



Southern California Association of Governments
900 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1700, Los Angeles, California 90017
March 5, 2020

To: Community
Economic & Human Development Committee (CEHD)
Energy & Environment Committee (EEC)
Transportation Committee (TC)
Regional Council (RC)
From: Naresh Amatya, Manager of Transportation Planning and
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Subject: Overview of Draft Connect SoCal Comments and Revision
Approach

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
APPROVAL

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

For information and discussion only.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This item supports the following Strategic Plan Goal 2: Advance Southern California's policy interests and planning priorities through regional, statewide, and national engagement and advocacy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the comments received on the Draft Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy ("RTP/SCS," "Connect SoCal" or "Plan") and receive input on staff's intended approach for responding to comments and preparing revisions for finalizing Connect SoCal.

BACKGROUND:

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura, SCAG is required by state and federal statutes to prepare and update a long range (20 year minimum) Regional Transportation Plan that provides for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities that will function as an intermodal transportation network for the SCAG metropolitan planning area. Pursuant to the federal Clean Air Act, Connect SoCal is required to meet all federal transportation conformity requirements, including regional emissions analysis, financial constraint, timely implementation of transportation control measures, and interagency consultation and public involvement (42 U.S.C. §7401 et seq.).

The passage of California Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) in 2008 requires that an MPO prepare and adopt a

OUR MISSION

To foster innovative regional solutions that improve the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive collaboration, visionary planning, regional advocacy, information sharing, and promoting best practices.

OUR VISION

Southern California's Catalyst for a Brighter Future

OUR CORE VALUES

Be Open | Lead by Example | Make an Impact | Be Courageous

Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that sets forth a forecasted regional development pattern which, when integrated with the transportation network, measures, and policies, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from automobiles and light duty trucks (Govt. Code §65080(b)(2)(B)). The SCS outlines certain growth strategies that provide for more integrated land use and transportation planning, and maximize transportation investments. The SCS is intended to provide a regional land use policy framework that local governments may consider and build upon. The development of the RTP/SCS is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Therefore, SCAG also prepares a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) that evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the Connect SoCal.

Through a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process with its stakeholders, SCAG developed the Draft Connect SoCal Plan, which meets state and federal requirements and lays out a collective vision for improving the region's mobility, economy, and sustainability.

SCAG released the Draft Connect SoCal for over the required 60-day public comment period that began on November 14, 2019 and ended on January 24, 2020. The public review and comment period completes more than three years of dialogue and consultation on this planning effort. During the public review and comment period, SCAG conducted a large-scale outreach campaign throughout the six-county region to educate and solicit feedback on the Plan. Throughout the public comment period, SCAG held 21 elected official briefings (which were also open to the public), one tele-town hall, one webinar, and three public hearings which were video-conferenced simultaneously to the five regional offices to make them more accessible to residents throughout the region. All of the materials for the briefings, public hearings, and workshops were posted on the Connect SoCal website. During our outreach, many expressed their support for Connect SoCal and offered feedback on how it could be further improved.

SCAG encouraged the public to comment on the Plan at the aforementioned outreach events and through the online commenting form, regular mail, and email. SCAG received 107 separate communications (both oral and written) containing over 1,800 comments on the Draft Connect SoCal. A total of 81 comments were received from agencies/organizations and 26 were received from individuals. A summary list of commenters is attached to this report (Attachment 1).

Based on staff's review, all elements of the Draft Connect SoCal received supportive comments with the majority of comments that sought further clarification. At a summary level, comments can be combined into 16 major categories. Staff seeks to inform the Regional Council and Policy Committee members and receive input on the intended approach for responding to comments and preparing revisions. The major categories of Connect SoCal comments and requests for clarification, with a proposed approach described, are as follows.

1. Active Transportation

Areas Seeking Clarification - Many commenters, including advocacy and county transportation commissions, were supportive of the importance the Draft Connect SoCal places on active transportation, e-scooters and bikeshare. Many encouraged the need for a stronger approach to the implementation of Complete Streets in the region. While many comments were supportive of the increase in active transportation funds, there were many on the need to further increase the amount of funding allocated to regions for active transportation projects. Additionally, comments called for the prioritization of bikeway classes by safety levels.

Proposed Approach - SCAG will strengthen language on implementation of Complete Streets in the region and prioritization of bikeway classification preference. SCAG will also continue to assist our local jurisdictions in applying for active transportation planning and implementation funds in order to increase safety and equity outcomes.

2. Aviation and Airport Ground Access

Areas Seeking Clarification - Many comments sought minor clarifications on the role of aviation within the plan as well as SCAG's role in aviation system planning. A few questions related to the aviation demand forecast process, assumptions and results. Some requested exploring additional opportunities to connect airports, particularly Ontario International Airport, with high quality transit options.

Proposed Approach - Most of the responses to comments involved clarifying the relationship as well as roles and responsibilities between SCAG, Airport Authorities, County Transportation Commissions, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and others. Some comments resulted in minor revisions, primarily to address unintended errors and provide minor clarifications. No changes to the underlying data, analysis and policies were recommended in finalizing the Aviation and Airport Ground Access element of the proposed Final Connect SoCal.

3. Emerging Technology

Areas Seeking Clarification - SCAG received numerous comments on the importance of transitioning to zero-emissions vehicles in various sectors including passenger, transit and goods movement vehicles. Other comments stated that SCAG should remain technology-neutral with regard to vehicle fuel and power technology. Additionally SCAG received comments regarding the importance of micro-mobility and other "slow-speed" modes in achieving the goals of Connect SoCal.

Proposed Approach - SCAG's policies are technology neutral with regard to supporting zero and/or near-zero emissions vehicles in order to achieve regional objectives. Regarding micro-mobility, these devices are regulated by local jurisdictions. SCAG will continue to conduct research and disseminate best practices to our member jurisdictions.

4. Environmental Justice

Areas Seeking Clarifications - Many respondents reported positive feedback on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Toolbox, General Plan Element indicators and the report's new structure, which were developed based on extensive stakeholder engagement. Other comments received were on various topics including developing EJ metrics and quantifiable targets, developing funding lists, examining park inequities, and clarification on certain maps and tables. Others requested to include additional consideration with public health and goods movement to increase collaboration with such topics.

Proposed Approach - Staff will provide clarifications and corrections where applicable in the narrative, tables, maps and charts. Suggestions related to including EJ metrics and quantifiable targets, developing funding lists, examining park inequities and more collaboration will be addressed after Connect SoCal adoption and with engagement from the Environmental Justice Working Group. Staff will continue to address these suggestions by developing an ongoing Environmental Justice Program.

5. Goods Movement

Areas Seeking Clarification - Many comments focused on electrification of the regional freight rail system, strategies to reach a zero-emission freight system, and increased funding allocation to deploy zero-emission cargo movement system(s).

Proposed Approach - SCAG recognizes that there are numerous issues to resolve in order to achieve our regional objective of a zero-emissions goods movement system. SCAG concurs that the region needs to move to cleaner modes of freight transportation and will continue to advance strategies that reduce emissions in all modes. Further evaluation regarding costs, funding, and implementation of electrification of the regional freight rail system and zero-emission cargo movement system(s) should be conducted. SCAG remains open to evaluating all technologies that will help the region to reduce emissions and associated health impacts, and achieve regional air quality goals.

6. Natural & Farm Lands Conservation

Areas Seeking Clarification - Comments were generally supportive of conservation strategies, and asked for further strengthening of conservation policies. Several comments described the need to identify further incentives and mechanisms to conserve lands to avoid growth on the urban fringe and further encourage infill development. Several comments were in support of the Regional Advance Mitigation Program (RAMP) strategy and sought more detail.

Proposed Approach - Text will be updated to clarify and reinforce conservation strategies and next steps. In the coming years, SCAG will support local entities and other stakeholders to assist in the cross-jurisdictional coordination and implementation of conservation

strategies, especially developing a Regional Greenprint data tool and exploring opportunities through partnerships to design a RAMP.

7. Passenger Rail

Areas Seeking Clarification - Many comments supported the passenger rail investments included in Connect SoCal, including the Metrolink SCORE program. A number of comments were on project updates or clarifications, including the XpressWest Project, and updates from the California High Speed Rail Authority.

Proposed Approach - Revisions to the Final Connect SoCal will reflect those updates.

8. Project List

Areas Seeking Clarification - Most comments involved requests for project listing modifications to modeled and non-modeled projects. In addition, several commenters support or oppose, or seek clarification on, individual projects.

Proposed Approach - SCAG worked closely with the six county transportation commissions (CTCs) to identify the projects included in the draft Connect SoCal, and each CTC likewise coordinated their countywide projects with local transportation agencies. Final determinations regarding projects are the responsibility of the appropriate lead agency and determined through local planning and project development processes. Minor project modifications were accepted when received from CTCs. In total, approximately 172 project listings were modified. For additional projects that are regional in nature, SCAG worked collaboratively with stakeholders to identify them. Decisions to delete, replace or modify a project should similarly undergo a coordinated process involving the affected CTC and lead agency. Substantive changes to projects may be addressed in the next update or amendment to the plan.

9. Public Health

Areas Seeking Clarification - Numerous comments encouraged more robust data collection on public health. Other comments emphasized the need to further consider impacts to low income/minority communities.

Proposed Approach - Many concerns regarding impacts to low income/minority communities are discussed in the Environmental Justice Technical Report. As part of an on-going effort, SCAG plans to improve data collection on public health. Healthy places index scores will be included as part of the Final Connect SoCal.

10. Public Participation & Consultation

Areas Seeking Clarification - Comments received expressed the need to perform more intentional engagement in traditionally underrepresented and/or underserved communities

throughout the SCAG region. Commenters also commended the use of new technologies, such as, live webinars and tele-town halls as effective tools for communication as they allow for greater access and participation from diverse audiences. There was also strong interest in continued engagement of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) pre and post development of draft Connect SoCal.

Proposed Approach - SCAG conducted a robust community engagement program after the draft Connect SoCal was released. Additional language in the Final Connect SoCal will be included to reflect those activities. For future cycles and in plan implementation activities, SCAG will continue to explore innovative ways to further engage traditionally underrepresented and/or underserved communities throughout the SCAG region.

11. Relationships between Connect SoCal and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

Areas Seeking Clarification - Comments received focused on the relationships between Connect SoCal and RHNA. Specifically, questions arose as to how the 6th Cycle RHNA has been considered in Connect SoCal, and how the Connect SoCal addressed the SB 375 requirements to identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight year projection of the regional housing need for the region pursuant to California Government Code Section 65584.

Proposed Approach - Recent state RHNA legislation has changed the relationship between RHNA and the RTP/SCS. Legislative changes in 2018 modified the nature of the regional housing need determination for the 6th cycle RHNA. The 6th Cycle RHNA regional housing need total per HCD of 1,341,827 units consists of “projected need” (504,970 units) intended to accommodate the growth of population and households during the 6th Cycle RHNA (2021-2029) as well as “existing need” (836,857 units) intended to address the latent needs of the existing population. The “projected need” portion of the 6th Cycle RHNA is derived from the Connect SoCal Growth Forecast. Specifically, the Connect SoCal Growth Forecast projects 466,958 additional households over 2021-2029 (the RHNA planning period). These 466,958 households represent occupied housing units, to which are added two adjustment factors: vacancy need (14,467 units) and replacement needs (23,545 units) to yield the 504,970 housing units reflecting “projected need” for the 6th Cycle RHNA. In addition, the Final Connect SoCal will include information identifying areas within the region sufficient to house an eight year projection of the regional housing need. Existing need is allocated consistent with Connect SoCal goals and policies. Pending availability of local housing element updates resulting from the 6th cycle of RHNA’s existing need and analysis of the market response, existing need will be evaluated for inclusion into future RTP/SCS growth forecasts. Since the intent of existing need is to provide additional housing to the current population, it does not impact population growth and as such is consistent with the Connect SoCal population growth forecast.

12. Sustainable Communities Strategy

Areas Seeking Clarification - Numerous comments were received about housing and the impact of Connect SoCal strategies on housing affordability. The comments varied from wanting to see more explicit housing related policies from SCAG to suggesting a change in the growth strategies. Other comments questioned the inclusion of any discussion on housing in Connect SoCal. Comments sought further clarity about the GHG reduction strategies, concern about the use of vehicle miles travelled as a metric, and proposals to focus on certain strategies, such as electrification, over others. One comment suggested that SCAG stall the process for one year, similar to San Diego Association of Governments, or submit an alternative planning scenario instead of an SCS to the California Air Resources Board. A few comments requested a more descriptive final growth vision. SCAG also received input from local jurisdictions requesting technical refinements to the growth vision datasets. Other comments included requests for more climate data and polices to address climate change.

Proposed Approach - The land use policies included in Connect SoCal reflect an update and refinement but general consistency with the land use policies and strategies included in the first RTP/SCS (2012). SCAG staff will better clarify the impact of strategies on development decisions and that local jurisdictions retain land use authority. Technical refinements will be made to growth vision datasets where input improves alignment with plan policies and strategies. Staff will clarify GHG reduction strategies but will not be changing the focus or emphasis of certain strategies. Additional strategies suggested for incorporation into the SCS can be considered for next cycle after additional discussion with SCAG Policy Committee Members and stakeholders.

13. Transit

Areas Seeking Clarification - Comments were specific to individual projects/ proposals, freeway High Quality Transit Areas (HQTAs), and Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation in regards to planned High Quality Transit Corridors (HQTCs).

Proposed Approach - SCAG will review and address project specific comments on a case-by-case basis. Generally, SCAG works with the county transportation commissions to identify specific transportation projects for inclusion in the RTP/SCS. Final determinations regarding transit technologies, project costs, project alignments, and project completion dates are the responsibility of the appropriate lead agency and determined through local planning and project development processes. For the 6th cycle of RHNA, SCAG is assigning a portion of housing unit need on the basis of 2045 HQTAs. These HQTAs will be consistent with those developed for Connect SoCal. Additionally, SCAG will revise the definition of HQTAs such that freeway transit corridors with no bus stops on the freeway alignment do not have a directly associated HQTA.

14. Transportation Conformity Analysis

Areas Seeking Clarification - Numerous comments recommended language on the challenge of attaining federal air quality standards be included in the Final Connect SoCal. Other comments were regarding clarifications on the transportation and emission models, conformity requirements, and overall appreciation to SCAG staff.

Proposed Approach - SCAG will include language regarding the challenges of attaining federal air quality standards and its potential implications. Clarifying language related to the transportation and emission models, conformity requirements, and other requested areas will be incorporated in the Final Connect SoCal.

15. Transportation Finance

Areas Seeking Clarification - Comments were focused on clarifying details on the financial model, implementation guidelines for new revenue sources and need for more evaluation, including assurances on distribution of funds and consideration of impacts of fees on different segments of the population.

Proposed Approach - Text clarifications will be made regarding assumptions for the financial model and guidelines for implementation of new revenue sources. SCAG agrees that additional work is needed including, but not limited to, evaluating options for implementation, accountability and approaches for addressing income and geographic (e.g., urban vs. rural) equity impacts before the mileage-based user fee (or road charge) would become effective (which is why the draft Connect SoCal does not assume revenues from this source before 2030). SCAG, in collaboration with local, regional, state and federal stakeholders, will continue to actively participate in efforts to make transportation funding more sustainable in the long-run.

16. Other

Areas Seeking Clarification - Other comments raise questions or concerns that do not fit into the above categories, such as copy editing and factual errors.

Proposed Approach - SCAG will consider revisions to the Final Connect SoCal generated by other comments on a case-by-case basis. In general, staff will consider revisions where adequate justification has been provided by the commenter.

Next Steps:

April 2, 2020

- o Joint Policy Committee will discuss proposed Final Connect SoCal and consider forwarding a recommendation for adoption by the Regional Council.
- o Energy and Environment Committee will review Final PEIR and consider forwarding a recommendation for approval by the Regional Council.

- o Regional Council will consider approving the Final PEIR and adopting the proposed Final Connect SoCal.

Early June 2020

- o CARB will review SCAG's determination that the SCS would, if implemented, achieve established GHG reduction targets.
- o FHWA and FTA in consultation with US EPA will review Connect SoCal for transportation conformity determination.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The budget for this work is primarily included in the WBS 010.0170.01 RTP Support, Development and Policy Implementation.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. List of Commenters

Draft Connect SoCal (2020 RTP/SCS) – Summary List of Comments (See Note*)

Agencies/Organizations:

- Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion
- Bolsa Chica Land Trust
- Bureau of Engineering, City of Los Angeles
- California Air Resources Board
- California Community Builders / The Two Hundred
- California Cultural Resources Preservation Alliance, Inc.
- California Department of Transportation
- California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
- California High Speed Rail Authority
- California Native Plant Society
- Californians for Electric Rail
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Demographic Research, Cal State Fullerton
- City of California City
- City of Corona
- City of Costa Mesa
- City of Huntington Beach
- City of Indio
- City of Irvine
- City of La Habra
- City of Laguna Hills
- City of Lancaster
- City of Los Angeles
- City of Los Angeles, Department of Transportation
- City of Mission Viejo
- City of Moreno Valley
- City of Ontario
- City of Oxnard
- City of Palmdale
- City of San Marino
- City of South Gate
- City of South Pasadena
- City of West Hollywood
- City of Yorba Linda
- Climate Resolve
- Diamond Bar Pomona Valley Sierra Club Task Force
- Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
- Friends of the Whittier Hills Association
- Have A Go
- Hills for Everyone
- Imperial County Transportation Commission
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
- Los Angeles County Business Federation
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Natural Lands Coalition
- Omnitrans
- Orange County Business Council
- Orange County Council of Governments
- Orange County Transportation Authority
- Public Health Alliance of Southern California
- Rail Propulsion Systems LLC
- RailPAC
- Responsible Land Use

*Reflects comments received and logged as of 02/19/2020 and may not be complete. Provided for informational purposes at this time. Commenters wishing to confirm receipt of any comment not shown may contact SCAG staff.

Draft Connect SoCal (2020 RTP/SCS) – Summary List of Comments (See Note*)

Agencies/Organizations (continued):

- Retro Bicycle corp.
- Right of Say
- Riverside County Transportation Commission
- Ron Milam Consulting
- Safe Routes Partnership
- San Bernardino Community College
- San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
- Save Hobo Aliso Task Force
- Save The Rivera
- Service Employees International Union - United Service Workers West
- Sierra Club Los Angeles Chapter
- Sierra Club Moreno Valley Group
- SoCalGas
- South Bay Cities Council of Governments
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Southern California Edison
- Southern California Leadership Council
- Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA)
- Transportation Now of San Geronio Pass
- Transportation Corridor Agencies
- UNITE HERE Local 11
- United State Environmental Protection Agency
- Ventura County Air Pollution Control District
- Ventura County Planning Division
- Ventura County Transportation Commission
- Walk Bike Long Beach
- Westwood South of Santa Monica Blvd Homeowner's Association

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Draft Connect SoCal (2020 RTP/SCS) – Summary List of Comments (See Note*)

Contacts with No Affiliation:

- Anonymous Submitter
- Adam Aitoumeziane
- Alan
- Albert Perdon
- Alexander Yessayantz
- Andrew Yoon
- Anna Jaiswal
- Don Salveson
- Garreth Wybenga
- Henry Fung
- Holly Osborne
- Ivan Garcia
- Jordan Sisson
- Mark Westerdale
- Marven Norman
- Meghan Kwast
- Michael Garlan
- Michael Rotcher
- Mitchel Kahn
- Pete Freeman
- Pilar Reynaldo
- Richard Sandbrook
- Stephanie Johnson and Ghassan Roumani
- Steven Shepherd
- T.L. Brink
- Tamara Zavinski

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