MEMO

DATE: December 6, 2007

TO: Energy and Environment Committee (EEC)
Regional Council (RC)

FROM: Jessica Kirchner, Senior Regional Planner, (213)236-1983, kirchner@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Update on the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)

BACKGROUND:
On November 1, 2007, the Regional Council voted in favor of preparing two separate PEIRs, one for the RTP and one for the RCP. This Regional Council action was based in part on the fact that the RTP is a federally mandated plan with a definitive schedule for adoption, unlike the RCP which is a SCAG-initiated plan with no required deadline for adoption and is not specifically binding on SCAG's members. As a result, of this action, SCAG issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) pertaining only to the RTP PEIR to notify agencies and interested parties of the change in the project's scope. The comment period for the RTP PEIR NOP began on November 7, 2007 and will end on December 10, 2007; this comment period is an opportunity for interested parties to provide input on the scope and content of the PEIR. As with the previous NOP, the notice was sent to over 1,500 agencies and interested parties. All comments received in response to the previously circulated June 27, 2007 NOP (that pertained to the RTP and RCP) will remain part of the administrative record and be addressed in the Draft RTP PEIR. Staff anticipates asking the EEC to release the Draft RTP PEIR on January 3, 2008.

The RTP PEIR will evaluate the environmental effects of implementing the 2008 RTP at a plan scale. A PEIR is by nature a programmatic document, and does not provide analysis of individual projects included in the RTP; rather, the PEIR will discuss the Plan as a whole and generally describe the types of impacts that could be expected. The 2008 RTP includes a comprehensive strategy of policies and projects including the following:

- High-Speed Regional Transport (HSRT) – high speed, high performance regional transport system connecting the region's ports, airports and urban activity centers;
- Goods Movement – freight rail investments, HSRT for freight, highway investments such as user supported (toll) dedicated truck lanes;
- Aviation - improved ground access, FlyAway improvement and expansion;
- Transit – heavy and light rail, bus rapid transit (BRT);
- Highway Improvements – HOV lanes and connectors, mixed flow or general purpose lanes, toll facilities and HOT lanes; and,
- Intelligent Transportation Systems.

While, the PEIR will evaluate the environmental effects associated with projects of the type described above at the program level; each project included in the RTP PEIR must be evaluated at the project level by the implementing agency. The following describes the issue areas that will be discussed in the PEIR. In each case, the analysis is completed by comparing existing conditions to conditions in 2035 with the Plan.

- Aesthetics and Views
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Hazardous Materials
- Land Use
- Noise
- Open Space
- Population, Employment, and Housing
- Public Service and Utilities
- Transportation
- Security
- Water Resources
- Construction Impacts
- Cumulative Impacts

In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, the RTP PEIR provides an opportunity to inform decision-makers and the public about potential environmental effects associated with the implementation of the RTP and its alternatives. This environmental analysis will ultimately support the selection of the Preferred Alternative, and will provide a useful regional-scale environmental planning tool to help local agencies evaluate and reduce cumulative environmental effects. The PEIR will also include mitigation measures where necessary, that are aimed at reducing impacts to below a level of significance.

FISCAL IMPACT:
Funds for the development of the 2008 RTP PEIR are included in the FY 07/08 budget WBS 07-020.SCGC1.

Reviewed by:

Division Manager

Reviewed by:

Department Director

Reviewed by:

Chief Financial Officer