in San Diego and Sacramento to support diverse public participation in regional sustainable planning. In the Sacramento region, metropolitan planning organizations worked with a local nonprofit organization to apply for and secure additional funds to support outreach. While adequate funding is vital to any outreach effort, organizations may be willing to help engage their members in sustainable community planning without financial incentives if they feel it helps achieve their goals.

In Fresno County, metropolitan planning organization staff worked closely with the county library system to involve residents in regional planning efforts. Computers at each library in the region provided information in English and Spanish about ways to participate in the process. An educational video in both English and Spanish helped orient residents to sustainable planning issues. Libraries provide online access for people without access to the Internet at home or at work. In addition, libraries can be a valuable partner in reaching seniors, young families and low-income residents.

Reaching Out to Include All Affected Residents

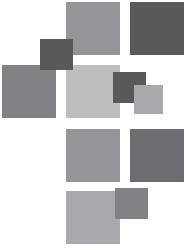
Some populations and communities have greater barriers to participating in regional transportation and sustainable community strategy planning efforts than others. For instance, many immigrants are wary of interacting with government entities; others may have language barriers to participation.¹² Young people, though they may be ultimately more impacted than adults by long range transportation and air quality plans, are frequently under-represented in regional planning efforts. People with disabilities and seniors may find it difficult to travel to meetings.

The Merced County Association of Governments successfully overcame these barriers to participation by using grassroots outreach and relationship-building. Its efforts to involve youth included having two high-school student interns survey their fellow students about their views on planning issues and encourage their further engagement in the planning process.

To reach Merced County immigrant residents, staff identified one or more key leaders in each immigrant community. This required:

- Attending meetings and services of congregations and community-based organizations serving immigrants;
- Building trust with leaders of these congregations and organizations; and
- Asking to be included on the agenda of future meetings.

In both Merced and Fresno, identifying a single bilingual Hmong person who was able to translate for and interview Hmong residents allowed members of that community to have a voice in regional planning processes.



Congregations can be particularly important vehicles for educating residents about regional planning and engagement opportunities. In many cases, outreach to diverse communities can be achieved through targeted efforts with congregations. Contacts with clergy and clergy associations provide an important avenue for pursuing these opportunities. For instance, in some communities Catholic churches may offer an ideal way to reach out and engage a significant number of Spanish-speaking residents. It is important to seek out clergy associations that are truly representative of an area's congregations. For more information, see *A Local Official's Guide to Working with Clergy and Congregations* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/local-officials-guide-working-clergy-and-congregations).

Providing accurately translated outreach and educational materials is another key to successfully involving members of immigrant communities. The Bay Area-based Metropolitan Transportation Commission has conducted phone surveys and interviews at shopping malls and transit hubs in Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese dialects as well as in English. In some communities with significant non-English speaking populations, participation may increase if separate meetings are held to collect input from residents in their native language.

VII. DEALING WITH DEEPLY HELD CONCERNS OR CHALLENGES TO THE PLANNING PROCESS

Agencies that sponsor public engagement processes related to regional planning can expect a broad spectrum of input from those who participate and from the community more generally.

Public engagement participants and others may have very strongly held views about:

- The topics to be discussed;
- The decision-making process; and/or
- The regional agency itself.

Designing and facilitating a discussion with people who have strong beliefs and varied perspectives is both a skill and an art. Providing inclusive processes in which all perspectives can be heard is a fundamental goal of public engagement efforts.

The following approaches can help in designing and preparing for public engagement processes that are effective, responsive and civil — even when participants hold strong assumptions, views and positions. Of course, regional agency plans and responses will be contingent on the time, staff and financial resources available.

Know Your Likely Participants

As part of the public engagement planning process, try to anticipate and understand:

- Participants' likely concerns and interests; and
- Gaps in the information they are likely to have about the topic to be discussed.

For example, one issue that has surfaced in some regional planning processes, especially related to sustainable

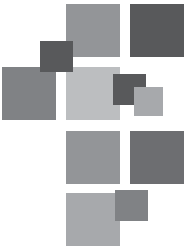
DIFFERENCES OF OPINION MAY POSE CHALLENGES

Differences of opinion about such matters as climate change, the role of government, property rights, housing, transportation options and other related topics may generate strong emotions and present challenges to any public engagement plan.

At times, a public engagement process itself may be the subject of challenge and debate. This may be due to the format or process for involving the community that an agency has selected. For example, regional planning agencies in California have experienced opposition to deliberative and small group discussions in some public engagement processes. If participants come to a meeting with one objective (for example, to ask questions or make a speech), they may resist more deliberative small group discussions. Challenges may also result from residents' fundamentally different beliefs about the legitimacy of regional planning and regional planning agencies.

These concerns will of course differ from time to time, from community to community and from region to region.

communities strategies, is the belief that regional transportation efforts are linked to Agenda 21, a 1992 United Nations report. Searching online for “Agenda 21 + Planning” can provide more insight on this perspective.¹³



In terms of public engagement process design, it is helpful to know if public engagement participants are likely to be organized stakeholders and interest groups with strongly held views, and/or members of the general public who may have less strongly formed or more varied opinions. In addition:

- Talk with colleagues at other regional planning agencies about their experiences with challenges to — and strong public sentiments during — public engagement activities. Learn what surfaced in their processes. Ask which engagement-related approaches worked and which did not.
- Consider the likely range of participant goals in attending the planned public engagement meeting. Some participants will welcome opportunities for dialogue and deliberation with their neighbors. Others may primarily want the opportunity to ask questions, make their views known or raise objections to the public engagement or planning process itself.

Plan, Prepare and Provide Information

Meetings that may involve individuals and groups with very different and deeply held perspectives require careful planning:

- Assess the option to identify and meet early in the design process with groups and organizations likely to have strongly held views. This may help the planning agency to better understand these views and concerns and to solicit input on process design that will enable all participants to be heard. In some cases, forming a public engagement advisory committee may be helpful.
- When possible, plan and hold selected public engagement activities in partnership with groups and organizations that have earned the community's respect.

- As appropriate, offer opportunities for early input by community members and groups to the sustainable communities strategy public engagement process. Doing so demonstrates a commitment to seeking public views.
- Try to ensure that participants adequately reflect the diverse population and viewpoints of the affected community. This requires up-front efforts to encourage such participation.¹⁴
- Be especially clear in all communications about public engagement meeting purposes and processes, as well as about when, how and by whom final decisions will be made.
- As possible, provide appropriate background information to participants before and at the public engagement meeting to help prepare for informed participation.
- Identify and use impartial meeting facilitators and leaders who will not have, or be perceived as having, a bias toward a certain perspective on the issues to be discussed. This may encourage participation from those with a range of different perspectives.
- When using speakers to introduce issues and provide perspectives on topics to be discussed by participants, present a broad spectrum of views.
- Provide the staff and the facilitators of the meeting with possible options and responses should participants challenge meeting ground rules, process and/or content. Facilitators should be courteous even if challenged and flexible as circumstances require.
- If concerns arise about potential safety and security issues at a meeting, staff and facilitators should know who will make any decision about agenda changes or whether a participant should be asked to leave. Bear in

mind that the visible presence of law enforcement personnel may in some cases discourage full participation or further escalate tensions.

Design an Appropriate Process

As described earlier in Chapter V (“Questions to Help Guide Effective Public Engagement Design”), various public engagement process designs support and/or allow opportunities for different kinds of public input. Some meeting design elements are particularly important when issues are significantly controversial and contested:

- Allow enough time in the agenda to clearly explain the work to be done at the meeting and present an overview of the overall decision-making process, the participating agencies’ roles and responsibilities, and the value and use of public input and ideas.
- Present issues and scenarios to be discussed in ways that acknowledge underlying policy history and assumptions.
- Provide sources and background when presenting data and other information to the public so people can verify it for themselves if they choose.
- Design engagement processes that attempt to meet the reasonable participation needs of those likely to attend. This may suggest agendas that include time for questions and answers, and periods for individual comments, as well as for small group discussion and collective discussions and recommendations. However, be very realistic about the time you need if you pursue such multi-faceted approaches. Sometimes separate and/or serial public engagement activities may be appropriate. In some cases, hold an earlier meeting that allows for more individual comments, questions and answers. This can be followed by a meeting with opportunities for more collective scenario discussions and planning.

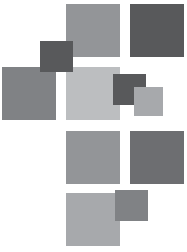
- Consider including options for online discussion and input in the overall public engagement strategy. This allows additional choices for participation and may help secure a broader range of perspectives from the community.
- Create participant worksheets that allow attendees to offer more detailed individual comments and ideas.
- If the agenda includes an opportunity for public comment and a large number of participants are expected, consider limiting the comment time allowed for each individual so that all can be heard. In some cases, key questions may be identified in small groups and then asked in the larger group. It may also be helpful to ask that speakers not repeat in detail points that have already been made.
- Determine how any collected comments, discussion elements or recommendations will be recorded and documented, and where and when they will be available.

Manage Public Engagement Meetings Transparently

At the public engagement meeting be clear about the meeting’s purpose and the ground rules. Maintain a respectful, impartial and firm tone and manner. Stay flexible to meet unexpected challenges.

Consider the following ideas:

- Early in the meeting, briefly describe the overall regional transportation/sustainable communities strategy planning process, the various opportunities for public input, the goal of the meeting, and how public input will be used. This should include information about the roles and responsibilities for decision-making, implementation and/or other actions by the local, regional, state or federal agencies involved.



- Explain, as appropriate, the roles of others at the meeting including local or other public officials or agency staff, presenters, facilitators, media, etc.
- Describe the meeting ground rules and the values and behaviors they are intended to promote (such as respect and fairness). Ask participants to agree to observe the ground rules. If someone objects or refuses to agree, ask if the rest of the group agrees. If there is substantial objection or confusion, further discussion may be required. If one or two people out of a large group raise concerns, these should also be addressed, but if no closure can be achieved in a few minutes, state that the ground rules accepted by most meeting attendees will be in effect and all are asked to follow them. It will then be the meeting organizers' and lead facilitator's responsibility to determine which, if any, ground rule "violations" that occur need to be identified; this may result in someone being asked to not participate or to leave.
- If participants will be asked to sign in or identify themselves before speaking, explain the purpose this serves for both speakers and listeners.
- For question or comment periods, indicate whether participants will be called upon directly or asked to submit question/comment cards. Be aware, however, that some may object to their use. They may not believe their contributions will be as effective if they are grouped with others' or expressed by someone other than themselves.
- Acknowledge that there are likely to be disagreements. Encourage participants to practice active listening to help people feel heard. Active listening techniques include repeating what one has heard, asking for clarification, avoiding the use of accusatory language and refraining from questioning someone's motives or integrity.

Respond Appropriately to Negative, Challenging or Emotionally Presented Comments

Some discussions may become loud and passionate. Rude or insulting comments may be made. Some participants may challenge the public engagement process or the larger regional planning process itself. These are each quite different things. It is important to listen carefully, use good judgment and respond to what is being said. For example:

- Encourage and practice active listening. Be respectful. Do not respond in kind to derogatory or insulting comments.
- Identify and respond to the substance of the question or comment rather than to its tone (assuming the question or comment is relevant to the topic).
- As appropriate, ask the person making a challenging comment to explain their point more fully. If a factual assertion is made, asking for the source of information. Encourage everyone to draw connections between their comments and the policy issues at hand.
- Intervene if personal verbal attacks are made by one participant to another. Refer back to the ground rules and ask that such comments not be made or repeated. If a meeting leader or facilitator is individually verbally attacked, they should not respond in kind but should refer to the ground rules. Ask the speaker to reframe the question or comment in a way that focuses on the issue and not on individual criticism.
- Suggest a short break if necessary and, as appropriate, speak to an individual about his or her inappropriate language or interactions with others.

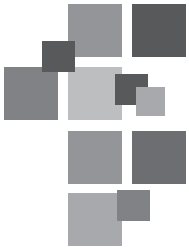
- Be aware that people who do not feel heard are likely to speak loudest. Some individuals also use more direct or emotional styles of verbal and nonverbal expression than others.
- Try to steer the conversation away from terms that may mean very different things to different people, such as “sustainability,” “liberty,” “property rights” or “economic justice.”

Take Steps if Participant Behavior is Disruptive

While rare, if one or more participants’ behavior become continually and personally insulting or disruptive it is important to acknowledge and address it appropriately. Otherwise the meeting dynamics may deteriorate and decrease the chances of accomplishing the meeting’s purpose. Clearly establish in advance which individuals are responsible for taking such action, and communicate this to meeting sponsors, leaders and facilitators. If insults, disruptive behavior, or challenges to the meeting continue to occur, consider the following:

- Review and enforce the meeting ground rules.
- Have the lead facilitator(s) maintain control of the microphone(s).

- In some cases, ask the group whether they wish the meeting to continue as planned or move to another format or process. However, this can be difficult and usually unwise in an already polarized or increasingly out-of-control meeting.
- If a “back-up” engagement process has been planned, move to it if appropriate and explain to participants what will happen next.
- If some participants continue to shout, talk over others or disrupt the meeting:
 - Indicate that they will be asked to leave if the disorderly behavior continues and take that step if called for; and/or
 - Conclude the meeting.



VIII. RESOURCES

Institute for Local Government Resources

The Institute's SB 375 Resource Center provides resources for local officials to learn about this important law and how it affects California cities and counties. The SB 375 Resource Center includes information about SB 375 and how it relates to local and regional planning for transportation, land use, housing and the environment.
www.ca-ilg.org/sb-375-resource-center

Information on public engagement and SB 375
www.ca-ilg.org/sb-375-and-public-engagement

Understanding SB 375: Public Participation Requirements
www.ca-ilg.org/post/understanding-sb-375-public-participation-requirements

Understanding SB 375: Regional Planning for Transportation, Housing and the Environment
www.ca-ilg.org/post/guide-regional-planning-transportation-housing-and-environment

Understanding the Basics of Land Use and Planning: A Guide to Local Planning
www.ca-ilg.org/post/understanding-basics-land-use-and-planning-guide-local-planning

Sustainability Best Practices Areas
www.ca-ilg.org/climate-action-sustainability-best-practices

A collection of regional planning agency public participation plans
www.ca-ilg.org/public-participation-plans

Building Public Support for Affordable Housing: A Toolbox for California Officials
www.ca-ilg.org/post/building-public-support-affordable-housing-toolbox-california-officials

Other Resources

The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)
www.ampo.org/content/index.php?pid=224.

California Council of Governments (CALCOG)
www.calcog.org

California Department of Transportation
2010 California Regional Progress Report
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www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pubcase.htm

IX. GLOSSARY

This glossary includes a few regional planning terms. Further information on terminology related to SB 375 can be found in the Institute publication *Glossary of Land Use and Planning Terms* (www.ca-ilg.org/post/understanding-basics-land-use-and-planning-glossary-land-use-and-planning-terms).

AB 32 — California’s Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 requires that California’s greenhouse gas emissions be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020. This is a reduction of about 30 percent from projected “business as usual” levels. AB 32 gives the California Air Resources Board authority to identify and regulate sources of greenhouse gas emissions. The California Air Resources Board’s Scoping Plan for implementing AB 32 includes a wide range of strategies, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks through transportation planning related to land use.

Alternative planning strategy — A regional growth strategy required under SB 375 for regions where the sustainable communities strategy will not achieve the greenhouse gas reduction target set by the California Air Resources Board. Unlike the sustainable communities strategy, an alternative planning strategy is a separate document from the regional transportation plan, and must, if implemented, meet the regional greenhouse gas emissions reduction target set by the California Air Resources Board. Residential development and transportation projects consistent with the alternative planning strategy are eligible for SB 375’s California Environmental Quality Act streamlining incentives, if cities or counties choose to offer them.

California Air Resources Board — The state agency responsible for regulating air pollution, including emissions of greenhouse gases under AB 32 and SB 375.

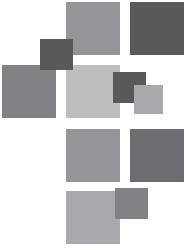
California Environmental Quality Act (acronym: CEQA; pronounced “See-qwa”) — A state law requiring state and local agencies to analyze the potential impacts of their actions on the environment, disclose their findings to the public and mitigate impacts where feasible.^{15, 16}

Greenhouse gas — Any gas that absorbs infrared radiation in the atmosphere. Types of greenhouse gases include water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), ozone (O₃), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆). Greenhouse gases are measured in tons or million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (sometimes indicated as MMT CO₂e).¹⁷

Metropolitan planning organization — A regional council of governments within a metropolitan region as defined by the federal government and authorized under federal law to develop a regional transportation plan.

The four largest metropolitan planning organizations are:

- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which includes the nine counties and the cities in the San Francisco Bay Area region;¹⁸
- The Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG), which includes El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties and the cities within them;
- The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which includes San Diego County and the cities within it; and
- The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), which includes Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties and the cities within them.



Regional housing needs allocation (acronym: RHNA; pronounced “Rē-na”) — A determination of the existing and projected need for housing within a region, made by a council of governments or by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The RHNA numerically allocates the future housing need by household income group for each locality within the region. This allocation must be reflected in the housing element of an agency’s general plan.

Regional transportation plan — A plan that, among other things, outlines transportation investments for a region. It is drafted by a metropolitan planning organization or regional transportation planning agency every four years (five years in regions that have attained federal air quality standards) and includes a 20-year outlook for likely growth in the region.

SB 375 — (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) directs the California Air Resources Board to set regional targets for metropolitan planning organizations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. SB 375 aligns the regional allocation of housing needs and regional transportation planning in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicle trips.

Statewide greenhouse gas emission limit — The maximum allowable level of statewide greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 as determined by the California Air Resources Board.¹⁹ In December 2007 the California Air Resources Board approved the 2020 emissions limit of 427 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent of greenhouse gases.²⁰

Sustainable communities strategy — A regional growth strategy required under SB 375 that, in combination with transportation policies and programs, strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, if it is feasible, achieves regional greenhouse gas reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board. The sustainable communities strategy is part of a regional transportation plan. It must comply with federal law and must be based upon “current planning assumptions” that include the information in local general plans and sphere-of-influence boundaries.

X. ENDNOTES

- ⁱ See CAL. HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE § 38500 and following.
- ⁱⁱ See CAL. SEN. BILL NO. 375 (2008 REG. SESS.).
- ¹ See CAL. GOV'T CODE § 65080(b)(2)(J).
- ² See CAL. PUB. RES. CODE §§ 21155, 21155.1, 21155.2, and 21155.3.
- ³ 2010 U.S. Census, <http://2010.census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn68.html>
- ⁴ State of California, Department of Finance, *Population Projections for California and Its Counties 2000–2050, by Age, Gender and Race Ethnicity*, Sacramento, California, July 2007.
- ⁵ See CAL. HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 38500 and following.
- ⁶ See Cal. Sen. Bill No. 375 (2008 Reg. Sess.), available at http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb_0351-0400/sb_375_bill_20080930_chaptered.pdf
- ⁷ See Cal. Sen. Bill No. 375 (2008 Reg. Sess.) § 1(a), at Chapter 728.
- ⁸ California Air Resource Board, Greenhouse Gas Inventory Data, available at www.arb.ca.gov/cc/inventory/data/graph/graph.htm
- ⁹ See 23 C.F.R. § 450.316. See Institute for Local Government, Public Participation Plan examples available at www.ca-ilg.org/public-participation-plans.
- ¹⁰ J. Fregonese & C.J. Gabbe, “Engaging the Public and Communicating Successfully in Regional Planning” in Seltzer, Ethan and Carbonell, Armando (eds.), *Regional Planning in America: Practice and Prospect*; Lincoln Institute for Land Policy, 2011.
- ¹¹ “Engaging the Public and Communicating Successfully in Regional Planning”
- ¹² For more on immigrant civic engagement strategies, see *A Local Official’s Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement* at www.ca-ilg.org/immigrant-engagement-integration.
- ¹³ See *Agenda 21: Myths and Facts* from the American Planning Association (www.smartvalleyplaces.org/wp-content/uploads/Agenda21mythsfacts.pdf)
- ¹⁴ See www.ca-ilg.org/engaging-broader-community-immigrants-youth-and-congregations for more information.
- ¹⁵ See CAL. PUB. RES. CODE § 21080.1.
- ¹⁶ See CAL. PUB. RES. CODE § 21155.
- ¹⁷ See CAL. HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 38505(g).
- ¹⁸ With the exception of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, each of the other major metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) is also the council of governments (COG) for its region. In the Bay Area, duties are split between the Association of Bay Area Governments (the COG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (the MPO).
- ¹⁹ See CAL. HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 38505(h).
- ²⁰ The California Air Resources Board approved the limit by its Resolution 07-55 adopted Dec. 6, 2007.

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