



Date: April 21, 2010
To: Regional Advisory Working Group
From: Catalina Alvarado, MTC
Subject: **Engagement Opportunities: Public Participation Plan Update**

Senate Bill 375 requires extensive outreach with local government officials and the public as part of the process of developing the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). It provides the opportunity to engage communities in an important endeavor to envision and plan for communities that rely less on automobiles and create attractive, walkable, sustainable communities that can offer a higher quality of life for all.

In the Bay Area, the SCS will be a joint effort between the Bay Area's regional agencies (the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission), local jurisdictions, and numerous stakeholders. Each metropolitan planning organization is required to adopt a public participation plan for the SCS. In the Bay Area, MTC will revise its federally-required Public Participation Plan (Res. 3821) to reflect public engagement in the development of the SCS. ABAG will adopt a similar but separate document that contains the public participation plan for the SCS.

An extensive community engagement process is anticipated as part of the development of the Bay Area's SCS. The public engagement process will be supplemented by a partnership of local governments and regional agencies that will bring together a mix of elected officials, planning directors, county congestion management agencies and local transit agencies. Under this structure, the cities and counties will choose the sub-regional units through which they believe they could most productively work with the regional agencies on growth assignments. This partnership is discussed more fully in Agenda Item 4b.

Stakeholders

In addition to the partnership among local governments (cities, counties, congestion management agencies, and transit agencies), a number of public stakeholders will be consulted, as called out in SB 375 and in federal legislation that governs regional transportation planning:

- Other affected public agencies (such as special districts, county health officers, resource agencies, etc)
- Opinion leaders, advocacy groups (transportation and environmental advocates, others)
- Neighborhood and community groups
- Broad-based business organizations
- Affordable housing advocates, home builder representatives, homeowner associations
- Landowners, commercial property interests
- Low income communities and communities of color
- Other interested parties and the general public.

Participation Techniques

A variety of participation techniques will be utilized to engage the wide range of stakeholders. The success of the SCS is dependent on all voices in the region being represented and involved. This presents an opportunity to engage residents that do not typically participate in planning efforts, and it is important that engagement efforts focus on under-represented communities.

To the extent that funding allows, the public engagement efforts will include:

- Public workshops in all nine Bay Area counties (Over the course of development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy, ABAG and MTC expect to hold more than the required minimum of three workshops in each county with a population larger than 500,000; and one meeting in smaller counties.)
- Grants to community non-profit organizations in communities of concern for assistance in engaging their residents
- Use of computer simulation at public workshops to depict alternatives under consideration
- Specialized focus groups
- Statistically relevant public opinion poll (also available in languages other than English)
- A single Web site for current updates on the SCS (also accessible from the Web sites of the regional agencies)
- Interactive Web polls, surveys, etc.
- Maintenance of a database to keep participants notified (via email or U.S. mail) of activities throughout the multi-year process
- At least three public hearings on the Draft SCS Plan, held in different parts of the region.

Advisory Structure: Use of New and Existing Advisory Groups

As part of the advisory structure for the SCS, staff will utilize existing advisory groups, including:

- MTC's Policy Advisory Council (a forum of a wide-range of interest groups)
- ABAG's Regional Planning Committee
- Regional Advisory Working Group: Newly created for the SCS process is the group here today, the Regional Advisory Working Group. The purpose of the Regional Advisory Working Group is to provide input to the regional agency staffs on the development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Meetings will be in the form of workshops and are slated for 2-hours. The Working Group will meet as needed. Topics to be covered include but are not limited to: Engagement Opportunities, Three Es & Goals, Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Target, Other Performance Targets, Regional Growth Projections, Regional Housing Needs Allocation, Regional Land Use and Travel Models and Forecasts.

Principles for Public Engagement

The public involvement procedures for the SCS will be built on the following guiding principles:

- Public participation is a dynamic activity that requires teamwork and commitment at all levels of ABAG and MTC.
- One size does not fit all — effective public participation strategies must be tailored to fit the audience and the issue.

- Citizen advisory committees can be used to hear and learn from many voices in the Bay Area.
- Engaging interested citizens in ‘regional’ issues is challenging, but possible through coordination with community-based initiatives.
- Effective public outreach and involvement requires relationship building between regional agencies, local governments, non-governmental organizations and the community.

Additionally, the Joint Policy Committee has adopted *Policies for the Bay Area’s Implementation of SB 375* that calls for construction of an integrated modeling system which, to the extent possible within the available time and resources, achieves transparency, among other essential qualities (see Policy 2). Policy 3 commits the Bay Area regional agencies to prepare a realistic and attainable SCS, and, among other points, to partner with CMAs, transit agencies, local governments, and other relevant stakeholders to cooperatively prepare an SCS, beginning no later than the end of 2009.

Next Steps

Staff requests comments or suggestions on effective ways to engage members of your communities or organizations. A Draft Public Participation Plan will be presented to this group’s next meeting in late May.