

Sustainability Program Call-for-Proposals

The 2013 Sustainability Program consolidated Call-for-Proposals was released on April 4 to cities and counties, with an application deadline of May 31. The new Sustainability Program builds on the success of the Compass Blueprint effort to provide services for communities and partners with two new components: Active Transportation and the Green Region Initiative. SCAG received a total of 76 proposals, with total funding requests slightly exceeding \$10 million. On September 12, the Regional Council approved staff's recommendations to fund all eligible 73 project applications. Notification letters were sent to all Mayors and City Managers on behalf of the Regional Council. Staff is proceeding immediately with the contract process related to the approved 17 grants in Phase 1.

Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants

I want to congratulate 16 of our member jurisdictions and partner agencies who were successful recipients of this year's Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants. We are awaiting the final figures to be calculated, but estimate the value of these awards to be approximately \$2 million for the region. The highly-competitive grants have been awarded to the Cities of Chino, Desert Hot Springs, Diamond Bar, Downey, Fontana, Holtville, Huntington Park, Long Beach, Oxnard, Pasadena, Riverside, Thousand Oaks and our partners at Goldcoast Transit, Imperial County Transportation Commission, Metro, Omnitrans and San Bernardino Associated Governments. These forward-thinking planning activities will serve as models throughout the region toward achieving our goal of creating a sustainable Southern California.

Bottom-Up Local Input Process for the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS)

A critical component to the success of the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Plan update will be the participation and cooperation of all 197 local government partners within the SCAG region. To this end, we will ensure that all local governments are fully informed of the planning process and have clear and adequate opportunities to provide local input. Beginning this month, SCAG will be distributing a letter to local city managers and county chief administrators, planning directors, city and county clerks (for forwarding to all city/county elected officials), and subregional executive directors that will explain the process, schedule and protocol for providing input to SCAG. We look forward to working together to ensure the success of the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Plan update.

Critical Clean Air Federal Approval

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is approving a State Implementation Plan (SIP) revision submitted by the California Air Resources Board to address Clean Air Act contingency measure requirements for the 1997 annual and 24-hour national ambient air quality standard for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in the South Coast Air Basin. Approval of this SIP revision terminates the sanctions clocks and a federal implementation plan clock that were triggered by EPA's partial disapproval of a related SIP submission on November 5, 2011. SCAG appreciates the efforts of the EPA, South Coast Air Quality Management District and California Air Resources Board that led to this critical approval.

Air Resources Board Update to the AB 32 Scoping Plan

On October 1, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) released the public discussion draft of the required update to the AB 32 Scoping Plan. The Scoping Plan describes a comprehensive range of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and meet the state's long-term goals to combat climate change. The discussion draft includes an analysis of progress to date, finding that California is on track to meet the AB 32 2020 goal of greenhouse gas reductions. It also includes actions to continue greenhouse gas reductions in six key focus areas: energy; transportation, land use, fuels and infrastructure; water; agriculture; natural and working lands; and waste.

The release of the discussion draft marks the beginning of a public comment period to help inform the Proposed Update to the Scoping Plan. Future steps include a public workshop on October 15 in Sacramento (which will be webcast) and a meeting of ARB at the end of October to provide further direction to staff on revisions to the discussion draft. The draft will be revised and presented to the Air Resources Board at its December meeting. ARB is anticipated to consider approval of the update in Spring of 2014. The discussion draft Scoping Plan Update can be accessed at: http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/2013_update/discussion_draft.pdf. Comments on the discussion draft Scoping Plan Update can be sent to the ARB at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/2013comments.htm>. I will keep the Regional Council apprised of SCAG staff's review of the discussion draft update and participation in the development of the final proposal.

Strategic Growth Council's Revised Draft Grant Guidelines for Public Comments

On September 18, the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) issued Revised Draft Guidelines for its Sustainable Communities Planning Grant. Public comments will be due by 5 p.m., October 18. The SGC is scheduled to adopt the new Grant Guidelines at its November 5 meeting and subsequently begin the solicitations of grant proposals. Eligible applicants include cities, counties, subregions, county transportation commissions and metropolitan planning organizations. The Revised Guidelines incorporate the written comments from SCAG and other interested parties concerning the previous Workshop draft. Notably, the Revised Guidelines permit the use of grant funds to prepare CEQA documents. Additional information can be viewed at http://www.sgc.ca.gov/planning_grants.html. SCAG staff will distribute reminder notices to the cities of the potential funding.

5th Cycle Housing Element Adoption Deadline

The State adoption deadline for 5th cycle housing elements by jurisdictions is October 15. The housing element must plan for projected household growth, or RHNA allocation, through a sites and zoning analysis for the October 2013-2021 planning period. The 5th cycle RHNA was adopted by the Regional Council in October 2012. We encourage jurisdictions to adopt their respective housing elements by the October 15 due date and urge your jurisdiction to contact HCD to ensure that adoption deadlines are met. Jurisdictions that do not adopt their housing element within 120 days of the deadline must revert to a four-year housing element. Reminders have been sent to the cities.

GIS Services Program

By the end of the calendar year, 20 new jurisdictions will be incorporated into SCAG's GIS Services Program, which will soon surpass 100 participants. Currently, SCAG staff will be initiating several GIS trainings throughout the SCAG region – totaling 22 software trainings in nine different venues. These trainings are anticipated to accommodate over 250 participants, totaling over 800 people trained since the program's inception. In addition, SCAG GIS Services staff is leading a multi-county collaboration to acquire aerial imagery for future use by SCAG member jurisdictions.

SCAG Map Book Update

SCAG staff developed a draft Map Book for each jurisdiction in the region detailing various land use datasets that will be used for consideration in the upcoming RTP/SCS. In early August, these booklets (and their related datasets) were made available to all local planning directors, city managers, subregional executive directors and subregional coordinators in the SCAG region for their review. Input from local jurisdictions on these datasets was requested by September 13. SCAG staff is working to revise the Map Books and will distribute new editions in early November. In order to ensure the highest accuracy and completeness of the data, we will continue to reach out to local jurisdictions to collect input and to confirm SCAG preliminary land use information.

Annual Financial Audit

Vasquez and Co., LLP, which began its annual financial audit of SCAG on September 16, is scheduled to complete fieldwork for this audit on Friday, October 4. The auditors will then prepare a preliminary audit report for presentation to SCAG's Audit Committee on December 4. This audit will complete the third and final year of Vasquez's contract with SCAG.

International Collaboration

On September 19, SCAG staff and I met with two Saudi Arabia officials, His Excellency Walid Abu Khalid, Deputy Minister for Industrial Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Dr. Fahad A. Abuhimed, Deputy Minister for Laws & Regulation Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, who visited SCAG to discuss SCAG's governance structure and regional planning efforts. Other topics discussed included Southern California's economy, diversified economy base and industry clusters, competitiveness, workforce development, and data/modeling for regional planning and policy analysis.

On September 23, as part of the follow up on the joint MOU between SCAG and Institute of Policy Management (IPM) of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Dr. Lele Zhou visited SCAG and gave a 45-minute presentation on "Policy Insight of China: Energy Management and low carbon development." The presentation covered the current stage of China's economy and energy; the main challenges today in China; green and low carbon development policies; local low carbon development policy – Guangdong case study; and the latest national schemes – new challenges. Through discussion with Dr. Zhou, staff received details on China's energy consumption and low carbon policy and development. More policy collaboration on sustainability and development will continue in the near future with the IPM of Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Chinese officials to use SCAG 2012-2035 RTP/SCS as planning & policy reference

In another example of SCAG's growing international reputation for regional planning expertise, officials from China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD) announced that it will use SCAG's 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy as a planning and policy reference as that nation works to address its significant and challenging air quality and public health issues. This is substantial international recognition and SCAG appreciates its partnership with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.