

SHARON NEELY, SCAG'S CHIEF DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TO RETIRE

For nearly seven years, I have had the privilege of working closely with Sharon Neely, seeking her advice, benefiting from her recommendations and knowledge, delegating to her important work assignments and enjoying her friendship. Although I have known Sharon for many years, the most significant part of our working relationship has been in the years she has worked with me at SCAG. I know that many of you on the Regional Council share good memories of Sharon and her work and I can assure you that the staff at SCAG feel likewise. Thus, it is with mixed feelings that I must report to you that Sharon has decided to retire from SCAG at the end of the current fiscal year, in June 2015. She is anxiously awaiting the birth of her second grandchild and is looking forward to many new exciting challenges in the years ahead. For the next few months, she will continue to provide me with support on a number of pressing SCAG issues, including the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy and working with our partners in Washington, D.C. to secure needed funding for our goods movement infrastructure. I'm sure she will also be in contact with many of you to share stories and update information.

Sharon has been a major contributor to many public agencies over the course of her career. She began her career in public service at OCTA (formerly OCTD) in 1974, and since that time her career has been filled with a long and distinguished list of accomplishments. She also very carefully reminded me that everything she has accomplished was part of a team effort, not just something she did on her own. However, all of us who know Sharon recognize that she was undoubtedly the driving force behind all of these accomplishments.

I will be asking you to join with me to publicly thank Sharon for her efforts at a retirement event in June. We will certainly recognize her at the Regional Conference and General Assembly. She will be attending Regional Council meetings in the next few months and I'm sure she would welcome meetings, lunches or friendly telephone calls with many of you. Please take the time to communicate with Sharon and let her know how much you appreciate all she has done for SCAG and for other public agencies. I know that your words will mean much to her. From all of us, she is entitled to a heartfelt, "Well done."

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY - FINAL GUIDELINES RELEASED FOR THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

On Jan. 20, the Strategic Growth Council adopted the final guidelines for the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) grant program. With \$120 million allocated in FY 2014-15 from cap-and-trade auction proceeds, the AHSC Program is intended to further the purposes of AB 32 and SB 375 by investing in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions by creating more compact, infill development patterns and encouraging affordable housing, active transportation and public transit usage. AHSC concept proposals are due to the California Department of Housing and Community Development by Feb. 19. Approved concepts will be invited to submit a full application on March 11, and the full application, if invited, is due by April 15. Two technical assistance workshops have been scheduled in the SCAG region – one on Feb. 5 in San Bernardino and the other on Feb. 6 in Los Angeles. Visit http://sgc.ca.gov/s_ahscprogram.php for more information and to RSVP.

SCAG staff and our partners have been actively working with the Strategic Growth Council to develop an effective and equitable program for this important funding source. SCAG will continue to work with the Strategic Growth Council on updates to the program and guidelines for future rounds of funding to further these objectives. For assistance with the AHSC grant applications, please contact Jonathan Nadler at (213)236-1884 or nadler@scag.ca.gov.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM CYCLE 2 DRAFT GUIDELINES IN REVIEW

SCAG staff is currently working with the California Transportation Commission to provide input on the draft statewide guidelines for Cycle 2 of the Active Transportation Program (ATP). The California Transportation Commission is currently reviewing and revising the statewide guidelines and hosted two workshops to solicit input. To promote the competitiveness of the region, SCAG staff presented comments supporting: Continued funding for community plans; alternative strategies for project allocation; and

continued prioritization of disadvantaged communities. The final statewide guidelines will be presented to the commission for approval on March 25. The call for projects will be released the same day and the deadline for project submission is slated for May 2015. In addition to the state guidelines, SCAG staff is also collaborating with the County Transportation Commissions to revise the guidelines for the regional portion of the ATP. It is anticipated that the regional guidelines will be submitted to Regional Council for approval on May 7.

SCAG PARTICIPATES IN STATEWIDE TASK FORCE TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Commissioned by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, the Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy held their inaugural meeting in Sacramento on Jan. 26. The task force was created to ensure that California workers will be trained for jobs available both now and in the future. As a result of this agency's work in organizing the Fifty Years into the War on Poverty Summit last August, the recent Southern California Economic Recovery & Job Creation Summit and the Regional Action Plan on Poverty, SCAG was invited to participate on the task force as a representative of Southern California. The task force meeting centered around the existing skills gap – how the current workforce is simply not trained for the jobs that are available now, nor for those that will be available in the future. Researchers revealed new data on how California has a worse skills gap problem than the rest of the country, despite having a half a million middle-skill job openings last year in areas like manufacturing, information technology, health care, purchasing and human resources.

The task force's ultimate goal will be to provide in eight months a slate of recommendations that will have the potential to: Create more industry-valued credentials; increase science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills that matter to employers and career pathways for jobs across the state; and encourage more employer co-investment through programs like apprenticeships. Prior to the task force's next meeting in April, five town hall meetings will be held across California to discuss how to better connect the colleges with key industry sectors in those regions. For more information, please visit the task force section on the California Community Colleges' Doing What MATTERS for Jobs and Economy webpage: <http://bit.ly/1zcMag4>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HOLDS MAYOR'S CHALLENGE TO IMPROVE SAFETY FOR BICYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx is calling on all cities to take part in a nationwide effort to create more seamless, convenient and safe biking and walking communities. Participating Mayors will be invited to join Secretary Foxx at the Safer People, Safer Streets Mayors' Challenge Summit on March 12 in Washington, D.C. Participating mayors and others will have access to DOT data and resources – along with being able to share proven approaches from their own cities – to create bike and pedestrian safety programs. "(The summit) is open to all mayors," Foxx said in an interview. "If we can get a critical mass of mayors involved in this ... it will create a groundswell across the country." A Mayor's Challenge webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 10, from noon to 1:00 p.m. To RSVP for the webinar or for more information, please visit the Mayor's Challenge website: <http://www.dot.gov/content/join-challenge>.

CALIFORNIA ROAD USER CHARGE PILOT PROGRAM TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On Jan. 23, the Road User Charge Technical Advisory Committee, established through SB 1077 (DeSaulnier), held its initial meeting in Sacramento. The committee is charged with studying road user charge alternatives to the gas tax, gathering public comment on issues and concerns related to a road user charge pilot program and recommending the design of a pilot program. SCAG Regional Council member Pam O'Connor (Santa Monica) serves on the committee, along with representatives from the telecommunications industry, highway user groups, the data security and privacy industry, privacy rights advocacy organizations, regional transportation agencies, and national research and policymaking bodies. In their initial meeting, the technical advisory committee was briefed on the state of Washington's planning experience with a potential road user charge and Oregon's pilot implementation experience to date.

SCAG STAFF PRESENT RESEARCH AT 2015 TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD ANNUAL MEETING

Several staff from SCAG's transportation and land use planning divisions recently presented at the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) 94th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. The five-day conference is recognized internationally as a sharing point for best practices in the field of transportation and is attended by more than 12,000 professionals, including policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers and representatives of government, industry and academic institutions. SCAG's presence included:

- **Annie Nam** and **Akiko Yamagami**, recognition for John and Jane Q. Public Communication Competition Runner-Up, *"FREIGHTWORKS: Southern California Delivers the Goods"*
- **Tom Vo**, **Jung Seo**, **Frank Wen**, **Simon Choi**, *"Visualization of Origin-Destination Commuter Flow Using CTPP Data and GIS Applications"*
- **Kimberly Clark** and **Marco Anderson**, *"Not Just Golf Carts: Promoting the Use of Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) by Targeting Communities Apt for NEV Adoption"*
- **Frank Wen**, **Simon Choi**, **Kimberly Clark**, *"Smart Growth Emissions Outcomes and Compliance with Title VI"*
- **Bayarmaa Aleksandr**, **Hsi-Hwa Hu**, **Guoxiong Huang** with **Rajesh Paleti**, **Peter Vovsha**, **Rosella Picado**, *"Development of Time Varying Accessibility Measures: Application to the Activity-Based Model for Southern California Region"*

SCAG's staff continues to produce leading-edge research and information, and I am proud to share that with you.

TRANSPORTATION REVENUE KEY TOPIC AT CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT PRIORITIES MEETING

On Jan. 27, the California State Transportation Agency (STA) held a kick-off meeting for its 2015 California Transportation Investment Priorities Workgroup. The meeting focused on transportation revenue issues as well as providing an overview of the state's adopted freight plan. Key highlights of the meeting included a discussion of federal reauthorization and Caltrans' letter to Congress focusing on user-fee options for transportation and Fix-it First initiatives. A great emphasis was placed on Fix-it-First revenues for preservation and maintenance of the state highways, local streets and roads, as well as transit systems. Meeting participants also engaged in discussion about pay-as-you-go alternatives, including weight fees, vehicle based fees, gas tax increases, mileage-based road user charges and other options. Limitations with local funding options were also discussed, referencing the need to consider additional tools for local funding. In the coming year, California STA plans to continue the discussion with small group meetings on more focused revenue topics.

SCAG'S DATA AND GIS SERVICES PROGRAM REACHES 1,000 PARTICIPANTS

SCAG recently reached an important milestone with over 1,000 participants in the Data and GIS Services Program. An important member service, the Data and GIS Service Program provides jurisdictions, agencies and other stakeholders with technical GIS training and fulfills requests for Census data and other data sources. SCAG staff recently provided customized GIS software training to Caltrans staff and assisted the City of Indio with the planning for a city-wide implementation of GIS with participants from their planning, engineering, police and other departments. SCAG staff also held a meeting attended by representatives from Imperial County, the City of Brawley, City of El Centro, Caltrans and the Imperial Irrigation District to review the completed aerial flyover of Imperial County. The final deliverables will include aerial imagery, elevations and building footprints. In the coming months, SCAG staff will be providing additional GIS trainings at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. New curriculum will include the use of the SCAG Atlas, a web application that utilizes SCAG's data and allows participants to create maps, perform simple analyses and update local data for use in their day-to-day work.

ORIENTATION WELCOMES NEW RC MEMBERS

On Jan. 26, SCAG hosted a New Member Orientation for both Regional Council and Policy Committee members who joined us during the past several months. The orientation was attended by 16 new members who received an overview of SCAG and updates on the roles and responsibilities of the three policy committees, SCAG leadership opportunities and current program priorities. I'd like to thank President Carl Morehouse and Regional Council members Margaret Finlay (Duarte) and Alan Wapner (Ontario) who shared their wisdom and experiences as long-time board members with the new members.

SCAG CONTINUES TO COLLABORATE INTERNATIONALLY ON REGIONAL PLANNING, POLICY AND STRATEGY

A recent meeting with our overseas counterpart underscores the importance of SCAG's work. On Nov. 25, SCAG hosted a high-level 25-member delegation from China's Ministry of Transport, the China Academy of Transportation Sciences, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport, and various departments of transportation from individual provinces. SCAG staff introduced the 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, and shared SCAG's strategies and approach for low carbon economic growth, ecology preservation, and sustainable and equitable community development. In another partnership with Myongji University in Korea, SCAG is hosting two volunteer interns, Jae Sung Ahn and Ji Hoon Jung, from Jan. 5 to Feb. 25. This internship will allow students to directly learn about how SCAG collaborates with key stakeholders to develop plans and policy options to address diverse urban and regional planning issues. The students will learn useful and practical planning knowledge through field study and guided research on a topic area of their interest.

SOUTH COAST HAS ATTAINED 1997 FINE PARTICULATE MATTER (PM2.5) NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

Air quality continues to improve in our region and the South Coast has reached a new milestone. I am pleased to report that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to find that the South Coast has attained the 1997 federal clean air standards for PM2.5 based on air quality monitoring data from 2011-2013. If finalized as proposed, the action will suspend attainment-related air quality planning requirements for so long as the area continues to attain the standards. These include requirements to submit an attainment demonstration, reasonable further progress, reasonably available control measures, and contingency measures. However, it is important to note that South Coast remains a nonattainment area under the more stringent 2006 and 2012 PM2.5 standards. For additional information, see <http://1.usa.gov/1KpkS86>.

EPA SEEKS COMMENT ON PROPOSAL FOR MORE STRINGENT OZONE STANDARDS

On Dec. 17, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed to strengthen the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground-level ozone from the current 75 parts per billion (ppb) to a level within the range of 65 to 70 ppb. EPA is also seeking comment on levels for the primary standard to be as low as 60 ppb as well as retaining the existing standards. Final non-attainment classifications for the new standards are required to be promulgated within two years or by Oct. 1, 2017. Attainment dates for a given area would vary from 2020 to 2037 depending on its classification. Air plans demonstrating attainment of a new standard would need to be developed within 3 or 4 years of the effective date of area designations, depending on the classification of the area (beginning in approximately 2020). Those future air plans will include new transportation conformity emission budgets that will be used by SCAG in future RTP/SCS, FTIP and their amendments. Written comments on this proposed rule must be received by March 17. For additional information, see the Federal Register Notice: <http://1.usa.gov/16uPMzG>.