



California State Association of Counties
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Regional Council of Rural Counties
801 12th Street, # 600
Sacramento, CA 95814

August 17, 2007

The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 375 (Steinberg): Transportation Planning: Travel Demand Models
As proposed to be amended – OPPOSE
Set for hearing August 22, 2007 – Assembly Appropriations Committee**

Dear Assembly Member Leno:

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) must respectfully oppose SB 375, which is scheduled for hearing before the Assembly Appropriations Committee on Wednesday, August 22, 2007.

SB 375 as proposed to be amended would, among other things, require federally designated Metropolitan Planning Agencies (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) within air quality nonattainment areas to include new “sustainable communities strategies” into their regional transportation plans.

CSAC and RCRC support the overarching goal of the author and sponsor to address climate change in transportation planning and funding to effectuate change in vehicle miles traveled in the state and offer various transportation choices. We also recognize the need to provide better linkages between land use and transportation in order to achieve the greenhouse gas emission reductions required under AB 32.

However, we have reviewed the most recent mock-up of proposed amendments and continue to have significant issues with the bill that are not addressed.

We continue to have concerns with reliance on the ARB targets that are not only unknown at this time, but it is uncertain the extent to which they will be coordinated with the local and regional air district targets we must rely on in the transportation planning process. Further, we know that efforts are already underway in a coordinated fashion with numerous stakeholder groups working with the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to determine how to incorporate climate change into both regional transportation and preferred growth scenario plans. These efforts are compatible with the very successful blueprint planning processes occurring throughout the state. It is our belief that these blueprint planning efforts are very successful, in part due to the flexibility that allows local elected officials, relying on extensive public engagement, to determine the appropriate means of achieving strategic growth in their particular region.

SB 375 now appears to overlay a new strategic growth planning process into Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs). This would create a myriad of issues and inconsistencies with existing planning processes and statutes associated with the RTP, transportation funding and current regional blueprint planning processes. To name a few:

- How do the sustainable communities strategies coordinate with the blueprints underway today?
- RTPs must be updated every 4 years, which is not a compatible timeline for these extensive and comprehensive growth plans.
- Incorporating this new growth strategy into the RTP would require that all transportation projects be consistent with such a plan and yet would not necessarily coordinate with local general plans and land use decisions.
- Would this create a conflict for regions in meeting county minimums with respect to programming STIP projects as required by current statute?
- The RTP has no correlation or consistency requirement with the distribution of regional housing need numbers (RHNA) that requires every city and county within a region to zone for a certain number of housing units.

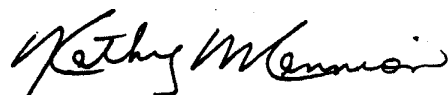
Overall, SB 375 continues to mandate a more prescriptive means for developing growth strategies now referred to as sustainable communities strategies. We believe the flexibility currently allowed in the regional blueprint process today is essential to their success for political “buy in” by the citizens and local elected officials. From our perspective, the success of influencing local land use decisions remains dependent upon the current approach, which builds on public and local elected participation in the development of the regional plans and the ability to determine a path to accomplish more strategic growth. Recognition of the diversity in our state is critical in these efforts. CSAC and RCRC support the current regional blueprint planning effort and find it critical that this remain an incentive based approach.

For these reasons, we regretfully must oppose SB 375. Please do not hesitate to contact us at your convenience for further information regarding our position. DeAnn Baker can be reached at (916) 327-7500 ext. 509 and Kathy Mannion can be reach at (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,



DeAnn Baker
Legislative Representative
California State Association of Counties



Kathy Mannion
Director of Water and Power
Regional Council of Rural Counties

cc: The Honorable Darrell Steinberg, California State Senate
Members and Consultants, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Gregson Porteous, Assembly Republican Caucus
Peter Akeret, Governor’s Office of Planning and Research