

# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

## Introduction

In 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Change Act of 2008, was passed as the mechanism to implement passenger vehicle greenhouse gas reductions outlined in Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32).

Under SB 375, the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG), as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is required by the state to prepare the area's "Sustainable Communities Strategy" (SCS) as an additional component of the 2012 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The SCS demonstrates the integration of land use, housing, and transportation for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles. In addition, SB 375 amended the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to provide incentives for residential and residential mixed use projects that help to implement the 2012 MTP/SCS.

In 2010, the California Air Resources Board approved passenger vehicle GHG emission targets for the Butte County region for the years 2020 and 2035. The targets established for the region allow for a one percent (1%) increase, per capita, in passenger vehicle GHG emissions for both time periods (compared with 2005).

The Butte County region will meet these targets, shown in Table 4-1, by balancing housing and employment growth within the specified growth areas, protecting sensitive habitat and open space, and investing in a multi-modal transportation system. The determination that BCAG will meet the CARB GHG reduction target is based upon the results of computer modeling. Appendix 6 describes the models and methodology used in preparing the estimates.

**Table 4-1**

**MTP/SCS per Capita CO<sub>2</sub> for Passenger Vehicles from 2005**

<b>Target Year</b>	<b>ARB Target</b>	<b>BCAG MTP/SCS</b>
2020	1% increase	2% decrease
2035	1% increase	2% decrease

The SCS has been prepared as a component of the MTP. Specific requirements of SB 375, and the locations in which these requirements have been addressed within the 2012 MTP/SCS are identified in a matrix in Appendix 7.

## **Background Information**

As directed by SB 375, future updates of an MTP must include a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which includes a regional growth forecast and land use pattern that is able to accommodate the estimated increases in population, housing and employment.

Although the SCS is a recent requirement, BCAG has past and present efforts which incorporate sustainable planning principles and help provide a foundation for the development of the 2012 SCS growth projections and forecasted development pattern.

## **BCAG Blueprint Planning**

Due to increasing growth pressures in the Butte County region over the past decade BCAG initiated the Blueprint Planning Program in 2006 to establish a multi-faceted planning process to help provide for a more informed land use and transportation decision-making process, and provide an improved environmental permitting process for future transportation and land use projects

These planning efforts were coordinated through the BCAG Planning Directors Group (PDG), which is comprised of planning directors and staff from all the BCAG member jurisdictions, as well as the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

The BCAG Blueprint Program resulted in: 1) the 2008 Regional Growth Forecasts; 2) established Regional Guiding Principles, an Ecological Baseline Assessment Report, Landcover Mapping, Biological Constraints Analysis, and Butte County Meadowfoam Evaluation; 3) initiated the Butte Regional Conservation Plan; and 4) integrated updates of the region's local general plans both with each other and with the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP) and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

As of 2012, four of the region's six local jurisdictions (Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and Butte County) have completed general plan updates, and the remaining two jurisdictions (Biggs and Paradise) have initiated an update process. The areas new general plans provide the foundation for the region's SCS.

## **Butte Regional Conservation Plan**

Habitat conservation efforts began in the region in 2007 when BCAG commenced development of the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP). The BRCP is a joint Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) and, once completed, will allow for appropriate and compatible growth and development in the Butte County region while ensuring

the preservation and protection of aquatic and terrestrial resources and providing habitat for threatened and endangered species through conservation partnerships with local agencies.

### **Regional Modeling**

In preparing the regional growth forecasts and land use patterns for the SCS, BCAG utilized sophisticated modeling tools developed with grant funding obtained from the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) and Caltrans. These new tools have allowed BCAG to look at land use scenarios on a micro level and determine their relation to the transportation system. Details regarding these tools and BCAG's transportation forecasting for the MTP/SCS are available in Chapter 3 – Traffic Forecasting and in Appendix 7.

### **SCS Planning Partners and Public Outreach**

With funding obtained from the SGC, BCAG partnered with the cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, the Town of Paradise, County of Butte and the Local Agency Formation Commission to develop the forecasted development pattern for the SCS. This partnership included the exchange of planning assumptions, review and comments regarding the information to be considered, review of the various documents, and the development of land use scenarios.

Additional public and stakeholder participation in the development of the SCS and forecasted development pattern were implemented through the BCAG Public Participation Plan (PPP). The BCAG PPP was amended by the BCAG Board of Directors in March 2010 to implement the required outreach efforts contained in SB 375. The PPP provides direction for public involvement activities conducted by BCAG and contains the procedures and strategies used by BCAG. A complete summary of BCAG's SCS public involvement efforts are contained in Appendix 8.

## **Regional Growth Forecasts**

The MTP/SCS identifies areas within the region sufficient to house all of the forecasted population of the region, including all economic segments of the population over the course of the MTP/SCS planning period. The population, housing, and employment forecasts for the MTP/SCS are based on the “medium scenario” contained in the Butte County Long-Term Regional Growth Forecasts 2010-2035, developed by BCAG in 2011. It represents the most realistic growth scenario for the region. A complete copy of the regional forecasts has been included in Appendix 9.

The 2035 growth forecast indicates that the population in the BCAG region is expected to grow by ~110,000 people, an increase of 50%, between 2010 and 2035. In comparison to the regional forecasts prepared for the 2008 MTP, the new forecasts capture the downward trend in regional growth associated with the dramatic downturn in the economy. This is most evident in the short term periods (2010-2020) of the forecasts in which the overall growth of the region has been most affected. Less variation is seen with the longer range (2020-2035) forecasts, suggesting that future growth patterns are likely to stay intact following an economic recovery.

In addition to the ~110,000 growth in new population, the forecasts show the need to accommodate approximately 47,325 new housing units and 40,778 new employees between 2010 and 2035, as illustrated in Table 4-2.

**Table 4-2**

**MTP/SCS Regional Growth Forecasts**

Year	Employees	Population	Housing Units
2010	71,501	221,768	96,623
2020	87,214	257,266	111,813
2035	112,279	332,459	143,948

*Source: BCAG, 2011.*

## **Land Use Forecasts**

The land use forecasts, and the process for allocating growth within the region, are affected by federal and state requirements related to the regional transportation plans and the Clean Air Act. In general, federal and state laws require BCAG to develop a forecasted land use pattern, based upon the best available information, in order to, among other things, design specific transportation improvements to serve that land use, and to perform travel modeling to determine the performance of the transportation system and determine whether the plan, including its land use and transportation components, meets federal air quality requirements. Starting with BCAG's 2012 MTP/SCS, this process is also affected by SB 375, and specifically its requirements to include an SCS, to calculate the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from passenger vehicles, and enable the California Environmental Quality Act streamlining benefits for projects that are consistent with the SCS.

The primary resource in preparing the MTP/SCS land use forecast are the latest local general plans which were developed in coordination with BCAG as part of the Blueprint Program. As the estimated land use forecast is developed, BCAG consults with local governments and stakeholders as it considers a number of factors throughout the process. The BCAG Planning Directors Group was the primary venue for ongoing coordination between local agency planning staff and BCAG.

## **Land Use Scenario Development**

In preparing the land use forecasts for the 2012 MTP/SCS, BCAG developed three distinct land use scenarios for the purpose of illustrating the travel effects of different development patterns on the regional transportation system and the associated greenhouse gas emissions resulting from these patterns. In addition, the scenarios allowed BCAG to test the performance of the enhanced regional travel demand model to ensure it was responding appropriately to changes in land use.

All three scenarios were prepared using the same regional employment, population and housing growth projections and regional transportation network. However, the following land use variables were adjusted to create the distinct scenarios:

- The amount of development occurring within each of the five Growth Areas (i.e., Urban Center and Corridor, Established, New, Rural, and Agricultural).
- The levels of infill and redevelopment occurring within the Urban Center and Corridor and Established Growth Areas.
- The shares of single-family to multi-family development.
- The amount of growth accommodated within each local jurisdiction.

The land use scenarios were designed by first assembling the “balanced” scenario. The “balanced” scenario (scenario #1) was prepared based on land use information from the recent general plan updates, the latest information regarding planned development, reasonable assumptions regarding infill and redevelopment, regional growth forecasts, and a review of development attractions (i.e., motorized and non-motorized transportation networks, existing development, utility areas, etc.) and discouragements (i.e., resource areas and farmland, public lands, areas exceeding 25% slope, etc.). Secondly, the “dispersed” (scenario #2) and “compact” (scenario #3) scenarios were prepared to represent development occurring at opposing ends of the spectrum from scenario #1. The scenarios are described in more detail in Table 4-3.

**Table 4-3**

**Description of MTP/SCS Land Use Scenarios**

Scenario	Land Use
Scenario 1 – Balanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced share of new housing within the center, established and new growth areas</li> <li>• Contains reasonable levels of infill and redevelopment</li> <li>• Consistent with local land use plans and draft habitat conservation plan</li> <li>• Consistent with BCAG long-term regional growth forecasts by jurisdiction</li> </ul>
Scenario 2 – Dispersed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largest share of single-family housing with a greater amount of growth directed to the new, rural, and agricultural growth areas</li> <li>• Minimize the amount of infill and redevelopment</li> <li>• Exceeds the unincorporated areas local land use plans reasonable capacities for growth</li> </ul>
Scenario 3 – Compact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greatest share of infill and redevelopment within the established and center growth areas</li> <li>• Highest share of multi-family housing</li> <li>• Potential incompatibilities with existing infrastructure capacity</li> <li>• Exceeds the incorporated areas local land use plans reasonable capacities for growth</li> <li>• Inconsistent with known housing type demand</li> </ul>

Each land use scenario was analyzed and results were compared for vehicle miles traveled (VMT), congested VMT, and CO<sub>2</sub>. A complete description of the analysis for the land use scenarios is included in Appendix 10.

### **Development by Growth Area**

BCAG developed a framework for describing the MTP/SCS that is made up of Growth Area Types. The Growth Area Types are an adaption to a similar framework developed by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), BCAGs closest neighboring Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Local land use plans (e.g., adopted and proposed general plans, specific

plans, master plans, corridor plans, etc.) were divided into one of five Growth Area Types based on the location of the plans. Figure 4-1 provides an illustration of the Growth Area Types.

The following contains a brief description of each Growth Area Type and a summary of land uses allocated within each, based on the preferred “balanced” land use scenario. The forecasted allocations are consistent with growth assumptions (e.g., location, density, and intensity of use) utilized in existing general plans or other local adopted plans, however, it does not utilize all available capacity in those plans by 2035. Tables 4-4 and 4-5 summarize the housing and employment in the MTP/SCS by Growth Area Type.

**Table 4-4**

**Summary of Housing Units Forecasted in MTP/SCS**

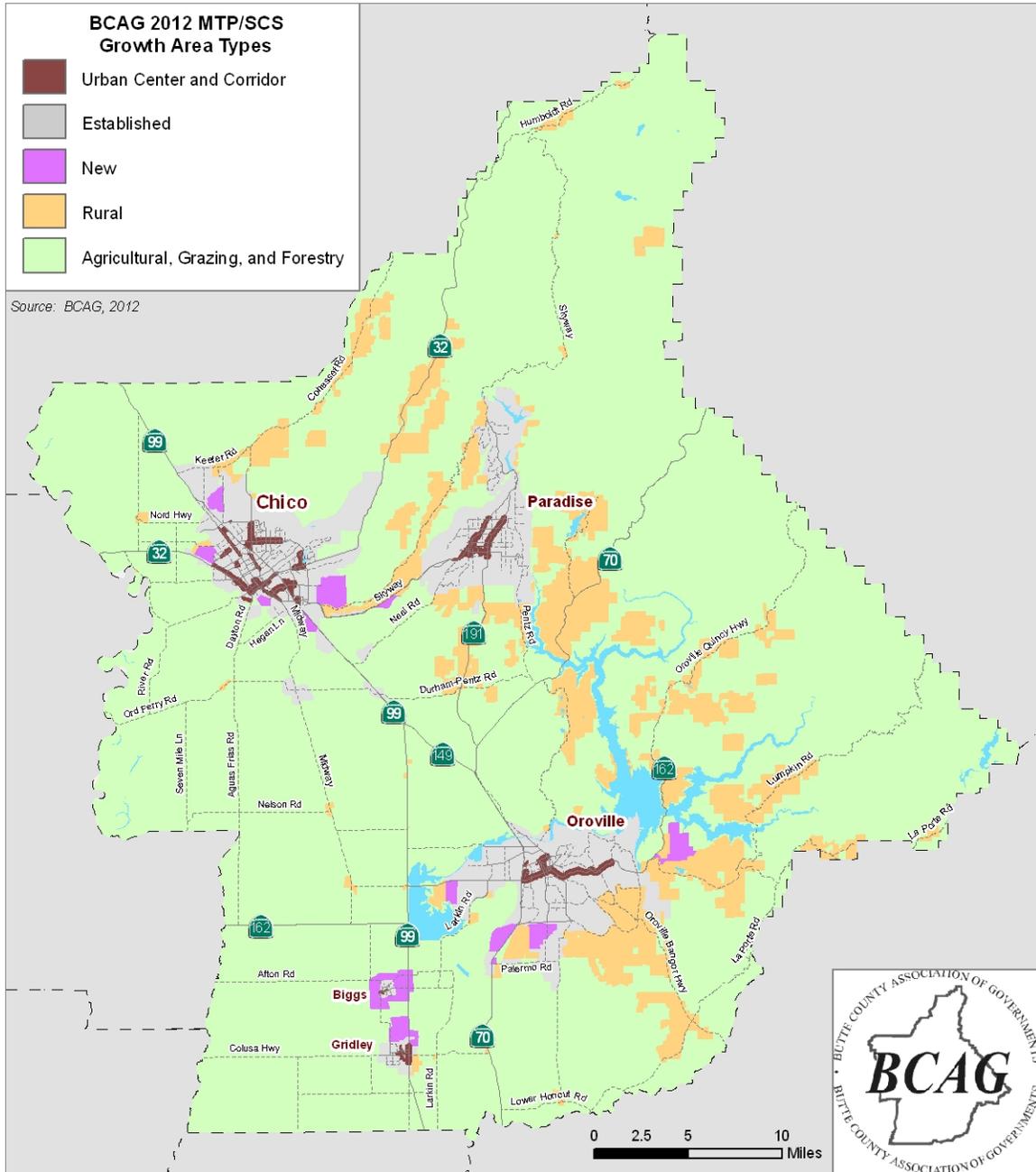
Growth Area Type	2010 Existing Housing Units	2010 - 2020 New Housing Units	2010 - 2035 New Housing Units	Total 2035 Forecasted Housing Units
Urban Center and Corridor Areas	8,375	838	2,760	11,135
Established Areas	73,639	10,960	26,493	100,131
New Areas	440	1,825	13,859	14,299
Rural Areas	7,829	955	2,924	10,753
Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Areas	6,340	613	1,289	7,629
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>96,623</b>	<b>15,190</b>	<b>47,325</b>	<b>143,948</b>

**Table 4-5**

**Summary of Employment Forecasted in MTP/SCS by Growth Area**

Growth Area Type	2010 Existing Employees	2010 - 2020 New Employees	2010 - 2035 New Employees	Total 2035 Forecasted Employees
Urban Center and Corridor Areas	30,471	3,063	9,804	40,275
Established Areas	37,535	11,137	23,573	61,108
New Areas	1,277	893	6,229	7,506
Rural Areas	950	429	902	1,852
Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Areas	1,268	192	271	1,539
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>71,501</b>	<b>15,713</b>	<b>40,778</b>	<b>112,279</b>

**Figure 4-1**



**Urban Center and Corridor Areas** consist of higher density and mixed land uses with access to frequent transit service. These areas typically have existing or planned infrastructure for non-motorized transportation modes which are more supportive of walking and bicycling. Future growth within these areas consists of compact infill developments on underutilized lands, or redevelopment of existing

developed lands. Local plans identify these areas as opportunity sites, downtowns, central business districts, or mixed use corridors.

Table 4-6 summarizes the existing conditions, and 2020 and 2035 MTP/SCS projections for the Urban Center and Corridor Areas.

**Table 4-6**

**Summary of Housing Units and Employees in Urban Center and Corridor Growth Area**

2010 Existing Conditions		2010 - 2020 Forecasted Growth		2010 - 2035 Forecasted Growth	
Total Employees	Total Housing Units	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth
30,471	8,375	3,063	838	9,804	2,760

**Established Areas** generally consist of the remaining existing urban development footprint surrounding the Urban Center and Corridor Areas. Locations disconnected from Urban and Corridor Centers may be residential-only, employment-only, or a mix of these uses with urban densities. These areas consist of a range of urban development densities with most locations having access to transit through the urban fixed route system or commuter service. Future growth within these areas typically utilizes locations of currently planned developments or vacant infill parcels. Local plans generally seek to maintain the existing character of these areas.

Table 4-7 summarizes the existing conditions, and 2020 and 2035 MTP/SCS projections for the Established Growth Area.

**Table 4-7**

**Summary of Housing Units and Employees in Established Growth Area**

2010 Existing Conditions		2010 - 2020 Forecasted Growth		2010 - 2035 Forecasted Growth	
Total Employees	Total Housing Units	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth
37,535	73,639	11,137	10,960	23,573	26,493

**New Areas** are typically connected to the outer edge of an Established Area. These areas currently consist of vacant land adjacent to existing development and represent areas of future urban expansion. Future growth within these areas will most often consist of urban densities of residential and employment uses with

a few select areas being residential only. Local plans identify these areas as special planning or specific plan areas, master plans, and planned development or planned growth areas. Currently, fixed route transit service is nonexistent in these areas. However, fixed route transit service would likely be provided to areas which are directly adjacent to current urban routing as part of build-out. Quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure are typically required to be incorporated under the local jurisdictions' plans.

Table 4-8 summarizes the existing conditions, and 2020 and 2035 MTP/SCS projections for the New Growth Area.

**Table 4-8**  
**Summary of Housing Units and Employees in New Growth Area**

2010 Existing Conditions		2010 - 2020 Forecasted Growth		2010 - 2035 Forecasted Growth	
Total Employees	Total Housing Units	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth
1,277	440	893	1,825	6,229	13,859

**Rural Areas** consist of areas outside existing and planned urban areas with development at low residential densities. These areas are predominantly residential and may contain a small commercial component. The densities at which these areas are developed do not reasonably allow for pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure and transit service is limited or nonexistent. Automobile travel is typically the transportation option.

Table 4-9 summarizes the existing conditions, and 2020 and 2035 MTP/SCS projections for the Rural Growth Area.

**Table 4-9**  
**Summary of Housing Units and Employees in Rural Growth Area**

2010 Existing Conditions		2010 - 2020 Forecasted Growth		2010 - 2035 Forecasted Growth	
Total Employees	Total Housing Units	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth
950	7,829	429	955	902	2,924

**Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Areas** represent the remaining areas of the region not being planned for development at urban densities. These areas support agricultural, grazing, forestry, mining, recreational, and resource conservation type uses. Locations within these areas may be protected from

future urban development under federal, state, and local plans or programs such as the Chico area “greenline”, Williamson Act contracts, or conservation easements. Employment and residential uses are typically allowed within portions of this area but are most often secondary to agricultural, forestry, or other rural uses.

Table 4-10 summarizes the existing conditions, and 2020 and 2035 MTP/SCS projections for the Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Growth Area.

**Table 4-10**

**Summary of Housing Units and Employees in Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Growth Area**

2010 Existing Conditions		2010 - 2020 Forecasted Growth		2010 - 2035 Forecasted Growth	
Total Employees	Total Housing Units	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth	Employee Growth	Housing Unit Growth
1,268	6,340	192	613	271	1,289

**Transit Priority Project Area**

As established by SB 375, a Transit Priority Project (TPP) area is defined as a location within one-half mile of a major transit stop or an existing or planned high-quality transit corridor included in the MTP/SCS. A high-quality transit corridor is defined by the State as a corridor with fixed route bus service intervals no longer than 15 minutes during peak commute hours. Certain projects within a TPP area are eligible for CEQA streamlining benefits.

The MTP/SCS has identified the Chico Transit Priority Project Area (Figure 4-2) as an area with the greatest potential to meet the TPP definition, within the timeframe of the plan. The Chico TPP area covers the Downtown Chico Transit Center and the area surrounding B-Line Route 15, which currently operates at the highest frequency in the BCAG region. New development within the Chico TPA consists mainly of infill and redevelopment opportunities. Mixed use, higher density, development, creating both employment and housing, is the primary allocation of new growth within the Chico TPA. Table 4.11 provides a summary of housing and employment forecasted to occur with the Chico TPP area.



## **Housing**

Providing a variety of housing types, including apartments, townhouses, condominiums, and single family homes, creates opportunities for the variety of people living in the region. For the purpose of preparing the forecasted development pattern of the SCS, BCAG has categorized housing into one of two categories:

- **Single Family** units are detached homes built at densities ranging anywhere from 13 units per acre in the urban areas to 1 unit per 160 acres in timber and agricultural areas.
- **Multi-Family** units are attached or detached homes built at densities ranging from 13 to 50 units per acre. Multi-family homes generally consist of duplexes, triplexes, lofts, apartments, condominiums, townhouses, row houses, etc.

A recent demographic study prepared by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, “Changing Demographics and Demand for Housing Types, January 2011”, indicates the evolving demographics and preferences held by specific demographic groups, or generational cohorts are driving a change in the housing stock. The study finds that on the demand side, the aging of the baby boom generation and the preferences of Generation Y (those born between 1978 and 1994) will have the greatest effect. These groups are expected to produce greater demand for apartments and small housing units (i.e. multi-family housing) into the future.

The MTP/SCS estimates that there will be an increased demand for multi-family housing. Regionally, 28% of the new housing in the forecasted development pattern is multi-family and 72% is single family. This demonstrates a moderate shift in the housing mix from the estimated existing mix of 25% multi-family and 75% single family.

The greatest shift in housing mix is within the Urban Center and Corridor Growth Areas and the New Growth Areas. It is estimated that 74% of the new housing in the Urban Center and Corridor Growth Areas will be multi-family and 32% of the new housing in the New Growth Areas will be multi-family housing, by 2035. The distributions for all growth areas are summarized in Table 4-12.

**Table 4-12**

**Summary of Draft Housing Unit Mix by Growth Area**

Growth Area Type	2010 Existing Housing Units		2010 - 2020 New Housing Units		2010 - 2035 New Housing Units	
	Single Family	Multi-Family	Single Family	Multi-Family	Single Family	Multi-Family
Urban Center and Corridor Areas	42%	58%	44%	56%	26%	74%
Established Areas	74%	26%	72%	28%	74%	26%
New Areas	99%	1%	74%	26%	68%	32%
Rural Areas	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%
Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Areas	97%	3%	100%	0%	100%	0%
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>28%</b>

**Jobs Housing Balance**

At the regional level, a jobs-housing balance can be discussed as a point in which the areas jobs and households are balanced so that neither jobs nor housing have to be imported or exported. An imbalance in a region’s jobs-housing ratio can increase travel by causing workers to commute out of their residence area (in areas with few jobs) or workers commuting into a region (in areas with more jobs).

Traditionally, the Butte County region has been an area in which housing has been greater than employment, with local residents commuting out of the area to find employment. With the current downturn in the economy this “imbalance” in housing and jobs has increased.

The MTP/SCS includes a forecasted increase in the existing 2010 ratio of jobs to housing, as included in the Butte County Long-Term Regional Growth Forecasts 2010-2035. In 2010, the areas ratio was 0.74 jobs (non-farm) per housing unit. The long-term forecasts estimate that the region will return to historic levels of 0.78 jobs per housing unit by the years 2020 and 2035.

## **Accommodating the Regional Housing Need Allocation**

BCAG is required by state law to complete a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) to determine the region's housing needs in four income categories - very low, low, moderate, and above moderate. This process occurs before each housing element cycle. (Note: SB 375 changed the update cycle from a four to eight-year period).

In the past, the RHNA was completed separately from the MTP. SB 375 now links the RHNA and MTP processes to better integrate housing, land use, and transportation planning. Integrating both processes helps ensure that the state's housing goals are met.

BCAG received the RHNA Determination from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for the upcoming 2014-2022 housing element cycle, as shown in Table 4-13 below.

**Table 4-13**

### **Regional Distribution of Total RHNA Determination by Income Group**

<b>Income Group</b>	<b>Housing Units</b>
Very Low	2,495 (24.2%)
Low	1,720 (16.7%)
Moderate	1,710 (16.6%)
Above Moderate	4,395 (42.5%)
Total	10,320 (100%)

BCAG worked with local jurisdictions in preparing the methodology for distributing the RHNA among all jurisdictions while considering the goals and required factors of housing element law. The RHNA methodology, including the consideration of goals and factors, is included in Appendix 11.

Once completed, the RHNA Plan will allocate the RHNA determination by jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction will receive an allocation and each jurisdiction will need to identify adequate sites to address its RHNA numbers in the four income categories when updating its housing element. Housing elements will be due no later than 18 months after the BCAG Board adopts the 2012 MTP/SCS.

SB 375 requires that the RHNA and SCS are consistent with one another – that is, that the SCS land use pattern can accommodate the 8-year RHNA Determination.

Table 4-14 demonstrates the capacity of the SCS land use pattern to accommodate the RHNA determination. Any changes to land use plans or zoning (because of updates to housing elements) by local jurisdictions will be reflected in the next regional growth forecast and MTP. This will ensure that land use changes resulting from the RHNA and the housing element process will be considered in future updates of these planning documents. The goal is to ensure consistency between future land use and transportation plans.

**Table 4.14**

**MTP/SCS 2010-2035 Housing Unit Growth Forecast by Jurisdiction**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Housing Unit Growth Forecast* 2010 - 2035</b>	<b>RHNP Allocation**</b>
Biggs	950	184
Chico	19,255	3,963
Gridley	3,405	769
Oroville	6,565	1,793
Paradise	2,975	637
Butte County Unincorporated	14,175	2,974
<b>Total Region</b>	<b>47,325</b>	<b>10,320</b>

\*Butte County Long-Term Regional Growth Forecasts 2010-2035 "medium scenario", BCAG 2011

\*\* RHNP Allocation based on Adopted Methodology

## **Resource Areas and Farmlands Considerations**

In developing the MTP/SCS land use forecast and transportation system, BCAG considered the region's latest information regarding resource areas and farmland, as required by Senate Bill 375. The following sections provide a description of the datasets considered and the estimated impacts to farmlands, recreation and open space, habitat and natural resources, and flood control lands.

### **Farmlands**

#### **Prime, Unique, and Farmlands of Statewide Importance**

Farmlands provide an important contribution to the economy of Butte County as well as provide environmental benefits such as flood control and habitat. In 2009, the total value of agricultural production in Butte County was valued at \$540 million with rice, walnuts, almonds, dried plums, and nursery stock as the leading commodities, according to the California Agricultural Resource Directory 2010-2011.

The California Department of Conservation maps farmland throughout California under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). A map of farmlands in the MTP/SCS planning area is included as Figure 4-3. In 2010, farmlands designated as either prime, unique, or of statewide importance totaled 237,272 acres. Build-out of the MTP/SCS forecasted land use and transportation system could impact up to approximately 5,741 acres (2.4%) of the "important" farmlands defined by the state (i.e., prime, unique, and of statewide importance). Table 4-15 provides a breakdown of impacts to these important farmlands by category of impact.

**Table 4-15**

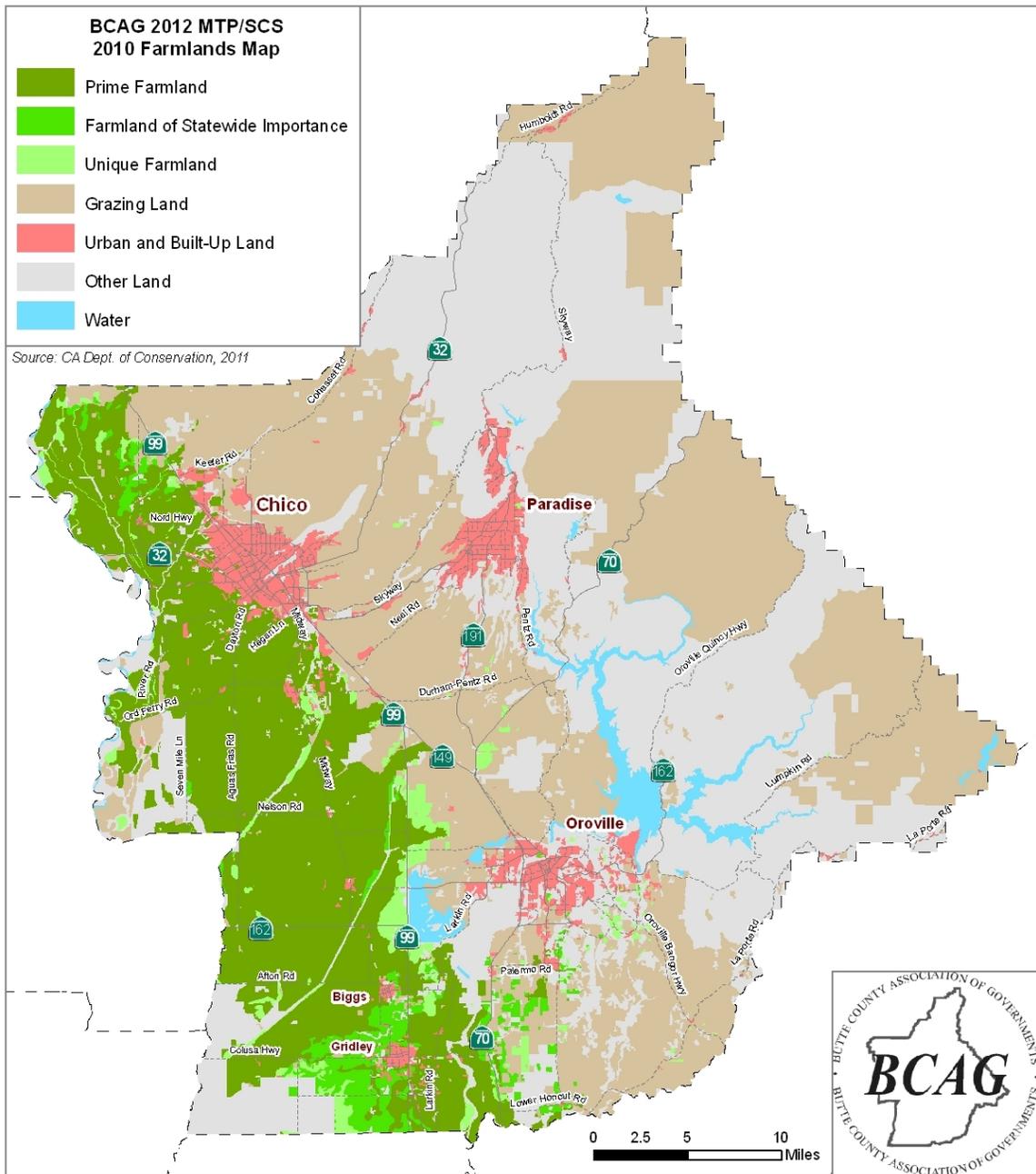
**MTP/SCS Land Use and Transportation Impacts to Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) Identified Farmland**

Category of Impact	Acres of Impact *
Land Use	5,588
Transportation Projects **	143
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>5,731</b>

\* Impact to those lands designated as prime or unique or farmland of statewide importance.

\*\* Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening. Acres of impact were calculated by applying a 100-foot buffer to road centerline.

**Figure 4-3**



**Williamson Act Lands**

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with land owners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or open space use. In return, landowners receive a lower property tax rate based on agricultural production value rather than full market value. Williamson Act contracts may be

non-renewed by landowners at any time, initiating a 9-year waiting period before the contract expires. Landowner's may alternatively initiate an Immediate Cancellation, which does not require the 9-year waiting period but requires meeting strict findings and the payment of penalties as set forth under the Williamson Act. As of 2009, Butte County has approximately 217,151 acres of land under a Williamson Act contract with 12,735 acres (6%) in non-renewal, according to the California Department of Conservation's 2010 California Land Conservation Act Status Report. Of the 217,151 acres under Williamson Act contract, only 1,314 acres (0.6%) have the potential to be impacted by build-out of the MTP/SCS. Table 4-16 provides a breakdown of impacts to the 2009 Williamson Act Lands by category of impact.

**Table 4-16**

**MTP/SCS Land Use and Transportation Impacts to 2009 Williamson Act Lands**

Category of Impact	Acres of Impact *
Land Use	1,297
Transportation Projects **	17
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>1,314</b>

\* Impact to those lands designated as prime and non-prime.

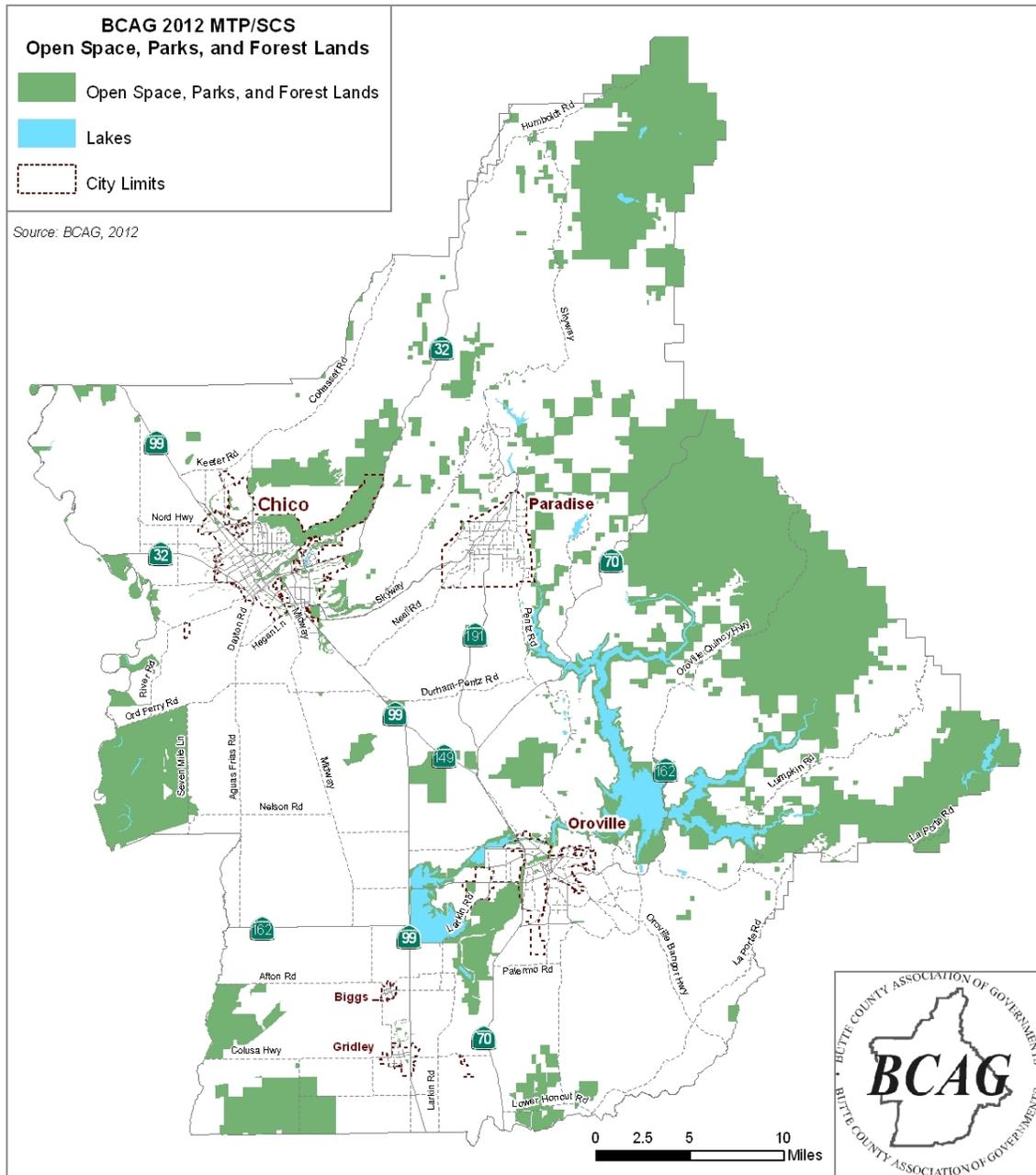
\*\* Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening. Acres of impact were calculated by applying a 100-foot buffer to road centerline.

## Recreation and Open Space

### Open Space, Parks, and Forest Lands

The Butte County region's open space, parks, and forest lands provide for the preservation of natural resources, create opportunities for outdoor recreation, contribute to public health and safety, are used for the managed production of resources, and contribute to the protection of Native American sacred sites. As part of the development of the Butte Regional Conservation Plan, BCAG worked with federal, state, and local agencies to inventory locations throughout the region that are set aside as open space for conservation, recreation, and resource management. A map of BCAG's inventoried open space, parks and forest lands is included as Figure 4-4. In preparing the MTP/SCS forecasted land use pattern, BCAG avoided allocating future development in these locations, no development density or intensity was attributed to these lands as they are protected by a variety of mechanisms from future development. Table 4-17 categorizes the acres of open space, parks, and forest lands currently inventoried by BCAG.

**Figure 4-4**



**Table 4-17**

**MTP/SCS Open Space, Parks, and Forest Lands**

Location of Lands	Acres
Within City Limits	7,139
Outside City Limits	285,595
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>292,734</b>

Source: BCAG 2012

## Habitat and Natural Resources

### Butte Regional Conservation Plan

Protection of the BCAG region's natural resources (habitat and species) is provided under State and Federal laws. In accordance with these state and federal laws, transportation projects and land development activities must avoid or mitigate for any significant impacts to these resources. In 2007 BCAG began preparing the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP). The BRCP will be a federal Habitat Conservation Plan and a state Natural Community Conservation Plan encompassing the western portion of Butte County. The 564,205 acre BRCP planning area, encompassing 53% of the county, provides a focus on the areas of greatest conflict between growth and development and federal and state protected species.

The BRCP's conservation strategy will provide a regional approach for the conservation of natural resources while allowing for development under county and city general plans and the MTP/SCS. Urban Permit Areas (UPAs) developed under the BRCP, will define the locations where impacts of future urban development are expected to be incurred based on the region's local general plans and the MTP/SCS. A map of the proposed UPA's has been included as Figure 4-5. The BRCP proposes to support clearly defined development activities occurring within the UPAs and provide avoidance and minimization measures and compensatory mitigation for all adverse effects of these activities on covered species and covered natural communities.

In developing the MTP/SCS forecasted growth pattern, BCAG worked with the local jurisdictions to direct future development within the BRCP's proposed UPAs in order to remain consistent with the BRCP and to minimize future impacts to covered species and natural communities. Table 4-18 approximates the percentage of forecasted development occurring within the BRCP UPAs. Additionally, the MTP/SCS forecasted growth pattern does not identify any future development within the proposed Butte County meadowfoam preserve areas identified in the draft BRCP.

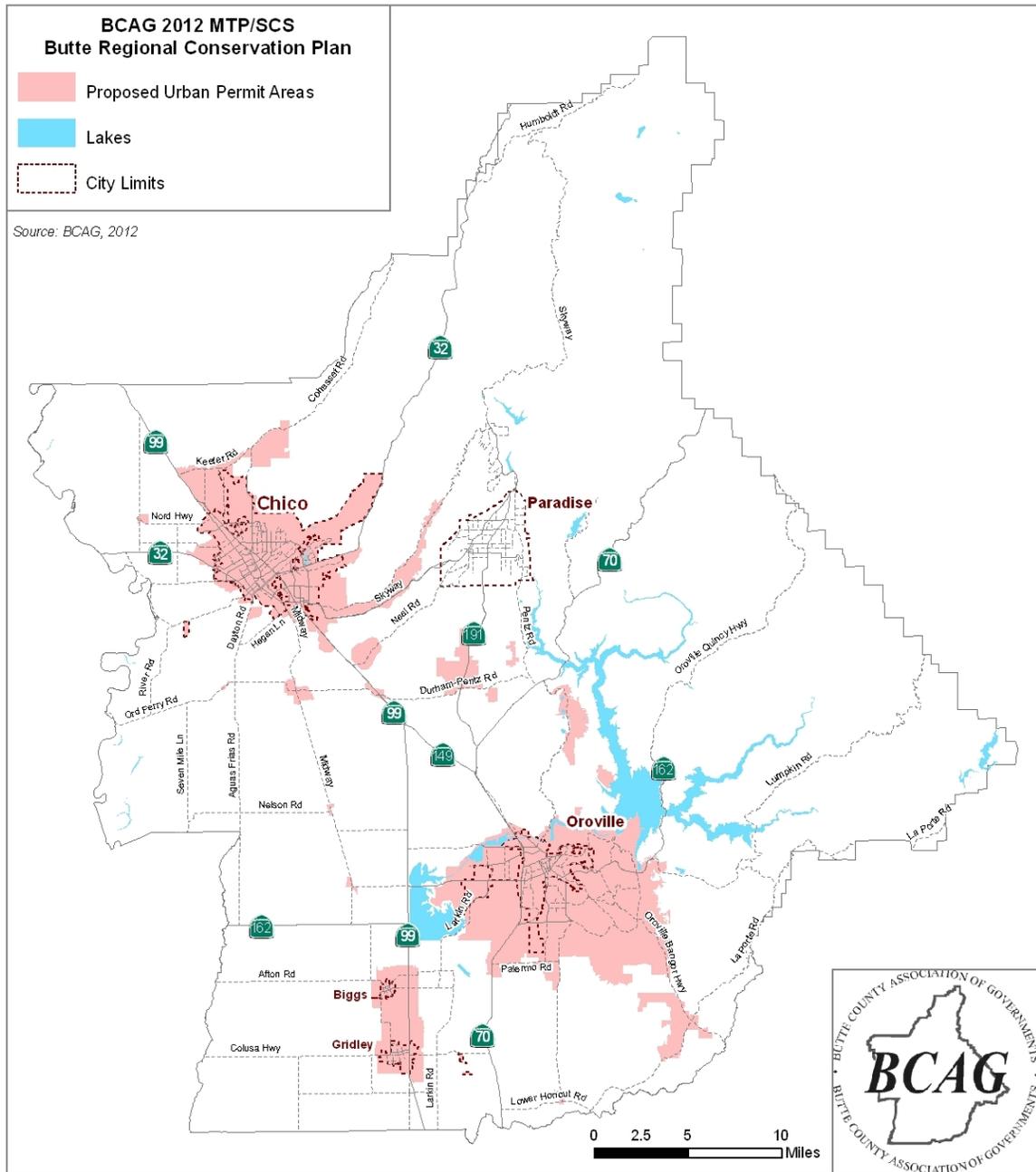
**Table 4-18**

**MTP/SCS Forecasted Development within BRCP UPAs**

Forecasted Development	Percent Within BRCP UPAs
Land Use - Residential	85%
Land Use - Non-Residential	89%
Transportation Projects *	61%

\* Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening.

**Figure 4-5**

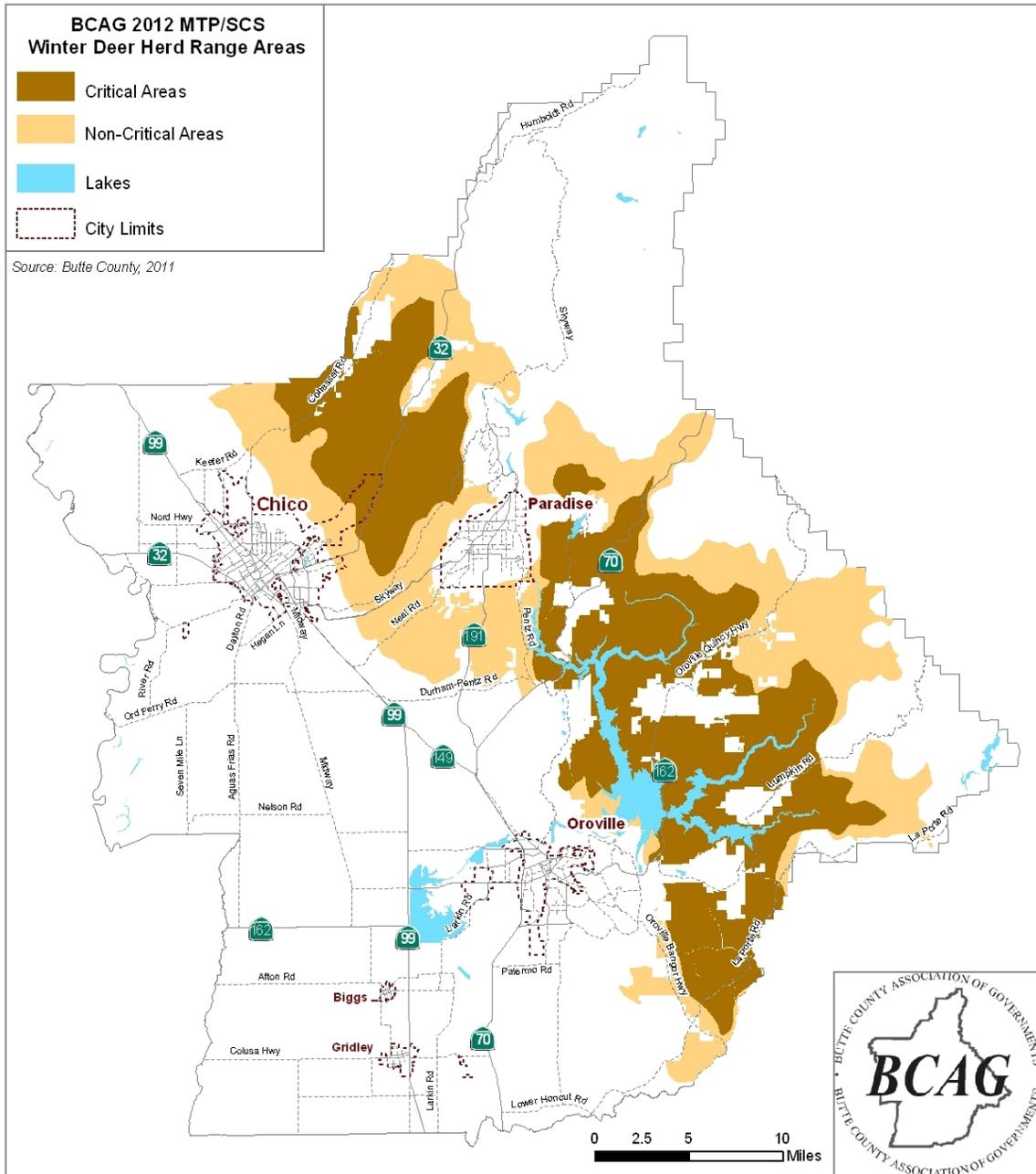


**Migratory Deer Herds**

Protection of the region’s migratory deer herds has long been an issue of concern for Butte County. Migratory deer herds move from higher elevations in Plumas and Lassen Counties to lower elevation winter range areas in Butte County. Winter ranges in the county include both critical and non-critical areas as shown in Figure 4-6. Non-critical areas provide habitat for migratory deer

herds, while critical areas provide the highest quality habitat for migratory deer herds, and supply the majority of the herd's winter survival needs (November – May). Butte County imposes a 20-acre minimum parcel size on non-critical migratory deer herd range and a 40-acre minimum parcel size on critical range.

**Figure 4-6**



As part of Butte County's efforts in preparing its comprehensive general plan update, winter deer herd range maps were updated and used in preparing the land use plan. The Butte County 2030 General Plan established goals and

policies regarding migratory deer herds, including minimum lot sizes in these areas in order to facilitate the survival of deer herds. In preparing the MTP/SCS forecasted land use pattern, BCAG considered the designations of these areas. The forecasted land use and transportation system in the MTP/SCS could impact up to approximately 4,507 acres (1.4%) of the migratory deer herd winter range lands (i.e., Critical and Non-Critical Winter Deer Herd Range). Table 4-19 provides a breakdown of impacts to the migratory winter deer herd ranges by category of impact.

**Table 4-19**

**MTP/SCS Land Use and Transportation Impacts to  
Migratory Winter Deer Herd Range Areas**

Category of Impact	Acres of Impact *
Land Use	4,507
Transportation Projects **	0
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>4,507</b>

\* Impact to those areas designated critical and non-critical winter deer herd ranges.

\*\* Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening. Acres of impact were calculated by applying a 100-foot buffer to road centerline.

*Mineral Resources*

Conflicts between mining and urban uses throughout California led to passage of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA). SMARA establishes policies for conservation and development of mineral lands and contains specific provisions for the classification of mineral lands by the State Geologist.

SMARA requires all cities and counties to incorporate in their General Plans mapped designations approved by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB). These designations include lands categorized as Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs), the most significant of which is a designation of mineral resources that are of regional or statewide significance. A general plan must recognize these areas and establish policies and programs for their conservation and development.

The State Geologist has not yet mapped the mineral resources in Butte County. However, based on petitioned requests, three sites have been classified by the SMGB as mineral resources of regional or statewide significance. Those sites include the 320-acre Table Mountain Quarry, located approximately 4 miles north of Oroville near SR-70 on North Table Mountain; the 627-acre M&T Chico Ranch Reserve, located adjacent to Little Chico Creek 5 miles southwest of Chico; and the 460-acre Power House Aggregate site, located south of Oroville along SR-70 and the Feather River. The forecasted land use in the MTP/SCS does not

allocate any development within the immediate vicinity of these quarries. In addition, no transportation projects are included in the plan which could be expected to impact the quarries.

## Flood Control

Flooding in the valley portion of the Butte County region is a concern, and other areas within the County have been subject to flooding from various rivers and creeks. The valley region of the County, which is the most flood prone, supports a significant portion of the County’s existing population, and is forecasted to accommodate a majority of the region’s future growth.

Nationally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides guidance on floodplain management and works with State and local agencies to adopt floodplain management policies and flood mitigation measures. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) identify flood zones (Zone A, AE, AO and AH) within the Butte County area, as shown in Figure 4-7. Local land use plans and the MTP/SCS forecasted development pattern have been prepared in a manner which minimizes the amount of future development within these areas. However, in order to achieve an efficient transportation system, reduce passenger vehicle GHG emissions, and improve regional air quality, a portion of the region’s forecasted growth could occur within FEMA-identified flood zones. Table 4-20, provides a summary of potential future growth that could occur within FEMA-identified flood zones.

**Table 4-20**

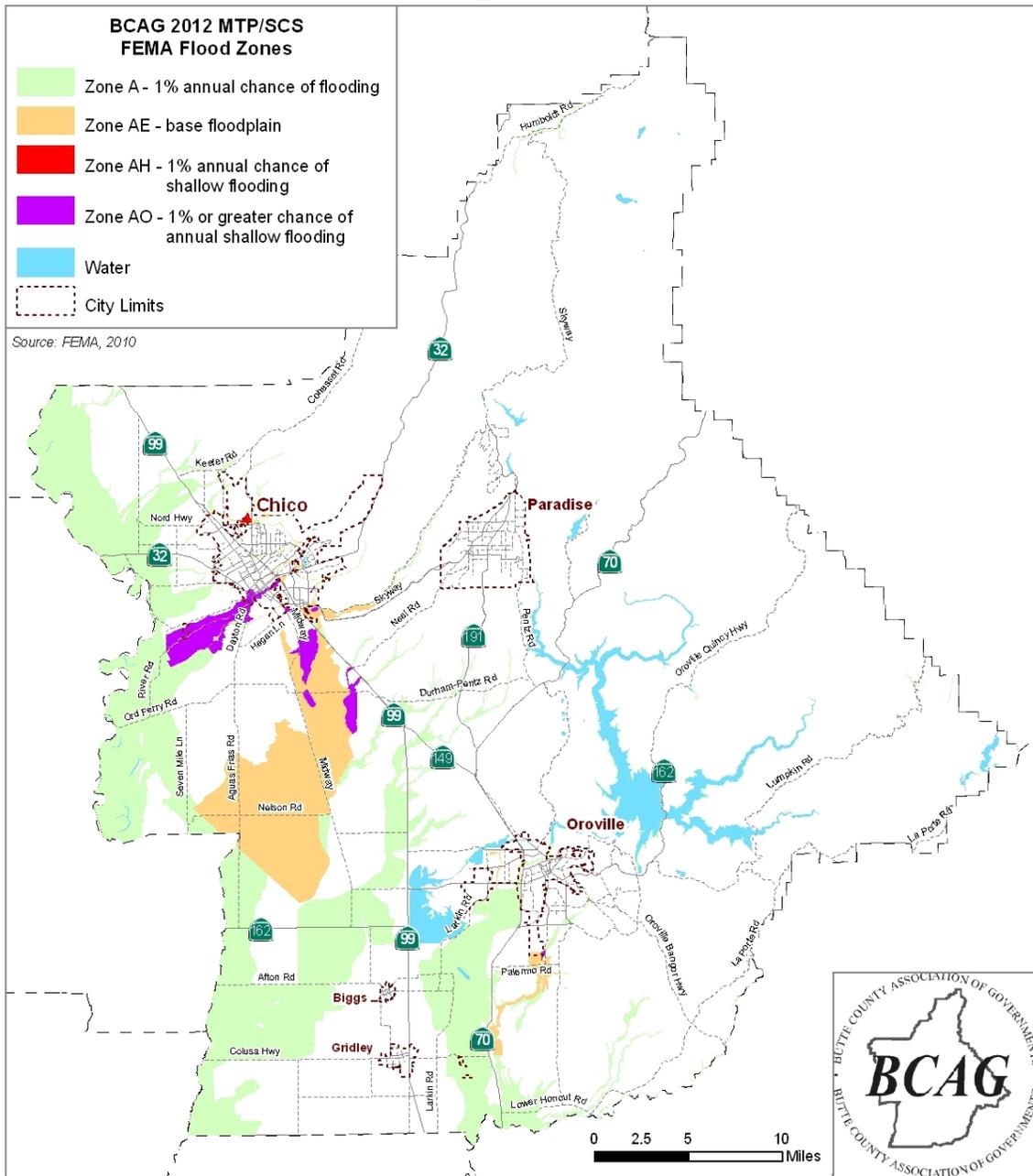
**MTP/SCS Land Use Development and Transportation Projects within FEMA Flood Zones**

Forecasted Development	Percent Within Flood Zones*
Land Use - Residential	14%
Land Use - Non-Residential	9%
Transportation Projects **	14%

\* FEMA Flood Zones designated as A, AE, AO and AH.

\*\* Transportation projects considered for this analysis include new roadways and roadway widening.

**Figure 4-7**



In accordance with state regulations, any future development within a flood zone must be permitted by the government after certain findings have been made. Specifically, local jurisdictions must find that the flood management facilities protect the urban properties.

## **Consultation with Local Agency Formation Commission**

BCAG considered the spheres of influence for cities and special districts that have been adopted by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). Proposed sphere changes included with the various general plan updates were also considered in the development of the SCS. A sphere of influence is defined as a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local government agency, as determined by LAFCO. All territory proposed for annexation to an incorporated city or a special district is required to be included in an agency's sphere of influence. For the purposes of developing the SCS, only special districts which provide essential municipal services such as domestic water, sewage collection and treatment, and structural fire protection were reviewed in relationship to future development potential within the Butte County region. Butte LAFCO has provided mapping and service data to BCAG and indicated a need to ensure that new areas proposed for potential development be consistent with the spheres of influence and jurisdictional boundaries of each agency providing municipal services.

Butte LAFCO is responsible for implementing the State Legislature's directives to promote orderly growth and development by coordinating the jurisdictional boundaries and services provided by the cities and other public service providers in the county. It is essential that LAFCO objectives be blended with the overall development of regional priorities established in the SCS. These include: accommodating growth within or through the expansion of local agency boundaries, extending necessary government services, preserving open space and prime agricultural lands, promoting the provision of housing for residents of all incomes, and addressing environmental justice concerns among others.

LAFCO also is a representative on the BCAG Planning Directors Group (PDG), which provides coordination on regional planning efforts among member agencies. As a member of the PDG, LAFCO is a participant in the development of the regional growth forecasts, regional guiding principles, the BCAG Blueprint Program, and the Butte Regional Conservation Plan. These projects and programs are key components in the development of the SCS. The collective efforts of the PDG are key to coordinating the growth forecasts with all agencies that play an active role in approving new growth and development.

## **Local Government Land Use Authority and CEQA Streamlining**

With the passage of SB 375 came the addition of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining incentives to assist and encourage residential and mixed use housing projects consistent with the SCS and Transit Priority Project Areas. The CEQA benefits available under SB 375 are for residential and residential mixed-use projects that are consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in the SCS. The CEQA benefits provided by SB 375 apply to three types of projects. Table 4-21 contains a summary of the types of development projects eligible for these CEQA benefits, specific qualifications for each project, and the types of CEQA streamlining available to each type of project.

By express provision, SB 375 does not supersede the land use authority of a city or county and does not regulate the use of land. Projects that use the SB 375 CEQA provisions still must obtain discretionary permits or other approvals from lead and responsible agencies in accordance with local codes and procedures. Moreover, SB 375 does not change how CEQA applies to projects that are inconsistent with the SCS or APS. As these CEQA benefits are designed to incentivize development projects consistent with the MTP/SCS, there is no disincentive for development projects not in the MTP/SCS. As noted, CEQA does not mandate that local agencies use the MTP/SCS to regulate GHG emissions or for any other purpose. Local government land use authority remains unchanged by SB 375; jurisdictions can consider, review, and approve any land use project by the same process and guidelines they use currently.

Although this MTP/SCS has no regulatory authority over local land use decisions, it provides information about the SCS so that local jurisdictions can determine whether a project is consistent with the SCS, and therefore, eligible for the CEQA benefits based on consistency with the SCS. To determine a project's consistency with the SCS, a jurisdiction must find it consistent with the general land use, density, intensity, and any applicable land use policies of the SCS. BCAG will provide assistance to a local jurisdiction in making this determination if the local jurisdiction requests such assistance.

**Table 4-21**  
**SB 375 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Benefits**

Project Designation	Qualifications	Streamlining Benefits
Mixed Use Residential Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least 75% of total building square footage for residential use</li> <li>- Consistent with the use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies for the project area of an SCS or APS accepted by ARB OR</li> <li>- A Transit Priority Project as defined below</li> </ul>	<p>Environmental documents are not required to reference, describe or discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) growth-inducing impacts, 2) impacts on transportation or climate change of increased car and truck VMT induced by project, 3) reduced-density alternative to project.</li> </ul>
Transit Priority Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least 50% of total building square footage for residential use OR</li> <li>- If 26-50% of total building square footage is nonresidential, a minimum FAR of 0.75</li> <li>- Minimum net density of 20 du/acre</li> <li>- Within 0.5 miles of major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in the regional transportation plan (No parcel more than 25% further, and less than 10% of units or no more than 100 units further than 0.5 miles)</li> <li>- Consistent with the use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies of an SCS or APS</li> </ul>	<p>Benefits described above PLUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Option to review under a "Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment"</li> <li>- An Initial Study is prepared identifying significant or potentially significant impacts.</li> <li>- Where the lead agency determines that cumulative impacts have been addressed and mitigated in SCS/APS, they will not be "considerable."</li> <li>- Off-site alternatives do not need to be addressed.</li> <li>- Deferential review standard – the burden of proof for legal challenge is on the petitioner/plaintiff.</li> <li>- Traffic control/mitigation may be covered by SCS/APS.</li> </ul>
Sustainable Communities Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Everything for Transit Priority Project PLUS:</li> <li>- Served by existing utilities</li> <li>- Does not contain wetlands or riparian areas</li> <li>- Does not have significant value as a wildlife habitat and does not harm any protected species</li>   <li>- Not on the Cortese List</li> <li>- Not on developed open space</li> <li>- No impacts to historic resources</li> <li>- No risks from hazardous substances</li> <li>- No wildfire, seismic, flood, public health risk</li> <li>- 15% more energy-efficient than CA requirements and 25% more water-efficient than average for community</li> <li>- No more than 8 acres</li> <li>- No more than 200 units</li> <li>- No building greater than 75,000 square feet</li> <li>- No net loss of affordable housing</li> <li>- Compatible with surrounding industrial uses</li> <li>- Within ½-mile of rail/ferry or ¼-mile of high quality bus line</li> <li>- Meets minimum affordable housing requirements as prescribed in SB 375 OR in-lieu fee paid OR 5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents provided</li> </ul>	<p>Exempt from CEQA</p>

## **Regional Transportation Network and the SCS**

The SCS is based upon a financially constrained regional transportation network which services the transportation needs of the region by investing in highways, local streets and roads, transit, and non-motorized transportation. Each of these areas of investment is described in more detail in the following chapters: highways and local streets and roads (Chapter 6), transit (Chapter 7), and non-motorized transportation (Chapter 8).

This forecasted regional transportation network, when combined with the land use forecasts in the MTP/SCS, contributes to meeting the region's greenhouse gas reduction targets. However, since the MTP/SCS does not identify specific long-term transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks, and the BCAG transportation model is unable to model these alternative modes of travel, BCAG was unable to quantify the direct contribution from each mode in meeting the greenhouse gas targets established by CARB.

In recognition of this deficiency, BCAG pursued, and was awarded, a California Strategic Growth Council grant for the development of the region's first comprehensive long-range transit and non-motorized plan. Once completed, the plan will include a detailed and prioritized listing of long-range transit and non-motorized projects developed in consideration of the MTP/SCS land use forecasts to be considered in preparing the 2016 MTP/SCS.