

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

## NOVEMBER 2014

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### **SCAG and SCLC Host Fifth Annual Economic Summit – Dec. 4**

SCAG and the Southern California Leadership Council will be hosting the Fifth Annual Economic Summit on Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The event will lead with an update from SCAG's team of independent economists on the region's economy, and the outlook for job creation and economic growth. Building upon the discussions at the Fifty Years into the War on Poverty Summit held this past August, the Economic Summit will feature the unveiling of the Regional Action Plan on Poverty, which highlights opportunity areas for collaboration and pinpoints key economic strategies that will provide good-paying jobs and revitalize the economy. In addition, a special panel will explore new opportunities for jurisdictions on infrastructure financing and community revitalization. State and local elected officials, public and private sector CEOs, business and labor leaders, stakeholder agency representatives and city managers are invited to attend and share ways in which we can build a stronger, more prosperous and sustainable Southern California. For information on registration, please visit: [www.scag.ca.gov/economicsummit](http://www.scag.ca.gov/economicsummit).

### **Mileage-Based User Fee Pilot Initiative Highlighted at Workshop**

On Oct. 7, SCAG and Caltrans co-hosted the California's Sustainable Transportation Funding Workshop, sponsored by the Mileage-Based User Fee Alliance. The workshop focused on California's transportation funding crisis; the importance of transportation infrastructure to enhancing California's economy; what the state of Oregon has accomplished with road user charges; and issues related to the implementation of a mileage-based user fee system. I participated in the closing panel discussion moderated by California Transportation Commissioner Lucy Dunn. This panel focused on the passage of SB 1077, which establishes a technical advisory committee charged with making recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation on a road user charge pilot program. As California, the largest state in the country, moves forward with a mileage-based user fee pilot program per SB 1077, practicalities of implementation including national interoperability, equity and privacy concerns will be at the forefront of discussion – and will likely draw national, and even international, attention. SCAG's ongoing dialogue about the need for more sustainable transportation funding and the inclusion of a mileage-based user fee strategy as a part of the adopted 2012-2035 RTP/SCS have been instrumental in moving the state towards a user fee pilot initiative.

### **Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Workshop Draws Hundreds**

Approximately 200 individuals attended the Oct. 27 Strategic Growth Council workshop on the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) funding program at SCAG's main headquarters, and videoconferenced to our regional offices and San Diego. The AHSC program, a component of the California Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, is a critical new source of funding intended to implement sustainable communities strategies throughout the state by investing in projects that create more compact infill development patterns and encourage affordable housing, active transportation and public transit usage. The workshop provided stakeholders with an opportunity to ask detailed questions and provide comments to Strategic Growth Council staff and other state agencies. Information on the draft guidelines and workshop materials are available at <http://www.sgc.ca.gov>. To further provide information to our Regional Council and stakeholders on the AHSC program and other GGRF funding opportunities, SCAG staff has organized a Cap-and-Trade Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Workshop for our Nov. 6 meeting, which includes presentations by state agency representatives.

### **SB 375 Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Target Update**

At the Oct. 24 meeting of the Air Resources Board (ARB), ARB staff recommended to their board that the 2020 and 2035 regional greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets remain unchanged through the next round of Sustainable Communities Strategy planning, which includes SCAG's 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), but proposed to conclude a review of revised targets by the end of 2015. I joined several of my fellow executive directors from metropolitan planning organizations throughout the state to support not changing the greenhouse gas emissions targets while we are working to implement projects from our 2012-2035 RTP/SCS. However, we all requested flexibility on concluding the next round of revised targets by the end of 2015. My testimony focused on the need for equitable and predictable funding commensurate with the state's expectation on planning and implementing the Sustainable Communities Strategy. We will keep the Regional Council apprised of this process as more information becomes available. For additional information, please visit <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/sb375/sb375.htm>.

### **Local Cities Awarded Top Prizes in "CoolCalifornia City Challenge"**

Three SCAG region cities – Riverside, Claremont and Rancho Cucamonga – were the top three finishers, respectively, in a statewide competition among cities to cut carbon emissions. The six-month CoolCalifornia City Challenge engaged thousands of households in ten cities across California to compete for the largest citywide carbon footprint reduction. Together, the cities engaged nearly 4,000 households to take simple, everyday actions to reduce their carbon footprint. Compared to last year, this year's challenge had 40 percent more households and 60 percent more greenhouse gas reductions in half the time. In total, the participants saved more than 800,000 pounds of carbon dioxide, equivalent to removing more than 140 California homes from the grid, or 80 automobiles from the road, for a

year. Other participants recognized include the cities of Corona, Long Beach, Lynwood and Mission Viejo. For more information, please visit: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/newsrel/newsrelease.php?id=666>.

### **Regional Facilitation on Review of Proposed CEQA Guidelines Update**

SCAG has been an active participant in efforts by the state's Office of Planning and Resources (OPR) to update the CEQA guidelines and replace existing requirements for studying transportation impacts, per SB 743. Existing rules treat auto delay and congestion, commonly measured using "level of service," or LOS, as an environmental impact. SB 743 requires the CEQA guidelines to proscribe an analysis that better accounts for transit and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In its draft proposal, OPR selected vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a replacement for LOS analyses. SCAG staff has since worked closely with OPR staff to facilitate discussions among our stakeholders on the merits and concerns of the proposal, as well as possible approaches to address substantive concerns. I am happy to report that OPR staff has been receptive to considering how to modify the proposal, as well as developing case studies as part of a pilot program prior to full implementation. OPR has subsequently extended the comment deadline to Nov. 21. Written comments should be submitted to [CEQA.Guidelines@ceres.ca.gov](mailto:CEQA.Guidelines@ceres.ca.gov). For more information, please visit: [http://www.opr.ca.gov/s\\_sb743.php](http://www.opr.ca.gov/s_sb743.php).

### **Caltrans Workshop on Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan – Nov. 19**

Caltrans is in the process of updating its Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan, a guidance document that helps identify and prioritize transportation projects across the state and supports Caltrans' role in improving the interregional movement of people, vehicles and goods. Public input on the draft plan is a crucial component of the update process. Caltrans will be hosting workshops across the state and as well as a webinar for people to participate remotely. The workshops will be in an interactive, open house format. The workshop in the SCAG region is Wednesday, Nov. 19, 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m., at Caltrans District 8, Management Center Independent Assurance Bldg., 13970 Victoria St., in the City of Fontana. For additional information, please visit: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/oasp/itsp.html>.

### **Draft Safe Drinking Water Plan Released for Public Comment**

On Oct. 6, the State Water Resources Control Board released a draft Safe Drinking Water Plan for California. The draft plan assesses the quality of the state's drinking water, identifies specific water quality problems, analyzes known and potential health risks that may be associated with drinking water contamination, and provides specific recommendations to improve drinking water quality. Additionally, the draft plan includes 32 recommendations in nine areas that would expand the State Water Board's efforts to bring a greater number of systems into compliance. The draft plan is currently under public review and comment until Dec. 15. For more information, including information on the public workshops in the SCAG region on Nov. 21 and Dec. 1, please visit: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/safedrinkingwaterplan/index.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/safedrinkingwaterplan/index.shtml).

### **SCAG Region Air Districts Compliance with Federal Clean Air Act Requirements**

Updated air plans for a number of non-attainment areas in the SCAG region have been, or are being, prepared by the local air districts and the Air Resources Board, with input from stakeholders. These air plans reflect current emission inventories and adopted rules, and have not proposed additional control measures. Their adoption and ultimate approval by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will meet various Clean Air Act requirements and set the framework for attaining air quality standards. SCAG's staff has been working closely with the local air districts and the ARB to establish appropriate updated transportation conformity budgets in these air plans for conformity analyses in future RTP/SCS and transportation programs. Brief status updates of these air plans are provided below.

- **Imperial and South Coast SIPs for Federal 2006 24-Hour PM2.5 Standard:** The initial draft Imperial County State Implementation Plan (SIP) to demonstrate attainment with the federal 2006 PM2.5 standard was released in September 2014, with public workshops held in October, and Draft SIP released on Oct. 24. The Imperial County PM2.5 SIP will be considered by the Air Pollution Control District Board on Dec. 2, and by the ARB on Dec. 11. Upon approval by the ARB Board, the Imperial County SIP will be submitted to the U.S. EPA for final review and approval. For additional information, see <http://bit.ly/1pi3ttl>. In a separate effort, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has initiated a revision to its 2006 24-hour PM2.5 attainment demonstration (part of the 2012 Air Quality Management Plan) due to clarification of the PM2.5 SIP CAA requirements by U.S. EPA in response to a court ruling, and to account for recent monitoring data associated with drought conditions (i.e., lack of rain) that shows worse than expected PM2.5 air quality. The draft SIP revision is planned to be released later this year and will be considered for adoption in February 2015 by the SCAQMD Governing Board and subsequently by the ARB. The final SIP revision is expected to be submitted to the U.S. EPA in March 2015. For additional information, see <http://bit.ly/1sdV4mC>.
- **Coachella and Western Mojave SIPs for Federal 1997 8-Hour Ozone Standard:** The U.S. EPA approved the "bump-up" reclassification requests included in the Coachella Valley and Western Mojave Desert Ozone Plans. Updated ozone plans have been prepared to account for the reclassification of Coachella from "Serious" to "Severe-15" and Western Mojave from "Moderate" to "Severe-15," as well to address updated federal guidance. Both plan updates were released for public review and subsequently approved by ARB Board on Oct. 24, and will be submitted to the U.S. EPA for review and approval. For additional information, visit <http://www.arb.ca.gov/planning/sip/planarea/mojavesedsip.htm>.

### **SCAG Member Services Provide GIS Training to Caltrans Staff**

SCAG staff will be conducting two days of geographic information systems (GIS) training to Caltrans District 7 (CD 7) staff on Nov. 3-4. The training will be customized with CD 7's local data, and will provide participants with both basic and some intermediate GIS practices in a hands-on, classroom setting. Attendees will learn to create a cartographic map and a map book, as well as calculate attributes, create and edit data and conduct simple and intermediate level database searches. SCAG is looking to further enhance its successful GIS Services program, and has emailed a survey to nearly 600 staff from local jurisdictions and other partner agencies. The survey will collect feedback for one month, and staff will quantify results to inform expenditure of future resources. For more information on SCAG's GIS Services program, see <http://gisdata.scag.ca.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>.

### **SCAG International Collaboration with Chinese Delegations**

Last month, SCAG hosted Chinese delegations from the Qinghai Transportation Department and from the Gangxi Provincial Government. SCAG staff presented on the agency's governance structure, the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS and SCAG's various integrated regional planning programs. SCAG staff and our visitors also discussed Southern California's urban and suburban growth, land use, transportation, air quality and SCAG's geographic/socioeconomic data resources. I am proud that SCAG continues to be sought out by the international community and will continue to accept and pursue such collaborative efforts.