

AGENDA: December 20, 2007

TO: Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)  
FROM: Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner  
SUBJECT: SB 375 (Steinberg) – Global Climate Change

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) approve working with other agencies around the State to seek amendments to SB 375 in order to preserve the ability to move forward with a ballot measure.

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### **BACKGROUND**

In 2006, AB 32 - the California Global Warming Solutions Act was signed into law. The bill requires the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop regulations to curb greenhouse gas emissions to their 1990 levels by 2020, and further by 2050. SB 375, introduced by Senator Darrell Steinberg, (D-Sacramento), propose changes to planning processes, including land use patterns and transportation planning, in order to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled and thereby cut greenhouse emissions. Representatives of local and regional government, including the League of California Cities and the California Association of Councils of Governments, have been working extensively with Senator Steinberg to address their concerns, and the bill has been significantly improved from the perspective of these organizations.

The following are the key provisions of SB 375 in its current form:

- Transportation models for the larger regional planning agencies would be required to account for the relationship between land use density and household automobile usage, the impact of enhanced transit service levels on vehicle usage, and the amount of new travel and land development resulting from highway or passenger rail expansion.
- The ARB would be required to develop, by January 1, 2009, a transportation sector greenhouse gas reduction target for each of the larger regions. The Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) adopted for these regions would be required to include a Sustainable Communities Strategy designed to reduce emissions to meet the target.
- Most transportation projects would be required to comply with the Sustainable Communities Strategy. SB 375 would exempt the following projects from this requirement: (1) projects funded with Proposition 1B; (2) projects funded through the 2006 and 2008 Federal TIPs; and (3) projects in local sales tax measure expenditure plans approved by the voters in 2006 or prior.

- Certain projects can be exempted from CEQA if they comply with the Sustainable Communities Strategy in the RTP.

## DISCUSSION

Given ever increasing concerns with global warming, it makes sense for greenhouse gas emissions to be addressed in future planning documents, including the Regional Transportation Plan. Staff therefore recommends that the RTC work with other regions to address concerns with SB 375. However, there is one proposed provision in SB 375 that would be a deal-breaker for agencies planning to place transportation sales tax measures on the ballot in 2008 or 2010, namely the provision that local sales tax expenditure plans are only exempted if approved by the voters in 2006 or prior. Guidelines for addressing greenhouse gas emissions and alternative growth scenarios in RTPs do not yet exist, would take a significant amount of time to implement, and are not required until 2011. As such, agencies argue that it is inconsistent for SB 375 to require that sales tax measures approved in 2008 or 2010 comply with SB375 proposals and could effectively prevent a local sales tax from being on the 2008 or 2010 ballot. In addition, staff is working on potential green house gas emissions language for a possible November 2008 transportation sales tax ballot measure. At this time it is impossible to ensure that such language will not be inconsistent with provisions that do not yet exist. As such, **staff recommends that the RTC approve working with other agencies around the State to seek amendments to SB 375 in order to preserve the ability to move forward with a ballot measure.**

Other issues that staff will be monitoring and/or working with other agencies statewide to address include the process for establishing the greenhouse gas emissions targets, consistency with federal RTP requirements, usefulness of CEQA exemptions for certain projects, and impact on local land use decisions.

## SUMMARY

Senator Steinberg is working with entities throughout the state to enact a bill (SB 375) that addresses global warming by linking land use and transportation planning. SCCRTC staff recommends that the RTC seek amendments to the bill to ensure that SB 375 does not inadvertently prevent new county transportation sales tax measures from moving forward.

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