



Southern California Association of Governments  
January 4, 2024

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2023**

THE FOLLOWING MINUTES ARE A SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (EEC). A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THE ACTUAL MEETING IS AVAILABLE AT: <http://scag.iqm2.com/Citizens/>.

The Energy and Environment Committee (EEC) of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) held its regular meeting both in person and virtually (telephonically and electronically). A quorum was present.

**Members Present**

**Hon. Deborah Robertson (Chair)**

**Sup. Luis Plancarte (Vice Chair)**

- Hon. Damon L. Alexander
- Hon. Art Bishop
- Hon. Phil Brock
- Hon. Margaret Clark
- Hon. Robert Copeland
- Hon. Jenny Crosswhite
- Hon. Ned Davis
- Hon. Rick Denison
- Hon. Shari Horne
- Hon. Dan Kalmick
- Hon. Joe Kalmick
- Hon. Elaine Litster
- Hon. Vianey Lopez
- Hon. Lauren Meister
- Hon. Oscar Ortiz
- Hon. Daniel Ramos
- Hon. Nick Schultz
- Hon. Jennifer Stark
- Hon. Connor Traut
- Hon. Dale Welty
- Hon. Edward H.J. Wilson

***Rialto***

- San Bernardino*
- Town of Apple Valley*
- Santa Monica*
- Rosemead*
- Signal Hill*
- Santa Paula*
- Westlake Village*
- Yucca Valley*
- Laguna Woods*
- Huntington Beach*
- Seal Beach*
- Simi Valley*
- 
- West Hollywood*
- Indio*
- Adelanto*
- Burbank*
- Claremont*
- Buena Park*
- Canyon Lake*
- Signal Hill*

**District 8**

**Imperial County**

- SBCTA
- SBCTA
- WSCCOG
- SGVCOG
- GCCOG
- District 47
- LVMCOG
- SBCTA
- OCCOG
- OCCOG
- District 20
- VCOG
- Ventura County
- District 41
- CVAG
- SBCTA
- AVCJPA
- SGVCOG
- OCCOG
- WRCOG
- GCCOG

**Members Not Present**

Hon. Ana Beltran	<i>Westmoreland</i>	ICTC
Hon. Maria Davila	<i>South Gate</i>	GCCOG
Hon. Britt Huff	<i>Rolling Hills Estates</i>	SBCCOG
Hon. Cynthia Moran	<i>Chino Hills</i>	SBCTA
Hon. Jeannette Sanchez-Palacios	<i>Ventura</i>	VCOG
Hon. Tamala Takahashi	<i>Burbank</i>	SFVCOG
Hon. Stephanie Virgen	<i>Coachella</i>	CVAG

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Deborah Robertson called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and Policy Committee member Daniel Ramos, Adelanto, SBCTA led the Pledge of Allegiance. Staff confirmed a quorum was present.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Chair Deborah Robertson opened the public comment period and provided detailed instructions on how to provide public comments. She noted that this was the time for members of the public to offer comment for matters that are within SCAG’s jurisdiction but are not listed on the agenda.

She reminded the public to submit comments via email to [EECPublicComment@scag.ca.gov](mailto:EECPublicComment@scag.ca.gov). She noted that public comments received via email after 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 1, 2023, would be announced and included as part of the official record of the meeting.

SCAG staff noted no public comments had been received before the 5:00 p.m. deadline on November 1, 2023.

Seeing no public comment, Chair Robertson closed the public comment period for matters not listed on the agenda.

**REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no requests to prioritize agenda items.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

There were no public comments on the Consent Calendar.

Approval Items

1. Minutes of the Meeting – October 5, 2023

Receive and File

2. Energy and Environment Committee Outlook and Future Agenda Items
3. 2020 Sustainable Communities Program – Overview
4. SCAG's Clean Transportation Technology Compendium

A MOTION was made (Clark) to approve the Consent Calendar with a revision to be made to the October 5, 2023 meeting minutes to reflect Councilmember Margaret Clark's comments regarding housing bills to require small yard setbacks as it could impede the tree canopy development. Motion was SECONDED (Ramos) and passed by the following votes:

**AYES:** Alexander, Bishop, Brock, Clark, Copeland, Crosswhite, Davis, Denison, Horne, D. Kalmick, J. Kalmick, Litster, Lopez, Meister, Ortiz, Plancarte, Ramos, Robertson, Schultz, Stark, Traut, and Welty (22)

**NOES:** None (0)

**ABSTAINS:** None (0)

**ACTION ITEM**

5. Sustainable Communities Program – Civic Engagement, Equity, and Environmental Justice Award Recommendation

There were no public comments on Item 4.

Karen Calderon, Senior Regional Planner, stated that SCAG has been required to evaluate and disclose potential environmental impacts of the plan implementation since 2012. She noted that SCAG had developed a PEIR which included a region-wide, first-tier, programmatic level assessment. She reminded the members that the EEC authorized the release of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) in October 2022 which allowed SCAG staff to proceed with public scoping and tribal consultation until January 2023. She indicated that public and stakeholder outreach continued until September 2023. Ms. Calderon shared a brief recap of information that was presented during the April 6, 2023, and July 7, 2023 EEC meetings before providing a summary of the next steps.

The comprehensive staff report was included in the agenda packet and posted on the SCAG website. The meeting video is also available on the SCAG website.

A MOTION was made (Ramos) to recommend that the Regional Council authorize the release of the Connect SoCal 2024 Draft PEIR for a 65-day public review and comment period beginning November 9, 2023, and ending January 12, 2024, and direct staff to carry out administrative tasks for the 2024 Draft PEIR public release. Motion was SECONDED (Brock) and passed by the following votes:

**AYES:** Bishop, Brock, Clark, Copeland, Crosswhite, Davis, Denison, Horne, D. Kalmick, J. Kalmick, Litster, Lopez, Meister, Ortiz, Plancarte, Ramos, Robertson, Schultz, Stark, Traut, and Welty (21)

**NOES:** None (0)

**ABSTAINS:** None (0)

#### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

##### 6. Department of Energy State and Community Energy Programs

There were no public comments on Item 6.

Christine Knapp, Community Innovation and Technical Assistance Program Manager, DOE, reported that the Department of Energy (DOE) recognized the immense challenge climate change poses to the country and the immense opportunity of creating new jobs and driving the economy as well as improving public health and righting the wrongs. She shared that the DOE investments align with the administration's near- and long-term climate and clean energy goals with the goal to reduce emissions to 50% by 2030, 100% clean energy by 2033, and net-zero emissions by 2050. She noted that over \$500 billion had been invested in the clean energy transition and there were three steps towards meeting those goals: the Inflation Reduction Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and CHIPS and Science Act. She clarified that Congress gave the DOE new mandates and unprecedented funding in the amount of \$100 billion in grants and rebates and \$250 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

Her presentation included information on new and existing funding resources that are available to state, local, tribal governments and community organizations to invest in clean energy solutions. These resources included formula grants, competitive grant awards, consumer rebate grants, and technical assistance for a wide variety of eligible projects and programs. She also provided information on partnership opportunities, background on the various programs, their timelines, and processes. Some of the community and local government programs she provided information on

were the State and Community Energy Programs, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants program, Renew America's Schools and Renew America's Nonprofits, Energy Future Grants, the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership Program, the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation collaboration on electric vehicle infrastructure, Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas, LEAP a technical assistance program, the Local Government Energy Program, and the Building Energy Codes Program.

She also noted that residents should be made aware of the tax credits available to them and that local governments can assist by spreading that word around tax credits for appliances and home improvements, clean energy tools like solar panels and batteries, and clean vehicles. She shared that the DOE launched on their website the Energy Savings Hub for consumers to find what opportunities are available to them. She shared that elective pay allows local governments and tax-exempt entities to receive a cash payment from the IRS for eligible clean energy investments. She also shared that there was a new DOE department called the Office of Community Engagement (OCE), that works to help with community engagement, assisting consumers with finding funding, resources, and other opportunities. She also indicated that there was a variety of technical assistance and noted that there were tools and resources such as the State and Local Planning for Energy program that can help with scenario planning for communities and understanding carbon emissions.

Lastly, Ms. Knapp encouraged members to sign up for DOE email updates to get a monthly newsletter that will spotlight new opportunities and resources and suggested they visit the DOE website.

Policy Committee Member Margaret Clark indicated they were all concerned about DEI and referred to page 228 of the packet. She stated the concern should be to look at clean energy choice. She stated they were getting away from fossil fuels but there were ways to make clean natural gas from organics. She indicated that in California they had to recycle every bit of food waste and that there were ways to make clean natural gas out of this. She stated from an equity standpoint, gas was much cheaper than electricity and she expressed concern. She asked if they were pushing for everything to be electricity. Ms. Knapp acknowledged the question and noted that she could not comment on this.

Policy Committee Member Daniel Ramos asked if the Justice 40 tool online was accurate and if a specific city wasn't listed if that meant they were not eligible for funds under this program. Ms. Knapp acknowledged the question and indicated that cities should let them know and explain why they think they qualify as an environmental justice community.

Policy Committee Member Oscar Ortiz asked if there are programs to help people with energy efficiency retrofits. Ms. Knapp suggested the weatherization assistance program and the rebate programs.

Policy Committee Member Jennifer Stark asked if DOE offered toolkits with communications materials for communities and stated that it would be helpful to have a centralized message so that cities' communications are consistent. Ms. Knapp indicated this was something they were trying to create as part of the technical assistance offering.

Policy Committee Member Lauren Meister asked if tax credits available to consumers will go through the end of December 2023 or into 2024. Ms. Knapp indicated that she was not aware of any deadline but indicated that starting January 2024, a tax credit can be transferred to the dealer to reduce the upfront purchase price.

Policy Committee Member Art Bishop asked about lowering energy bills in Southern California with Southern California Edison and if this was something SCAG was following. Ryan Wolfe, Department Manager of Sustainable and Resilient Development, indicated he was not aware of SCAG following this item closely and indicated they could take a look at this. He requested information about grid issues be incorporated into future presentations as the issue was affecting Southern California broadly.

Chair Deborah Robertson stated that community-based organizations can help create private public partnerships to address issues in communities and provide employment opportunities through such investments. She further shared that in her own city there was a battery farm.

Policy Committee Member Art Brock emphasized the comments made by Policy Committee Member Jennifer Stark and stated there was a need for a communications toolkit to help distribute information and make communities aware of these opportunities, otherwise they will never know.

Policy Committee Member Oscar Ortiz requested that when the issue of grid capacity is brought up that they also include Imperial Irrigation District in the conversations for the Coachella Valley and Imperial Valley.

Policy Committee Member Edward Wilson stated that no matter the efforts, there will be people who don't know about it, so it's important to identify how communication and information reaches the right people. He stated that there was a need to redefine how to transport energy and move beyond existing transmission lines using right-of-way, and noted there was solar and batteries that can create the energy at the source. He stated that this will change the economics of energy companies and they will have to adjust to this new set of circumstances, and that distributed energy resources are available in the case of disasters.

The comprehensive staff report was included in the agenda packet and posted on the SCAG website. The meeting video is also available on the SCAG website.

#### 7. New SCAG Resource: Climate Resilient Urban Greening Best Practices

There were no public comments on Item 7.

Maya Luong, Civic Spark Fellow, SCAG, reported she had researched climate, resilience, urban greening resources and compiled a resource hub on SCAG's website that went live in July 2023. She shared that the Regional Council adopted the climate action resolution and the Water Action resolution and that the resource hub would address the directives from the climate and water action resolution. She explained that extreme heat was the leading cause of weather and climate change related deaths in the United States. She also shared that urban heat islands effect refers to the increase in temperature in urban environments compared to surrounding areas and pose health risks to residents. She further explained that urban heat islands occur throughout the SCAG region but are most concentrated in formerly redlined areas and disadvantaged areas. She shared that some of the urban greening benefits that they knew about were that it improved mental health and stress levels, reduced air pollution, it provides shade and lowers surrounding temperatures, and improved comfort for active transportation users. She also noted that other benefits included reducing stormwater runoff, replenishing groundwater, and reducing electricity use, greenhouse gas emissions and vehicles miles traveled. She also explained that urban forestry best practices included right tree, right place, site-specific evaluation, adequate soil and planning for tree care in the first ten years or until the tree grows to full maturity. She noted that engagement and collaboration with local communities and plans for post-planning monitoring and evaluation were key for success.

She also shared that urban greening management plan establishes a shared vision for an urban forest rather than tree ordinances which are more like city rules that can create standards and procedures for certain sections of trees. She noted that a few samples of urban forest management plans were linked on the resource hub and include examples from the cities of Sierra Madre and Santa Monica. She shared that new trees currently being planted have not been projected or known to survive in the new temperatures, precipitation, and water supply that will exist in the future with climate change. She indicated that the key things to consider when considering climate resiliency in urban forests was to get to know the local specific climate hazards by mid to end of the century and tree characteristics. She indicated there were several tools to assist with tree planting in a changing climate. She noted that the first one was called risk factor, which shows the projected risk of flood, extreme heat, fire, and wind factor. She noted another tool was CAL-ADAPT which provides projected mid-century (2035-2064) and end-century (2070-2099) for annual average maximum and minimum temperatures and annual average precipitation. She also shared that the California Urban

Forest Inventory and Urban Tree Detector was another useful resource. Lastly, Ms. Luong stated it was important that cities consider non-native and native plants for the ability to withstand the future climate. She noted that an expert presentation on this topic was included and encouraged the members to view the report if they wanted to learn more.

Policy Committee Member Phil Brock recognized the inclusion of Santa Monica's urban forest plan and stated that there was a need for a private tree ordinance as well to increase the standards required for removing private trees that may be historic. He emphasized the importance of looking at both public and private urban trees. He stated that palm trees did nothing to help cool cities or protect from climate change, so there was a need to increase urban forest instead of continuing to lose urban trees. He stated that there was no tree requirement built into state housing requirements, so housing needs could negatively impact urban forest.

Policy Committee Member Edward Wilson expressed thanks for creating the presentation and the resource which he will share with his city.

Policy Committee Member Lauren Meister referenced SB 306 and stated this would add an extreme heat action plan to the state's climate plans and require the state to show how it will be dealing with extreme heat. She stated this resource will be very useful for that. She stated West Hollywood was losing a lot of urban trees, and that this resource will be useful for addressing this issue. She stated that the State needs to increase requirements around urban forest to protect and expand urban trees even while addressing the housing shortage as development requirements don't currently address heat.

Policy Committee Member Margaret Clark asked if there was a website where an address or city can be entered and be provided information about what kind of trees are most appropriate. Ms. Loung indicated that that there was not.

Policy Committee Member Jenny Crosswhite stated that wildfire prevention efforts are often contrary to urban greening efforts, and that it should be explored how urban greening can occur in vulnerable wildfire areas. She stated that more conversation around urban greening and best practices would be valuable.

Chair Deborah Robertson stated that drought-tolerant landscaping can be more expensive to maintain than traditional landscaping, and that traditional landscaping has greater cooling and climate benefits, so it would be worth investigating. She highlighted benefits of growing bamboo for energy and climate resilience.

The comprehensive staff report was included in the agenda packet and posted on the SCAG website. The meeting video is also available on the SCAG website.



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**CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Robertson asked Vice Chair Plancarte to share updates regarding their tour of Imperial County.

Vice Chair Plancarte stated that representatives from SCAG attended the Imperial County Tour to visit a California Highway Patrol facility located along the U.S./Mexico border commercial port of entry. He explained the facility is responsible for inspecting semi-trucks to ensure the vehicles are conforming to California and USDOT standards. He shared that the Imperial County Transportation Commission is currently building a multimodal station in Calexico which will operate from 6:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. to accommodate the farm workers coming from the Mexican border. Lastly, he noted that they toured a tiny home project which was a joint venture with Imperial Valley College, the city of El Centro and Imperial County. He explained that full time students experiencing homelessness would be eligible for the tiny homes and the county would be offering full wraparound services.

Chair Robertson thanked Vice Chair Plancarte for his report and stated that the number of pedestrians that cross between the U.S./Mexico border was astronomical and that the temperature there can get as high as 124 degrees. She expressed that a humanitarian effort should be made to put trees around the areas without shade so those waiting to cross the border can be provided with some relief.

Chair Robertson reported that SCAG was hosting its 14th annual Southern California Economic Summit on December 7 at the Sheraton Grand in Downtown Los Angeles. She noted that the program would explore the major economic factors that inform Connect SoCal 2024, SCAG's draft Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy – from generating new jobs to creating efficiency gains for commuters, shipping, and travel.

**STAFF REPORT**

Rachel Wagner, Government Affairs Officer, reported that SCAG would be hosting several workshops in each county for elected officials to preview the draft plan, ask questions, and share feedback on the draft Connect SoCal Regional Community Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy until December 14<sup>th</sup>.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

There were no announcements.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chair Robertson adjourned the Energy and Environment Committee meeting at 11:46 a.m.

[MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE EEC]

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