

MEMO

Date: May 25, 2010
To: Regional Planning Committee
From: Ken Kirkey, Planning Director
Re: Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Update

This is an informational item that summarizes efforts to date and upcoming tasks on the SB375-related Sustainable Communities Strategy.

After several months of reviewing the Sustainable Communities Strategy legislation, requirements, and resources in relation to existing efforts, regional agencies in coordination with local governments are defining the overall framework of the Strategy. We are defining the scope of the project and the process of interaction across agencies and local governments.

Over the past few years, regional agencies have advanced a coordinated focused growth vision through policies and programs such as the Transit Oriented Development(TOD) Housing Policy, FOCUS' Priority Development Area (PDA) and Priority Conservation Area (PCA) designations, Projections 2009, expanded Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) program and funding, Station Area Planning Grants, among several others. The Sustainable Communities Strategy will build upon existing efforts and accelerate the momentum created by these efforts towards the creation of complete communities in continued collaboration with local jurisdictions.

The core task of the Sustainable Communities Strategy focuses on the allocation of housing and jobs close to transit to reduce vehicle-miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Regional agencies will work with local jurisdictions at the sub-regional level to allocate growth in the "right" places, improve the links between housing and jobs, increase support for the communities that do the heavy lifting, and build priority development areas as complete communities. This core task will require identifying and prioritizing appropriate infrastructure and other investments, planning efforts, and policies. These efforts represent the bulk of the work for the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

In addition, some additional effort will relate to the identification of key issues that will make the allocation of housing and jobs feasible; that are important factors relative to Priority Development Area implementation. Those issues include for example school quality, public safety, and redevelopment law and funding. Identifying these issues in the Sustainable Communities Strategy, and advancing potential approaches where appropriate, will contribute to the overall feasibility of the SCS.

The immediate tasks include the development of the greenhouse gas emission and housing targets, the assessment of Priority Development Areas, and the development of the public participation process.

MTC and ABAG are working on the greenhouse gas and housing targets. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) will issue draft targets by June 30, 2010. Regional agencies will respond by July 28, 2010. CARB will issue the final targets by September 30, 2010. A regional housing target will be developed in coordination with local governments by Fall 2010.

The assessment of Priority Development Areas started October 2009 and will be released in the early fall of 2010. This assessment identifies the key needs, potential growth, and planning work completed at the Planned Priority Development Areas. It will provide a picture of the policies, regulations, and investments needed to accommodate population and job growth in these areas.

The specifics of the public participation process are under discussion. This first Sustainable Communities Strategy will entail an open exchange with local jurisdictions on the most appropriate development path to accomplish the core task. In order to facilitate this exchange, ABAG and MTC are developing a template of Place Types that will help recognize the qualities of various types of neighborhoods and communities in relation to the expected growth. Two technical advisory groups have been created to assist in shaping the SCS process: the Regional Advisory Working Group and the Regional Executive Group. The first one has met twice on May 14th and 25th and the second one will meet on June 7th.

At the Regional Planning Committee Meeting on June 2, 2010 staff will provide more detail relative to the above-described issues including updates on the CARB's approach to provision of a regional greenhouse gas target and the public participation plan including elected official engagement for the SCS.