

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	2/28/12
SUBJECT:	Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Planning Direction
AGENDA ITEM:	6
STAFF CONTACT:	Daniel Wayne

SUMMARY:

Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) requires that each metropolitan planning organization (MPO) prepare a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) outlining how the region might reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from automobiles and light trucks. The precise content of an SCS is up to each region to decide; several alternative approaches are provided.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board receive a presentation regarding the region's SCS planning process and select a course of action for staff to pursue.

DISCUSSION:

By now most are at least familiar with SB 375. A general overview is provided (Attachment A). To be clear, there's only one explicit local requirement of the law – each MPO must add an SCS to their regional transportation plan (RTP). The RTP is the core planning document used for the prioritization and programming of all regional transportation improvements. Without an approved RTP, the region would not be eligible for state and federal transportation funds.

The precise content of an SCS is up to each region to decide, but should show how a region is able (or unable as the case may be) to reduce GHG from automobiles and light trucks. RTPA efforts have thus far focused on enhanced technical capabilities, including development of regional geographic information systems (GIS) data and travel demand modeling. Completing the SCS plan will require more extensive interaction with local agency staff and buy-off by each governing council/board.

As previously approved by the board, the agency's SCS work plan is comprised of three phases: a first-cut GIS-based assessment; a 'beta' or trial version, and; a final SCS/RTP (see Attachment B: SCS Work Flow). Should the board wish to modify or amend the agencies SCS work plan in any way, now would be an appropriate time to do so. Staff is aiming for the broadest possible consensus on the board's philosophical approach to moving the SCS process forward – prior to the transition from technical work tasks to SCS plan development. The following range of alternative SCS planning approaches is provided to facilitate board discussion:

Alternative	Intent/Objective	Next steps	Pros/Cons
Non-Compliance	Disregard SCS planning requirement	- Update RTP w/out SCS chapter - Decline SCS-related planning grants	- Non-compliant RTP - RTPA no longer eligible for state and federal funding - Potential for legal challenges to transportation improvements and new development
Minimum Compliance	- Local planning agencies assume the lead on SCS and all land use policies within their four respective areas - Do only what is needed to remain marginally eligible for transportation funding	- RTPA submits request to local agencies for necessary SCS inputs, and assumptions - Local agencies conduct their own planning and public involvement processes - RTPA compiles and models emission impacts - RTPA pursues grants only at the request of local agencies	- Eliminates perception that RTPA seeks control of local land use - Places additional planning burden on local agencies - Inefficient use of resources due to four parallel planning processes - RTPA abrogates its responsibility to coordinate member agencies - RTPA does not control the process, but assumes any risk related to RTP approval - Reduced discretionary funding - Increased legal exposure
Middle Ground	- Strive to negotiate a balance between state requirements and local realities - RTPA maintains lead role and facilitates the process, but local agencies have final say and approval	- Continue with RTPA board's prior approved approach - Collaborate with partner agencies to determine best practices and model outcomes - Pursue grants based on shared regional and local agency needs	- Gain collateral benefits, such as GIS data and new travel demand model - Balances needs on cross-jurisdictional transportation facilities - Provides some protection from litigation against transportation improvements and new development impacts - Increased discretionary funding
Full Compliance	- Strongly promote land use policies that meet state goals - Seek but not require local agency buy-in	Pursue an ambitious GHG emission target	- Necessary measures and strategies would be controversial - No obvious advantage over the 'middle ground' - Would likely set the region up for failure

The extremes (i.e. non-compliance and full compliance) are neither practical nor desirable. Work accomplished to date reflects the 'middle ground' option, but staff could dial back the effort toward 'minimal compliance' should the board so direct. Because the RTPA relies heavily upon discretionary funds to complete capacity increasing projects (the Dana to Downtown project and I-5 expansion are recent examples), this direction should be weighed carefully. Other options or variations on the above may be possible.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The three cities and the county are contributing to the planning process. The California Air Resources Board is charged with reviewing the region's SCS to ensure the validity of modeling inputs and assumptions.

FINANCING:

The SCS planning effort, including development of GIS data, technical tools, and a new travel demand model, is being funded through Proposition 84 grants, including a \$400,000 Modeling Enhancements and a \$300,000 Sustainable Communities grant. In December the board authorized a second Proposition 84 Sustainable Communities grant application in the amount of \$500,000. Proposition 84 grants can only be used for planning and do not require a local match.

In addition, the board approved Planning, Programming & Monitoring (PPM) funding in the FY 11/12 OWP (\$110,000) and FY 12/13 OWP (\$50,000) to reimburse partner agencies for staff time and expenses associated with development of local SCS assumptions and inputs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel S. Little', written over a horizontal line.

Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments: SB 375 Background
SCS Work Flow Chart

Attachment A: SB 375 Background

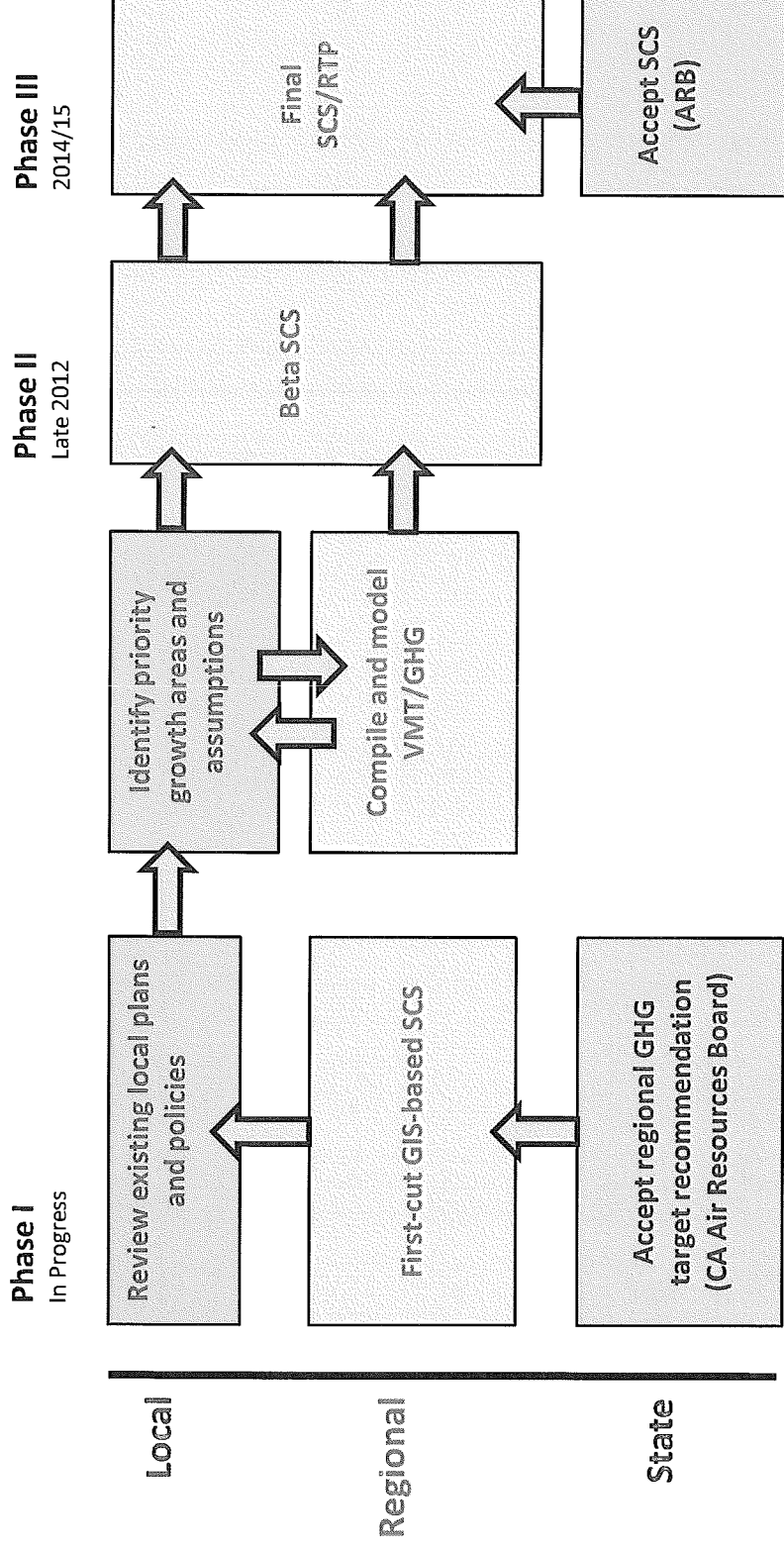
Pursuant to SB 375, also known as The Sustainable Communities & Climate Protection Act of 2008, all California metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) must include a 'sustainable communities strategy' (SCS) chapter when updating their regional transportation plan (RTP). In Shasta County, the agency's RTP must be updated for 2015.

The purpose of an SCS is to integrate transportation and land use components in a manner that reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and corresponding greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Some regions, mostly in the largest metropolitan areas, have been optimistic in their ability to reduce VMT/GHG emissions, relying upon congestion pricing, parking policies, high density housing, increased public transit investment, and other aggressive strategies. Smaller regions, including Shasta County, have been more realistic and pragmatic in their approach and assumptions. A target of 0% change in per capita GHG emissions between the 2005 baseline year and 2020 was offered by Shasta County and subsequently accepted by the CARB.

If, as a result of the planning and modeling process, the region concludes that it is not feasible to meet the greenhouse gas emission target, an 'alternative planning scenario' (APS) is prepared. An APS explains how the region would meet the target if not constrained by funding or other specific limitations. Since the APS does not become part of the RTP, it is not clear how the state will handle or respond to a region with an APS.

From a local agency perspective, the law is explicit in that nothing in an SCS shall be interpreted as superseding the land use authority exercised by cities and counties, nor shall it require city or county land use policies and regulations, including the general plan, to be consistent with the SCS.

Attachment B: Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Work Flow



Phase I: First-cut GIS-based – As directed by the board, staff acquired grant funding and has partnered with local agencies in the development of a data-driven assessment of where transportation and land use strategies would likely be successful.

Phase II: Beta SCS – The board earmarked funding in the agency's overall work program (OWP) to assist local agencies in the identification of priority growth areas and realistic growth and development assumptions therein. These inputs will be compiled and run through the agency's travel demand model to determine the impact on VMT and GHG emissions. Several iterations of local agency inputs may be required. If accepted by the agency and its partners, the beta-SCS would serve as a test run – an opportunity to try out the SCS under real-world conditions for up to two years without any binding commitment.

Phase III: Final SCS/RTP – Based on lessons learned and feedback received from local agencies, the beta-SCS will be revised and incorporated into the RTP for final adoption in 2015.



Citizens for Smart Growth Shasta County
2701 Old Eureka Way Suite 2A
www.ShastaSmartGrowth.org

February 27, 2012

Supervisor Leonard Moty
RTPA Chair
1855 Placer Street
Redding, Ca 96001

Dear Supervisor Moty:

Citizens for Smart Growth wishes to speak to Item #6 and Item #9 for the RTPA Board meeting for February 28, 2012.

#6: We urge the RTPA Board of Directors to empower the Shasta County RTPA to continue adding the sustainable community's strategy, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks, to its Regional Transportation Plan. We support the "Middle Ground" approach which allows RTPA to maintain the lead role of facilitating the process; with the local agencies having the final approval.

#9: We urge the Board to support the Independent RTPA Transition Plan with the same employees with no compensation changes. This will allow the RTPA employees to continue to fully engage the many tasks it needs to perform with its well qualified employees.

Best regards,

Ron Reece MD
Co-Founder

CC: Daniel S. Little
Executive Director