STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE:	**June 28, 2021**
SUBJECT:	**Approve Preliminary Strategies for the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy**
AGENDA ITEM:	**8**
STAFF CONTACT:	**Daniel Wayne, Senior Transportation Planner**

SUMMARY:

Every four years the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) must be updated to be eligible for state and federal transportation funding. The RTP must include a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) showing how regional development patterns and transportation projects, policies, programs, and services work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from passenger cars and light trucks. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has given the Shasta Region a target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 4% between 2005 and 2035. The next RTP/SCS update is due October 2022. Input is needed on potential new greenhouse gas reduction strategies.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors approve preliminary strategies for the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS).

DISCUSSION:

Background – The Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) is an integral component of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). It is a coordinated approach to growth and development that, when combined with regional transportation projects, policies, programs, and services, improves mobility while minimizing per capita greenhouse gas emissions from passenger cars and light trucks. Specifically, an SCS includes the following elements:

- Identifies the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region;
- Identifies areas sufficient to house the region's population over the 20-year RTP planning horizon, including an 8-year projection of low-income households;
- Gathers and considers the best practically available scientific information regarding resource areas and farmland in the region;
- Identifies a transportation network and accompanying policies, programs, and services that meets the mobility needs of the region; and
- Uses travel demand modeling, emissions modeling, and other techniques to demonstrate that the region's SCS will, if fully implemented, achieve the CARB-assigned GHG emission reduction target for the year 2035.

As required by state law, CARB has assigned greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for all of the state's metropolitan regions. The region's response, in the form of an SCS, is a bottom-up approach. Local elected

officials, as members of the SRTA Board of Directors, are the key decision-makers in the development and implementation of the SCS. In addition, the SCS must be consistent with city and county general plans.

Although achieving the CARB-assigned per capita greenhouse gas emissions receives most of the attention, SCS are also intended to support greater regional livability, economic development, social equity, access to affordable housing, sustainability, and climate resiliency.

All urban regional agencies in California, including SRTA, have successfully developed SCSs that meet their region-specific target, and have passed CARB's technical validation process. If a region cannot meet it's target, an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) may be used, which outlines what the region would do if not constrained by available funding or other limitations. To date, no regions have chosen an APS.

2018 RTP/SCS – The current 2018 RTP/SCS for the Shasta Region successfully demonstrated that the region's greenhouse gas emission reduction target could be met if the SCS strategies shown in Attachment A are fully implemented. Also noted in the table are actual actions and investments since the 2018 RTP/SCS was adopted, as well as staff recommendations for maintaining or modifying existing strategies.

2022 RTP/SCS – Looking forward to the upcoming RTP/SCS 2022 update, there are several challenges:

- New regional targets applicable to the 2022 RTP/SCS are now much more ambitious than before. The Shasta Region's target for per capita greenhouse gas emission reductions from 2005 to 2035 has gone from holding constant (0% change) to a 4% reduction. The 2018 RTP/SCS exceeded the target by demonstrating a potential reduction of 1.16% in per capita reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; however, this came with a 6.3% increase in per capita vehicle mile traveled, illustrating the region's heavy reliance on assumptions for increased zero-emission vehicles.
- Low-hanging strategies have already been used in the SCS, including aggressive modeling assumptions for their level of implementation. 'Turning up' existing strategies further than what has already been done will require significant changes to local-regional policy and investment strategies.
- CARB now requires regions to report on progress toward implementing their strategies and associated performance gains. Regions must show how they are actually following through in terms of dollars invested and projects delivered, and if such efforts are yielding the performance gains anticipated by the regions' respective adopted SCS. Both existing and future strategies will require documentation of regional implementation efforts.
- Because regional transportation funding is insufficient compared to regional transportation needs, such funds must be used as local match to leverage additional state investments. Unfortunately, state funding programs have been slow to align with state policy priorities – particularly for non-planning construction funding. And, unlike many other CA regions, SRTA has no self-help tax measure, which provides additional flexible funding and potential for leveraging discretionary grants. This means that the realization of regional greenhouse gas emission reduction targets is largely outside of the region's capacity without state financial support.

Next Steps – This agenda item is to determine which SCS strategies should be initially tested during the 2022 RTP/SCS planning process, and to provide partner agencies and the public an opportunity to provide input. Based on ensuing modeling results, consultation with regional partners, and future direction from the SRTA Board of Directors, a final set of strategies and modeling assumptions will be presented for approval and inclusion in the final RTP/SCS.

A handful of SCS strategies have been identified to simplify the dozens of potential possibilities, and to reinforce the need for packaged sets of strategies that work together to affect travel behavior. Within each category, staff will experiment with different transportation projects, policies, programs, services, and land use assumptions. Final staff recommendations will take into consideration public and local agency buy-in, benefit/cost ratio, potential secondary benefits, and other such factors. The following is not a comprehensive list; rather, it is based on regional suitability and the potential to yield multiple community benefits. For this initial round, there is some overlap among strategies. This will be sorted out when the final strategy recommendations are presented for approval. Finally, it should be noted that these are 20-year strategies that may not be ready for near-term implementation, but could be implemented incrementally over time or closer to the 2035 target year.

Table 1: Preliminary 2022 RTP/SCS Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Strategies

Preliminary Strategy #1 **Implement 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan**	• Reallocate transit to provide high-quality service on key corridors and between activity centers, combined with more flexible on-demand transit in lower demand areas/days/times. Transit coverage may be incrementally expanded in response to increased public demand and documented unmet transit needs. • Use of context-appropriate 'flexible fleets' (see #3 below) in and surrounding accessible activity centers (see #4 below).
Preliminary Strategy #2 **Implement GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan**	• Provide technical and financial support to local agencies to build a direct, contiguous, and low-stress network of active transportation trunk lines with local feeders. • Provide or support complementary programs, amenities, and services, such as marketing and education, secure bicycle parking, bikeshare, and other similar activities.
Preliminary Strategy #3 **Flexible Fleets**	• Encourage and support more nimble, responsive, and context sensitive short-trip mobility options within and surrounding 'accessible activity centers' (see #4 below). Options may include: expanded ShastaConnect on-demand transit, car sharing, electric scooter share, electric bike share, electric shuttle service (e.g., Redding's DASH shuttle), and neighborhood electric vehicles (i.e., privately-owned low-speed plug-in electric vehicles). • Provide programmatic support since many of these services are new and unfamiliar to the region. • May include support for alternative fuel/charging infrastructure and pilot programs that help increase the share of zero-emission conventional automobiles in the region's overall fleet mix.
Preliminary Strategy #4 **Zero-emission vehicles**	• Accellerate public adoption of zero-emission vehicles by facilitating hydrogen fueling and electric charging stations across the region, including in rural towns, urban activity centers, and intra/inter-regional corridors. • May be included if a dedicated regional funding source can be identified; otherwise, incorporate into other strategies.

Preliminary Strategy #5 **Support the development of 'accessible activity centers'**	• An evolution of 'strategic growth areas' found in the current RTP/SCS, an 'accessible activity center' is an a large-draw destination easily accessed without an automobile, and where a variety of trip purposes may be accomplished per visit. Once in an activity center, individuals have access to high-frequency, fixed-route transit between the region's multiple activity centers in order to expand available destinations. • Accessible activity centers support the use of 'flexible fleets' (see #3 above) and feature secure, end-of-trip bicycle parking facilities that are accessible by high-quality infrastructure as described in the GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan (see #2 above). • Accessible activity centers support automobile travel but focus on consolidated parking served by last-mile mobility options in order to maintain a more human-scale environment.
Preliminary Strategy #6 **Rural mobility**	• Includes community-specific strategies aimied at reducing one of the region's largest sources of vehicle miles and emissions: longer distance rural-to-urban trips for work, regional shopping, schools, and escort trips (e.g., parent driven trips due to greater automobile dependency). • Supports county of Shasta's efforts toward more self-contained rural town centers in order to reduce average vehicle trip lengths. • May include various travel demand management and commute trip reduction strategies. • May include zero-emission fueling/charging infrastructure.
Preliminary Strategy #7 **Managed corridors**	• Includes longer-term strategies for increasing person throughput (vs. vehicle throughput), particularly on congested arterial corridors where widening may not be feasible due to surrounding land-use. • Utilizes current and emerging technologies to provide user-responsive and predictive traffic management. • May include managed lanes that favor transit, ridesharing, and low- or no-emission vehicles. • May include zero-emission fueling/charging infrastructure.
Preliminary Strategy #8 **Vehicle Miles Traveled Mitigation Bank**	• Establish regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) credit pool from which developers may purchase credits to mitigate for VMT generated by their projects. • May include impact fee reduction on scales commensurate with project VMT.
Preliminary Strategy #9 **Targeted disadvantaged mobility**	• Because access to automobiles is generally lower in disadvantaged communities, providing custom-tailored solutions in these areas may provide a higher benefit-to-cost ratio than similar projects in other locations, while also helping to address inequities. • Specific strategies will be determined based on localized needs, but may include reduced or free fares for low-income transit riders, guaranteed ride home program, and/or other strategies.
Preliminary Strategy #10 **Commute Trip Reduction Programs**	• Includes a variety of incentives, programs, and resources that help employees reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. • May include rideshare matching, parking cash out and transit allowances, remote work, guaranteed ride home, and support for active transportation.

To allow needed flexibility, it is recommended that the board of directors approve a broad range of strategies for preliminary evaluation and testing. It is further recommended that the board of directors identify priority selection criteria that staff may use when presenting final recommendations. For example, the board of directors may request that SCS strategies be evaluated and compared based on:

- Potential for greenhouse gas emission reductions per dollar invested;
- Potential to attract grant funding;
- Documentation of local agency and community stakeholder support;
- Direct benefits to disadvantaged communities;
- reduced traffic-related injuries and fatalities;
- Opportunity for secondary benefits; and/or
- Other criteria at the discretion of the board of directors.

Board members may also wish to share:

- Specific projects, policies, or programs personally experienced or observed in other communities that might be transferrable to the Shasta Region, such as active transportation facilities in the city of Davis or the preservation of essential open space and agricultural lands through the Butte County Regional Conservation Plan.
- Specific local challenges and needs that might benefit from SCS strategies, such as homelessness, urban revitalization, or wildfire threat.

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may direct staff to evaluate additional, modified, or alternate SCS strategies. Alternatively, the board of directors may choose to submit an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) stating what the region would do if fiscal and/or other specific obstacles were removed. This option is not recommended as it may make it more difficult for the region and local agencies to compete for discretionary grant funds required for high-priority transportation infrastructure improvements, including I-5 improvements. To date, since no other region has chosen an APS, there is no real-world precedent for what the implications would be.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The RTP/SCS technical methodology is reviewed and accepted by CARB. Participation from Caltrans and local agency partners is needed for implementation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approving preliminary strategies for the 2022 RTP/SCS has no direct fiscal impact to the agency; however, demonstrating the ability to achieve region's greenhouse gas emission reduction target helps to ensure continued local and regional competitiveness for various state discretionary fund sources.

Dan Little

Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments: Review of Previously Adopted 2018 SCS Strategies

Attachment A: Review of <u>Previously Adopted</u> 2018 SCS Strategies

Previously Adopted 2018 SCS Strategies & Modeling Inputs	Actual Actions and Investments Since Adoption of 2018 SCS	Recommendations for Inclusion in 2022 SCS
Population and employment shift to Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) (2015, 2018) • SGAs are assumed to capture a greater than projected market rate share of the region's future population and employment (total of +2,653 residents and +1,064 jobs among all SGAs) as a result of coordinated local/regional/private sector actions, policies, and investment.	• SRTA provided technical and financial assistance for three Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities (AHSC) grant applications: o Redding SGA Market Square - successful o Redding SGA Block 7 – successful o Shasta Lake Boomtown – not successful, but reapplying	• Continue with adjustments as needed to growth and development forecasts and assumptions.
Increased residential densities in SGAs (2015, 2018) • An increase in multi-family housing over the projected market rate was assumed (total of +1,280 units among all SGAs) as a result of coordinated local policies, regional infill and redevelopment incentives, and affordable housing grant funding opportunities.		
Increased automobile operating costs (2015, 2018) • Automobile operating costs increase from $0.15/mile (2005 baseline) to $0.29/mile (2035 projected) as a result of no local or regional actions (relies on market forces and state/federal policies). *Note: current year auto operating costs per mile will be updated as part of the new ShastaSIM travel demand model.*	• SRTA provided support toward city of Redding's parking study, which includes plans for pay parking in the downtown central business district.	• Carryover and consider adding local/regional pricing strategies.
Increased public transportation service (2015, updated 2018) • Frequency increased on select routes for 2020 and more extensively for 2035. Headways reduced from 60 min to 30 min for most routes, resulting in an +104 daily service hours and +3,098 daily transit boardings. • Assumed implementation of on-demand transit in certain areas (in and around SGAs and large activity centers) and at certain times (AM/PM commute, extended service hours, Sunday service).	• Developed and implemented new ShastaConnect On-Demand Transit to meet reoccurring unmet transit needs. This service, funded through the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, is a free fare service. • SRTA completed the 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan, which provides strategies for improving and expanding transit services, including alternatives to low-performing conventional fixed-route services. • Salmon Runner intercity bus service is anticipated to begin service in late 2021.	• Carryover with focus on 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan implementation.

Accelerated implementation of active transportation investment in SGAs. • Assumes accelerated implementation, with a focus on transformational projects (i.e., trunk lines, cycle tracks) located in SGAs and connecting to activity centers. • Subsidized membership in the private/non-profit bike depot and bike sharing program.	• SRTA completed the GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP). • SRTA received two grants to work with local agencies to develop ATP applications for transformational projects consistent with the GoShasta Regional ATP. SRTA was instrumental in assisting local jurisdictions in securing several Active Transportation Program construction grants with the help of these planning grant funds.	• Carryover with a focus on GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan implementation.
Accelerated adoption of plug-in electric vehicles through charging infrastructure development (2018) • Market penetration of plug-in electric vehicles assumed to increase by 10% over projected market rate as a result of coordinated state, regional, and local initiatives combined with private sector investment.	• Programmed SB1 formula planning funds for Hydrogen fuel infrastructure plan.	• Carryover and explore potential dedicated regional fund source.