

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

AUGUST 2014

SCAG Hosts Fifty Years Into the War on Poverty Summit - Aug. 20th

Regional Council and Policy Committee members are invited to attend "Fifty Years Into the War on Poverty," a summit hosted by SCAG and the Southern California Leadership Council. The event seeks to help raise awareness; develop a broad coalition of stakeholders to help find solutions; identify specific actions needed to move people out of poverty and into jobs; assure Southern California's future prosperity for our economy and residents; and outline ways for attendees to get involved. Speakers include former California Gov. Gray Davis; Connie Rice, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Advancement Project; Nolan Rollins, President and CEO of the L.A. Urban League, and many others. The summit will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 20th, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the California Science Center in Los Angeles. The event is free but space is limited. Please visit www.scag.ca.gov/povertysummit, or contact Jane Embry, Senior Administrative Assistant, at (213) 236-1826.

Strategic Growth Council Workshop on Affordable Housing/SCS Program - Aug. 15th

On June 20th, Gov. Jerry Brown signed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 California state budget that also established an expenditure plan for cap-and-trade revenues. The approved expenditure plan is the culmination of a process of development of the plan to allocate cap-and-trade revenues begun by the state in 2012. SCAG, as part of its board-adopted 2013 and 2014 legislative priorities, has partnered with transportation, local government, business and environmental stakeholders from around the state to work closely with the legislature to ensure that equitable allocations of cap-and-trade revenues flow to transportation programs and policies reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Strategic Growth Council is currently seeking public input on the development of guidelines for its Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC), a \$130 million new funding opportunity for FY 14-15, created by the recently approved Cap-and-Trade Expenditure Plan. The program is intended to further the purposes of AB 32 and SB 375 by investing in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the creation of more compact infill development patterns; encouraging active transportation and mass transit usage; and protecting agricultural land from sprawling development. The Strategic Growth Council will be hosting an AHSC guideline development workshop on Friday, Aug. 15th, at the Caltrans District 7 office, 100 S. Main St., in Los Angeles. Additional information on the Cap-and-Trade Expenditure Plan is included in the August meeting packet for Regional Council and Policy Committees. Additional information on the SGC workshop, including instructions on how to register, is available at <http://www.sgc.ca.gov>.

Congress Passes HR 5021 to Avert Highway Trust Fund Insolvency

On Thursday, July 31st, Congress passed HR 5021, a short-term measure that provides approximately \$10.8 billion in offsets to support transfers of general funds into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and to extend the authorizations for transit, highway, and highway safety programs funded from the HTF through May 31, 2015. The bill was signed by President Obama on Aug. 1st.

The HTF was set to run out of money this month had Congress not passed a bill addressing the funding shortfall. Extending HTF funding until May 2015 means that any long-term structural funding for the HTF and the successor to MAP-21 will likely be addressed by the next Congress. More information is available in SCAG's August State and Federal Legislative Update.

Proposed Federal Rules for New and Existing Municipal Solid Waste Landfills

On July 17th, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released proposed updates to its air standards for new municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills. The proposed rule would require new MSW landfills to capture two-thirds of their methane and air toxics emissions by 2023, which is 13 percent more than required under current rules. The proposed rule applies to landfills that commence construction, reconstruction, or modification after July 17, 2014. On the same day, the EPA also issued a notice of proposed rulemaking regarding the emission guidelines and compliance times for existing landfills. The notice also sought public input on methods to reduce emissions from existing landfills. The EPA intends to consider the information received in evaluating whether additional changes beyond those in the proposed revisions for new sources are warranted. Comments on both proposals must be received on or before Sept. 15, 2014. Please see the following federal register notices for further information, including how to comment: <http://1.usa.gov/WXmViF> (for new landfills) and <http://1.usa.gov/1kj4Buh> (existing landfills).

SCAG's Regional Council to have Public Transportation Representative

On June 2nd, the FTA and FHWA jointly issued final guidance on requiring representation by "providers of public transportation" for each MPO by no later than Oct. 1st. The intent is for the public transportation representative, once designated, to have equal decision-making rights as other members on the MPO's Board. This matter was discussed by the executives of the six County Transportation Commissions (CTCs) and SCAG at their monthly meeting on June 20, 2014. The executives recommended that there be one public transportation representative appointed to the Regional Council to represent the transit interests of all the operators in the SCAG region. This representative would serve a two-year appointment consistent with the term for existing Regional Council members. The position would rotate among the six counties, and the appropriate CTC would make the two-year appointment, subject to the SCAG President's official appointment. The Regional Transit Technical Advisory Committee, composed of staff representatives from the region's transit operators, reviewed and concurred with this recommendation at its July 30th meeting. SCAG staff will bring forward a formal recommendation to the Regional Council on September 11, 2014.

Court of Appeal Rules in Favor of the HSR Authority

On July 31st, the Third District Court of Appeals cleared the way for the sale of bonds to pursue the statewide High Speed Rail (HSR) project and overturned the prior lower court's decision. While acknowledging that substantial legal questions still remain regarding the current project's scope as well as its financial and environmental components, the appellate court ruled solely on the project's bond validation and mandamus proceedings, and determined that the HSR Finance Committee properly found the issuance of bonds for the project was necessary or desirable; and that a writ of mandate was not needed to compel the idle act of redoing the preliminary funding plan for which the Legislature reviewed when it approved the bond appropriation. It is unclear whether there will be any further appeal to the State Supreme Court.

"We welcome the court's ruling. The Authority has always been committed to building a modern high-speed rail system that will connect the state, precisely as the voters called for when they passed Proposition 1A," said HSR Authority Board Chairman Dan Richard. "[This] system will be a clean, fast, non-subsidized service, and will create jobs and enable smart, sustainable growth while preserving farmland and habitat."

SCAG's GIS Team Presents Best Practices at ESRI International Conference

Last month, the annual ESRI International Users Conference was held in San Diego. More than 15,000 GIS professionals from around the world attended the conference to learn about the latest trends in GIS technology through technical instruction, GIS training, and general networking opportunities. Several SCAG staff members were invited to present on the application of GIS software in the regional planning process. SCAG's presentations on "Automated Workflow Using Python Scripting to Build SCAG's Local Map Books" and "Application of Python Scripting for Major Work Destination Analysis" were well received and recognized as best practices in the application of GIS technology for urban and regional planning.

SCAG Shares Regional Perspective with Chinese Agencies

In mid-June, President Carl Morehouse led a SCAG delegation to China, sharing best practices in regional planning and fostering ties with counterparts in the world's most populous nation. The delegation began their visit with a stop in Beijing, the country's capital, where the Institute of Policy and Management at the Chinese Academy of Science hosted a workshop on International Regional Planning and Interagency Collaboration. SCAG's delegation traveled to the nearby province of Hebei for a Sustainability and Smart Growth Conference. Through discussion and dialogue, President Morehouse and the SCAG delegation connected the dots between land use, transportation, environment, public health, and environmental justice. The Chinese hosts expressed a strong desire to collaborate with SCAG in the future, specifically regarding issues such as governance reform, regional planning and policy, air quality regulations, and major projects involving technical analysis and modeling. The trip concluded with President Morehouse signing a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of SCAG with the Jiangsu Transportation Institute in Nanjing, a former dynastic capital and the second-largest city in Eastern China after Shanghai.