

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

DATE: September 9, 2013
TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Jacki Bacharach, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Sustainable Communities Strategy – SBCCOG position

Background

SB 375, also known as California’s Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and Climate Protection Act, is a state law that calls for the integration of transportation, land use, and housing planning and the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission as one of the main goals for regional planning. The law requires SCAG as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), working together with subregional councils of government and county transportation commissions (CTCs) to prepare a SCS as part of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Subregional COGs, along with their respective county transportation commission have the option of accepting the responsibility of preparing their own subregional SCS as outlined in the July 2013 *Policy Principles for Subregional SCS Development* (which is not yet available but will be incorporated into the formal *Subregional SCS Framework and Guidelines* and MOU for developing a Subregional SCS for the 2016 RTP). Every subregional COG must submit a letter to SCAG by January, 2014 declaring its intention to either accept or not accept responsibility for producing an SCS for its subregion.

This was also a requirement for the 2012 RTP. Orange County and Gateway were the only councils of government who accepted responsibility for producing a subregional SCS for the 2012 RTP. The cost of sub-regional SCS was \$400,000 for Gateway (paid for through a special assessment charged to their member cities) and \$500,000 for Orange County COG (paid for by federal grant). These funds were used for consultant fees exclusive of COG staff time.

The SBCCOG, in its declaration letter of December, 2010, requested a “hybrid” relationship with SCAG. In other words, the SBCCOG wanted to describe the strategy for integrating transportation, land use and housing planning that best fit the conditions in the South Bay (referred to as the Sustainable South Bay Strategy or SSBS), but did not intend to take responsibility for producing the actual SCS. While SCAG tacitly agreed to this arrangement, the proposed collaboration did not occur. The absence of transportation models that could incorporate the Sustainable South Bay Strategy was the primary barrier.

For 2016 staff recommends that SBCCOG once again decline to take responsibility for producing a subregional SCS. The SBCCOG has neither the funds nor the staff to assume this responsibility. However, this time SBCCOG will not propose a “hybrid” model. The primary reason for this is that SCAG is in the process of developing what is referred to as the Scenario Planning Model (SPM) that will allow COGs to independently plan and evaluate their own development scenarios. The SPM will be a concrete tool for demonstrating the SSBS and its impact on GHG emissions without relying on an undefined “hybrid” collaboration with SCAG.

The challenge is to ensure that the SPM is calibrated to address the relatively high density – transit poor conditions in the South Bay. That is why staff will be assigned to participate in the SPM’s development over the next 6 months. The SPM is expected to roll out to cities and COGs in the spring of 2014. We will demonstrate it at the Livable Communities Working Group and work with any cities interested in evaluating the impact of planned developments on GHG emissions.

Being able to use the SPM is essential to maintaining the viability of the South Bay Sustainable Neighborhoods Strategy for subsequent use by cities interested in doing so; for educating SCAG, Metro and South Bay cities planning staff; and for building the South Bay brand.

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to prepare a letter for Board approval to be sent to SCAG declining to take responsibility for producing a subregional SCS for the 2016 RTP.