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DATE: July 2, 2015

TO: Energy and Environment Committee (EEC)

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SUBJECT: 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 RTP/SCS) – Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) Update and Preliminary Draft Outline

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S APPROVAL: 

RECOMMENDED ACTION:
For Information Only – No Action Required.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
This report is being prepared to provide a status update on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS that SCAG released for a 30-day public review and comment period which ended on April 7, 2015. Further, this report is intended to provide the EEC with a preliminary draft outline of the PEIR and a schedule of events in the next few months relating to preparation of the PEIR. Staff plans to provide periodic updates on the progress of the PEIR development at the next several EEC or Joint Policy meetings and to give members ample opportunity to become familiar with the PEIR such that a recommendation for approval to release the Draft PEIR can be made to the Regional Council (RC) currently planned in the fall of 2015.

STRATEGIC PLAN:
This item supports SCAG’s Strategic Plan Goal 1: Improve Regional Decision Making by Providing Leadership and Consensus Building on Key Plans and Policies; Objective a: Create and facilitate a collaboration and cooperative environment to produce forward thinking regional plans.

BACKGROUND:
The RTP/SCS is a long-range transportation plan that provides a vision for regional transportation investments over a 20-year period. In accordance with applicable federal and state laws, SCAG updates the RTP/SCS every four (4) years to reflect changes to the transportation network, the most recent planning assumptions, economic trends, and population, household, and employment growth forecasts. The California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”, Pub. Res. Code § 21000 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (“CEQA Guidelines”, codified at 14 C.C.R. § 15000 et seq.) require SCAG as the Lead Agency to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for any discretionary government action, including programs and plans that may cause significant environmental effects. As such, SCAG is preparing a PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS pursuant to CEQA and other applicable federal and state environmental laws and regulations.

The PEIR will serve as a first-tier, programmatic document that provides a region-wide assessment of potential significant environmental effects of the 2016 RTP/SCS. The PEIR must evaluate region-wide, potential environmental effects, including direct and indirect effects, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts of the 2016 RTP/SCS at a programmatic level. The PEIR must also evaluate alternatives to the 2016 RTP/SCS and propose feasible mitigation measures.



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UPDATE ON THE NOP OF THE 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR:

As indicated in the March 5, 2015 Staff Report to the EEC, staff prepared the NOP of a PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS in accordance with provisions of CEQA. At the March 5, 2015 meeting, EEC authorized the release of the NOP for a 30-day public review and comment period beginning March 9, 2015. SCAG released the NOP from March 9 through April 7, 2015. The NOP was released to notify local, state and federal agencies, and other interested agencies, organizations and individuals (“Interested Parties”) that SCAG plans to prepare the PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS and to seek input from Interested Parties with respect to the scope and content of environmental information to be evaluated in the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR. As part of the scoping process required under the CEQA, two NOP scoping meetings were conducted on March 17 and 18, 2015. SCAG received 26 public comments in response to the NOP, including three (3) public comments received after the NOP closed on April 7, 2015. A breakdown of the 26 commenters received on the NOP is listed below:

Breakdown of the Commenters on the NOP	Number
Sovereign nation	1
Federal agency	1
State agency	3
Regional agency	5
SCAG member jurisdiction	7
Subregion	1
County Transportation Commission	1
Other interested organizations and individuals	7

Both PEIR and RTP/SCS topics were raised by the commenters. Breakdown of the NOP comments by PEIR and RTP/SCS topic areas is listed below:

	Breakdown of the NOP Comments by Topic Areas	Number
PEIR	Project Description	2
	Air Quality	6
	Biological Resources and Open Space	3
	Cultural Resources	2
	Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change	1
	Hydrology and Water Resources	2
	Land Use and Planning	1
	Population, Housing and Employment	2
	Transportation, Traffic and Safety	4
	Mitigation Measures	9
	Alternatives	6
RTP/SCS	Vision, Goals, Policies, and Performance Measures	6
	Transportation Infrastructure and Technology	1
	Land Use Strategies	2
	RTP/SCS Scenario Planning	4
	Public Participation Process	3

Staff will attach the NOP of the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR and comments received on the NOP to the Draft PEIR document as an appendix.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT OUTLINE OF THE PEIR:

Staff has prepared a preliminary draft outline of the PEIR. Staff intends to provide the EEC with periodic updates discussing progress of the PEIR and to offer EEC members ample opportunity to become familiar with its preliminary contents of the PEIR. Key information of the preliminary draft outline of the body of the PEIR is summarized below, and appendices will be included as appropriate.

- **Executive Summary:** This summarizes key information presented in the PEIR, including a table depicting impacts and proposed mitigation measures for each resource area discussed in Chapter 3.
- **Chapter 1 – Introduction:** This chapter consists of the introduction and a description of the analytical approach utilized in the PEIR and a review of the legislation that guides the process of developing the PEIR. It also describes the purpose, scope and methodology of the PEIR, consideration of CEQA streamlining opportunities, the environmental review process, and an overview of the contents of the PEIR.
- **Chapter 2 – Project Description:** This chapter provides background information on SCAG’s roles and responsibilities. It also provides information on the 2016 RTP/SCS vision, goals, policies, performance measures, programs, and public participation process. Although the PEIR does not require federal approval (federal environmental review is not required), a discussion of purpose and need for the 2016 RTP/SCS will be included along with the CEQA-required project objectives. Regional growth projections and major components of the 2016 RTP/SCS will also be summarized in this chapter.
- **Chapter 3 – Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures:** This chapter will identify the PEIR baseline and describe the existing conditions against which potential environmental impacts will be analyzed in the PEIR. It will focus on addressing current federal and state regulations and policies, recent CEQA case law; and conduct a programmatic analysis of potential environmental impacts of the 2016 RTP/SCS for the region. The following resource categories will be analyzed in this section, and supplemental materials, including the NOP of the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR and comments received on the NOP, will be attached, as appropriate, in appendices to the Draft PEIR document: Aesthetics and Views; Agriculture and Forestry Resources; Air Quality; Biological Resources and Open Space; Cultural Resources; Energy; Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources; Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Resources; Land Use and Planning; Noise; Population, Employment, and Housing; Recreation; Transportation, Traffic, and Safety; Public Services and Utilities; and Mandatory Finding of Significance. For each of these environmental areas, the analysis addresses Regulatory Framework, Environmental Setting, Methodology, Significance Thresholds, Impact Analysis, Cumulative Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Level of Significance after Mitigation. As required by the provisions of CEQA, determination of impacts will be based on a comparison of the proposed plan to existing conditions. A discussion of the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS compared to the No Project Alternative will also be provided for informational purposes. Further updates of the PEIR for the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS are as follows:
 - Analysis of CEQA topic areas, where applicable, will include Plan benefits that result from region-wide, ongoing implementation of policies and programs that promote active transportation, public health, and quality of life and that also integrate transit and transportation facilities with land use planning and sustainable community strategies in the SCAG region.
 - The Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change Chapter will include the consideration of greenhouse gas emission reduction goals set forth in the Executive Order B-30-15 (40 percent

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reduction below 1990 levels by 2030) and Executive Order S-3-05 (80 percent reduction below 1990 levels by 2050).

- The Transportation, Traffic and Safety chapter will include an analysis of active transportation and pedestrian and bicyclist safety.
 - CEQA topic areas will be analyzed with a public health lens, where applicable.
 - In the Health Risk Assessment (HRA) Appendix to the PEIR document, the number of corridors in the HRA analysis will increase since the PEIR for the 2012 RTP/SCS.
- Chapter 4 – Alternatives: This chapter will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS at a programmatic and region-wide level. It will include a comparison of alternatives to the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS for each resource areas analyzed in Chapter 3.
 - Chapter 5 – Long Term CEQA Considerations: This chapter will identify the significant unavoidable environmental effects, significant irreversible environmental effects, irreversible damage from environmental accidents, growth inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts of the 2016 RTP/SCS.
 - Chapter 6 - Persons and Sources Consulted: This chapter lists the contributors to the preparation of the PEIR and includes a list of sources consulted and used in making of the PEIR.
 - Chapter 7 – Glossary: This chapter includes the acronyms used in the PEIR.
 - Chapter 8 – Maps: This chapter includes a compilation of maps referenced in the PEIR.

SCHEDULE:

Key dates for the development and completion of the PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS are listed below:

Milestones	Dates (Expected)
2016 RTP/SCS Open House	May 26-June 29, 2015
Release of the Draft PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS for a 45-day public review and comment	October/November 2015
Adoption and certification of the Final PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS by SCAG Regional Council	April 2016

SCAG staff will provide periodic progress reports to the EEC as development of the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR progresses. Key dates for the EEC review of the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR are listed below:

Milestones	Dates (Expected)
Stakeholders and partners outreach for the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR	May/June/July 2015
EEC review of the key approaches to the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR*	August/September 2015
EEC review of Draft PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS and recommend action to RC	September/October 2015
RC to authorize the release of the Draft PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS for a minimum 45-day public review and comment	October/November 2015
EEC review of draft Final PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS	February/March 2016



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*SCAG staff is considering and evaluating all appropriate approaches to greenhouse gas emission analysis, mitigation measures, and alternative analysis for the 2016 RTP/SCS PEIR. Staff will provide more information at the August and September 2015 (Joint Policy or EEC) meetings. Staff plans to meet with stakeholders and partners on topics of the PEIR for the 2016 RTP/SCS prior to the August and September 2015 (Joint Policy or EEC) meetings.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Work associated with this item is included in the Fiscal Year 14/15 Overall Work Program (15-020.SCG00161.04: Regulatory Compliance) and in the Fiscal Year 15/16 Overall Work Program (16-020.SCG00161.04: Regulatory Compliance).

ATTACHMENT:

None