



October 2, 2023

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

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Subject: Regional Planning Update

Overview

Regular updates on regional planning matters are provided to highlight current transportation planning issues impacting the Orange County Transportation Authority and the Southern California region. This update focuses on the development of the Southern California Association of Governments' 2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy and the California Transportation Commission's Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) regularly coordinates with other planning and regulatory agencies within the Southern California region. This coordination is conducted at many levels, involving the OCTA Board of Directors (Board), executives, and technical staff. Some examples of the regional planning forums in which OCTA participates include:

- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council, policy committees, and technical working groups,
- State Route 91 Advisory Committee,
- Regional Chief Executive Officers meetings,
- South Coast Air Quality Management District working groups, and
- Interregional planning coordination meetings (OCTA, SCAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, and the California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] districts 7, 11, and 12).

Staff last provided a regional planning update to the Board in May 2023. Items previously presented and other ongoing regional planning activities are summarized in Attachment A showing lead agencies, a summary of each activity, key dates, OCTA's interests, and current involvement.

Since the May 2023 update, new activities have emerged, including:

- SCAG's has developed the draft 2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). The plan will be released for public review in November 2023,
- The California Transportation Commission (CTC) has released the draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO),
- SCAG has updated their Regional Advanced Mitigation Planning (RAMP) Policy Framework and progress towards SoCal Greenprint;

A discussion of each of these new activities is provided below.

Discussion

2024-2050 RTP/SCS Development

SCAG, as the federally designated MPO for the counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura, is required by federal and state law (23 U.S. Code § 134 and CA Govt Code § 65080) to adopt a RTP/SCS every four years. The last RTP/SCS for the SCAG region was adopted in 2020; therefore, an updated plan is scheduled to be adopted by April 2024. All regionally significant transportation projects must be included to advance through the project delivery process. The RTP/SCS must also demonstrate conformity with federal air quality standards, identifying funding that is reasonably available through 2050 (horizon year), and provide for stakeholder and public input.

Additionally, SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) requires the RTP/SCS to identify strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from cars and light trucks from 2005 levels. The GHG reduction target assigned to the SCAG region by the California Air Resources Board is 19 percent per capita by 2035 (compared to 2005). This target must be met as an eligibility requirement for agencies in the SCAG region to compete for certain funding programs managed by the State. These programs include the Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SCCP) and the Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP). According to SCAG, since the 2020 RTP/SCS was adopted, the SCCP and TCEP have funded about \$1.5 billion in projects throughout the SCAG region.

The 2024 RTP/SCS, also known as Connect SoCal 2024, includes input from OCTA that is consistent with the final 2022 Long-Range Transportation Plan. Similar data is also included from the other county transportation commissions in the SCAG region. The information is used to model and analyze regional emissions and travel conditions. SCAG also coordinated with all 197 local jurisdictions in the region to understand current land use, anticipated population, housing, employment growth, resource areas, sustainability practices, and local transit-supportive measures to document how the region is growing. This future growth includes increases of 11 percent in population, 26 percent in the households, and 14 percent in employment. The regional population in 2050 is forecasted to be 20.1 million, which is lower than prior RTP that estimated the 2045 regional population to be 22.5 million. The change in future population levels is consistent with the trend of lower birth rates and having more out-migration than in-migration. SCAG has used this data to help identify the following regional challenges that are existing and/or anticipated through the horizon year of 2050:

- **Mobility**
 - Roadway congestion, long commute times, and declining transit ridership
 - Conditions of local streets and roads
 - Decline of transportation revenue sources
- **Communities**
 - Lack of connectivity
 - Housing supply and affordability
- **Environment**
 - Poor air quality
 - Climate change hazards
 - Loss of natural and farmlands
- **Economy**
 - Inequitable access to opportunities
 - Supply chain and goods movement instability
 - Digital divide

The draft 2024 RTP/SCS centers around one main vision statement for Southern California in the year 2050: “A healthy, prosperous, accessible and connected region for a more resilient and equitable future.” The following four goals are identified to help achieve this vision:

- **Mobility:** Build and maintain a robust transportation network
- **Communities:** Develop, connect, and sustain communities that are livable and thriving
- **Environment:** Create a healthy region for the people of today and tomorrow
- **Economy:** Support a sustainable, efficient, and productive regional economic environment that provides opportunities for all residents

These goals were then used in developing the following key elements of the 2024 RTP/SCS, intended to provide direction to SCAG staff and guidance to partner agencies within the region:

- **Regional Planning Policies:** Provide guidance for integrating land use and transportation planning. These policies can be utilized as a resource by county transportation commissions or local jurisdictions to demonstrate alignment with the RTP/SCS when seeking resources from state or federal programs.
- **Project List:** Planned investments created via input from county transportation commission’s on near-term and long-term projects.
- **Forecast Regional Development Patterns:** Estimate where future jobs and housing will be located.
- **Regional Strategic Investments:** Identify regional investments funded by new revenues (see below).
- **Implementation Strategies:** Identify areas where SCAG will lead, partner, or support other responsible parties.

The 2024 RTP/SCS Regional Strategic Investments depend on new funding (reasonable fund sources that are above and beyond those assumed by county transportation commissions) to help ensure that the regional GHG reduction targets and other performance metrics for the region are met. The new funding assumed by SCAG primarily comes from a replacement of the federal and state gas taxes with mileage-based user fees in 2035 (totaling 2.5 cents per mile), a local road charge program that assumes a regional mileage-based user fee in 2035 (an additional two-cents per mile), potential parking pricing at major employment centers, conversion of the high-occupancy vehicle lanes to high-occupancy toll (i.e., tolled express lanes), and congestion pricing only in Los Angeles County. Details of Regional Planning Initiatives are expected to be provided within the draft 2024 RTP/SCS that address the challenges noted above. SCAG has indicated that this will include the following investments in strategies:

- Mobility: \$105 billion
 - System Preservation and Resilience: State highway, local streets, and roads
 - Transportation System Management
 - Transit and Multimodal Integration: Regional enhancements and improvements
 - Complete Streets: Planning for all users
- Communities: \$3 billion
 - Housing the region: Promote housing supportive infrastructure
- Environment: \$2 billion
 - Clean transportation
 - Natural and agricultural lands preservation
- Economy: \$21 billion
 - Goods movement
 - Universal basic mobility (mobility equity fund)
 - Tourism: Access to recreational trails and scenic byways

Development of the Regional Strategic Investments are “key elements” of the 2024 RTP/SCS, as noted further below. The combination of county transportation commission submitted investments together with the Regional Planning Investments total approximately \$750 billion in capital projects and operations/maintenance through 2050. These investments, combined with local land use strategies, demonstrate that the 2024 RTP/SCS successfully addresses the regional GHG reduction target of 19 percent per capita by 2035. SCAG has indicated that the GHG emission reductions are provided through the following general categories:

- 55 percent Transit/Shared Mobility
- 18 percent User Fees/Pricing
- 15 percent Land Use
- 10 percent Active Transportation
- 2 percent Other (electric vehicles, coworking and parking deregulation strategies)

SCAG staff will seek the approval of their Regional Council to release the draft 2024 RTP/SCS for public review and comment, including the associated transportation conformity analysis in November 2023. At that time, OCTA staff will review and make necessary comments to communicate OCTA’s planning interests. Following the public comment period, SCAG staff will address and incorporate necessary edits before adopting the final 2024 RTP/SCS in spring 2024. Once adopted, the final 2024 RTP/SCS will be submitted to the appropriate state and federal agencies for approvals, which are typically expected by summer 2024.

Update of the RTP Guidelines for MPOs by the CTC

California Government Code Section 14522 requires the CTC to adopt guidelines for the development of RTPs. The RTP Guidelines are updated, as needed, with the most recent guidelines approved in 2017. In October 2022, the CTC initiated an update to the RTP Guidelines to better align with recent state and federal policies. These include the state Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) and the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). It should be noted that the ongoing RTP Guidelines update will not apply to the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS discussed above.

The 2024 RTP Guidelines set out to achieve the following:

- Promote an integrated, statewide, multimodal, regional transportation planning process and effective transportation investments.
- Develop a uniform transportation planning framework for California by identifying federal and state requirements impacting the development of RTPs.
- Promote a comprehensive transportation planning process that commits to public health and environmental quality.
- Promote a planning process that considers the views of all stakeholders.

Development of the 2024 RTP Guidelines is guided by eight specific work groups:

1. Equity, Engagement, and Health
2. Housing
3. Freight and Economic Development
4. Transportation Performance Management
5. Modeling
6. Climate Adaptation and Resilience
7. Environmental
8. Greenhouse Gas/Sustainable Communities Strategy

In general, updates pertaining to each of the above work group areas focus on aligning performance measurements and asset management goals, including language based on the IIJA, considering CAPTI priorities, incorporating Justice40 Initiative information, a federal government initiative to invest 40 percent of benefits from certain investments to disadvantaged communities, and adding best planning practice examples.

The timeline for the 2024 RTP Guidelines is as follows:

- October 2022 – RTP Guidelines Kick-off
- February 2023 – Working Groups Workshop #1
- May 2023 – 30-Day comment period for draft 1 of the RTP Guidelines
- July 2023 – Working Groups Workshop #2
- October 2023 – 30-Day comment period for draft 2 of the RTP Guidelines
- January 2024 – Anticipated adoption of the RTP Guidelines by the CTC

In June 2023, OCTA staff provided an initial comment letter for the first draft of the 2024 RTP Guidelines (Attachment B). These comments consisted of grammatical corrections, organizational recommendations, and requests to elaborate/clarify language. Staff is actively participating in stakeholder engagement opportunities and will continue to monitor the RTP Guidelines update process. Once the second draft is released for public review, it is anticipated that staff will coordinate with SCAG and other partner agencies, as appropriate, and submit additional comments.

Update on SCAG's RAMP Policy Framework and SoCal Greenprint.

RAMP is a process that plans for required mitigation needs of multiple planned infrastructure and development projects at a program level. The Measure M2 Freeway Mitigation Program is a good example of an existing RAMP. A key goal of RAMP is to reduce the costs and schedule delays associated with environmental mitigation, and to avoid environmental harm more effectively.

A RAMP policy framework (framework) was adopted by SCAG's Regional Council on February 2, 2023. This framework provides guidance to agencies within the SCAG region on how to develop and implement RAMP initiatives. Key principles of the framework suggest that RAMP initiatives should be:

- Regional in scope, to address the interconnected environmental challenges facing the SCAG region.
- Flexible and adaptable, to meet the needs of different projects and communities.
- Transparent and inclusive, to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the process.
- Cost-effective and efficient, minimizing the burden on taxpayers and project sponsors.

The framework also directs SCAG to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The purpose of the TAC is to help SCAG develop a web-based tool, called the SoCal Greenprint, that can provide agencies in the SCAG region with data to support RAMP development and implementation. The TAC will advise SCAG on data policies, governance standards, user guidelines, data selection criteria, and data parameters to ensure that the SoCal Greenprint tool aligns with local priorities.

The TAC is composed of representatives from the County Transportation Commissions, Caltrans, each county government, City of Los Angeles, two local jurisdictions from each county (cities of Irvine and Anaheim were selected for Orange County), a member of the environmental community, and a member of the business/development community. TAC meetings are also open to the public to allow input from additional stakeholders.

The Greenprint TAC was scheduled to meet three times with the first meeting held on July 26, 2023. This meeting focused on project background, an overview of the RAMP policy framework, the purpose of the SoCal Greenprint, and potential use cases and data. It was emphasized that the data should be publicly available, developed by or in partnership with a government agency, regionally comprehensive, and not impose constraints on development. It was also noted that the data should not be endorsed or adopted by the SCAG Regional Council as official policy. Caltrans also presented the data they are using in their Statewide Advanced Mitigation Needs Assessment for reference in developing data criteria for the SoCal Greenprint tool.

The second meeting was held on August 28, 2023. This meeting focused on user guidelines, governance standards, data policies and parameters, and data selection criteria. Some of the more in-depth discussions included data selection criteria, potential processes used to resolve discrepancies in the data, and the integrity of the data.

The third meeting was originally scheduled for September 25, 2023, but has been rescheduled to a future date yet to be determined. This third and potentially final meeting of the Greenprint TAC is intended to focus on tool functionality, finalizing input for staff consideration, and identifying a group to test the SoCal Greenprint tool. TAC input will be considered in development of SCAG staff recommendations that will be presented to the SCAG Energy and Environment Committee and Regional Council for approval.

Summary

OCTA is engaged in ongoing regional and statewide planning activities. Drafts of the SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS and of the statewide RTP Guidelines for MPOs are expected to be released this fall. Once released, staff will review and provide comments as needed to support and protect the interests of OCTA. Staff is also advising SCAG on the development of the SoCal Greenprint tool through participation on the Greenprint Technical Advisory Committee. The SoCal Greenprint tool is intended as a web-based data resource for agencies who want to develop a Regional Advance Mitigation Program. Staff will continue to keep the Board informed of these and other ongoing regional planning activities going forward.

Attachments

- A. Regional Planning Activities – October 2023
- B. Letter from Charlie Larwood, Manager, Transportation Planning, to Brigitte Driller, Associate Deputy Director, Planning, California Transportation Commission, dated June 5, 2023, re: Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines Update – Orange County Transportation Authority Comments

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