MEMO

DATE: March 6, 2008

TO: Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Jacob Lieb, Program Manager, (213) 236-1921, lieb@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Environmental Planning Overview

BACKGROUND:
SCAG staff, at the direction of the Regional Council and the Energy and Environment Committee undertakes a variety of environmental planning activities. In light of the appointment of several new members to the EEC, the recent completion of major tasks, and the upcoming budget deliberations, it is appropriate to provide an overview and discussion on the environmental planning function at SCAG.

Activities fall under the following categories –

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/ Environmental Impact Report
Environmental staff prepares the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Regional Transportation Plan, and is responsible for other on-going CEQA compliance activities. In the current year, staff will also be preparing an EIR for the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Air Quality
SCAG has several air quality planning responsibilities including assuring compliance with Federal transportation conformity law and preparing portions of the South Coast Air Quality Management Plan. During the past year, air quality planning has increased in emphasis due to the recognition of an emissions related health crisis by the Regional Council. To that end, SCAG is participating in the drafting of a joint white paper along with the California Air Resources Board and the South Coast Air Quality Management District on future emissions reduction strategies.

Regional Comprehensive Plan
Environmental staff supports the development of the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), and all of its associated public process. The RCP has a sustainability focus, and features five individual chapters on environmental issues (water, energy, open space, solid waste, and air quality).

Environmental Justice
SCAG is responsible for complying with applicable Federal and State requirements on Environmental Justice (EJ). Activities include analyzing SCAG plans and programs to determine any disproportionate impacts, as well as conducting public outreach to stakeholder groups.

Task Force and policy support
Environmental Planning staff support the information sharing and policy deliberations for the following groups, in addition to the EEC –

- Solid Waste Task Force
- Water Policy Task Force

- Open Space Working Group
- Energy Working Group
- Transportation Conformity Working Group

Anticipated Activities, Fiscal Year 2008-2009

The proposed activities for the next year are described briefly below. At this time, preliminary submissions have been made for the development of the agency budget, and comments and suggestions are welcome.

Compliance activities
As above, SCAG staff will perform required functions under CEQA, SAFETEA-LU, and Environmental Justice

Air Quality
Staff will perform mandated air quality planning functions with additional work and emphasis on future attainment strategy development, and on technical and analytical support to other transportation and regional planning functions

Mitigation and initiatives
Several policy initiatives, including those emerging from the draft RCP will be developed further. These are subject to further discussion through the completion of the RCP process, but are likely to include developing regional planning approaches to climate change, addressing energy uncertainty, and developing the region's capacity to plan and mitigate for open space impacts.

FISCAL IMPACT:
Information only at this time. Environmental planning activities are included in the Overall Work Program (08-020, Environmental Planning; 08-035, Regional Comprehensive Plan;and 08-025, Air Quality)

Reviewed by:
Division Manager

Reviewed by:
Department Director

Reviewed by:
Chief Financial Officer