

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

OCTOBER 2014

Cap-and-Trade Funding Guidelines and Workshops

As previously reported, SCAG has been monitoring and reporting on the programs supported by the auction proceeds derived from the California Air Resources Board's AB 32 Cap-and-Trade Program. Allocating an equitable share of these funds to transportation and sustainable communities implementation was a top legislative priority for the Regional Council and this was reflected in the appropriation to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) in the State Budget for FY 2014-15. These critical funding programs are expected to help local jurisdictions and SCAG's partners implement the 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). Three GGRF programs are further along than others, and I want to share the information on the following funding opportunities.

1. The Strategic Growth Council (SGC) released preliminary draft guidelines for the Cap-and-Trade Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program on Sept. 23, with comments due by Oct. 31. SGC will hold a public workshop on the draft guidelines on Monday, Oct. 27, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., at SCAG's headquarters in Los Angeles (with video-conferencing to satellite offices, as available). The draft AHSC guidelines are available at: http://www.sgc.ca.gov/docs/Draft_AHSC_Guidelines_for_posting_082314.pdf.
2. SGC, in conjunction with the California Natural Resources Agency and California Department of Conservation staff have released preliminary draft guidelines for the California Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP), a component of the AHSC program. The draft SALCP guidelines are available at: http://sgc.ca.gov/docs/Sustainable_Ag_Lands_Conservation_Program_Guidelines_092214_DRAFT.pdf.
3. As part of the natural resource category of GGRF investments, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has begun the process for their FY 2014-15 Urban & Community Forestry GGRF Grants. CAL FIRE has scheduled a workshop on this program in the Los Angeles/Orange County area on Oct. 1 and in the Inland Empire on Oct. 2. More information is available at: http://www.fire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/resource_mgt_urbanforestry_grants.php.

Other important items that cover the entire Cap-and-Trade funding program are:

1. The California Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines on defining disadvantaged communities by early October 2014;
2. The Air Resources Board (ARB) recently adopted Interim Guidance to Agencies Administering Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Monies. This document is intended to help maximize the investment benefit to disadvantaged communities; and
3. ARB's methodology to quantify the benefit to disadvantaged communities, including co-benefit of eligible projects. ARB's Interim Guidance document will be followed by a multi-stage public process to develop full funding guidelines over the coming months. These will include direction on metrics and quantification, as well as tracking and reporting for relevant projects. The full guidelines are expected to benefit from lessons learned in early implementation of the investment program and may include changes to the Interim Guidelines that will apply to subsequent appropriations. More information is available at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/newsrel/newsrelease.php?id=658>.

SCAG will continue to closely monitor the development of these programs and is planning to hold workshops to provide value to our members and partner applicants. Additional information will be forthcoming as available.

CalEPA Updates CalEnviroScreen Tool to Identify Disadvantaged Communities

On Aug. 14, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) released an updated version of its California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen), a screening methodology to identify communities that are vulnerable due to sensitive population and socioeconomic factors and also disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution. The new CalEnviroScreen 2.0 includes additional indicators for drinking water quality and the unemployment rate, and used census tracts instead of zip codes as the basic geographic unit. CalEnviroScreen will be used to implement provisions in SB 535 and SB 862, where at least 25 to 50 percent (depending on the program) of the state's Cap-and-Trade auction proceeds are to benefit disadvantaged communities. CalEPA is considering six different approaches for identifying disadvantaged communities based on the tool, and intends to finalize its approach in the next few weeks. For more information, see <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/ej/index.html>

54 Projects Selected for Southern California Active Transportation Program

At its Oct. 2 meeting, the Regional Council will consider adopting the 2014 Southern California Active Transportation Program (ATP),

which recommends funding 54 projects that promote walking and biking in the region. The regional program represents an investment of \$78.2 million, and is in addition to the \$115.2 million in projects awarded through the statewide ATP competition by the California Transportation Commission. The recommended project list was developed by SCAG in collaboration with the six County Transportation Commissions and is consistent with both the California Transportation Commission's adopted ATP guidelines and SCAG's adopted Southern California ATP Project Selection Process. If approved by the Regional Council, the projects will be submitted to the California Transportation Commission for approval at their Nov. 12 meeting. Successful project sponsors will be notified by Caltrans of their award and receive further direction on program requirements and funding allocation. SCAG will work in partnership with Caltrans and the County Transportation Commissions to support project sponsors, track project delivery and recommend modifications to the program, if needed. More information on the statewide and regional components of the ATP can be found on SCAG's website at: www.scag.ca.gov/programs/Pages/ActiveTransportationFunding.aspx?opentab=8.

SB 375 Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Target Update

As reported last month, the Air Resources Board (ARB) held workshops throughout the state to solicit input on updating the SB 375 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for each of the 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations in California. ARB's staff is currently considering input received during the public comment period, and will present a revised staff report with recommendations at their next board meeting, scheduled for Oct. 23-24, at the South Coast Air Quality Management District's headquarters in Diamond Bar. SCAG has recommended to the ARB that the 2020 and 2035 targets for the region should remain unchanged through this next round of Sustainable Communities Strategy planning, which includes SCAG's 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). SCAG's focus is to work with our local jurisdictions, County Transportation Commissions and other stakeholders to implement the 2012-2035 RTP/SCS.

Comment Period Extended for Preliminary Draft CEQA Guidelines Update

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has extended the public comment period for its preliminary draft of updates to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) until Nov. 21. The draft CEQA guidelines update is an outcome of SB 743, which became law in September 2013. SB 743 is intended to facilitate transit-oriented development by providing CEQA exemption opportunities for qualified projects located within transit priority areas consistent with a locally adopted specific plan. SB 743 and the guidelines update will change the way that transportation impacts are analyzed under CEQA, from measuring level of service (LOS), or driver delay, to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, creation of multimodal networks and promotion of a mix of land uses. OPR's draft CEQA guidelines update proposes to replace LOS methodology with metrics based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for projects located within transit priority areas. OPR may also consider similar applications to areas outside transit priority areas. The draft CEQA guidelines update also includes resource materials for VMT estimation, among others. SCAG staff has assisted OPR in holding three regional workgroup meetings to provide input from local jurisdictions and other interested parties in the region. To review the preliminary draft document, please visit: http://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/Final_Preliminary_Discussion_Draft_of_Updates_Implementing_SB_743_080614.pdf.

SCAG Prepares for the 2016 RTP/SCS, Seeks Input from Local Jurisdictions

Over the past 18 months, SCAG staff has conducted extensive outreach with local jurisdictions to facilitate a review of SCAG's draft socioeconomic and geographic datasets that will be used for the 2016 RTP/SCS. The effort included one-on-one meetings to collect data changes and provide technical guidance to local staff. As a result, SCAG received input from 93% of jurisdictions on all or a portion of the information requests for the local input process. SCAG values the effort that local partners have devoted to ensure that SCAG's data resources reflect their on-the-ground knowledge and expertise. City and county staff have devoted a significant amount of time and resources to ensure that the 2016 RTP/SCS has local relevance. Although the deadline for providing input was Aug. 29, SCAG's staff is continuing to reach out to the remaining jurisdictions to ensure all are informed of the process and are familiar with SCAG's technical analysis. All remaining jurisdictions are encouraged to provide feedback to SCAG staff as soon as possible. For more information, please contact Frank Wen at (213) 236-1854 or at wen@scag.ca.gov.

CCCA Hosts Southern California Water Summit and Fall Seminar

Elected officials and city/county leaders from throughout the region will gather in San Diego on Nov. 7-9 to learn about how to prepare their communities and constituents for an ever-changing world of water resources. The Southern California Water Summit and Fall Seminar is being presented by the California Contract Cities Association, in partnership with the League of California Cities, SCAG and the West Basin Municipal Water District. For more information and to register, visit: <http://www.contractcities.org/>.