

TO: Transportation Policy Workshop (TPW)
FROM: Rachel Moriconi, Senior Transportation Planner
REGARDING: Senate Bill 375 Land Use and Transportation Coordination

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Discuss and adopt an “Oppose Unless Amended” position on SB375 (Steinberg), which would require Regional Transportation Plans (RTP) to address the reduction of greenhouse gases and require transportation funding to be allocated according to those plans; and
 2. Receive information on the addendum to the State’s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Guidelines to be considered by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) this month.
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BACKGROUND

The transportation sector is the single largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in California (approximately 40% statewide according to the California Air Resources Board). As discussed at prior Regional Transportation Commission meetings, there are a great number of legislative, policy, and planning efforts underway at the local, state, and federal levels to address global warming.

The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) requires the state to reduce carbon emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020, a reduction of approximately 25%. The California Air Resources Board is developing regulations and compliance mechanisms to address this mandate. Additionally, several bills related to implementing AB32 are under debate. Several proposals would significantly expand the scope of Regional Transportation Plans. The next Regional Transportation Plan for our region is scheduled for adoption in the spring of 2010.

DISCUSSION:

SB 375 (Steinberg)

SB375, introduced last year by Senator Steinberg, focuses on implementing AB32 and addressing GHG emissions through expanded land use-transportation coordination. This bill generally requires regional transportation planning agencies to develop more sophisticated transportation planning models and to use them for the purpose of creating a “Sustainable

Communities Strategy” aimed at reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled. The bill also provides for various forms of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) relief in communities that conform their general plans to the sustainable community strategy. A summary of the major provisions of the bill is attached (Attachment 1). The full text of the bill is available online at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>.

Under the current version of the bill, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito region, would be required to include the “sustainable communities strategy” in its regional transportation plan, which combines the plans developed by the three counties. The bill may be amended to allow cities and counties within multicounty regions to propose the sustainable communities strategy for that county. AMBAG has received a state Blueprint Planning grant to host “visioning” workshops over the year. These workshops will analyze how alternative growth scenarios for the region could impact the number of vehicle miles traveled.

The intent behind SB 375 is consistent with several goals and policies identified in the RTC’s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) focused on coordinating land use and transportation decisions. Overall, staff supports the concept of addressing the linkages between land uses, transportation and greenhouse gases; however there are several issues with the bill which the RTC may wish to relay to the author. A list of concerns that have been raised by various entities, including CalCOG, CSAC, the League of Cities, and various transportation agencies, is attached (Attachment 2).

Concerns include:

- Although the bill specifically states that it does not in any way diminish the authority of local government over land use, it effectively requires local agencies to make planning decisions consistent with a regional ‘sustainable communities strategy’ (SCS) in order for their transportation projects to be eligible for inclusion into the RTP and, therefore, for state and federal transportation funds.
- This bill could make GHG emissions reduction the deciding factor in terms of determining where transportation investments will be made. The more conventional factors inherent in transportation planning, such as economic vitality, enhancing mobility, or full consideration of financial, social and political forces largely out of the control of regional transportation planning agencies may become secondary.
- The bill creates significant increased litigation exposure for Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) and transportation projects. It further complicates the process requirements for delivering infrastructure projects.
- Modeling tools and data necessary to perform the proposed studies is not uniformly available and the legislative expectations may exceed practical abilities of many regions, including AMBAG.
- The bill only targets new housing development and transportation projects. Broad-based approaches and incentives are needed for both new and existing housing to reduce their "carbon footprint."
- Land use and transportation initiatives to reduce emissions should be coordinated and integrated with other activities and be consistent with the overall framework for implementation of AB 32; they should not be done in isolation.

Staff recommends that the RTC discuss concerns about this bill, adopt a position of “oppose unless amended”, and direct staff to relay the RTC’s concerns to Senator Steinberg.

Supplemental Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Guidelines

At its May 28-29 meeting, the California Transportation Commission will consider an addendum to the Regional Transportation Plans (RTP) Guidelines focused on addressing climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Attachment 3). Along the same lines as SB375, the proposed RTP Guidelines addendum identifies policies and strategies focused on linking land use and transportation planning, including the use of advanced models. Staff submitted comments on the proposed guidelines, including our concern about repeated references to blueprint plans given that blueprint plans are voluntary and do not currently exist for Santa Cruz County.

This is an interim update of the RTP Guidelines given that more specific impacts to the RTP process may result once ARB promulgates new GHG regulations impacting transportation planning. As discussed earlier, proposed legislation such as SB 375 would also impact the development of RTPs. Once, and if, such actions occur, the CTC and Caltrans will prepare another update to the RTP Guidelines to ensure requirements are addressed in subsequent RTPs.

LUSCAT Report

On a parallel front, the State’s Climate Action Team is developing recommendations on how meet AB32 greenhouse gas reduction targets. The Land Use Subgroup, LUSCAT, has developed draft recommendations to the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The LUSCAT report can be found at: <http://www.climatechange.ca.gov/luscat/meetings.html>. The report primarily focuses on policies, programs, and practices that provide for GHG reductions through the integration of transportation and land use planning.

SUMMARY:

Several efforts are underway to address land-use/transportation coordination. SB 375 may require regions to develop preferred growth scenarios in an effort to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Staff recommends that the RTC oppose this bill unless amended to address any concerns the RTC may have about the bill.

Attachments:

1. Provisions of SB375
2. Potential Issues Regarding SB375
3. Addendum to Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Guidelines