

Regional Advance Mitigation Program – Advisory Task Group (RAMP-ATG)

List of Public Comments

Received **before** 5pm on Thursday, February 17, 2022

	Date Received	Sender Name	Organization	Subject Matter
1.	2/15/2022	Josh Newman, State Senator, District 29 Phillip Chen Assemblymember, District 55	California Legislature	Support for the Creation of a Regional Advance Mitigation Program
2.	2/16/2022	Pat Bates, Senator, District 36	California State Senate	SCAG Regional Advance Mitigation Program (SUPPORT)



February 15, 2022

Mr. Kome Ajise
Southern California Association of Governments
900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017

RE: Support for the Creation of a Regional Advance Mitigation Program

Submitted via email to: SCAGGreenRegion@scaq.ca.gov

Dear Mr. Ajise:

We write in strong support of the creation of a Regional Advance Mitigation Program (RAMP) by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), as described in the Program Environmental Impact Report for the 2020 Connect SoCal Regional Transportation Plan. We appreciate SCAG's inclusion of this innovative mechanism that is designed to meet both transportation and conservation goals.

In 2006, Orange County voters passed the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Renewed Measure M. Within the measure was a commitment to create a RAMP that would offset the freeway project impacts through a comprehensive, rather than piecemeal, approach. The piecemeal approach would have included *13 different environmental documents and permitting processes*. The comprehensive approach streamlined both the environmental review and permit process into one coordinated package. This reduced the risks for OCTA (including litigation exposure) and offered assurances for getting transportation projects funded and built in a timely manner.

Because of this RAMP, the conservation community supported Measure M and has subsequently worked in close collaboration with OCTA to implement the program. To date, the OCTA RAMP has protected approximately 1,300 acres of natural land and funded 350 acres for restoration. This program has allowed the conservation of important prioritized natural lands to occur through willing seller transactions, reduced staff time and budget costs for OCTA and the wildlife/permitting agencies, and reduced the time to complete freeway projects (among other benefits)—not to mention an unprecedented partnership between OCTA and the environmental groups.

OCTA's measure, however, only allows for expenditures *within* Orange County. That's why the proposed SCAG RAMP is so essential: it creates a cross-county RAMP that will allow for broader, more effective collaboration across multiple jurisdictions.

One of the major conservation initiatives in our districts is the protection and restoration of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor, which spans four counties and 31 miles, from the 91 and 71 freeways in Corona to the 60 and 605 freeways in Whittier. The "anchor property" on the east side of the hills is Chino Hills State Park, which has benefited from the OCTA RAMP both from restoration dollars and the acquisition of 300 acres in eastern Brea adjacent to Chino Hills State Park.

A RAMP that spans the entire SCAG region has many benefits for our respective districts, as well as the region at large, including the prospective conservation of a 3,000-acre property that straddles Los Angeles and Orange Counties. This land connects the 4,000 acres of land preserved on the western side of the Wildlife Corridor to the 15,000 acres preserved on the eastern side. A SCAG RAMP would allow for a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional collaboration that complements existing mitigation programs.

To this end, we offer our support for the creation of just such a mitigation program that will allow for improved transportation and conservation planning outcomes, reduced staff and project costs, and the completion of transportation projects faster with a streamlined permitting process, as has already accrued to the benefit of Orange County.

Sincerely,



Josh Newman
State Senator, District 29



Phillip Chen
Assemblymember, District 55

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California State Senate

SENATOR
PATRICIA C. BATES

THIRTY-SIXTH SENATE DISTRICT



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February 16, 2022

Kome Ajise
Southern California Association of Governments
900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017

RE: SCAG Regional Advance Mitigation Program (SUPPORT)

Dear Mr. Ajise,

I am pleased to write this letter of support for the creation of a Regional Advance Mitigation Program (RAMP) by the Southern California Association of Governments. I have extensive experience with the RAMP created in Orange County and urge SCAG to meet its mitigation measures by fulfilling this commitment to create a six-countywide RAMP.

By way of background, I served on the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Board of Directors when the ½ cent sales tax was being considered for renewal in 2005. Because of discussions with the environmental community, OCTA chose to more thoughtfully spend its freeway program revenues through a comprehensive mitigation program—a RAMP. This decision gained considerable support from the environmental community because comprehensive mitigation allows for landscape level and meaningful conservation while also ensuring transportation projects are constructed.

This approach replaced the less strategic piecemeal mitigation which requires environmental review, permitting, and mitigation on a per project basis. By bundling all 13 freeway projects and their impacts together, OCTA was able to simplify its environmental review to one environmental document (instead of 13) and develop a state and federally approved conservation plan for its freeway mitigation. OCTA committed to a minimum of 5% of the freeway program revenues to offset its freeway project impacts. The measure allowed the funding to be spent on acquisition, restoration, and management of natural lands.

When the Environmental Oversight Committee was formed in 2007, I volunteered to serve as Chair to oversee the RAMP's creation. I served in this capacity for eight years when I went into the State Legislature. Working in partnership with both the environmental community and the wildlife agencies, properties were scrutinized through a science-based process for consideration. The process was fair, transparent, and inclusive.

The OCTA program allowed conservation of important prioritized natural lands to occur through willing seller transactions while simultaneously meeting goals of both the conservation community and OCTA. It has also reduced staff time and budget costs for OCTA and its transportation projects, built relationships with the wildlife/permitting agencies, streamlined permitting for projects, and reduced the time to complete freeway projects (among other benefits).

I encourage SCAG to use the OCTA RAMP as a model for its program because it has the ability to be replicated, expanded, and applied across multiple counties—not to mention an unprecedented partnership between transportation agencies and the environmental groups. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patricia A. Bates". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "B".

Senator Pat Bates
District 36