

SB 375 Regional Targets Advisory Committee Summary and Highlights
Prepared by Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Staff
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The Regional Targets Advisory Committee (RTAC) was convened at the beginning of 2009 to advise the California Air Resources Board (ARB) on methodology for developing regional emission reduction targets under SB 375. The final version of the Report was released on September 30, 2009.

The RTAC report, attached to this memo, provides a starting point for the implementation of SB 375 statewide, and lays out a series of next steps that will be engaged here in Southern California and in other regions.

SCAG was active in the process for developing the RTAC report, and involved regional partners and stakeholders to inform our input. Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks represented SCAG on the Committee, and staff were regular participants.

The purpose of the RTAC, as delineated in SB 375, was to prepare a report to the Air Resources Board that would recommend a methodology and factors to be considered in the development of regional targets. The ARB itself, then, is to develop actual targets in consultation with the regions by September of 2010.

The RTAC was comprised of a variety of experts and stakeholders from around the State, including the four larger Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), experts on modeling and transportation issues, environmental advocates, the building industry, and others. A full list of RTAC members is included in the RTAC report.

Highlights of the final report, with notes on the significance for the upcoming SCAG process include:

A. Metrics and Technical Issues

Uniform/relative target metric – The core of the RTAC’s charge was to recommend a “metric” for regional targets. The RTAC resolved this issue by agreeing to use a uniform Statewide target expressed in relative terms (a percent rather than a distinct number), and compared to current conditions. For example, the targets will be expressed as reducing X% of per capita emissions in future years compared to per capita emissions in 2005. The RTAC further recommends that regional flexibility and regional differences may be accounted for through adjustments made on a case by case basis. It was recognized through the committee’s discussions that, for example, the rate of growth in a region is a key variable affecting the ability of individual regions to achieve a result.

Components of the Sustainable Communities Strategy – The RTAC report clarifies what is expected to be included in Sustainable Communities Strategies. The elements of a strategy will consist of:

- Land Use Strategy, including growth distribution, and general locations, densities, intensities of future development.
- Transportation investment focusing on infrastructure (e.g., transit projects).
- Other transportation policies including Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation System Management (TSM).
- Technological improvements initiated by local and regional agencies that can be demonstrated to go above and beyond what is envisioned under AB 32.

Modeling and Best Management Practices (BMPs) – The Committee focused much of its effort on considering the relative capabilities of models and other analytical tools that could be used to measure performance of the SCS. While the Committee found that there is not comparability among the regions of the State in terms of tools, it did recognize that a) regions are required to model the performance of their strategies in response to federal transportation law, and b) that efforts are underway to improve and standardize modeling tools around the State. As such, it is expected that models will be a critical component in the development of SCSs, as well as in the compliance demonstration. The committee also recognized the potential for using BMPs, expressed in a point system built from a menu of policy options as a supplement to performance measured by modeling. The committee recommended that a statewide list of BMPs be developed for informational purposes. For the SCAG region, the use of BMPs will be critical as a communication tool, and as a way to consider options as strategies are developed around the region.

B. Policy Issues

Ambitious and achievable – The RTAC’s recommendations are built on a foundation that targets should be ambitious and achievable. That is, regions should have to exert effort, and move beyond the status quo to meet targets, but it should not be out of their reach to do so.

Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) vs. Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) – Related to the discussion on “ambitious and achievable,” the RTAC report states that if the targets are set appropriately, most regions should be able to adopt an SCS to meet the target (as opposed to relying on the unconstrained APS allowed in the law). The committee wished to encourage regions to develop an SCS to meet the target because, as part of the federally required Regional Transportation Plan, there is greater assurance that strategies will be implemented.

Incentive Based Approach – The RTAC recognized as one of the intents of SB 375 that implementation should be built around incentives for regions and local agencies to take appropriate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The report includes several recommended approaches that can be implemented at the State or regional level to provide incentives including, among other areas,

recognitions programs, further regulatory relief, and preference for grants and other funding.

Public Participation – The RTAC placed a high value on public participation and communication as part of a statewide strategy for implementing SB 375. Of note, the committee’s proposed seven step process for finalizing targets was scheduled in such a way as to allow stakeholder input at the statewide level before targets are finalized. Further, the selection of a uniform statewide metric for target-setting was motivated by the Committee’s expressed desire to have a target that is readily relatable for residents around the State. Finally, the identification of a BMP approach, as described above, was also intended to foster broad involvement and interaction in development of strategies. A section of the report, prepared and submitted by SCAG, discusses public involvement strategies and techniques.

Economic conditions and impacts – The Committee was cognizant of current economic conditions, and was given several presentations from the development and academic sectors in order to inform their recommendations. The Committee’s recommendations underscore the need to account for economic conditions as a function of regional forecasting.

Social Equity – The Committee, in their deliberations and in the final report, raised several issues related to housing and social equity. The Committee recommended that the development of the BMP list should incorporate information on the potential disproportionate impacts related to transportation access, housing cost and availability, and displacement of lower income households.

C. Process and Next Steps

Target Setting Process / Preliminary Draft Statewide Target and Sketch Planning Exercise – The RTAC report lays out a seven step process for the determination of regional targets. As part of this exercise, ARB will determine a preliminary target in the Spring of 2010, and will seek public and stakeholder feedback before issuing a formal draft target, as required by the law, in June 2010. The first step in this process will be for the MPOs to prepare a sketch scenario exercise to better understand what can be achieved, and to submit information to ARB by March 1, 2010.