

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Public Participation Plan

MEETING DATE: December 6, 2007

AGENDA ITEM: 7

STAFF CONTACT: Gregg Hart

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend approval of SBCAG Draft Public Participation Plan

SUMMARY:

SBCAG has an existing Public Participation Plan that was last amended in 2002. Federal law requires SBCAG to regularly update its Public Participation Plan. SAFETEA LU requires that the participation plan be developed in consultation with all interested parties and shall address specific criteria. The updated plan addresses all these requirements, has met the required public circulation requirements and is ready for adoption.

DISCUSSION:

SBCAG has an existing Public Participation Plan that was last amended in 2002. Federal law requires SBCAG to regularly update its Public Participation Plan. SAFETEA LU requires that the participation plan be developed in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points; timely notice and access to information about transportation issues and processes; employing “visualization techniques” to describe transportation plans; making public information available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web; holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times; seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households; coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes; and periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

The updated plan addresses all these requirements. To a large extent, existing SBCAG processes address many of these requirements. For example, SBCAG Board meetings are accessible and televised with remote access from Santa Barbara and Santa Maria. Public input is a regular part of board meetings and committees are accessible to the public.

An element receiving additional attention is these guidelines is making SBCAG notices and reports accessible on the World Wide Web and specifying outreach to traditionally underserved groups. One significant challenge is associated with the method of informing the public and interested parties of impending changes to the RTP and FTIP. In the past, SBCAG has relied on legal notices in the paper. This has become less effective due to changes evident in the media and in the way the public obtains news and information over the past several years. Therefore, the Plan proposes more reliance on the internet and e-mail notices vs. formal legal notices.

The draft plan was circulated for public comment from October 8th to November 30, 2007. A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days is required before the revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Sixty days will have elapsed since the plan was circulated for public review and the TTAC/TPAC Committee meetings to consider adoption of the plan. Staff held two noticed workshops, one in Santa Maria on October 10th and the other in Santa Barbara on October 11th to receive public comments on the draft Plan. Display advertisements for the workshops were placed in the Santa Barbara News Press, Santa Maria Times, Lompoc Record and Santa Ynez Valley News. In addition, e-mail notices were sent to SBCAG's nearly 2,500 recipient list to announce the start of the Public Participation Plan Update process and a second e-mail notice was sent to announce the workshop dates and locations. SBCAG staff received comments on the draft plan from FTA/FHWA, Caltrans, TTAC, TPAC and SBCTAC and the SBCAG Board. The plan has been amended to address the comments received. (see attachment)

ATTACHMENTS:

Response to Comments received on Draft Public Participation Plan
Public Participation Plan 2007

Response to Comments received on Draft Public Participation Plan

The following comments were received on SBCAG's Draft Public Participation Plan and the suggestions have all been added to the document on the noted pages.

SBCAG Board – Supervisor Carbajal suggested that SBCAG inventory the Spanish radio stations and newspapers. Supervisor Centeno suggested adding the SLO Tribune and other San Luis Obispo County media outlets that cover northern Santa Barbara County to the media list. (page 6)

FTA/FHWA – The plan draft should include documented consultation information (i.e. how participants were contacted, who participated, and what was decided during the participation plan process). (Appendix D) In the last paragraph on page ten, consider identifying that 23 *CFR 450.332* refers to the annual listing of obligated projects. (page 11) The plan draft mentions a working relationship with the tribes on page thirteen. Were the tribes represented during the creation of the participation plan? (Appendix D)

CALTRANS – Mention in the Plan that there is remote testimony available for every SBCAG Board meeting. (Page 7) On page 8 you mention the RTP being updated every four years. Actually it's 5 years for SBCAG since this is an air quality attainment area. (page 8)

TPAC - Bill Shipsey suggested including reference in the document to SBCAG's extensive use of sites throughout the county for public meetings and workshops. (page 7)

SBCTAC - Barry Stotts recommended reference to ADA special access requirements be added (the notice that is placed on all SBCAG Committee Agendas) to the report. Summary Spanish language contact information that is in most SBCAG public notices should be referenced as well. A table be inserted listing the newspapers, radio, and TV stations (including those in San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties whose markets are in Santa Barbara County) and that SBCAG attempt to use public access TV, social service agencies and churches in reaching low income and minority communities. Barry also suggested a web link between SBCAG and the 211 system and the CRIS Directory. (page 14) Vibiana recommended using College and High School newspapers for workshop notices. She added that churches are another good way to reach low income and minority individuals. Dean Palius and others recommended social service non-profits such as Salvation Army and Catholic Charities. David Damiano recommended consideration of web media such as Craig's list. (page 14)