REPORT

DATE: December 4, 2003

TO: Energy and Environment Committee and Regional Council

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SUBJECT: Release of the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report for Public Review and Comments

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve the release of the draft 2004 Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the public review and comment process.

SUMMARY:

The California Environmental Quality Act requires SCAG to prepare and circulate an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan. The EIR must identify the probable significant environmental effects of implementing the projects, programs, and policies included in the Plan. It is important to note that the baseline for determining *significance* in CEQA is current conditions. Furthermore, the EIR must evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the Plan that reduce environmental effects and must also include mitigation measures designed to minimize significant effects. The 2004 RTP Program EIR will fulfill these requirements and will provide a regional-scale, programmatic, environmental planning tool that will offer useful analysis for subsequent, site-specific analysis, and will ultimately help the Region minimize adverse environmental effects. It will also provide a framework for updating various chapters of the Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide.

The Energy and Environment Committee is scheduled to approve the release of the Draft 2004 RTP Program EIR on December 4, 2003. A 45-day public comment period is scheduled to begin in mid-December, with the public comment period ending 45 days after circulation of the Draft. A joint RTP/EIR public hearing will be held during the public comment period at SCAG in mid-January, 2004.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Development, production, and release of the Draft Program EIR was programmed into the FY 2003/2004 OWP (WBS Element 04-020). Thus, approval of the Release of the Draft Program EIR for public review and comments is expected to have no additional fiscal impact on SCAG.