

California Transportation Commission

Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines 2010 Update Subcommittee

Meeting Notes – Summary

Tuesday August 25, 2009 10:00am – 12:00pm

California Energy Commission, Hearing Room B
1516 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA

Facilitators: Rusty Selix, California Association of Councils of Government (CalCOG) and Garth Hopkins, Caltrans

Summary of Key Comments:

Rusty Selix provided a brief overview of the expectations for the meeting. He explained that a lot of comments were received yesterday in response to the draft SCS Chapter prepared by Caltrans. The meeting today should provide a framework for identifying the changes that the subcommittee members believe are important. This will enable the development of an annotated draft that identifies all subcommittee comments. Today it is important for the subcommittee to focus on key comments to the draft and hold discussions on specific issues to a future meeting.

Garth Hopkins, Caltrans began the meeting by outlining the topics to be discussed which included:

1. Review and comment on the draft SCS Chapter of the RTP Guidelines which was emailed to the subcommittee on Thursday August 20th,
2. Discussion of any further issues to be addressed in the draft SCS Chapter.

Justin Paddock from the California Air Resources Board (ARB) provided an update on the Regional Targets Advisory Committee (RTAC). The RTAC met on August 18th where they continued their discussion regarding methodology proposals for setting regional GHG targets. The RTAC agreed that a draft recommendation document was needed to move forward. Several RTAC members and ARB staff will put together an initial draft that will be available on ARB's website Monday August 31st. The draft recommendation document will not reflect full RTAC review and input until after its discussion as an agenda item at the next RTAC meeting scheduled for Tuesday September 1st in Sacramento. The RTAC methods and factors recommendations are due to ARB by September 30th 2009 and will be heard by the ARB at a public hearing in October 2009. RTAC information and meeting materials are available on the ARB website at:

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/sb375/rtac/rtac.htm>

Susan Bransen from the California Transportation Commission (Commission) reminded the subcommittee that materials from the July 1st, July 14th and July 28th meetings are available on the Commission's RTP Guidelines website located at: <http://www.catc.ca.gov/programs/rtp.htm>. She encouraged members to join the Google RTP Guidelines Subcommittee listserv. This listserv provides a forum through which subcommittee members can engage in discussions and post information between meetings. The RTP Guidelines Subcommittee Listserv can be accessed at the following website: <http://groups.google.com/group/rtp-guidelines-update-subcommittee-listserv>

Susan thanked committee members for their submission of comments on the draft SCS Chapter. She presented a draft timeline to discuss how the Guidelines update process will move forward. Comments were provided by the committee regarding the proposed timeline and it was determined to be too aggressive. Susan noted the comments and will update the schedule to reflect them.

Susan also informed the committee members that she provided an update on the progress the subcommittee members were making to the Commission at the August Commission meeting. She explained that a concern was raised by the Commission with respect to the financial feasibility of successful implementation of SB 375 given the current economy, lack of transit funding, etc. She requested that if any of the committee members have suggestions to address this concern relative to the guidelines, to please let her know. She also stated that it is important as we go through this process of updating the guidelines to be careful not to write new requirements that may result in financial hardship to the MPOs, local governments and other stakeholders. She will provide the Commission with another update on the subcommittee's progress at the September Commission meeting.

She then introduced the idea of forming sub-working groups within the committee to address the variety of issues raised to date. Several committee members agreed that working groups would allow subcommittee members with specific areas of expertise to collaborate and provide technical guidance for updating the Guidelines. It was agreed that during the meeting, specific workgroups would be identified for discussion at the end of the meeting.

Scott Morgan from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) provided a presentation on CEQA as it relates to the RTP development and approval process for MPO's. He provided a flowchart documenting how the RTP development and CEQA processes run parallel and noted that they generally begin at the same time. He also noted that ARB reviews the RTP EIR during the 45 day comment period. However, review of the SCS takes place after the MPO adopts the RTP (and certifies the EIR). Scott also explained that pursuant to Senate Bill 97, OPR has developed CEQA Guidelines related to climate change which are currently out for public review and comment and are required to be adopted as regulations by January 1, 2010. A suggestion was made to provide an appendix in the guidelines for CEQA requirements related to RTP development.

David Schonbrunn questioned whether the guidelines should address the no project alternative. He is concerned that an RTP treats the plan as a land use plan and the

consequence is that projects in the RTP are not modeled as a project alternative. Scott explained that this would not be addressed in the proposed CEQA guidelines.

Amanda and Scott confirmed that an MPO needs to adopt the RTP before the ARB reviews the SCS. Therefore, if the RTP is changed based on the ARB review, the RTP would need to be readopted.

Garth Hopkins and LaNae Van Valen, Caltrans, presented the draft Sustainable Communities Strategy Chapter 3.40. Eight written sets of comments on the chapter were received as of close of business on August 25th. Meeting facilitators noted that Caltrans staff was on hand to take note of all verbal comments received at the meeting. Subcommittee members were encouraged to submit comments in writing.

Subcommittee members provided numerous comments regarding the Draft Sustainable Communities Strategy Chapter which were noted by staff and are summarized below:

1. The chapter should start with the legislative purpose and intent. The discussion should clearly differentiate between what should and shall be done and what is already done (i.e. preparation of a public participation plan). This would include integration of state and federal requirements.
2. Options to address issues should be offered for large and small MPO's. A "one size fits all" approach should be avoided.
3. The document may not be helpful to people who do not have a smart growth background. The chapter should be tailored to the appropriate audience.
4. Website links should be included to government codes, federal regulations and other guidance.
5. The chapter should provide guidance for how an MPO can stay on schedule for conformity determination during the development and review of their SCS/RTP. Amending an RTP is not an easy process. The federal schedule requirements to adopt an RTP and ARB's SCS approval timeline could jeopardize the conformity process. If this occurs, the option would be to develop the APS for ARB approval.
6. Sequencing and timing of RTP development is already complicated, the SCS needs to blend into the existing process. A Sequencing Workgroup should be established.
7. The chapter should clarify whether population estimates are going to be needed for the RHNA timeframe or should be encouraged to go beyond the RHNA timeline for the entire planning period (20 years). A Housing Workgroup should be established to cover this issue.
8. Technical correction is required to state that there are 14 subregions of SCAG.
9. Guidelines should address whether both an SCS and APS should be prepared during the RTP development process, since, if an SCS is prepared and not approved by ARB, then an APS is required.
10. The SCS chapter provides an educational opportunity to explain the linkages between carbon emissions and the built environment.
11. Certain housing provisions of SB 375 need to be incorporated into the Guidelines. Social equity is very important and should be addressed throughout the Guidelines.

12. Technical corrections are required to clarify that the RTAC does not set targets, that the SCS is an element of the RTP and that an APS does not need to be a part of an RTP – only the SCS must be a part of the RTP.
13. Support was expressed for the written comments provided by Ron Milam and Jerry Walters, Fehr & Peers, for Option 2 of the SCS Chapter “Addressing Regional Transportation Needs in the SCS.”
14. The SCS should be identified as a new required component of an RTP (for MPOs).
15. Guidance for identifying land uses in the SCS should be more specific.
16. Acronyms in the document should be defined at least once and be available in the glossary of terms.
17. The chapter should mention that no single plan will work for any two regions. Region specific needs and diversity should be taken into consideration.
18. Legislative language should be used wherever possible and government code sections should be cited.
19. The chapter should contain more specific examples of how the SCS will be developed. The chapter should go beyond the legislation to provide guidance for the MPOs to use in order to successfully implement the requirements of SB 375.
20. Income level groups identified in the SCS should be defined per state housing law. This could be addressed in the Housing and Land Use Workgroup.
21. Define what it means to accommodate housing needs – don’t just reiterate the language in the bill. This subcommittee should brainstorm ideas on how the steps required in the bill can be achieved.
22. Use of illustrative examples is good however clear language should be used to identify requirements.
23. The chapter should address interaction of the SCS with local general plans and housing elements. This could be addressed in the Land Use and Housing workgroup.
24. Lack of specificity in SB 375 allows for MPO discretion which should be maintained in the RTP Guidelines.
25. This committee does not have to fill in all the gaps. Gaps can allow discretion. There are 18 “think tanks” required to implement this and we should respect this.
26. The terms Sustainable Communities Strategy and Regional Blueprint should not be used interchangeably. Blueprints are broad ranging documents and an SCS is a “sliver” within a blueprint.
27. The chapter should not imply that MPO’s dictate land use. Change is needed to the language that incorrectly states that the SCS requires the MPO to determine where commercial or residential development will occur. MPOs do not have land use authority. MPOs will need to work with locals to determine where development is planned to be.
28. Greenprint is an idea to put in the blueprint but it does not have to be included. Also, resources do not have to be quantified.
29. Chapter section “Identifying Land Uses in the SCS” states that each region is challenged to “maximize its land use.” This statement should be deleted.
30. A better understanding of local land use assumptions should be determined within a Land Use and Housing workgroup.

31. Models must be understandable and usable to the public. Fulfilling this requirement is a complex issue.

The following working groups were suggested:

- 1.) Land Use and Housing Workgroup
- 2.) RTP Sequencing and Adoption Workgroup
- 3.) Transportation Workgroup
- 4.) Public Participation Workgroup
- 5.) RTAC Coordination Workgroup

Caltrans and Commission staff will develop a general description for each workgroup which will be sent to the subcommittee. Individuals interested in participating on a workgroup should contact Susan Bransen by Tuesday September 1st. Caltrans will identify certain chapters or sections of the Guidelines for the subcommittee to address. Each workgroup will meet throughout September and will submit suggested language to Caltrans and Commission staff for discussion at the next RTP Guidelines Subcommittee meeting to be held the week of October 5th.

Rusty concluded the meeting by asking subcommittee members to submit written comments and suggested language for the draft SCS Chapter to Caltrans staff by Monday August 31st. Caltrans and Commission staff will incorporate all comments received into the draft Sustainable Communities Chapter and distribute to the subcommittee.

Action Item Summary:

- Caltrans and Commission staff will coordinate the formation of 5 Workgroups.
- Caltrans and Commission staff will compile all comments received on the draft Sustainable Communities Strategy Chapter, identify conflicts and distribute the chapter with revised language to the subcommittee for review.
- Contact FHWA to request a presentation at the next meeting relative to the federal conformity process.

Next Meeting:

The next subcommittee meeting will be held sometime during the week of October 5th.

Meeting Materials Provided:

- RTP Development/Approval and CEQA Process Flowchart – Prepared & Presented by Scott Morgan, Governor's Office of Planning & Research
- RTP Guidelines Draft SCS Chapter 3.40 - Prepared & Presented by LaNae Van Valen and Garth Hopkins, Caltrans