

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

SCAG Sustainable Communities Working Group

2020 RTP/SCS Draft Goals

Discussion Question Comments – May 29, 2018

Should any of these goals be revised?

2. Enhance the preservation, security, and resiliency of the regional transportation system

It would help to define terms that may be ambiguous to some. Clarity will also help make the document more accessible to a lay audience. In Goal #2, please clarify the term “regional transportation system.” Does that include county rail systems, Metrolink, Amtrak, state highways, Interstate Highways, local streets, parking lots, public rolling stock, privately owned vehicles, TNCs, etc.? Is it just infrastructure or also services? Is it only a public resource or does it include private investments?

3. Increase person throughput and travel choices.

Please specify the system in which throughput should increase. Does this refer to the regional transportation system? If so, throughput seems especially important for goods movement and mode choices especially important for passenger travel.

One way to increase freight throughout would be to reduce unnecessary work commute trips taken by information workers. It could be argued that a passenger goal should be to keep trips local (out of the regional system) as a means of increasing volume and speed of throughput overall.

Improving access (physical and virtual) to destinations will increase the percentage of trips that are local. Many more zero emission mode options are available for local trips than those that require the regional transportation system. Increasing the trips not taken could be the most cost-effective approach to increasing throughput of the system.

4. Leverage new transportation technologies and data-driven solutions that result in more efficient travel.

Consider deleting the word “transportation” so that the goal involves technologies of any kind; and adding “and more effective access” after “more efficient travel.” The goal would now read “Leverage new technologies and data-driven solutions that result in more efficient travel and more effective access.”

6. Encourage regional economic prosperity and global competitiveness.

I suggest you amend this goal by adding “without relying in traditional growth.” In other words, we should seek prosperity without depending on growth as it has been in the past to do so.

Technology literature forecasts large scale depressive impacts on job growth within 5 years as artificial intelligence replaces many job categories and whole industries in some cases. From retail work force to truck drivers, the future is not bright.

While the negative impacts may prove to be overstated, it will be prudent to plan for the prospect that the region may need to pursue prosperity without the kind of growth that we are used to.

8. Adapt to a changing climate by integrating a sustainable regional development pattern with the transportation network

Please define “regional development pattern” and “transportation network” (is this same as “regional transportation network?”). Please explain the link to climate adaptation.

Integrating development with transportation is most often discussed in terms of climate change prevention, usually through building Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) around rail transit infrastructure. However, even then, the TOD strategy is feasible in very few locations in the region and is having minimal impact on GHG emissions reductions where it has been deployed because it is not realizing a significant change to public transit mode share.

9. Preserve existing housing, while encouraging development of diverse housing types in transportation-supported areas.

Define “transportation supported areas.” All developed areas are supported by some form of transportation infrastructure so probably what’s intended is more like “public transit supported areas.” If that’s true, the objective should be revised to reflect the emerging paradigm of zero emission multi modal mobility where legacy transit is one mobility service among many. Or, preferably, encourage diverse housing types in a place and manner that does not increase GHG emissions per household above the current baseline for the area.

Is there anything missing from these goals?

Create a goal of adopting an RTP that minimizes the public sector cost to implement. The least expensive mobility options should be encouraged over more expensive.

Current and future private sector services should be incorporated in an effort to reduce the public sector investments needed.

2016 Sustainable Communities Strategies

LAND USE STRATEGIES

- Reflect Our Changing Population and Demands
(*more multifamily development*)
- Focus New Growth Around Transit
- Plan for Growth Around “Livable Corridors”
- Provide More Options for Short Trips
(*more Active Transportation, Neighborhood EVs*)
- Support Local Sustainability Planning
- Protect Natural and Farm Lands

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

- Preserve our Existing System
- Manage Congestion
- Promote Safety and Security
- Transit
- Passenger Rail
- Active Transportation
- Highways and Arterials
- Regional Express Lane Network
- Goods Movement

Which of these [high level land use and transportation strategies] should SCAG continue to emphasize?

The SBCCOG believes that most of the 2016 strategies should be refined or replaced. Society is in a period of demographic, economic and technology change. New research continually provides new insight that should be incorporated into policy. As a consequence, virtually all strategies should be subject to re-evaluation.

The most important 2016 strategy is “Support Local Sustainability Planning.” The SBCCOG published in March, 2018 the Land Use and Transportation Chapter of its Climate Action Plan (CAP) along with land use and transportation chapters for CAPS (LUTCAP) for every South Bay city. SCAG provided data support for the initiative. However, some of the data needed were not available from SCAG. We are delighted that SCAG is working on being a data clearinghouse. Going forward, SCAG could help other sub-regions and cities by providing more robust data sets and working more closely with sub-regions.

The next step is for SCAG to incorporate or at least acknowledge any sub-regional LUTCAPs in the 2020 RTP. For example, the South Bay cities do not have the rail infrastructure nor the transit services of sufficient quality to use as the anchor for sustainable mobility. The 2016 RTP based its carbon reductions on transit and TOD;

the 2020 RTP should offer scenarios based on other carbon reducing sustainability strategies.

Additionally, there are no strategies that address technological changes or the role of the private sector as a mobility partner providing sustainable choices.

Which strategies should be refined?

Please consider renaming “transportation strategies” as “mobility strategies.”

Reclassify “Provide More Options for Short Trips (more Active Transportation, Neighborhood EVs)” as a mobility strategy. See below under “Other Strategies” for a proposed replacement that is the land use strategy that supports short trip mode options.

The land use strategy “Reflect Changing Population and Demands” has as a sub-strategy “more multi-family development.” Multi housing development is a conclusion posing as a strategy. For example, demand for single family housing remains strong (millennials, once thought of as exclusively urban dwellers have discovered the suburbs, particularly when raising a family). The challenge is to make single family housing affordable, and that requires building on relatively inexpensive land in the far suburbs and exurbs. This is discussed in more detail below.

“Focus New Growth Around Transit” fits well in only a small number of contexts; those that are currently urban. High density TODs simply generate more traffic and carbon unless the mode share of transit is at least 30% to 50% and that is extremely rare.

Taken together, these comments suggest that RTP strategies need to be more context specific. In no case does one strategy fit every context in the region. State funding is often tied to RTP strategies so that failing to address the variety of contexts essentially excludes those jurisdictions with different contexts from state funding programs.

Are there other strategies SCAG should emphasize?

We recommended reclassifying as mobility “More Options for Short Trips” and suggest replacing it in land use with the following: Use all means possible to shorten trip lengths. The SBCCOG LUTCAP reduces trip lengths through a combination of dense neighborhood centers (destination clusters) within .5 mile of most households, supplemented by technology infrastructure and applications that make destinations virtually present that are not physically present. Those are the land use strategies that will create the options for AT, neighborhood vehicles and personal mobility devices.

A zero emission multi-modal strategy is missing from the list. This consists of a package of privately owned neighborhood vehicles and personal mobility devices plus a robust mobility services market, that includes ride hailing, car sharing, bike and scooter sharing as well as transit.

Consider adding a set of “Access Strategies.” Improved access reduces the demand for mobility. For example, developing a regional telework strategy would dramatically improve access to work places. There are many similar examples.

Also missing is a strategy that looks at re-developing the aging and unsuccessful retail developments. This is discussed further below.

Sustainable Growth Patterns

The six county SCAG region will add approximately **four million new residents** and add over **one and a half million jobs** by 2045.

Where and how should we grow as a region?

As mentioned previously in these responses to the discussion questions, the growth forecasts should include one based on no- or limited growth. While the future is always unknowable, the future from 2020 out to 2045 is especially difficult to predict.

The 2016 RTP directed growth to the already dense coastal sub-regions in order to preserve the patchwork of green fields in the outer suburbs and exurbs. Yet those outer areas including the IE and North County have more affordable land available for developing work force housing.

There are a number of strategies for mitigating carbon generated by mobility in those areas. They include using the green fields to create “complete neighborhoods” with destination-rich neighborhood centers, zero emission multi modal mobility options, a regional telework program, and incentives for business to locate in the outer sub-regions.

In the already crowded coastal sub-regions, residential development should be directed to recycled retail properties that are no longer needed in the new retail environment.

What are the sustainable growth opportunities in your community?

There are two complementary sustainable development opportunities. The first is the gradual decentralization of destinations into neighborhood centers (also known as neighborhood business districts) which need to be fashioned out of places that currently have center-like characteristics, and the redevelopment of retail strips and regional malls into housing. The objective is to use all redevelopment opportunities to create complete neighborhoods.

Implementing Sustainable Communities

Please share your experience of the challenges you face in pursuing more sustainable development in your community.

Two challenges stand out. The first is endorsement by state and regional agencies that would help build confidence among the cities to take on the challenge of innovation. This is discussed further below under “how can SCAG help.”

The second challenge is lack of funding to implement the adopted LUT CAP. Good ideas are not enough when policies and programs need to change. Overcoming resistance to change requires a combination of sticks and carrots. The next step in the South Bay requires carrots in the form of funding. Three particular challenges stand out.

- Funding for large scale deployment of the mobility strategy

Despite official statements regarding the need for innovation, state programs stick to their traditional boundaries, sometimes due to the way in which the legislation was written.

The SBCCOG has been meeting with CARB staff in order to test a pilot project consisting of state subsidies for low end EVs like NEVs, Segways and e-bikes comparable to the CVRP which supports high end EVs. This could be especially useful for helping residents of DACs gain access to electric mobility. Discussions continue but resistance has been substantial.

- Funding for the infrastructure needed for implementation.

This includes support for the feasibility study needed for the network of “local lanes” that would carry the full range of slow speed vehicles including pedal technologies to destinations throughout the South Bay. Metro funded a master plan for this network but the next step toward implementation is a feasibility study of a segment of the network. Proposals to acquire the needed funding have been unsuccessful.

The SBCCOG, in partnership with the South Bay Workforce Investment Board, funded a study of the feasibility of assembling a fiber backbone network that would form the infrastructure for smart cities in the South Bay. While an RFP will be issued this summer for bids from fiber wholesalers, the capital costs may be in excess of what most cities can afford. Sources to secure those capital costs have not been identified to date, threatening to stall the initiative and/or widen the divide between have and have-not cities.

Technology facilities to anchor the planned neighborhood centers and connect to the fiber backbone network being developed in order to import distant destinations virtually rather than physically has no potential funding source and fits into no existing funding programs.

- Funding for a Sustainable South Bay Working Group that will teach city planners how to analyze maps of the spatial distribution of “destinations” in order to identify where to encourage neighborhood centers and which tools will be needed to implement them.

Where have you seen examples of success? What policies or programs were used?

Components of the Sustainable Neighborhood Strategy have appeared in various jurisdictions in the past while others are being demonstrated today.

- CV Link currently being developed in the Coachella Valley is a zero emission multi-modal highway for slow speed vehicles and devices.
- The Blue Line TeleVillage was a prototype technology suite to anchor a neighborhood center, demonstrated by Metro at the MLK Transit Center in Compton in the mid-1990s.
- City of Santa Monica developed an advanced broadband network infrastructure and adopted many “smart city” applications over the past 20 years.
- City of Monrovia began implementing in February, 2018 an innovative mobility services model called GoMonrovia. This initiative merges ride hailing firm Lyft and dockless bike sharing provider Lime Bike replacing the City’s existing dial-a-ride operator, to provide fast and affordable transportation all throughout Monrovia saving the city a large amount of subsidies and incorporating the private sector into their transportation network.
- The recently opened Nordstrom Local in West Hollywood demonstrates a retail outlet that carries almost no stock in order to occupy a very small footprint – a quality that is essential to a successful neighborhood center.
- The Telework Facilities Exchange, sponsored by the League of California Cities and funded by the AQMD in the early 1990s, demonstrated a regional telework marketing organization that managed a program of facilities swapping based on proximity to home.
- Telecommuting programs were demonstrated by both the City and County of Los Angeles in the early 1990s.

In addition to those empirical examples, it should be noted that the plan for a sustainable South Bay is based on 15 years of research and demonstration that produced data and strategies subjected to rigorous statistically valid analysis. The foundation upon which the innovations are based is strong.

How can SCAG better support implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy?

Just as the TOD model might not be the best in all situations, this is another option. Each region should have the opportunity to decide what strategies, not just one strategy, works for them.

SCAG can support the adopted South Bay Sustainable Neighborhoods Strategy (SNS) by recognizing it as a viable approach to sustainability – suited to the South Bay, and an alternative to the transit-TOD strategy that has limited applicability in built-out auto-suburbs, outside of urban contexts.

This support could include sharing the SNS with the TAC, other Working Groups and the Policy Committees. It could be used as the basis for one of the growth scenarios that will be evaluated in the 2020 RTP.

Grants could be offered outside of the traditional TOD and ATP focused programs.

Environmental Constraints

Where should future growth not occur?

Current policy is to direct growth to the coastal areas in order to preserve land on the periphery. Yet the periphery is where the land is least expensive and where affordable housing could be most easily developed. If built as “complete (sustainable) neighborhoods” around a compact center complemented, with zero emission multi-modal mobility and a regional telework program, the carbon footprint would be minimized.

The periphery can no longer be considered “sprawl” simply because there are some green fields that remain undeveloped. (For example, the IE is home to over 4 million people.) Those green fields provide the opportunity for development into complete neighborhoods with low carbon transportation profiles. (See previous discussion above.) Rather than places to avoid, the periphery actually contains a regional resource where development can advance regional goals.

Coastal areas are already dense. Redevelopment (there are very few infill opportunities in the South Bay) is difficult, land is expensive, neighborhoods are crowded, and residents are opposed. There is also a carry capacity issue, discussed below.

Do you agree with these categories for potential growth constraints?

Environmental constraints exist in almost every dimension. As part of the discussion of where and why growth should be constrained, studies of the “carrying capacity” should be conducted in each sub-region.

Growth in the coastal areas is pursued regardless of the shortage of water requiring more imports; limits to sewer capacity before very expensive replacement is needed; strain on the electric grid requiring new transformers; land fill capacities are reached pushing trash hauling further outside the area; and streets become congested and parking more scarce and expensive.

Shortage of parks is a particular problem as open space acres per capita decline with population growth since reclaiming open space for the public from land privately held is extremely difficult and expensive.

New challenges seem to arise from surprising sources. Just this week the LA Times reported that China would no longer purchase recycled plastic and other materials from the U.S. that have in the past been used to fabricate new products. The U.S. lacks the technology to process most recycled waste meaning that new storage facilities will be needed.

Are there any other areas in the region where growth should be constrained?

Growth everywhere should be carefully evaluated both in terms of its feasibility (what happens to the job engines?) and its desirability (does the carrying capacity exist?). SCAG should consider evaluating the carrying capacity (as defined above) of those areas of highest expected growth.