Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy and Program Environmental Impact Report

The formal Public Comment period for the Draft 2012-2035 RTP/SCS ended on February 14, 2012 and over 160 separate communications adding up to about 1,600 separate comments were received. The Regional Council and Policy Committees held a joint workshop on February 21 to review comments received. The focus of the discussion at the workshop was on the mitigation measures included in the draft document and how they might be applied for local projects. Staff described a series of revisions and clarifications that will more clearly establish that local project mitigation is intended as a source of information and examples rather than mandated activities for projects. Staff is preparing responses to comments and making appropriate revisions to the Final 2012 RTP/SCS and PEIR.

Staff will also be completing a final model run reflecting the most up to date project information and socio-economic data since the draft was released. All the comments and staff responses will be posted on the SCAG website in advance of the Special Joint Meeting of the Regional Council and Policy Committees on March 21, 2012.

I have continued to meet with editorial boards, subregional councils of governments and stakeholder partners across the region to describe the key program elements of the Draft 2012-2035 RTP/SCS and will continue to do so until the April 4 Regional Council meeting.

Compass Blueprint Demonstration Projects

The Demonstration Projects continue to be a proven mechanism for supporting regional goals by funding innovative planning studies at the local level. In October 2010, SCAG received applications from 51 jurisdictions, including local cities and counties as well as non-profits and transportation agencies. The proposals were reviewed and ranked, and SCAG was able to initiate the highest ranked 21 projects in spring 2011. These projects will be completed at the end of the fiscal year in June 2012. Additional funding became available in fall of last year, and I am pleased to announce that procurement is currently underway for an additional 27 projects. Total SCAG Fiscal Year 2011-2012 and Fiscal Year 2012-2013 funding for these projects is expected to be approximately $3.5 million.

Toolbox Tuesdays 2012

In February SCAG kicked off its 2012 Toolbox Tuesdays Series, free training for local planners, with a three-hour session on modern Traffic Roundabouts. Thirty local transportation and municipal planners learned about the safety and congestion management benefits of properly engineered traffic roundabouts. Case studies included the recently implemented Vista Boulevard Roundabouts in Long Beach, a planned roundabout in Lancaster, and a high-speed suburban roundabout corridor in Northern California. Presentation materials are available for download at www.compassblueprint.org/toolbox/trainings/online. The 2012 Toolbox Tuesdays sessions will continue to be available via videoconference at SCAG regional partner offices. On March 27 SCAG will host a training session on the nuts and bolts of implementing Complete Streets Policies.

2012 SCAG Scholarship Program

Applications are still being accepted for the 2012 SCAG Scholarship Program. The SCAG Scholarship, in its third year, is designed to provide seven high school and community college students a scholarship award of $2,000 each and a two-week externship at a local government agency. Recipients will also have an opportunity to meet with their local government representatives and practicing planners to discuss the importance of urban planning and a future career in public service. A total of seven students (one student each from Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties, and two from Los Angeles County) will be recommended for the scholarship award to the Regional Council. Scholarship information has been sent to all of the high schools and community colleges in the SCAG region. Applications for the SCAG Scholarship Program must be postmarked by March 9, 2012.