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NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO: Interested Agencies, Organizations and Individuals

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report for Connect SoCal (2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy)

DATE: January 23, 2019

LEAD AGENCY: Southern California Association of Governments
900 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 1700
Los Angeles, California 90017

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), as Lead Agency, is publishing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for Connect SoCal (also referred to herein as “2020 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy” or “2020 RTP/SCS” or “Plan”). SCAG is preparing Connect SoCal pursuant to federal and state metropolitan planning and air quality requirements including the federal surface transportation reauthorization, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the Transportation Conformity in the Air Quality Attainment Plan per 40 CFR Part 51 and 40 CFR Part 93, and Section 65080 et seq., of Chapter 2.5 of the California Government Code, The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Senate Bill 32), The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (Senate Bill 375), California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32), and corresponding regulations.

Two (2) Scoping meetings for the Plan, each providing the same information, will be held at SCAG’s Main office – Room Policy Committee A (see address above) on **Wednesday, February 13, 2019 from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM and 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM**. Webcasting and videoconferencing will be available from SCAG’s regional offices (see last page for addresses).

To ensure full consideration of environmental issues with potential significant impacts in the Draft PEIR, **all comments must be received within thirty (30) days of the start of the 30-day public comment period, which begins January 23, 2019 and ends February 22, 2019**. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive notices regarding the PEIR for the Plan, or have any questions or need additional information, please contact the person identified below.

Please send your response to Roland Ok, Senior Regional Planner, either electronically to: 2020PEIR@scag.ca.gov, via the web at: <https://connectsocial.org>; or at the mailing address shown above. Please include a return address and the name of a contact person in your agency/organization.

Introduction

CEQA and its implementing regulations (*State CEQA Guidelines*) require SCAG as the Lead Agency to prepare an EIR for any discretionary government action, including programs and plans that may cause significant environmental effects. Connect SoCal is a regional planning document updated every four years (see further discussion below) and will update the 2016 RTP/SCS. Given the regional level of analysis provided in a RTP/SCS, a Program EIR (PEIR) is the appropriate CEQA document. A PEIR is a “first-tier” CEQA document designed to consider “broad policy alternatives and program wide mitigation measures” (*State CEQA Guidelines* Sec. 15168). The programmatic environmental analysis for the Connect SoCal PEIR will evaluate potential environmental effects consisting of direct and indirect effects, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts resulting from the Plan, and will include mitigation measures to offset any identified potentially significant adverse environmental effects. As a first-tier document, the PEIR may serve as a foundation for subsequent, site-specific environmental review documents (including Addendums, Supplemental EIRs, Subsequent EIRs) for individual transportation and development projects in the region (*State CEQA Guidelines* Sec. 15385).

This NOP is intended to alert responsible agencies, interested agencies, organizations, and individuals of the preparation of the PEIR. Comments regarding the scope of the PEIR received during the 30-day NOP review period will be used to refine the scope and content of the PEIR, as appropriate.

PROJECT LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

Project Location

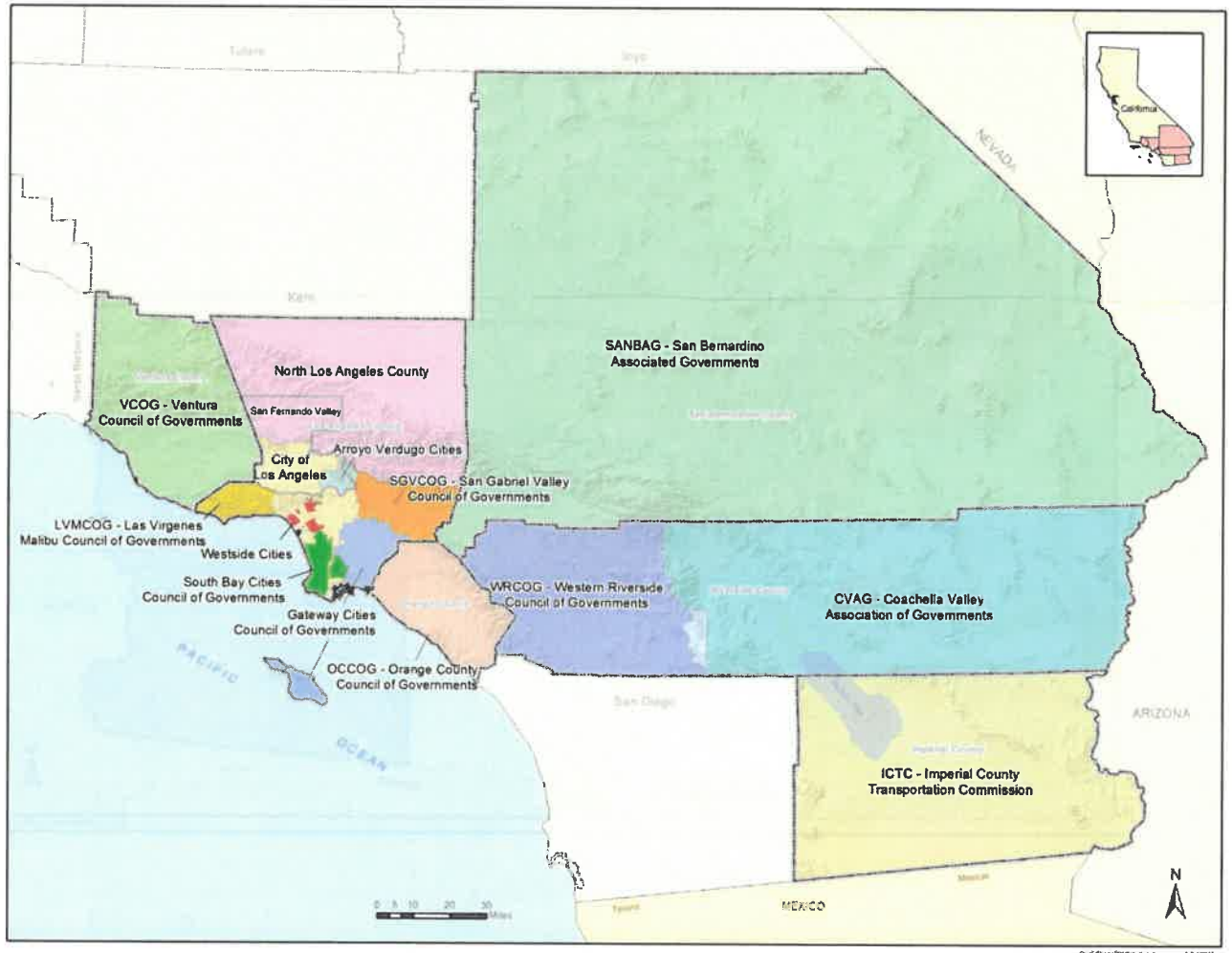
SCAG is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (“MPO”) under Title 23, United States Code (U.S.C.) 134(d)(1). The SCAG region consists of six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura), and 191 cities (Figure 1, *SCAG Region*). To the north of the SCAG region are the counties of Kern and Inyo; to the east is State of Nevada and State of Arizona; to the south is the county of San Diego; and to the northwest is the Pacific Ocean. The SCAG region also consists of 15 subregional entities that serve as partners in the regional planning process. (Figure 2, *SCAG Subregions*).

SCAG is one of 18 MPOs in the State of California. The total area of the SCAG region is approximately 38,000 square miles. The region includes the county with the largest land area in the nation, San Bernardino County, as well as the county with the highest population in the nation, Los Angeles County. The SCAG region is home to approximately 20 million people, or 49 percent of California’s population, representing the largest and most diverse region in the country.

Figure 1: SCAG Region



Figure 2: SCAG Subregions



SCAG Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to federal designation as a MPO, SCAG is designated under California state law as the Multicounty Designated Transportation Planning Agency and Council of Governments (COG) for the six-county region. Founded in 1965, SCAG is a Joint Powers Authority, established as a voluntary association of local governments and agencies.

SCAG serves as the regional forum for cooperative decision making by local government elected officials and its primary responsibilities in fulfillment of federal and state requirements include the development of the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS); the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP); the annual Overall Work Program; and transportation-related portions of local air quality management plans. SCAG’s other major functions include determining the regional transportation plans and programs are in conformity with state air quality plans; preparation of a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA); and intergovernmental review of regionally significant projects.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2020 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

Pursuant to federal and state planning requirements, SCAG updates and adopts a long-range regional transportation plan every four years. SCAG's last Plan was adopted in 2016 and an updated Plan is required to be adopted by April 2020.

Connect SoCal will outline the region's goals and policies for meeting current and future mobility needs, provide a foundation for transportation decisions by local, regional and state officials that are ultimately aimed at achieving a coordinated and balanced transportation system. Connect SoCal will also identify the region's transportation needs and issues, recommended actions, programs, and a list of projects to address the needs consistent with adopted regional policies and goals, and documents the financial resources needed to implement Connect SoCal. It is important to note that SCAG does not implement individual projects in the RTP, as they will be implemented by local and state jurisdictions, and other agencies. SCAG has already initiated the development of Connect SoCal and is working closely with County Transportation Commissions (CTCs) to compile a regional project list that will build upon the list identified in the 2016 RTP.

In accordance with the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, or Senate Bill (SB) 375 (Steinberg) and codified in California Government Code §65080(b)(2)(B), the Plan will include a SCS which details land use, housing and transportation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles (automobiles and light-duty trucks).

Pursuant to SB 375, SCAG's SCS is required to meet reduction targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of 8 percent per capita by 2020 and 19 percent per capita by 2035 compared to 2005 emission levels, as set by the California Air Resources Board (ARB). According to Section 65080(b)(2)(B) of the California Government Code, the SCS must:

- Identify existing land use;
- Identify areas to accommodate long-term population growth;
- Identify areas to accommodate an eight-year projection of regional housing needs;
- Identify transportation needs and the planned transportation network,
- Consider resource areas and farmland;
- Consider state housing goals and objectives;
- Set forth a forecasted growth and development pattern; and
- Comply with federal law for developing an RTP.

Additionally, if the combination of measures in the SCS would not meet the regional targets, the MPO must prepare a separate "Alternative Planning Strategy" (APS) to meet the targets.

Scenario Planning Process

As part of the planning process, SCAG is developing several transportation and land use scenarios for public consideration. These scenarios focus on transportation and land use related inputs that are modified to vary across the scenarios. These scenarios will provide the analytical technique for policy choices to be considered as the Plan is being developed, while the Plan goals, guiding policies and performance measures will underpin scenario designs.

SCAG will use scenario planning tools to illustrate the impact of distinctive policy and investment choices that will then be compared to business as usual scenario (No Project) in order for the Regional Council and Policy Committees to evaluate the merits of regional decisions for the Plan.

SCAG will seek input for scenario development through stakeholder outreach. These scenarios would then be presented to the general public in late Spring/summer of 2019 in a series of public workshops.

Bottom-up Local Growth and Land Use Input Process

A critical component to developing a successful Plan is the participation and cooperation of SCAG's local government partners and stakeholders within the SCAG region. To this end, SCAG uses a bottom-up local input process by which all local governments are informed of the planning process for Connect SoCal and have clear and adequate opportunities to provide input. Growth forecasts and land use updates for development of the Plan will be developed through this bottom-up local input process.

SCAG's Public Participation Plan and Process

Another key aspect of Plan development is public participation. To provide early and meaningful public participation in the Plan's development and decision-making processes, SCAG has developed and adopted a Public Participation Plan ("PPP").¹ The adoption of the PPP demonstrates SCAG's commitment in increasing awareness and involvement of interested persons in SCAG's governmental processes and regional transportation and land use planning. SCAG will provide information and timely public notice, ensuring full public access to key decisions, and supporting early and continuing public involvement in the development of the Plan. To this end, SCAG will continue to engage a wide range of stakeholder groups, elected officials, special interest groups, the general public, and other interested parties through a series of workshops and public meetings, as well as SCAG's policy committees, task forces, and subcommittee structure during the development of the Plan and its associated PEIR.

SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS IN THE PEIR

Environmental Factors Considered

The PEIR is a programmatic document that will analyze potential effects of the Plan on the environment. Although Connect SoCal will include some individual transportation projects, the PEIR does not specifically analyze environmental effects of any individual transportation or development project. Project-level environmental analyses will be prepared by implementing agencies on a project-by-project basis as projects proceed through the design and decision-making process.

The potential scope of environmental effects that warrant analysis in the Connect SoCal PEIR are as follows:

- Aesthetics and Views
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources and Open Space
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Resources
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Recreation

¹ Southern California Association of Governments. Public Participation Plan. Adopted September 6, 2018. <http://www.scag.ca.gov/participate/Pages/PublicParticipationPlan.aspx>

- Geology, Soils and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Transportation/Traffic
- Public Services and Utilities
- Wildfire

CEQA Streamlining

SB 375 contains CEQA incentives, or streamlining provisions, to encourage coordinated land use and transportation planning. Certain types of development projects (i.e., transit priority projects or residential/mixed use residential projects, as defined by the statute) may qualify for CEQA streamlining as long as the requisite criteria are met. Consistency will be determined by the local jurisdiction that is the lead agency for each project to be streamlined. SCAG’s primary role is to include appropriate information in the SCS, such as land use information as required by SB 375 and/or guidance to aid in interpreting land use information that will allow a jurisdiction to make a consistency determination with respect to appropriate streamlining options on a project-by- project basis.

Additionally, the PEIR will support other CEQA streamlining options that do not fall into the categories under SB 375 (i.e., SB 743, SB 226 and the State CEQA Guidelines).

Preliminary 2020 RTP/SCS Alternatives

The development of alternatives in a PEIR is focused on avoiding or reducing potentially significant impacts of the Plan while achieving most of the project objectives. It is anticipated that the PEIR will evaluate at least three potential alternatives to Plan as follows:² (1) No Project; (2) 2020 Local Input Alternative; and (3) Intensified Land Use Alternative. Each Alternative, except the No Project Alternative, will vary in terms of policies and projects including, but not limited to, variations in land use development patterns or transportation network.

SCAG has the discretion to select more than one alternative as long as they are within the range of impacts identified.

No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative is required by Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines and assumes that the Plan would not be implemented. The No Project Alternative will consider continued implementation of the goals and polices of the adopted 2016 RTP/SCS and will be based on 2016 RTP/SCS regional population, housing, and employment. The No Project Alternative includes those transportation projects that are included in the first year of the previously conforming FTIP (i.e., 2018). The growth scenario included in the No Project Alternative, and all alternatives, will include the same regional totals for population, housing and employment.

2020 Local Input Alternative

This Alternative will incorporate jurisdictional general plans and land use information to reflect the most recent growth estimates and land use development patterns in the region. This alternative would include policies and strategies included in the 2016 RTP/SCS to the extent that they have been incorporated into local jurisdictional plans. This alternative does not include additional land use strategies described in the

² It is important to note that these are preliminary alternatives and may change during the planning process.

2020 Plan that go beyond current local policy and strategies described in the intensified land use alternative, that help meet additional objectives.

Intensified Land Use Alternative

An Intensified Land Use Alternative would be based on a transportation network for Connect SoCal with aggressive land use development patterns. Land use development patterns in this alternative would build on land use strategies as described in the Plan by maximizing growth around high quality transit areas (HQTAs). Potential growth patterns associated with this alternative would optimize urban areas and suburban town centers, transit oriented development patterns (TODs), livable corridors, and neighborhood mobility areas (NMAs).

SCAG is seeking input on these preliminary alternatives through the scoping process, changes to the alternatives as a result of the scoping process could result in modifications to the number, content and scope of alternatives analyzed in the PEIR. Furthermore, the PEIR will identify alternatives that were initially considered, but rejected for reasons including infeasibility or inability of a particular alternative to meet the project objectives or reduce environmental impacts beyond that of the project.

SCOPING MEETINGS

As mentioned previously, SCAG will host two (2) Scoping meetings for the Plan, each providing the same information, at SCAG's Main office – Policy Committee A Room (see address above) on **February 13, 2019 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM and 6:30 to 8:30 PM**. For each of the two scoping meetings videoconferencing will be available at SCAG's regional offices listed below.³

SCAG Imperial County Regional Office
1503 N. Imperial Avenue, Suite 104
Imperial, CA 92243
(760) 353-7800

SCAG Riverside County Regional Office
3403 10th Street, Suite 805
Riverside, CA 92501
(951) 784-1513

SCAG Orange County Regional Office
OCTA Building
600 South Main Street, Suite 906
Orange, CA 92868
(714) 542-3687

SCAG San Bernardino County Regional Office
1170 West 3rd Street, Suite 140
San Bernardino, CA 92410
(909) 806-3556

City of Palmdale (From 3:00 to 5:00 PM Only)
Planning Department
Development Services Conference Room
38250 Sierra Highway
Palmdale, CA 93550
(661)267-5337

Coachella Valley Association of Governments (From 3:00 to 5:00 PM Only)
73-710 Fred Waring Drive
Palm Desert, CA 92260
(760)346-1127

³ Please note that the Ventura County Regional Office is currently closed. Those from the Ventura County area are encouraged to participate via webcast.

Additionally, webcasting will be provided for those who are unable to attend the scoping meetings hosted at the main offices or teleconference options at the regional offices. Information for the webcast is provided below:

Webcast

<https://scag.zoom.us/j/553192165>

Dial: 1-669-900-6833

Meeting ID: 553-192-165

Signature: *Ping Chang*

Ping Chang, Manager of Compliance and Performance Monitoring

Southern California Association of Governments

Telephone: (213) 236-1839

Email: Chang@scag.ca.gov; or 2020PEIR@scag.ca.gov

Date: 1/23/19

