



STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Regional Growth Blueprint Plans

MEETING DATE: October 19, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 10

STAFF CONTACT: Michael Powers

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Authorize chair to sign letter of support for SLOCOG grant application for state partnership planning grant to include Santa Maria Valley in San Luis Obispo's Regional Vision 2050 planning area.
- B. Receive report on state regional growth blueprint planning grant program and provide direction to staff regarding possible participation in program by SBCAG.

SUMMARY

Following a presentation by SLOCOG on its Community 2050 project at its last meeting, the board expressed interesting supporting a joint grant application to include northern Santa Barbara county in this regional planning effort. Staff is recommending that the chair be authorized to sign a letter of support for the grant application. The board also expressed interest in continued discussion of opportunities for development of a regional blueprint plan for Santa Barbara County. Although the deadline for submitting an application this year for a state regional blueprint planning grant has passed, staff will keep the board informed regarding future funding opportunities. The board may wish to revisit the option to initiate a regional planning effort next Spring when the SBCAG Overall Work Program for FY 07-08 is being developed.

DISCUSSION:

A. Partnership Planning Grant with SLOCOG

The San Luis Obispo County Council of Governments is involved in a regional planning effort and made a presentation to the SBCAG board last month. Based on the connections between southern SLO County and northern Santa Barbara County, staff requested SLOCOG staff to update your board on their progress in preparing their regional Vision Plan.

Member Agencies

SLOCOG received a Blueprint Planning Grant from the state in fiscal year 2005-06 to undertake a vision planning process. This process, called Community 2050, centered on having the community envision the region's future. SLOCOG started with its municipalities' 20-year plans, and then asked how people wanted the region to develop from there over the next couple of decades. Similar activities are underway around the entire state—regional growth blueprint planning efforts are underway in virtually every urban county (Attachment 1).

Following the presentation by SLOCOG, the Board discussed coordination opportunities between SLOCOG and SBCAG, the cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe, and the County of Santa Barbara. The sense of the board was to pursue coordination opportunities with SLOCOG and take advantage of funding opportunities for improving the information to make decisions.

As the representative from SLOCOG mentioned at the September board meeting, they are requesting SBCAG's support for a competitive state Partnership Planning Grant to involve SBCAG, the cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe, the County of Santa Barbara in their regional planning effort. Staff discussed this option with SLOCOG and local agency staff representatives at a joint meeting on October 9 in Santa Maria. All parties agreed to participate in a joint application that would improve the data for decision making by each of the local agencies. All agencies believed the opportunity to obtain grant funds should be taken in order to develop GIS capability and address topical issues of local interest such as the potential to expand urban areas in an environment that strives to retain agricultural viability. The purpose of the grant would be to build up the base of information on which to make decisions. The following are examples of potential applications of the grant funds: Santa Maria can use the funds to generate information in its update of its Sphere of Influence; the County might examine agricultural – urban fringe development challenges and potential new town locations in the Santa Maria Valley area; Guadalupe may digitize their land use and zoning maps on a GIS platform. SBCAG can use all the information to refine its countywide growth forecast and allocation.

SLOCOG would be the applicant and SBCAG would be the co-lead agency. The work would be developed under the leadership of a technical committee composed of staff from the Planning Departments of the cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe, SBCAG, SLOCOG and the Planning Division within the County of Santa Barbara, Administrative Office. In addition a policy committee composed of elected officials from those same agencies would provide policy direction to insure the program was responsive to local concerns. Since the application deadline for this program is October 13, staff from all local agencies agreed to provide input to SLOCOG to advance this opportunity and submit an application. The grant request from all the agencies will not exceed \$300,000, the maximum grant amount. Funding would be distributed among the agencies. Funding could be used collectively to secure consulting services to develop the information for all the agencies. The local 20% match requirement for the grant is available using in-kind services. The joint application will be reviewed by Caltrans and a decision will be made on successful applicants to this competitive grant in the spring of 2007 with work starting in mid 2007.

Staff recommends that the chair be authorized to sign the attached letter of support for the Partnership Planning Grant application submitted by SLOCOG. On Tuesday Oct 10 the Guadalupe City Council approved their participation in the grant.

B. SBCAG Countywide Blueprint Planning Grant

In March of this year, staff presented a draft of our proposed 2006-07 Overall Work Program. This year's proposed OWP included an optional element to develop a "Growth Partnership Planning Work Element similar to what SLOCOG is doing with its Community 2050 project. Based on several concerns expressed by both TPAC and board members, the board voted not to a regional planning effort in this year's OWP. A summary of the concerns can be found in Attachment 2. The primary reason for the concern was the potential for intrusion into local land use planning by the state and SBCAG.

At the last meeting following the SLOCOG presentation, the Board discussed the potential of this type of program to develop better information for decision making while being sufficiently controlled by local agencies that the program can mitigate the concerns about the intrusion of regional agencies in local land use planning.

Staff researched the availability of grants to develop this program. Staff was informed by the State Department of Transportation (CALTRANS and State HCD jointly administer this program) that the deadline for applying for a Blueprint Planning Grant had passed and since this fiscal year's funding would be distributed among new and ongoing grantees SBCAG would not be eligible during this funding cycle. Staff inquired if a letter of intent would allow SBCAG provisional entry into this program but that proposal was rejected by the state officials.

Staff recommends that your board direct staff to continue monitoring this statewide program by attending statewide meetings of the partnership planning network that reports on the ongoing efforts by regional agencies to develop regional blueprint plans. Staff will also monitor the availability of Blueprint Planning Grant funds for next fiscal year, 2007-08. If future funds are available staff will apprise the board of new opportunities and request direction on applying for future grants.

This close monitoring of this issue is also prompted by one of the Governor's bond measures that require participation in a regional blueprint planning effort as a prerequisite for eligibility of housing bond program funds. Furthermore, the Secretary of Resources provides competitive grants, based on regional growth plans that includes an resource conservation element, that assist in the implementation of resource and habitat preservation polices in the regional growth plan. As you may recall performance measures are being used as another mechanism to measure how regional plans address state policies.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None

Attachments:

Letter Supporting SLOCOG application for state Partnership Planning Grant
Attachment 2--California Regional Blueprint Planning Program
Attachment 3--Background on Regional Blueprint Planning and SBCAG Board Concerns

ATTACHMENT 2

CALIFORNIA Regional Blueprint Planning Program

The State of California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency has launched the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program to support efforts of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Councils of Government (COGs) to conduct comprehensive scenario planning that results in consensus by regional leaders, local governments and stakeholders on a preferred growth scenario – or “blueprint” – to achieve the goals shown below for a twenty-year planning horizon (through 2025). The new program makes \$5 million in grant funds available to the MPOs for regional blueprint planning in fiscal year 2005/2006 and potentially another \$5 million in 2006/2007.

Seven Regional Blueprint Planning grants are being awarded in the first year as follows:

1. San Joaquin Valley (SJV) includes the eight Valley MPOs
2. Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG)
3. Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
4. Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG)
5. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) / Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)
6. San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)
7. San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)

The grant program is intended to better inform regional and local decision-making, through proactive engagement of all segments of the population as well as critical stakeholders in the community, business interests, academia, builders, environmental advocates, and to foster consensus on a vision and preferred land use pattern. It is anticipated that the regional blueprint planning grants will build capacity for regional collaboration and integrated planning that will in turn enable regions to plan to accommodate all their future growth, thereby reducing need for sprawl.

The grants for regional collaborative decision-making will lead to adoption of “blueprint” plans that will:

1. Foster a more efficient land use pattern that (a) supports improved mobility and reduced dependency on single-occupant vehicle trips, (b) accommodates an adequate supply of housing for all incomes, (c) reduces impacts on valuable habitat, productive farmland, and air quality, (d) increases resource use efficiency, and (e) results in safe and vibrant neighborhoods.
2. Provide consumers more housing and transportation choices.
3. Improve California’s economic competitiveness and quality of life.
4. Reduce costs and time needed to deliver transportation projects through informed early public and resource agency involvement.
5. Secure local government and community support, including that of under-represented groups, to achieve the resulting comprehensive vision through including innovative computer models and public involvement activities.

6. Establish a process for public and stakeholder engagement that can be replicated to build awareness of and support for critical infrastructure and housing needs.

The regional blueprint efforts will include development of regional performance measures that can measure progress toward the region's own vision for future land use and transportation. Each region will also select several statewide performance measures to measure progress toward statewide transportation system and housing goals.

California has the opportunity to build on several existing scenario planning efforts including San Diego's Regional Comprehensive Plan, the nationally-recognized planning processes known as Blueprint in the Sacramento region and the Riverside County Integrated Project in Southern California, and the Merced County Partnership in Integrated Planning of the Central Valley agricultural region.

While each project reflects the vision and character of their respective regions, each has valuable lessons learned on aspects of scenario planning such as use of growth scenario models, interactive public participation tools, engaging resource protection agencies in the transportation planning process, use of non-traditional performance measures that indicate changes in land use patterns, and gaining public and local government support for regional efforts.

WEBSITE:

More information on the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program and the statewide regional blueprint planning workshop held August 2, 2005, are found on the California Department of Transportation, Division of Transportation Planning web page at:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/>

ATTACHMENT 2

BACKGROUND ON REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PLANNING AND BOARD CONCERNS

A new grant program for regional agencies like SBCAG is provided by the State Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency administered by the Department of Transportation and supported by various other agencies including HCD, FHWA, and EPA. The goal of the Regional Blueprint Planning Grant Program is to use our transportation infrastructure more efficiently by better integrating housing, land use and transportation policies. The expectation of this program is to develop alternative smart growth scenarios using innovative and extensive public input and GIS based land use models and mapping tools. A summary of the blueprint grant program prepared by Caltrans is attached.

Funds for the regional blueprint planning grant program were first included in the current FY 2005-06 state budget. Because the county split election is scheduled for June, 2006 and the resulting difficulties this will likely cause for joint, countywide regional planning efforts, staff elected to defer submission of a grant for this year. Staff discussed the possibility of submitting a grant application to embark on an initial Phase 1 effort to first develop the necessary data coverage for GIS and land use model applications. Following an extensive discussion in September of last year, TPAC members in general declined this opportunity. This recommendation was also discussed with the Executive Committee of SBCAG last fall and they concurred with the TPAC recommendation.

However, new bond measures being advanced have certain programs that require participation in a regional blueprint planning effort as a prerequisite for eligibility in these programs. In addition the Governor's "GOCalifornia" initiative to significantly improve the transportation system references the need to develop land use strategies that reduce impacts on transportation. Development of regional blueprint plans is clearly a priority for the current administration and with some members of the legislature. The Governor's proposed FY 2006-07 budget again appropriates \$5.0 million for the blueprint grant program.

This competitive grant program will initiate or augment existing efforts by many of the larger Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) and Councils of Government (COG's) to conduct comprehensive scenario planning that results in consensus by regional leaders, local governments and stakeholders on a preferred growth scenario - or "blueprint" - that achieves the objectives delineated in the attachment for, at minimum, a twenty-year planning horizon (through 2025).

There is a tie between this program and related state requirements such as the Congestion Management Program and Regional Housing Needs Assessment since the Blueprint will identify the most efficient transportation system and land use pattern to:

- 1) Improve mobility
- 2) Reduce reliance on single occupant vehicle travel
- 3) Accommodate a sufficient housing supply to address regional needs over 20 years
- 4) Minimize impacts on habitat
- 5) Increase resource efficiency
- 6) Engage the public.

Santa Barbara is one of the few urbanized counties in the state that doesn't have a blueprint or is working on one. It is fair to state that based on the grant amounts provided to other areas

undertaking blueprint plans, SBCAG could expect to receive approx \$200k to \$250k with a good application in the next grant cycle scheduled for this fall. It should be noted, however, that preparing a plan is typically a 2-3 year effort and there is no assurance that funding for the grant program will be provided in future state budgets.

This reexamination of this issue is prompted by proposed bond measures that require participation in a regional blueprint planning effort as a prerequisite for eligibility in these programs. For example, SB-1024 (Perata) provides for the development of regional growth plans. Once these plans are approved and certified, the Secretary of Business Housing and Transportation makes grants available to regional agencies for establishment of revolving funds for actions necessary to authorize urban infill development in an area designated for that development in a regional growth plan. Furthermore, the Secretary of Resources provides competitive grants, based on regional growth plans that includes an resource conservation element, that assist in the implementation of resource and habitat preservation polices in the regional growth plan. As you may recall performance measures are being used as another mechanism to measure how regional plans address state policies. In fact the recent submission of SBCAG's 2006 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) was required to address performance criteria related to changes in person trips, access to transit among other factors,

. Some examples of key performance measures are;

- Travel time within key regional corridors
- Total person hours of delay
- Percent of workers within various time periods from their jobs
- Percent utilization of highways during peak period
- Improved ratio of jobs to housing
- Reduction in employee outmigration
- Increase in the production of new housing

There are positives and negatives associated with participating in the blueprint program:

On the positive side we could obtain new state funding for the development of a rich data base and new analytical tools. Scenario planning provides citizens and decision makers with the ability to examine the outcomes of alternative growth plans. It is an exercise that could demonstrate the interdependencies of planning, land use and transportation policies. The project could serve to build bridges between various constituencies and develop a common vision of the future for the county. Developing a blueprint plan could make the cities and the county eligible for new funding programs that arise from the proposed bond measures and provide SBCAG with additional funding under emerging grant programs. It is possible that discretionary funding available from the state for transportation projects and programs could be impacted by not having a blueprint plan.

On the negative side the project may serve to ferment the ongoing and long standing arguments over growth and development. Many may not want to accept the notion of any "growth" in a growth visioning process. Some may see this program as setting the stage for interference with local land use decisions. Local agencies, some of whom are currently engaged in community planning efforts may view the imposition of state planning goals as unwelcome encroachment on local control and decision-making. As there is no guarantee that the blueprint program will

be included in future state budgets, there is concern that grant funding that may be awarded to SBCAG in the next cycle may not be sufficient to complete the effort.

The board should consider these issues and provide direction to staff. A draft work program is attached for your consideration. Staff is recommending that the optional regional blueprint work element not be included in the OWP at this time. If the board elects to submit a grant application in the fall, the work element can be amended into the OWP at that time.

TPAC COMMITTEE REVIEW

SBCAG sought input from TTAC and TPAC members on issues that should be addressed on a regional basis during the coming year. Staff also requested that local governments and transit operators make us aware of any significant transportation planning activities they may be contemplating, so that these can be incorporated in the OWP prior to its adoption by the SBCAG Board in April. Transit operators are advised that this is a federal requirement. TTAC will also have an opportunity to review the draft OWP at their April meeting.

Staff also met with the Technical Planning Advisory Committee in March to consider development of a Regional Blueprint plan. By-and-large TPAC members were very cautious about this program and in general advised against it for many of the reasons noted above. Some believed the grant program was setting the stage for interference with local land use authority; others were concerned about the state expecting a pre-determined result (as noted in the previous 5 goals for the Blueprint Plan) vs. an open ended visioning process. Some expressed concerns about the link to the Regional Housing Needs Allocation process and other state regulations, as well as the potential lack of influence on state and other institutions such as UCSB. However, some believed the grant could support an expanded outreach process for the update of the growth forecast and new tools could assist in public education. However, in general, TPAC members believed the risks outweighed the rewards.

BOARD CONCERNS – SBCAG MINUTES OF MARCH 16

In regards to a Regional Blueprint Plan, Supervisor Centeno said his concern was that land use concepts and transit concepts go together at the local level and that with the makeup of the board he did not foresee this type of discussion happening on a regional level. He said he did not think this item should be placed on the agenda at this time.

Mayor Wallis said that the city of Goleta was preparing its general plan and that if this was looked at on a regional basis, the north county would be telling Goleta to build more houses and the south county would be telling the north county to commit to transit issues.

Supervisor Carbajal said he agreed with Mayor Wallis. He said the state had not given him too much confidence and that the state would need to be more creative in solving transportation and planning issues before taking away authority from local agencies.

Councilmember Mariscal said that the concept of maintaining local control of land use issues was unanimous by the board. He said that SBCAG was in a unique position with information on land use, roads and housing issues and proactively participates in discussions on a local level. He said there needs to be a regional dialogue that doesn't have to do with land use about moving transportation and goods throughout the corridor.

Mayor Blum said she also was in agreement with local control relative to land use but that it might be helpful for each jurisdiction to report what they are doing relative to housing issues that might affect other jurisdictions.

Mayor DeWees urged the board to take a global view when discussing Measure D.

Supervisor Centeno asked for a motion on whether the board wanted to pursue the development of a Regional Blueprint Plan.

Mayor Wallis moved not to approve including the development of a Regional Blueprint Plan in the OWP. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Carbajal and carried unanimously.