



Regional Transportation Plan & Sustainable Communities Strategy

Public Participation Plan

January 2012



Established in 1971

FORWARD

In 2006, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 32, which required the State to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. In 2008, California Senate Bill 375 was passed to provide a means to achieve AB 32 goals from cars and light trucks. SB 375 relies upon regional planning processes already underway by the 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the state to accomplish its objectives.

SB 375 aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through development of a Sustainable Communities Strategy, or SCS, which integrates land use, housing and transportation planning. A SCS will identify a forecasted development pattern and transportation network that will meet the emission reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board.

Further, the SCS, within the Regional Transportation Plan, will set forth a vision for growth for the region taking into account the transportation, housing, environmental and economic needs of the region.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- *Margaret Mead*

Introduction

According to Senate Bill 375, 'each Metropolitan Planning Organization shall adopt a public participation plan for development of the sustainable communities strategy'. This document, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Public Participation Plan (RTP/SCS PPP), shall serve to meet that requirement.

The intent of the RTP/SCS PPP is to establish a process and outline specific activities for communicating with the public throughout the RTP/SCS development. The RTP/SCS PPP is rooted in the principles from our federally required, agency-wide public participation plan, adopted September 2011. The concept of the RTP/SCS PPP is to promote an open, transparent planning process that encourages the ongoing and active participation of local governments and a broad range of stakeholders.

The Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) has outlined a comprehensive public outreach and involvement program to support the development of the 2013 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and its SCS. StanCOG has created and will implement an outreach plan which ensures that those with a stake in the outcome have the opportunity to be involved. We invite all Stanislaus county residents to join in the dialogue to make our region a better, more sustainable, place

SB 375: Sustainable Communities Strategies

Per SB 375, the 2013 RTP will incorporate new legislative requirements. The SCS will be a new element of the RTP, and will be designed to show how regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets, established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), will be achieved through development patterns, infrastructure investments, and transportation measures or policies that are determined to be feasible. Additionally, the SCS must be consistent with the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). If the SCS does not meet the GHG emission targets, an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) must be developed to demonstrate how the targets could be achieved.

To assist in the development of the RTP/SCS, StanCOG has formed a SCS Steering Committee comprised of the 10 local agencies, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), and a representative from selected StanCOG Standing Committees. StanCOG developed the RTP/SCS PPP with input from the SCS Steering Committee.

The goals and procedures outlined in the RTP/SCS PPP guide outreach efforts to build awareness of the regional transportation planning process and identify opportunities for stakeholders to shape the region's future. The RTP/SCS PPP also describes StanCOG's efforts to gather input on developing priorities and project selection criteria, as well as transportation networks, funding alternatives, how to meet GHG emissions targets, and other elements of the 2013 RTP and SCS.

SCS Steering Committee

To help ensure that input for the 2013 RTP/SCS reflects interests beyond COG staff, StanCOG has created a SCS Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is comprised of a representative from the 10 local agencies, LAFCo, and a representative from the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) and the Policy Board. This group represents a broad range of interests and expertise, including planning, public works, transit, bicycle and pedestrian interests, a representative from the public, and a policy-maker. In addition, one of the first tasks of the Committee was to produce a list of secondary outreach partners, whose input should be gathered during the development of the RTP/SCS. This expanding list includes representatives from the business industry, the agricultural industry, service districts, environmental groups, building associations, health agencies, education, public safety agencies, neighborhood associations and social service agencies, among many others. Outside of the advisory role that the SCS Steering Committee and the secondary outreach partners will provide, StanCOG will make efforts to seek broad representation from the public including those populations that typically do not participate in the planning process.

Getting Involved

Contact StanCOG Offices

StanCOG offices are located at 1111 I Street, Suite 308, Modesto, California 95354 and are open 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. You can reach StanCOG at 209/525.4600 or by visiting our website at www.stancog.org.

Join Stakeholder List and/or Receive Newsletter

To join the RTP/SCS Stakeholder list or to receive the StanCOG quarterly newsletter, On the Move, go to www.stancog.org or contact StanCOG at 209/525.4600.

Transportation Planning Process

StanCOG's current land use and transportation planning efforts include two key elements, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), which now must be woven together under SB 375 into a single planning effort: the SCS.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The RTP, which is a long-range transportation planning and investment strategy, is prepared every four years per state and federal law. The RTP sets forth a transportation vision for the region taking into account population, housing and employment forecasts. The RTP must be a financially viable plan, which also conforms to clean air goals. Under SB 375, the RTP must now include a SCS for achieving regional emission reduction targets. In the case where the goal cannot be achieved, an alternative planning scenario (APS) must be prepared. The RTP/SCS is slated for adoption in late 2013.

Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA)

StanCOG also coordinates the state-mandated RHNA process. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) determines the region's overall housing need, then StanCOG is responsible for distributing to local governments their share of housing units, including affordable units, that the region should plan for in order to accommodate future growth.

Before SB 375, federal and state law ignored the fact that in most areas in California, RTPs and RHNAs are prepared by the same regional organization. Conflicting deadlines have historically caused a disconnect between regional transportation planning and regional housing policy. SB 375 eliminates this disconnect by requiring the RTP to plan for the RHNA process and by requiring the RHNA allocation to be consistent with the projected development pattern used in the RTP/SCS.

Other Documents/Planning Processes Associated with the SCS/RTP

Consistent with the intent of the legislation, StanCOG is incorporating the products/results of a wide variety of our planning efforts into the SCS/RTP, including:

Blueprint

In early 2006, the eight San Joaquin Valley Council of Governments came together in an unprecedented effort to develop a coordinated valley vision: the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint. Ultimately, this effort produced a valleywide vision for future development to the year 2050, of which the local agencies

can voluntarily comply, but are not mandated to do so. The San Joaquin Valley Policy Council—comprised of two elected officials from each county—adopted a list of 12 smart growth principles to be used as the basis for the Blueprint. Although the Blueprint is a voluntary process, to the extent that the agencies adopt the principles into their General Plans, the vision can guide land use and transportation policies in the 2013 RTP/SCS.

Congestion Management Process (CMP)

The CMP is an integral component of the COG planning process. StanCOG utilizes the CMP as a systematic progression of activities to analyze and address regional congestion. The results from this decision-making process are integrated into the RTP and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). The CMP is a performance-based process which provides a coordinated and consistent approach for responding to congestion through investment in roadway capacity projects only after all reasonable non-capacity increasing measures have been employed.

Regional Expressway Study (RES)

The RES is a planning process used to evaluate the transportation network at a regional level. The local jurisdiction's general plans address the roadways within their respective boundaries, but roadway connections, development standards consistency, and regional connectivity could be lost at that level. StanCOG coordinated with its member agencies to gather roadway information at the local level and compile it to show a regionwide network. This created a comprehensive vision of major roadways for the future, which can be incorporated into future General Plan Updates.

Environmental Justice Analysis

In 1994, Executive Order 12898 was signed. The Order, commonly referred to as Environmental Justice, is a follow-up to Title VI, which was a part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. EO 12898 requires that each federal agency or agency receiving federal dollars shall administer and implement its programs, policies, and activities that affect human health or the environment so as to avoid 'disproportionately high and adverse' effects on minority and low-income populations. StanCOG is urged to prepare Environmental Justice Analyses as part of large-scale planning efforts, like the RTP/SCS, to measure how the planning process affects identified low-income and minority populations versus the countywide average. If disproportionate impacts are discovered, StanCOG is encouraged to address these in future planning efforts.

Proposition 84 Grant

The agencies within the region—the nine cities and the County—applied for and were awarded a \$1 million Proposition 84, Sustainable Communities Planning Grant to develop a Regional Sustainability Toolbox. The concept of the Toolbox is for each agency to develop a pilot-project that will promote sustainable development in their region. Once completed, the region will have ten separate tools in the toolbox, which will be available for the other nine agencies and others to develop if deemed a success. The results of these pilot-projects will be incorporated in the agencies' general plans, which will then be incorporated into future RTP/SCS. Prior to completion, the work on the projects can be integrated into the 2013 RTP/SCS planning process.

Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA)

Commissioned by the StanCOG Policy Board in July 2010, the CTSA's creation came about in response to an unmet transit need—a required annual process undertaken by StanCOG—for specialized transportation services to seniors and the disabled communities. As commissioned, the CTSA's role is to coordinate with, and offer support to, the region's existing public transit operators and private social service agencies in an effort to meet the transit needs of Stanislaus County's senior and disabled communities.

Coordination with LAFCO

Senate Bill 375 requires that, 'In preparing a sustainable communities strategy, the metropolitan planning organization shall consider spheres of influence that have been adopted by the local agency formation commissions (LAFCo) within its region. StanCOG will work closely with LAFCo to incorporate the adopted spheres for the local agencies and service districts within the region.

The intent of the SB 375 legislation is to capitalize on the regional planning processes already underway to accomplish its objectives. The coordination of the planning efforts described in this section will ensure that transportation planning is not completed independently of housing and land use planning and other planning efforts performed by StanCOG.

RTP/SCS Public Participation Plan

The RTP/SCS PPP will support the development of the 2013 RTP/SCS. The RTP/SCS PPP will create opportunities for stakeholders to provide input on the development of the RTP and SCS. These efforts will coordinate with regular interaction with the SCS Steering Committee. The RTP/SCS PPP will guide efforts to secure input from individuals, organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders in the development of the 2013 RTP/SCS, including efforts to involve typically underrepresented populations. Consistent with the guidelines discussed above, the RTP/SCS will comply with Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, Executive Order 13166 on Limited English Proficiency, and Title VI.

The primary work of the SCS will be completed by the Stanislaus Council of Governments. However, SB 375 calls for the integration of transportation, housing and land use planning and the local agencies maintain 100% of the land use authority, therefore, it is imperative to work closely with the local agencies on this effort. To ensure the successful development and implementation of the plan, StanCOG has created a SCS Steering Committee comprised of those with land use authority and other transportation related interests. This will provide StanCOG staff with a broad perspective in developing this very important document for the first time. Further, we want to provide the opportunity for those with land use authority to be part of the development process, not just to comment on completed work.

The success of the RTP/SCS is predicated on effective partnership with the local agencies and public support for policies and programs to accommodate the entire region's projected population growth, including all income groups, and achieve targeted reductions in GHG emissions from automobiles. This is why we have created a core group of local agencies and members of the public representing transportation related interest groups to serve as the first line in the decision-making process.

Further, StanCOG is proposing a vast series of public workshops, speaking bureaus, presentations to City officials and dissemination of information through our website, and in mail-outs and handouts.

Stakeholders

The goal of engaging organizations, interest groups, advocates and the public (stakeholders) in the SCS planning efforts is to promote an open, transparent process that encourages the ongoing and active participation of a broad range of participants and views.

To encourage participation from all stakeholders StanCOG will develop project and process material in ordinary language so all residents, not just planning professionals, understand what we are attempting to accomplish through this process and the options available to the region for achieving our established goals.

The primary role of this document, the RTP/SCS PPP, is to outline StanCOG's strategy in seeking input from the public throughout the process of developing the first SCS. StanCOG, working with the Steering Committee, has outlined a strategy to elicit and incorporate public comments from as broad an array of the population as possible, including those communities and individuals that typically do not participate in the planning process.

PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

SB 375 legislation calls for the MPO to conduct at least two informational meetings in each county to be held for members of the county board of supervisors and city councils, to review and discuss the Draft SCS and consider their input and recommendations. However, one informational meeting can be conducted if attendance at the one meeting includes county board of supervisors and city council members representing a majority of the cities representing a majority of the population in the incorporated areas of the county.

StanCOG strives for a robust engagement with local governments that will go beyond the number of meetings prescribed in the legislation. The informational meeting described above is just one way in which StanCOG will seek government and non-government participation in the process. A number of efforts will be implemented during this process to expand communication about the project. The following is a summary of the planned ways in which the public can stay involved in the RTP/SCS development process.

Planned Public Meetings

SCS Steering Committee meetings, StanCOG Advisory Committees and Policy Board meetings

Participation in regularly scheduled meetings of the SCS Steering Committee, advisory committees and the Policy Board is one way that interested stakeholders—whether government or non-government—can get and stay involved. Meeting times and location for these meetings are posted on the StanCOG website at www.stancog.org. If unable to attend, stakeholders can find meeting material (including agendas, handouts and minutes) on the website as well.

SCS Steering Committee Meetings

The StanCOG SCS Steering Committee meetings, which are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 1:00 pm at the StanCOG offices in downtown Modesto, are open to the public. All meeting times and materials are available on the website prior to the meeting.

RTP/SCS-Specific Public Meetings

StanCOG has, through the SCS Steering Committee, developed a Schedule of Activities outlining the tasks to be undertaken over the next two years as we develop the RTP/SCS. The Schedule provides, at a quick glance, a roadmap for the entire process. Also, the schedule will provide the opportunity for the public to determine the next steps each step of the way. This provides for better understanding of each task to be undertaken. The following is a description of the public meetings, specific to the RTP/SCS that StanCOG is planning.

Presentations to City Councils/Planning Commissions

The first public outreach effort, apart from the SCS Steering Committee, will be to provide presentations to each of the city councils, the board of supervisors and LAFCo. The intent is to provide information to the elected officials prior to the point which we will require decisions made regarding the RTP/SCS. This will provide StanCOG staff with an opportunity to make an informal presentation to each of the local agencies; for the agencies to learn about the process and to provide StanCOG with valuable insight from a local land use perspective. It dually provides another forum for public participation at the local level as opposed to the regional level. Presentations are tentatively scheduled to begin in November 2011.

Public Workshops

StanCOG will conduct public workshops during the development of the RTP/SCS, and specifically prior to key decision points. The Public Workshops will seek input from the public on key issues including the draft and final RTP/SCS, demographic forecast, project visioning, amongst others; but also to answer questions about the process. Public Workshops are tentatively schedule for December 2011, April 2012, July 2012 (on the RHNA methodology), October 2012, December 2012 (on the Draft Environmental Impact Report) and in May 2013.

Informational Meeting

As stated previously, StanCOG is statutorily obligated to hold at least one informational meeting in the region to review and discuss the Draft SCS and consider the electeds input and recommendations. The informational meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 2013.

Speakers Bureaus

To keep the local community and larger regional interests informed about the project throughout the process, StanCOG will offer to any group or organization a direct presentation on the RTP, SCS or any facet of the process. This concept also referred to as a speaker's bureau will provide the public maximum flexibility in terms of gaining information on the SCS process directly from StanCOG. All events will be scheduled as requested.

Other Outreach Efforts

In addition, to the RTP/SCS specific meetings, StanCOG plans to reach out to the public through electronic formats, which are accessible to the public who cannot attend the meetings. The following is a description of each of these formats.

E-Newsletter/Stakeholder List

StanCOG has developed a quarterly E-newsletter called 'On the Move'. StanCOG will provide updates on the RTP/SCS in each edition. This newsletter is emailed to those who have provided their emails addresses on our expanding Stakeholder list comprised of more than 1,000 individuals from various government and non-government agencies, groups, organizations and persons from the public. To be added to the Stakeholder List, please contact StanCOG at 209/525.4600 or visit the website (below).

Website

Information on the RTP/SCS or other related efforts can always be found on our website at www.stancog.org.

Goals and Procedures

The goals for the RTP/SCS development process are derived from the StanCOG Public Participation Plan, adopted September 28, 2011. The agency-wide PPP is prepared and designed to encourage public participation and to provide opportunities for the public to comment on all of StanCOG's planning and programming documents.

The following goals and procedures are designed specifically to encourage participation and provide opportunities to comment on the development of the RTP/SCS.

Goals

The four goals of StanCOG's RTP/SCS PPP are:

- Goal 1: Strive for a balanced representation of all groups of the public, including the typically under represented in the planning process; while providing ample opportunities for public review and input of all planning and programming documents
- Goal 2: Promote a culture of dialogue and partnership among residents, property owners, the business community, organizations and public officials; while educating local officials and the public in the transportation planning process
- Goal 3: Make both technical information and meeting notices involved in the planning process available in accessible formats; while providing communications and agency reports that are understandable and timely
- Goal 4: Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and programming process; while treating all interested participants fairly and respectfully

Meeting these goals, through the 'procedures' described below, will improve the development effort of the Regional Transportation Plan and associated Sustainable Communities Strategy. StanCOG staff will implement all procedures to the greatest extent possible.

Goal 1: *Strive for a balanced representation of all sectors of the public in the planning process; while providing ample opportunities for public review and input of all planning and programming documents*

Procedures

- *Continue coordinating with the SCS Steering Committee to vet project information and to gather applicable stakeholder input at appropriate times in the process.*
- *Provide informational presentations and frequent updates to the local agencies' decision-making bodies*

- *Hold public workshops and speakers bureaus upon request to get relevant information out to the public and to provide opportunity to comment on the process and document*
- *Hold all RTP/SCS public meetings at convenient and accessible locations*
- *Provide opportunity for the public to comment on any relevant subject, whether on the agenda or not, at all public meetings*
- *Provide 14-45 day notice of all plan and/or program specific public meetings*
- *Provide notice of all RTP/SCS public meetings in one of the following methods: the StanCOG website, notice posted outside the office building, and available by contacting Staff. The Public can also request to be added to our stakeholder list to receive notice of all meetings either through email or ground mail.*
- *Interact and seek input from a broad spectrum of interested stakeholders through various committees that meet on a regular, on-going basis to review, discuss and provide feedback on various initiatives, plans and programs*
- *To the extent possible, hold meetings accessible to public transit and located and scheduled to maximize citizen participation*
- *To the extent possible, hold meetings in different communities in the County to solicit comments from new areas of the County*
- *To the extent possible, attend public events throughout the county to inform the public of the RTP/SCS process and document*
- *Provide a interpreter for anyone wishing to address Staff (given 72 hour notice)*
- *Make all RTP/SCS meeting agendas available upon request in appropriate alternative formats to persons with disabilities as required by ADA*

Goal 2: *Promote a culture of dialogue and partnership among residents, property owners, the business community, organizations and public officials; while educating the public and local officials in the transportation planning process*

Procedures

- *To the extent possible, attend public events throughout the county to inform the public of the RTP/SCS process and document*
- *Utilize visualization techniques to describe the RTP/SCS to make understandable to non-transportation planning professionals*
- *Continue to hold the Sustainable Communities Strategies Steering Committee*
- *Continue to add to the expanding Stakeholder List; a list of all interested members of the public and other interested groups who would like to be contacted regarding the RTP/SCS*
- *Provide opportunity for the public to comment on any relevant subject, whether on the agenda or not, at all public meetings*
- *Provide clear informational material to not only inform the public of opportunities to comment on the RTP/SCS, but also to inform the public of the impacts of decisions made*

- *To the greatest extent possible, provide a comfortable atmosphere at all RTP/SCS meetings for the public, to gather comments from those that are traditionally uncomfortable speaking in public*
- *Encourage proponents and opponents of the RTP/SCS to participate in the planning process by providing opportunities to discuss and debate issues of concern and acknowledge the value of all input*

Goal 3: *Make both technical information and meeting notices pertaining to the planning process available in accessible formats; while providing communications and agency reports that are understandable and timely*

Procedures

- *Provide concise updates on the RTP/SCS in the StanCOG quarterly newsletter*
- *Make all RTP/SCS-related public information available in an electronically accessible format as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration by the public*
- *Provide clear informational materials, including one-page fact sheets of the RTP and SCS, explaining the document and the process to better inform the public of the impacts of decisions made*
- *Continue to update the StanCOG website to provide clear informational material, meeting notices, agendas and minutes, announce draft and final plan releases, make plans available for review and encourage feedback and comments from the public*
- *Seek input from local agencies, organizations, committees and the public on additional methods of providing information to those that cannot access the internet*
- *Utilize visualization techniques to describe the RTP/SCS to make understandable to non-transportation planning professionals*
- *Provide clear, consistent and concise primary messages for media and public involvement interaction*
- *Keep interested parties informed with progress reports, when applicable, during document development, review and adoption phases*

Goal 4: *Demonstrate consideration and timely response to public input received during the planning and programming process; while treating all interested participants fairly and respectfully*

Procedures

- *To the extent possible, respond to every relevant letter, fax or email submitted by individual members of the public*
- *Hold public hearings and workshops on the RTP/SCS to allow enough time for comments received, as appropriate, to be fully incorporated into the development of the plan*
- *Continue to include all public comments received as an appendix to the RTP and SCS*
- *Provide opportunity for the public to comment on any relevant subject, whether on the agenda or not, at all public meetings*
- *To the extent possible, regard commenting participants as working partners*

APPENDIX

StanCOG Policy Board & Committee Meetings 2012

	Policy Board	Executive Committee	Social Services Transportation Advisory Council	Sustainable Communities Strategy Steering Committee	Citizens Advisory Committee	Management and Finance Committee	Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee
2012	(3rd Wednesday of the month) 6:00 p.m.	(3rd Wednesday of the month) 5:00p.m.	(1st Tuesday of the month) 8:30 a.m.	(1st Tuesday of the month) 1:00 p.m.	(1st Wednesday of the month) 6:00 p.m.	(1st Thursday of the month) 3:00 p.m.	(1st Tuesday of every other month) 5:30 p.m.
January	1/18	1/18 #	1/3	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/3
February	2/15	2/15	1/31 *	1/31 *	2/1	2/2	
March	3/21	3/21 #	3/6	3/6	3/7	3/8 *	3/6
April	4/18	4/18	4/3	4/3	4/4	4/5	
May	5/16	5/16 #	5/1	5/1	5/2	5/3	5/1
June	6/20	6/20	6/5	6/5	6/6	6/7	
July	7/25 *	7/25 *	7/10 *	7/10 *	7/11 *	7/12 *	7/10 *
August	No Meetings Scheduled						
September	9/19	9/19 #	9/4	9/4	9/5	9/6	9/4
October	10/17	10/17	10/2	10/2	10/3	10/4	
November	11/14 *	11/14 *#	10/30 *	10/30 *	Tuesday 10/30 *	11/1	11/6
December	12/12 *	12/12 *	11/27 *	11/27 *	11/28 *	11/29 *	

All Meetings held in the StanCOG Board Room, located at 1111 "I" Street, Suite 308, Modesto, CA 95354

** Please note different dates due to holidays or calendar conflicts*

Executive Committee Meetings held at 3:30 p.m. for the months of Jan, Mar, May, Sept, & Nov