MEMO

TO: Transportation and Communications Committee

FROM: Brett Sears, Associate Regional Planner, Environmental Planning, (213) 236-1810, sears@scag.ca.gov

DATE: August 5, 2004

SUBJECT: Alternative Fuels

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Information only.

SUMMARY:

The Transportation and Communications Committee asked SCAG staff to report on SCAG policy regarding alternative fuels. SCAG has been a member of the Clean Cities Program, a program established by the U.S. Department of Energy to expand the use of vehicles operating on alternative fuels, since 1991 and has incorporated policy supporting alternative fuels into a Regional Council resolution and several planning documents.

BACKGROUND:

At its May 1991 meeting, the Regional Council approved a request to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy to designate SCAG as a member of the Clean Cities Program. The Clean Cities Program was established by the U.S. Department of Energy to support locally based government/industry partnerships in the expanded use of vehicles operating on alternative fuels. Currently, The Partnership administers the Clean Cities Program in the SCAG region.

SCAG has entered into voluntary Memoranda of Understanding with several partners on behalf of the Clean Cities Program in order to:

- Join in a coordinated effort to promote and accommodate the acquisition and use of alternative fuel vehicles, change local and state laws to facilitate alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure, and establish necessary refueling sites and servicing facilities;
- Provide assistance in the collection and analysis of environmental, economic, and performance data on alternative fuel vehicle use and experience, and distribution of information regarding alternative fuels and vehicles;
- Work with public private organizations such as The Partnership to encourage engine manufacturers and alternative fuel producers to develop vehicles and infrastructures that meet local and regional needs;

- Develop applications for funding service from the state and federal government or other appropriate sources to sustain the objectives of the program.

The Regional Council approved a resolution which supported existing and proposed clean fleets bills and encouraged local governments to purchase alternative fuels vehicles at its October 1999 meeting.

SCAG has addressed alternative fuels in several of its planning documents. SCAG's 1994 Regional Mobility Plan contains an Advanced Transportation Technology Strategy that includes Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) and Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) and support for The Partnership. SCAG's Energy Chapter of the Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide recommends implementing the development of alternative fuels, AFVs, and ZEVs. SCAG has sponsored clean fuel and electric vehicle symposia, including the Clean Fleets Symposium held in Long Beach in December 1999 and the National Alternative Fuel Vehicle Odyssey Fair held in Diamond Bar in April 2004.

At its June 1999 meeting, the Regional Council voted to oppose AB 71 (Cunneen) "High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes: Inherently Low-Emission Vehicles (ILEVs)." The bill would have allowed ILEVs to use HOV lanes, as well as HOV on-ramps. Proponents of AB 71 maintained that permitting ILEVs on HOV facilities would be an incentive to purchase these types of vehicles. The Energy and Environment Committee voted to support the bill in order to facilitate the introduction of ILEVs. The Transportation and Communications Committee voted to oppose the bill on the principle that the HOV lanes were built to reduce congestion and this bill would undermine that principle.

FISCAL IMPACT: All work related to this memo was contained within the FY03-04 work program.