



May 5, 2025

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
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.

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

Regional planning updates are prepared twice a year, with the last update provided to the Board in November 2024. Attachment A includes regional planning activities that are being monitored by staff, including relevant activities highlighted in previous updates.

Since the November 2024 update, there have been new developments in the following planning activities:

- SCAG's 2024 Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)
- Reform of SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008)
- SCAG's Role in 2028 Olympic Planning

A discussion of each is provided below.

Discussion

SCAG's 2024 SCS

The federally required Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the state required SCS for the SCAG region are compiled in a single document, known as Connect SoCal 2024. An approved SCS is essential for OCTA to remain eligible and competitive for state transportation funding programs such as the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program, Active Transportation Program, and Solutions for Congested Corridors Program, which require or prioritize consistency with an adopted SCS and alignment with the State's Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure. Under SB 375, SCAG is required to submit its SCS to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to either accept or reject SCAG's determination that the SCS, if implemented, will meet the per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction target of 19 percent below 2005 levels by 2035.

On January 12, 2024, CARB submitted formal comments (Attachment B) on SCAG's draft 2024 SCS. In the comment letter, CARB identified several areas requiring additional clarification or commitments to ensure the SCS is fully supported and the GHG emission reductions goals in the plan are reasonably achievable.

In response to CARB's feedback, SCAG made revisions to the SCS, but assumptions around auto operating costs remained in question. This assumption significantly influences forecasted travel behaviors. SCAG had developed this assumption in consultation with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to reflect the latest data regarding electric vehicle ownership trends.

SCAG adopted the final Connect SoCal 2024 in April 2024 and submitted the final SCS to CARB in July 2024. Since that time, SCAG and CARB have been in discussions revolving around the key assumption of auto operating costs. CARB is requesting that SCAG use the methodology provided in the 2019 SCS guidelines. However, SCAG's position is that the 2019 methodology ignores the latest research in this area, and there may be concerns by SCAG that use of the

2019 methodology might result in the SCS not achieving the target greenhouse gas reductions.

SCAG remains confident in its approach and submitted a final set of supplemental materials to CARB in March 2025 with the intent of resolving this matter. While SCAG has requested a timeline for a decision, CARB is yet to provide one.

SB 375 Reform

In September 2024, California's four largest Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO [SCAG, MTC, SACOG, and SANDAG]), submitted a joint letter to CARB requesting a pause on the processes to revise SB 375 targets and SCS guidelines (Attachment C). This request sought to enable a comprehensive review of the SB 375 framework to reflect major shifts in state policy and evolving travel behaviors, including transportation electrification, vehicle miles traveled-based impact analysis requirements, and recent legislative mandates on housing and equity.

The MPOs asserted that the current framework does not adequately reflect these changes and lacks the resources, flexibility, and implementation focus needed to meet the state's climate and housing goals. They urged CARB and other state agencies to engage in a collaborative process to reform the SB 375 framework in alignment with California's evolving priorities.

In response, CARB issued a letter on October 23, 2024 (Attachment D), declining the request to pause current target-setting and guideline updates, citing statutory requirements and the need to maintain progress on upcoming evaluations. However, CARB expressed support for ongoing dialogue on SB 375 reform and acknowledged the importance of strengthening implementation.

MPOs and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies throughout the State are currently working to develop a set of shared principles that could be used in future SB 375 reform discussions. SB 375 reform could have implications for funding availability and prioritization of projects that may affect OCTA. Additional updates will be provided as this issue develops.

SCAG's Role in 2028 Olympic Planning

On April 15, 2025, additional venues for the 2028 Olympics were announced, including two events with ties to Orange County: indoor volleyball will be held at the Honda Center in Anaheim, while surfing will take place at Trestles Beach in San Diego County, just south of San Clemente in Orange County. Given the implications for regional mobility, OCTA staff is engaged in ongoing planning efforts to ensure Orange County's transportation needs are appropriately addressed, including those led by SCAG.

As a member of the Games Mobility Executives (GME) group, SCAG is leading transportation demand management (TDM) planning efforts for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games (2028 Games). In this role, SCAG is coordinating TDM strategies for public mobility and regional freight logistics in preparation for the 2028 Games. SCAG will be engaging local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, and private stakeholders to ensure operational readiness. Planning efforts also emphasize lessons learned from past global events, including the Paris 2024 and London 2012 Games with a focus on early coordination, equity, sustainability, and minimizing long-term disruptions to freight and transit systems.

On April 4, 2025, SCAG released its Draft 2028 Games Mobility Program Development Framework (Attachment E) to support the 2028 Games, which outlines the agency's goals, objectives, and strategies to coordinate regional transportation planning in support of the 2028 Games. The framework emphasizes minimizing system disruptions, enhancing long-term mobility outcomes, and aligning regional efforts with the pillars of Connect SoCal 2024: mobility, communities, environment, and economy, amongst other items.

SCAG is hosting a series of stakeholder engagement forums in spring 2025, including a Freight Industry Forum on April 23, 2025, and its first Regional TDM Forum on May 7, 2025. These forums aim to convene public agencies, freight and logistics representatives, and other key stakeholders to begin preparing for the level of coordination and communication necessary for the success of the 2028 Games. OCTA is participating in these forums to help support an efficient, well-connected regional transportation system during the 2028 Games and will continue to engage with SCAG and GME partners as plans evolve.

Internally, OCTA is also developing a Draft Service Plan for the 2028 Games. The Service Plan is intended to evaluate operational scenarios that support transit access to the identified venues, while continuing to support workforce travel and other regular transit needs throughout Orange County. A presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations is anticipated to be shared with the OCTA Board in the near future.


Summary

Staff will continue to monitor the status of CARB's determination on SCAG's 2024 SCS, the development efforts to reform SB 375, as well as ongoing efforts related to regional planning for the 2028 Games. These activities have the potential to influence transportation planning, policy development, and funding opportunities across Southern California. Staff will continue to report on the status of these and other pertinent issues to inform the Board and ensure OCTA's interests are represented in regional and statewide discussions.

Attachments

- A. Regional Planning Activities – May 2025
- B. Letter from Lezlie Kimura Szeto, Sustainable Communities Policy and Planning Manager, California Air Resources Board, to Sarah Jepson, Planning Director, Southern California Association of Governments, Dated January 12, 2024
- C. Letter from Andrew Fremier, Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Kome Ajise, Executive Director, Southern California Association of Governments, Mario Orso, Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Association of Governments, and James Corless, Executive Director, Sacramento Area Council of Governments, to Dr. Steve Cliff, Chief Executive Officer, California Air Resources Board, re: Pause Current SB 375 Targets and SCS Guidelines to Allow a Holistic Review of SB 375 Framework, Dated September 20, 2024
- D. Letter from Steven S. Cliff, Ph D., Executive Officer, California Air Resources Board, to Andrew Fremier, Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Kome Ajise, Executive Director, Southern California Association of Governments, Mario Orso, Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Association of Governments, and James Corless, Executive Director, Sacramento Area Council of Governments, Dated October 23, 2024
- E. Southern California Association of Governments, 2028 Games Mobility Program Development Framework

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