# REPORT

**DATE:** March 1, 2007

**TO:** Transportation and Communications Committee
Regional Council

**FROM:** Cheryl Collier, Communications Supervisor, 213.236.1942, collier@scag.ca.gov

**SUBJECT:** Public Participation Plan

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:**

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**
Approve the Public Participation Plan.

**BACKGROUND:**
Since its inception, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has engaged in a public involvement process in developing its regional transportation plans and programs. As a result of changes in the metropolitan planning law in 2005, SCAG will broaden its current participation activities to engage a more extensive group of stakeholders in its planning and programming processes.

This Public Participation Plan serves as a guide for SCAG's public involvement process as well as the continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning process among the stakeholders to ensure the ongoing opportunity for broad-based participation in the development and review of regional transportation plans and programs.

The draft Public Participation Plan was initially released for a 45-day public review and comment period and posted on SCAG's web site beginning October 17, 2006. A notice of the draft Plan's availability was posted in one major newspaper in each county plus La Opinion and the Chinese Daily News. In addition, copies of the draft Plan were distributed to 46 local libraries, 14 subregions, 16 Tribal Government Chairs, various environmental organizations, representatives of the disabled, pedestrians and bicycle users, the county transportation commissions, air districts, and other interested parties.

SCAG received formal comments on the draft Public Participation Plan from FHWA in a letter dated December 13, 2006. Briefly summarized, FHWA requested further documentation on how interested parties were involved in the development of the procedures and further clarification on how SCAG will provide access to its public involvement process throughout the region. As a result of FHWA's comments, SCAG extended the public comment period through February 26, 2007.

SCAG continued its efforts to further reach out to agencies by sending additional copies of the draft Public Participation Plan to 38 federal and state resource agencies. This was followed up with two electronic messages as well as telephone calls to elicit comments and feedback on the Plan. During this period, SCAG made presentations on the draft Public Participation Plan to three outside organizations and one in the SCAG office.

SCAG also reached out to the county transportation commissions and the subregions both electronically as well as by telephone to seek comments to the draft Plan. In addition to comments received from FHWA, SCAG has received responses from one Tribal Government, one member city, one county transportation

commission, three subregions, two resource agencies and one private business. In general, those who responded (other than FHWA) indicated that they have received and reviewed the Public Participation Plan, that the plan looks fine and that they did not have any other specific comments. In total, SCAG's draft Public Participation Plan was available for public comment for a period of 133 days.

SCAG staff has also discussed FHWA's comments with FHWA staff. SCAG anticipates that the Plan will undergo amendments later down the road as we continue to work with FHWA and address the Department of Transportation's Statewide Transportation Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning; Final Rule published in the Federal Register on February 14, 2007. SCAG has made significant efforts to reach out to interested parties, encourage feedback, and involve interested parties in the development of the Plan's strategies and procedures and will continue these efforts in future updates to the Plan.

Staff will report on any substantive comments received, if any, at the March Regional Council meeting that would require a formal response or change to the Plan.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**
There is no fiscal impact except for the nominal fee associated with newspaper postings.

**Reviewed by:**
*Division Manager*

**Reviewed by:**
*Department Director*

**Reviewed by:**
*Chief Financial Officer*

**Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)**

# Public Participation Plan

**March 1, 2007**

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."** *Margaret Mead*

## Purpose of SCAG's Public Participation Plan

The awareness and involvement of interested persons in governmental processes are critical to successful regional transportation planning and programming. When the public is engaged in the process, their feedback helps assure projects address community needs. Likewise, the public gains a better understanding of the tradeoffs and constraints associated with transportation planning. This Public Participation Plan ("Plan") serves as a guide for SCAG's public involvement process as well as the continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning process among the stakeholders to ensure the ongoing opportunity for broad-based participation in the development and review of regional plans and programs.

## Introduction

Since its inception, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has engaged in a public involvement process in developing its regional transportation plans and programs. As a result of changes in the metropolitan planning law in 2005, SCAG will broaden its current participation activities to engage a more extensive group of stakeholders in its planning and programming processes.

As a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), SCAG is responsible for preparing and utilizing a Plan which is developed in consultation with all interested parties and provides reasonable opportunities for interested parties to comment on the content of SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), pursuant to the "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" (SAFETEA-LU), Pub. L. No. 109-59, Title VI, Section 6001(a), 119 Stat. 1839 (Aug. 10, 2005).

The participation procedures incorporated into this Plan are intended to afford interested parties a specific opportunity to comment on the Plan prior to its approval. The Plan contains an expanded list of Interested Parties, including

governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the Department of Transportation (DOT) to provide non-emergency transportation services and recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.

In addition to developing and carrying out a Plan, SCAG is required to consult with State, local, and Tribal Governments in development of its RTPs and TIPs. SCAG is specifically required to consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the region that are affected by SCAG's RTP and TIP (including, as appropriate, State & local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation).

As part of developing other plans and programs for which SCAG is responsible, SCAG carries out additional participation activities, including but not limited to: collaboration with transportation partners in development of the SCAG Overall Work Program, pursuant to 23 C.F.R. 450.314 and State guidance; scoping meetings and public review of the Draft Program EIR (PEIR) for the RTP, as required by applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, 14 C.C.R. Ch. 3, Art. 7; and, public participation in the development of a methodology for the Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan, pursuant to Govt. Code Section 65584.04(c).

This Plan is intended to guide the participation process and to coordinate the process with SCAG's consultation activities and other responsibilities.

**Public Participation Plan Requirements**

SCAG's Public Participation Plan must comply with the following requirements provided under 23 U.S.C. 134, subsections (i)(5), and (j)(1)(B) which are summarized as follows:

1. SCAG shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the RTP.

2. The participation plan shall be developed in consultation with all interested parties, and shall provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan.

3. In carrying out the participation process, SCAG must, to the maximum extent practicable--

(i) hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
(ii) employ visualization techniques to describe plans; and
(iii) make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate, to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information under paragraph 1 above.

4. The RTP shall be published or otherwise made readily available by the metropolitan planning organization for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web, approved by the metropolitan planning organization and submitted for information purposes to the Governor at such times and in such manner as the Secretary shall establish.

5. In developing the TIP and before approving the TIP, SCAG in cooperation with the State and any affected public transportation operator, shall provide an opportunity for participation by interested parties in the development of the program, in accordance with the same requirements described above.

The Public Participation Plan further incorporates the requirements proposed under Federal guidance implementing SAFETEA-LU (71 FR 33521; June 9, 2006), summarized as follows:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns);

2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;

3. Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs (in non-attainment areas, classified as serious and above, the comment period shall be at least 30 days for the plan, TIP and major amendment(s));

4. Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;

5. Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households;

6. If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by SCAG and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available;

7. The Public Participation Plan shall be periodically reviewed by SCAG in terms of its effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;

8. Metropolitan public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs;

9. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA's conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP.

10. Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the initial or revised Public Participation Plan is adopted by SCAG;

**Consultation Requirements**

SCAG must consult, as appropriate, with State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation concerning the development of a long-range transportation plan. The consultation shall involve, as appropriate:

1) Comparison of transportation plans with State conservation plans or maps, if available; or

2) Comparison of transportation plans to inventories of natural or historic resources, if available.

See 23 U.S.C Section 134(i)(4).

Furthermore, under the metropolitan planning process, RTPs and TIPs must be developed with due consideration of other related activities within the region, and

the process must provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the region that are provided by:

1) Recipients of assistance under Chapter 53 of Title 49 U.S.C.
2) Governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and
3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C Section 204.

See 49 U.S.C Section 5303.

Consultation requirements are accomplished primarily through our policy committees and task force structure. Policy committees are primarily made up of local elected officials. There are several issue-specific as well as mode-specific task forces that are on-going as well as some that are created for a specific purpose and specific time frame. All of these task forces forward their recommendations to policy committees. Examples of these task forces include: Transportation Finance Task Force, Aviation Task Force, Goods Movement Task Force, Regional Transit Task Force, and the Plans and Programs Technical Advisory Committee. Membership on these task forces and working groups includes elected officials as well as stakeholder agency representatives. The stakeholders have a direct pipeline to SCAG's planning processes through these task forces. SCAG proposes to expand the membership of some of these task forces to ensure inclusion of the broader stakeholders and interest groups identified in SAFETEA-LU.

In addition, SCAG conducts several workshops prior to releasing the Draft RTP involving stakeholders to ensure that their input on major issues is addressed in the plan.

SCAG also utilizes the subregional council of governments (COG) structure to "get the word out" and solicit input on the content as well as the planning and programming process from the local stakeholders.

SCAG mails out a Notice of Draft RTP and RTIP Availability to the stakeholders at the local, state and federal level to solicit their comment and input to the final RTP and RTIP. Comments as well as responses are fully documented and reflected in the final RTP.

SCAG will continue to engage Tribal Governments in the RTP and RTIP processes through Tribal Government representation on SCAG's governing board and policy committees, and through the Tribal Governments Relations Task Force.

## Bottom-Up Planning and Interagency Consultation

An expanded 70-member Regional Council and the fostering of 14 subregional organizations were initiated by the former Executive Committee in 1992. These forums, coupled with three policy committees and 20 standing committees and technical advisory committees, and the "AB 1246 process" (required under Public Utilities Code Section 130000 et seq.) facilitate SCAG's ability to provide a framework for bottom-up planning and more frequent and ongoing participation by interested parties at all stages of the process.

Within the AB 1246 process, the multi-county designated transportation planning agency shall convene at least two meetings annually of representatives from each of the four commissions, the agency, and the Department of Transportation for the following purposes:

(a) To review and discuss the near-term transportation improvement programs prior to adoption by the commissions.
(b) To review and discuss the regional transportation plan prior to adoption by the agency pursuant to Chapter 2.5 (commencing with Section 65080) of Title 7 of the Government Code.
(c) To consider progress in the development of a regionwide and unified public transit system.
(d) To review and discuss any other matter of mutual concern.

The Regional Transportation Agencies Coalition is currently fulfilling the function of the AB 1246 process.

SCAG has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) on transportation and air quality conformity consultation procedures for the South Coast Air Basin and for the Riverside County portions of the Salton Sea Air Basin and the Mojave Desert Air Basin. Parties to the MOU include: SCAQMD, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Air Resource Board, and the Federal Highway Administration.

Likewise, SCAG has an MOU for transportation and air quality conformity consultation procedures with the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD) for the Ventura County portion of the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB). Parties to the MOU include: VCAPCD, Ventura County Transportation Commission, Caltrans, California Air Resources Board, Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

To support interagency coordination and fulfill the interagency consultation requirements of the Federal Transportation Conformity Rule, SCAG participates in the Transportation Conformity Working Group (TCWG). The group meets on a

monthly basis to address and resolve regional issues pertaining to transportation conformity for the RTP, RTIP, RTP and TIP amendments and the region's air quality management plans.

Participants in the Southern California TCWG include representatives from federal, state, regional and sub-regional agencies such as the United States Environmental Protection Agency (both national and regional representatives), Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, California Air Resources Board, California Department of Transportation, Air Quality Management Districts, SCAG, and County Transportation Commissions.

**Interested Parties**

To ensure compliance with SAFETEA-LU requirements and other federal and state mandates, SCAG intends to target the following participants in the region:

- citizens
- affected public agencies
- representatives of transportation agency employees
- freight shippers
- providers of freight transportation services
- private providers of transportation
- representatives of users of public transit
- representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- representatives of the disabled
- Tribal Governments
- transit operators
- governmental agencies and non-profit organizations that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the Department of Transportation (DOT) to provide non-emergency transportation services and recipients of assistance under section 204 of Title 23 U.S.C .
- and other interested parties (e.g. subregions, ethnic and minority groups, older and retired persons, special interest non-profit agencies, environmental groups, educational institutions, women's organizations, private sector)

The following goals and procedures are designed to encourage participation and provide opportunities to comment on the development and approval of SCAG's RTPs, RTIPs, the Regional Comprehensive Plan, (In addition to this Plan, SCAG adheres to the public process required by CEQA for our PEIR and related environmental review documents.) and other products prepared by SCAG that statutorily require public participation or for which the Regional Council determines is necessary.

## Public Participation Plan Goals

The five primary goals of SCAG's Public Participation Plan include:

**Goal 1:** Implement an open and ongoing participation process that ensures citizen, agency and interested party participation in, and input into, regional transportation planning and programming.

**Goal 2:** Provide full public access and information to key decisions in the regional transportation planning process.

**Goal 3:** Disseminate clear, concise and timely information to citizens, affected agencies and interested parties.

**Goal 4:** Provide timely responses to issues, concerns, and comments raised by the public regarding the development and implementation of regional transportation plans, programs, and projects. Ensure that the comments received are considered and incorporated into the deliberations regarding proposed plans and programs.

**Goal 5:** Enhance the participation process including reaching out to those communities that have been underrepresented and/or underserved.

## Public Participation Plan Procedures in Obtaining Goals

**Goal 1:** **Implement an open and ongoing participation process that ensures citizen, agency and interested party participation in, and input into, regional transportation planning and programming.**

- SCAG's participation program will include public outreach and communications for all major plans and programs. This includes establishing procedures and responsibilities for (1) informing, involving and incorporating public opinion into the planning process, (2) consultative involvement of designated agencies (i.e., federal, state and local agencies, county transportation commissions and air quality management/pollution control districts) on technical data and modeling used in developing regional plans and determining transportation improvement program and regional transportation improvement program conformity, (3) designating lead staff persons who are knowledgeable about the entire planning process to be responsible for the participation program, and (4) providing adequate funds and staff resources to implement the participation program.

- Stress the requirement to encourage, assess and provide for public participation to staff, consultants, stakeholder

organizations and others as well as stress the importance of an inclusionary process and dialogue and encourage staff to regard citizens, subregional organizations and agencies as working partners.

- Interact and seek input from a broad spectrum of interested stakeholders through various task forces and working groups that meet on a regular, on-going basis to review, discuss, and provide feedback on various SCAG initiatives, plans and programs.

- Integrate the outreach effort of the subregional organizations and transportation and air quality agencies into the SCAG process.

- Encourage proponents and opponents to participate in the regional planning process and acknowledge the value of their input.

- Update and maintain the contact databases and audience categories within the Communication and Management System (CMS). Expand current list categories to include the additional list of parties outlined in SAFETEA-LU. These contact databases should be reviewed and updated at least twice per year and on an on-going basis as individual changes occur.

- Provide outreach to citizens, groups, agencies and subregional organizations and inform them of how their involvement has affected the plan.

- Assemble, organize and equip a participation and outreach team of transportation planners, environmental planners, analysts and other technical staff, public affairs staff, management staff, and elected officials to conduct presentations, hold briefings, workshops, hearings, during the year to diverse groups and organizations throughout the region.

- Conduct hands-on, interactive workshops such as the Compass workshops, to encourage community involvement and participation and obtain feedback from local residents, regional stakeholders and local governments (planners, demographers, and elected officials).

- Provide outreach assistance, including to under-represented areas, using Member Relations Officers who are geographically focused and knowledgeable on the issues of the subregion.

- Train staff in effective communication and public relations skills by providing clear, consistent and concise primary messages for media and public involvement and interaction.

- Complete target group and media mailing lists for targeted audiences and determine the best methods for distributing information: speaker's bureau, fact sheets, brochures, flyers, white papers, plan summaries, newsletters, PowerPoint presentations, press releases, public service announcements, press advisories, press conferences, telephone and personal interviews.

- Develop memoranda of understanding or agreements with appropriate agencies, as needed.

- Participate in regular monthly meetings with the CEOs of the county transportation commissions.

**Goal 2:** **Provide full public access and information to key decisions in the regional transportation planning process.**

- Utilize SCAG's web site to provide information, announce draft and final plan releases, encourage feedback and comments from the public, make draft and final plans and corresponding documents available, provide contact information, educate about SCAG and SCAG initiatives, inform of upcoming events and meetings, post meeting agendas and minutes and provide publications. Ensure that the information available is easy-to-read and accessible and that the web site is compliant with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Post public notices of the draft product in at least one major newspaper in each of the six member counties and include community newspapers and ethnic press.

- Follow-up on public notices to increase participation. Assign staff to look out for non-participating public interests.

- Conduct at least one public hearing for the draft RTP, TIP and EIR and other major plans as needed. Announce public hearings in printed materials, on SCAG's web site, and in local newspapers. Provide translation services at these hearings, if needed.

- Develop procedures for public hearings. Include the time to be allotted to each speaker and how the order of appearance is determined. A written explanation of adopted procedures should be distributed to participants both prior to and at the hearing. Make arrangements for the submission of written statements in addition to verbal comments.

- Hold monthly meetings with the subregional coordinators to review upcoming Regional Council and Policy Committee agendas and conduct other coordinating activities.

- Keep interested parties informed with progress reports during the product development, review and adoption phases.

**Goal 3: Disseminate clear, concise and timely information to citizens, affected agencies and interested parties.**

- SCAG, together with its subregional partners and other stakeholder organizations, will notify interested parties through traditional meeting announcements, newspapers, public service announcements, press releases, special mailers, publications and agendas of committees, meetings, workshops, briefings, web site postings, email communications and other opportunities to participate, as appropriate.

- Make electronically accessible to the public, all draft and final plans, fact sheets, publications such as *Your Guide to SCAG*, the *Benefits of Membership*, *Member Handbook* and the *Legislative Reference Guide*, the Overall Work Program, the eVision newsletter, key PowerPoint presentations, meeting agendas and minutes, data and other planning-related information, and a calendar of upcoming events on SCAG's web site at www.scag.ca.gov. Encourage public involvement on the web site. Ensure that the information provided is timely, accessible and easy-to-understand.

- Provide complete and easy-to-understand information, including summaries and one-page fact sheets on major plans and initiatives at the beginning of and throughout the planning process and define the issues and alternatives in a concise, straightforward and consistent manner.

- Update annually and disseminate SCAG's citizen guide "Your Guide to SCAG" which succinctly informs the public about SCAG and the regional planning process, highlights major

SCAG initiatives, cites the importance of public involvement, invites participation, and identifies key contacts.

- Provide updated information about SCAG's activities, plans, actions, upcoming events, legislative efforts, and subregional activities in the eVision electronic newsletter which is disseminated to local elected officials, legislators, subregions, commissions, air districts, other interested parties and members of the public at least eight times per year. The eVision newsletter is accessible through SCAG's web site. In addition, archival copies are readily available on the site.

- Maintain and update media mailing lists that include metropolitan and local community newspapers, radio, television and cable outlets, trade journals, wire services, ethnic and foreign-language media, government and legal publications and special interest press directed at older Americans, the disabled, Native Americans and students.

- Implement the media outreach strategies contained in the agency's overall Communications Strategy. This includes press releases, media advisories, calendar advisories, media interviews on television and radio talk shows and public affairs programs, public notices, op-ed articles in local newspapers, editorial board meetings, development of consistent media messages on major SCAG initiatives, and outreach to ethnic and foreign language press.

- Develop printed materials, fact sheets, brochures, summaries, fliers, pocket guides, promotional literature, PowerPoint presentations, relating to SCAG and SCAG's initiatives and other publications for general population distribution in concise, understandable, non-technical language.

- Maintain an updated calendar of events on SCAG's web site, accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Translate the most significant web site information and printed materials into other languages when needed and contingent upon resource and budget availability. Include the ethnic press in media advisories, press releases, press conference notifications, calendar advisories and other media communications. Maintain and update ethnic press contacts in the media contact database.

- Disseminate the *Challenges Facing Southern California* brochure at meetings, conferences, through mailings, and in SCAG's lobby area which highlights SCAG's major initiatives, invites participation within the community, solicits feedback and encourages citizens to "Get Informed and Get Involved."

- Make presentations on various SCAG initiatives throughout the region to citizens, community groups, environmental groups, business organizations, minorities, faith-based organizations, subregions, other stakeholders, and other interested parties. Staff throughout the organization, along with Regional Council members, will conduct the presentations. Determine the appropriate staff and agency representatives to speak on policy, technical and media issues. Staff will proactively encourage presentations be included on various meeting agendas.

- Prepare technical and non-technical PowerPoint presentations for workshop, conference, hearings and other meeting use to showcase SCAG and SCAG's initiatives and simplify the regional planning process. Ensure that the presentations are easy-to-understand, interesting, and invites participation and involvement. Utilize graphics and animation to make the presentations more interesting and inviting. Tailor presentations to the audience by including subregional statistics and addressing primary areas of audience concern. Enhancements to the presentations should be based on community input and speaker feedback. Maintain a library of all PowerPoint presentations created. Post relevant PowerPoint presentations on SCAG's web site for public access.

- Utilize visualization techniques whenever possible such as maps, videos, PowerPoint presentations with graphics and animation, flowcharts, computer simulation, interactive GIS systems, photorealistic visualizations, video fly-throughs, illustrative drawings, simulated photos, sketches, and photo manipulation scenario planning tools to better and more easily communicate technical planning issues and strategies.

- Design and display a modular exhibit for "on-the-road" presentations and exhibit tables at conferences, workshops, meetings and other public events. The exhibit will be visually appealing and will graphically showcase SCAG's major planning initiatives to diverse audiences. This exhibit will increase the public's awareness of the work of SCAG and the importance of public involvement.

- Explore new opportunities using state-of-the-art communications and information technology for reaching remote audiences.

**Goal 4:** **Provide timely responses to issues, concerns, and comments raised by the public regarding the development and implementation of regional transportation plans, programs, and projects. Ensure that the comments received are considered and incorporated into the deliberations regarding proposed plans and programs.**

- SCAG will review and consider all public comments in the regional transportation planning process. Comments will be recorded, tracked and maintained through the Communication Management Software System (CMS). The system will provide a list of all comments received, the name of the commenter, the comment date, the topic, the comment message, and SCAG's response to the comment. All comments received will be responded to in a timely manner.

- Evaluate public comments received throughout the planning process and assess whether, and to what extent, modifications were made in the draft documents as a result of the comments received.

**Goal 5:** **Enhance the participation process including seeking out and considering the needs of traditionally underrepresented and/or underserved persons. Ensure that minority and low-income persons have meaningful access to the public outreach and involvement activities.**

- Coordinate with individuals, institutions or organizations to reach out to members in the affected minority and/or low income communities.

- Choose an event site and time convenient for participants. All events should be fully accessible to all citizens, including disabled, low-income and minority communities. Encourage the participation of elected officials at events and hearings.

- Provide assistance, if requested 14 days prior to the event, to people with disabilities, including individuals who are blind, have low-vision or are hearing impaired.

- Provide language assistance, if requested 14 days prior to the event, to Limited English Proficient Persons.

- Evaluate public participation efforts at the end of each phase of the planning process so that necessary modifications can be made for subsequent phases. Provide recommended strategies to enhance the outreach program and better serve the underrepresented segments of the region.

- Annually update the agency's overall Communications Strategy and seek Regional Council approval of the plan and recommended strategies.

- Develop and adopt a plan for providing language assistance for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP Plan).

- Maintain an outreach calendar of presentations, workshops and hearings which will enable staff to map presentations to determine geographically where we've been, the type of audience and the topic thus enhancing our ability to strengthen outreach to underrepresented areas. The goal is to average at least 15 presentations per month.

- Consider budgeting for occasional public opinion surveys of community interests and needs to determine public opinion on regional issues.

- Consider budgeting for surveys of demonstration project participants (such as Compass Blueprint) to provide better, more efficient services.

- Assess how effective the agency's communication strategies have been in impacting public policy. Consider conducting surveys of members, partners, stakeholders early in the planning process and again later to determine the affect of the communication effort.

**"The better the citizenry as a whole are educated, the wider and more sensible public participation, debate and social mobility will be."**
*John Ralston Saul*

PC Docs #119724 v7