

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Regional Transportation Plan

MEETING DATE: July 17, 2008

AGENDA ITEM: 9

STAFF CONTACT: Aubrey Spilde, Michael Powers

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive briefing on Draft 2008 Regional Transportation Plan and accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Report and authorize release for public comment.

SUMMARY:

SBCAG is currently preparing the Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP): VISION 2030 as required by federal and state law. It is an update of the 2004 Federal Metropolitan Transportation Plan and 2001 State Regional Transportation Plan and contains more recent project and financial information, and additional environmental analysis. A consultant was retained to prepare the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). A draft Plan and EIR are now ready to release for public review and comment. . Copies of these reports will be available on July 18. Public workshops on the Plan will be held in July. Your board will hold a formal public hearing on the draft Plan and EIR in August and the board will consider certification of the EIR and adoption of the Plan in October. Copies of the plan and EIR are being prepared and will be distributed at the board meeting and posted on SBCAG's website shortly thereafter. Staff will make a brief presentation on the RTP at the board meeting. Staff is recommending that the board authorize release of the draft RTP and EIR for public review..

DISCUSSION:

Federal and state statutes require SBCAG, as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA), to develop a long-range transportation plan, referred to as the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). "The purpose of the RTP is to establish regional goals, identify present and future needs, deficiencies, and constraints, analyze potential solutions, estimate available funding and propose investments."¹

"[T]he traditional steps undertaken during the regional planning process include:

¹ 2007 California Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines, p. 15.

1. Providing a long-term (20 year) visioning framework;
2. Monitoring existing conditions;
3. Forecasting future population and employment growth;
4. Assessing projected land uses in the region and identifying major growth corridors;
5. Identifying alternatives and needs and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvements;
6. Developing alternative capital and operating strategies for people and goods;
7. Estimating the impact of the transportation system on air quality within the region; and,
8. Developing a financial plan that covers operating costs, maintenance of the system, system preservation costs, and new capital investments.”²

California statute requires RTPs to address these three elements: policy, action, and financial.

The federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), signed into law in 2005, made the following changes to the metropolitan planning process for the RTP:³

- Will be updated every 5 years for regions such as Santa Barbara County that are in attainment of federal air quality standards.
- Intermodal connectors are added as a transportation facility.
- Include a discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities along with potential sites to carry out the activities to be included. The discussion is to be developed in consultation with Federal, State, and tribal wildlife, land management, and regulatory agencies.
- Transit operators are to be included in the cooperative development of funding estimates for the financial plan section.
- MPOs are required to consult with State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation concerning development of the Plan.
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, the disabled are specifically added as parties to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the planning process.
- The MPO is to develop a participation plan in consultation with interested parties that provides reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment.
- To carry out the participation plan, public meetings are to be: conducted at convenient and accessible locations at convenient times; employ visualization techniques to describe plans; and make public information available in an electronically accessible format.
- The Plan is to be published and made available electronically.

SBCAG has prepared a Draft Regional Transportation Plan: VISION 2030 that addresses both federal and state requirements. It covers the period of 2007-2030. The most recent update was 2004 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2000-2030, which SBCAG adopted in January 2005.

VISION 2030 differs from the 2004 MTP in that it contains:

- New factors, such as safety and security, examined due to SAFETEA-LU
- New emerging policy issues such as climate change

² 2007 California Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines, pp. 15-16.

³ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/factsheets/mp.htm>

- Reference to new studies such as the LOSSAN North Strategic Plan, North County Transit Plan, 2007 Transit Needs Assessment, 2007 SBCAG Travel Trends Report, 2007 Traffic Solutions Commuter Survey, etc.
- Updated Program and Plan project lists
- Inclusion of a transportation programs section to complement the list of road, transit, rail, bike, and pedestrian capital projects
- Updated financial information
- Inclusion of 101 In Motion consensus projects and Measure A Renewal projects
- New format
- Accompanying Environmental Impact Report

The chapters of VISION 2030 include:

1. WHERE WE ARE TODAY
2. CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD
3. GOALS OF VISION 2030—the Policy Element
4. PUTTING THE PLAN IN MOTION—the Action Element
5. EXAMINING OUR RESOURCES—the Financial Element
6. HOW VISION 2030 WILL PERFORM—the Performance Element

Chapter 1 introduces Santa Barbara County and describes its geographic, economic, and demographic characteristics. It also explains the purpose of the RTP, the requirements, and the planning process. In addition, the chapter provides an overview of the County's multimodal transportation system—the roadway, bikeway, transit, rail, aviation, and marine systems.

In November 2007, staff held publicly noticed workshops throughout the County to gather input on significant issues that need to be addressed in the RTP update. This input is summarized in Chapter 1 of the RTP. All RTP staff presentations were placed on the SBCAG web site, www.sbcag.org, with an ongoing request for public comment.

Chapter 2 describes the challenges that lie ahead, outlining issues such as population and traffic growth, dependency on automobile travel, integrating land use and transportation planning, air quality, and the emerging policy issues related to climate change. The chapter also describes the challenges of maintaining a safe and secure transportation system in good working order. The chapter emphasizes the importance of managing our transportation system and the incorporation of strategic environmental issues. Challenges related to intermodal connectivity and goods movements are also highlighted, addressing highway, transit, rail, bikeway, and airport systems of travel

Chapter 3 identifies the goals and policies to meet the transportation needs of the region. Based on input from the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) and public workshops, goals and policies have been updated since 2004 to address system safety, local land use coordination, rail, and funding.

Chapter 4 is the Action Element. It describes the progress made in implementing the 2004 MTP and the implementation strategy for the 2008 RTP. It details the many SBCAG transportation programs and then discusses the Capital Improvement Program (the Program and Plan project lists). It contains an improvement strategy that emphasizes completion of the bikeway network, improved transit service, and additions to highway capacity. Appendix D includes the details of the Program, Plan, Illustrative, & Airport Plan projects. The "Illustrative" project list includes those projects for which funding is definitely not available under the revenue assumptions in the

financial forecast. Chapter 4 includes the criteria for regional significance used to select projects for the project lists, as well as maps of Program and Plan projects throughout the County. TTAC members have reviewed and commented on chapter 4 and project lists.

Cost estimates for the Plan project list (shown in Appendix D) include a 4% cost inflation rate (3% for bus purchases). Federal requirements obligate SBCAG to forecast project costs and estimate year of expenditure costs. This requirement may result in project costs exceeding expected revenues for the time period covered by the RTP. Therefore, some Plan projects were moved to the Illustrative list as insufficient revenues are forecast to complete all forecast project needs.

Chapter 5, the Financial Element, assesses the financial resources available to implement the projects identified in the Action Element. The analysis concludes that the region will likely have sufficient revenues to fund the projects in the first five year period; however, our future (10 to 20 years) capability to fund needed road maintenance is dependent on the continuation of Measure D beyond the sunset date of 2009.

Chapter 6 is the Performance Element. It includes measures to evaluate current and future multimodal system performance for the movement of people and goods. It also details how the projects in the Program and Plan lists will impact traffic throughout the County, and forecasts impacts on transit. The chapter also addresses environmental justice.

Release of the Draft RTP and DEIR will initiate a 45-day public review of the reports. The following outlines the schedule for review, comment, and adoption of the 2008 RTP.

DATE	EVENT
July 18	Release Draft RTP and Draft Environmental Impact Report,
August 5	Public Workshop <u>North County</u> Tues. 6:30 PM B/S Hearing Room, County Govt. Center, Santa Maria
August 6	Public Workshop <u>South Coast</u> Wednesday 6:30 PM B/S Hearing Room, County Admin. Building, Santa Barbara
August 5	(Optional) North County Sub-Regional Committee discussion
August 6	(Optional) South Coast Sub-Regional Committee discussion
August 7	Presentation to TTAC
August 12	Presentation to SBCTAC
August 21	SBCAG Public Hearing, B/S Hearing Room, County Admin. Building Santa Barbara
August 31	Deadline for public comments (45-day RTP and EIR circulation)

DATE	EVENT
September 24	Release of Final RTP, FEIR
October 2	TTAC Recommendation
October 14	SBCTAC Recommendation
October 16	SBCAG Certification of FEIR and adoption of RTP

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is recommending that the board authorize the release of the draft RTP and EIR for public review.