

# RTP Guidelines Modeling Update Sub-Committee -

## Tuesday July 14, 2009 Meeting Summary

### *Welcome and Introductions*

Participants included:

#### In-Person:

- Sarah Chesebro, Caltrans TSI
- Coco Briseno, Caltrans TSI
- Doug MacIvor, Caltrans TSI
- Susan Bransen, CTC
- Bob Johnston, UC Davis
- Justin Paddock, ARB
- Michelle Bina, Cambridge Systematics
- Dennis Wade, ARB
- Ron West, Cambridge Systematics
- Jeff Clark, Fehr and Peers
- Annette Gilbertson, CTC
- David Schonbrunn, TRANSDEF
- Sharon Sprowls, Housing CA
- Frank Limacher, HCD
- Tanisha Taylor, SJCOG
- Larry Rillera, CEC
- William Davis, Caltrans District 3
- Aniss Bahreinian, CEC
- Monica Rudman, CEC
- Jila Pribe, Caltrans DMT
- Ridgley, Caltrans TSI

#### Via Phone:

- Chuck Purvis, MTC
- Rick Curry, SANDAG
- Bill Yim, SBCAG
- Jonathan Nadler, SCAG
- Clint Daniels, SANDAG
- Mark Hays, TCAG
- Brian Lasagna, BCAG
- Terry Parker, Caltrans
- Amanda Eakan, NRDC

The next two meetings have already been scheduled for July 28 and August 25. Future meetings after August 25 will be dependent on progress made during those two meetings. A listserv for California modelers exists and will be used to further discussions and post files for this subcommittee. The listserv site is at:

<http://groups.google.com/group/california-inter-agency-cia-modeling-forum-listserv?hl=en>

### *Purpose of the RTP Modeling Guidelines Update Subcommittee*

The purpose of the committee is to update the modeling guidelines, in response to SB 375. Additional results of the meetings include refining the committee and its members; updating earlier work and the status of the guidelines; and beginning dialog on issues, subject areas, and categories that need to be updated as related to SB 375.

A tentative schedule for the RTP Guidelines Update was provided. It is anticipated that the draft be completed by December to be available for the January/February hearings and possible adoption in March.

The RTP **Planning** Guidelines Update subcommittee (the other subcommittee) will be examining the actual language of SB 375 for interpretation of how it may relate and/or be incorporated into modeling guidelines. It was recognized that there may be overlap between the two subcommittees, but each group is approaching SB 375 from different angles. CTC will manage information produced for the other subcommittee on the CTC website.

This subcommittee will address SB 375 and incorporate any changes into the last RTP update (adopted 14 months ago, even though work for the update was completed approximately 2 years ago). Some example issues to be addressed include interregional travel, performance measures, and peer review. A quick turnaround on this update is expected.

### *Review of Current RTP Modeling Guidelines*

A brief history relating to the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Modeling Guidelines was given. Implemented models and standards of practice from around the country were synthesized and incorporated with current ideas **since** the mid-1990s to form the initial guidelines, including auto-ownership and mode choice models. The task of creating the guidelines also provided a platform for discussions about the practice and allowed for more focused conversations. Discussions have included features of the model, what you do with them (i.e., performance measures), and hope to move the process and products forward.

A phone participant agreed that the meetings provide an opportunity for focused discussions and suggested that the idea of updating the guidelines should be revisited every 3-4 years in order to address the continually changing state of modeling. There was general agreement this was a good idea to have the modeling guidelines be regularly updated.

Some history about the formation of this committee: Prior to the adoption of SB 375, an initial group of Air Resource Board (ARB) staff and some of the State's larger MPOs created a technical partners group in order to meet and become familiar with each other and was never meant to be a decision-making body. Recognizing the need for a formalized group and be representative of all California models, the RTP Modeling Committee was formed. This group created a less ambitious schedule than the ARB/MPOs/technical partners group in order to wait for the ARB targets.

## *Areas of the RTP Modeling Guidelines That Will Need to be Addressed as a Result of SB 375*

A participant suggested converting the “shoulds and cans into shalls”, making more of the guidelines binding. There is concern that SB 375 does not provide any more mandatory language for MPOs, at least not in terms of modeling.

Other issues to be addressed were related to performance indicators/measure (especially VMT), consistency/flexibility of the model, model assumptions, interregional travel, and peer review of regional models.

One participant suggested looking at the other reasons that models are being used. Another participant stated that a SACOG-developed survey wanted to inventory model usage and the survey may be used as a tool here.

Another participant mentioned the other SB 375-related efforts that are going on (i.e., RTAC, the Strategic Growth Council, the possibility of Prop 84 funds) and was wondering if there is going to be any synergy among these efforts. Another participant recognized that the modeling community is looking into the potential of Prop 84 funds for modeling purposes, such as data collection efforts. The intention of the Prop 84 funds would be for Blueprint planning, for which modeling improvements would be needed. However, the Prop 84 bonds have not yet been sold and there is a long list of potential items to fund.

In keeping with financial matters, a phone participant was concerned about turning “shoulds into shalls” and the financial implications that will be necessary in order to apply these changes. It was recognized that model improvement plans would require additional data collection and tools, some of which are funded, but there is a need to document what is and is not funded. The Strategic Growth Council (SGC) is currently conducting an informal survey of MPOs and cities to identify priority (non-GIS) data and their availability throughout agencies in California. The SGC is trying to coordinate with ARB but, at this stage, is focused on getting information from the MPOs. The results of the survey should be available later this month.

It was noted also that many agencies buy data sets that are similar, if not identical, and there may be an opportunity there to reduce costs and increase coordination.

Recognition was made about the overlapping interests between various committees and other efforts. One participant recognized this as an opportunity that needs to be taken advantage of; but at the end of the process, there needs to be consistency.

A question was made about the possibility of more cooperation/collaboration between cities, counties, councils of government, MPOs, etc. in order to create fewer models and lessen financial demands. In response, a participant said that, traditionally, each region has their own models that are tailored for their purposes but that cooperation is needed and evident by these meetings. The Strategic Growth Council was cited as an opportunity for improving coordination, starting with data collection and documentation of the state of modeling within California. Furthermore, a Caltrans/ARB partnership is combining efforts and working on a statewide freight model. A statewide urban growth model is also in the works in order to get interregional and interstate trips. CARB and Caltrans already have their own aggregate statewide travel demand model, as

well as econometric models, GHG models, etc; and these models are not necessarily inconsistent, they are just tailored to fit their own needs.

### *Other Items to be Addressed in the Update of the RTP Modeling Guidelines*

The RTAC's official recommendations to ARB are due at the end of September, making their efforts available to this subcommittee. It was noted, however, that talks between RTAC and ARB are continuing after September 30<sup>th</sup>, so the targets and methodologies will not be finalized in mid-September.

Participants then listed more issues to be considered, including: consistency between regional and local models, more guidelines on alternative analyses; 4Ds post processing; calibration of regional models' VMT to odometer and fuel sales data (datasets that are not currently available), addressing the auto ownership step in model; the need for 2 kinds of models (the traditional travel demand model and other lightweight/quick turnaround models such as iPlaces and Uplan); coordination of efforts between cities, counties, and regional agencies; how to deal with projects not consistent with a blueprint; local cities and counties using model through their own consultants; having CTC and/or Caltrans understand other MPOs' (not just SACOG's) models; and the additional time and cost needs for creating more mandatory language in the guidelines.

A suggestion was made that modelers obtain more transit data from operators and agencies and incorporating that data into the land use models.

### *Wrap-up and Conclusion*

To summarize, the following lists the issues to be addressed:

- Performance indicators/measures
- Consistency/flexibility
- Assumptions in models
- Inter-regional travel
- Peer review
- Modeling capabilities
- Strategic Growth Council and RTAC overlaps with this subcommittee's efforts
- Alternatives analysis/model sensitivity
- 4Ds post processing to enhance model capabilities
- Addressing how models can respond to questions policy makers are grappling with

- Where can models inform decision-makers?
- Calibrating VMT projections
- Visioning or planning-level models (post processing and planning level)
- Documentation of cost and time resources for model improvements
- Better understanding of the shoulds, shalls, and cans
- A closer look at the interpretations of the specified 5 issues outlined in Government Code 14522.1(b):
  - Relationships between land use density/vehicle ownership and vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
  - Impacts of enhanced transit service levels on vehicle ownership and VMT
  - Changes in travel and land development likely to develop as a result of highway and passenger rail expansion
  - Mode split (including bicycle and pedestrian) within the region
  - Transit operations (frequency, speed, days, hours, etc.)

To prepare for the next meeting, a participant suggesting receiving a rough outline from Caltrans (completed by the other subcommittee) to define where there are areas of agreement and disagreement, to be focused on. However, for those not wanting to wait for the outline or meeting minutes, it was suggested that participants collect/edit their own guideline recommendations. Participants were requested to make their comments and recommendations by close of business on Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup>. Caltrans will aggregate the comments and take the lead to create something rough to talk about next time (for example, establishing placeholders for the 14522.1(b) components). It was also suggested that the listserv be used as a forum for those comments and recommendations as a quicker alternative to chain emailing. The current guidelines addendum will be made available in Word document form (editable format) via email and the listserv for those wanting to redline the document. Those providing comments and edits are encouraged to use track changes mode.