

Memorandum

To: Chair and Commissioners

Date: March 30, 2009

From: ANDRE BOUTROS
Interim Executive Director

File: Book Item 4.10
Action

Ref: Regional Transportation Plan Guideline Update for SB 375 Implementation

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that a workgroup be formed this summer to update the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Guidelines in response to the requirements of SB 375. Staff estimates that this update should be ready for consideration by the Commission at the end of this calendar year. This workgroup would include, but not be limited to, interested representatives from the staff of the Assembly and Senate, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPA), state and federal agencies, environmental interest groups, building and industry organizations and county and city associations.

It is expected that the RTP Guidelines update will include, but not be limited to, providing guidance with respect to sustainable communities strategies designed to achieve certain goals for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks in each region. For example, in addition to modeling, information with respect to alternative land use decisions, modal choices, and infrastructure as well as development of corridor system management plans may need to be added and/or updated in the RTP Guidelines.

ISSUE: To promote the implementation of SB 375, the Commission will need to update its RTP Guidelines. Subsequent to the passage of SB 375, staff has participated in various staff level meetings with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, and the California Energy Commission to develop a coordinated approach in implementation of the requirements of SB 375. Staff has also attended the CARB Regional Targets Advisory Committee (RTAC) meetings.

The proposed timeframe to establish an RTP Guideline workgroup recognizes that there are concurrent activities with regard to SB 375 implementation that may have implications to an RTP Guideline update. For example, as described in the background section below, the RTAC is currently in the process of developing factors and methodologies for setting greenhouse gas emission targets that will be provided to CARB no later than September 30, 2009; legislation is underway to address various aspects of SB 375 that may impact implementation efforts; and the Strategic Growth Council was recently formed to help state agencies allocate strategic growth plan money in ways that best promote efficiency, sustainability and support the Governor's economic and environmental goals.

BACKGROUND: California statute requires each RTPA to adopt and submit an updated RTP to the Commission and Caltrans every four years in urban regions and every five years in non-urban regions. To ensure a degree of statewide consistency in the development of RTPs, the Commission is authorized under Government Code Section 14522 to prepare RTP Guidelines, in cooperation with the RTPAs and Caltrans.

On May 29, 2008, subsequent to the passage of Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the Commission adopted an addendum to the 2007 RTP Guidelines to address climate change and greenhouse gas emissions during the RTP process. This addendum was prepared in response to a request by then Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata who requested that the Commission use its statutory authority to review its RTP Guidelines in order to incorporate climate change emission reduction measures and the utilization of models that accurately measure the benefits of land use strategies aimed at reducing vehicle trips. The RTP Guideline addendum promotes smart growth/land use and modeling strategies to be considered in the preparation of RTPs.

Senate Bill 375 (SB 375; Steinberg, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) was signed by the Governor on September 30, 2008. SB 375 requires the Commission to maintain guidelines for travel demand models used in the development of RTPs by MPOs. The bill requires the Commission to consult with various agencies and to form an advisory committee and to hold workshops before amending the guidelines. SB 375 further requires, in part, the following:

- No later than September 30, 2009 – The CARB appointed RTAC will recommend factors to be considered and methodologies to be used for setting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the affected regions.
- No later than September 30, 2010 – CARB will provide each affected region with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the automobile and light truck sector for 2020 and 2035, respectively.
- To achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets established by CARB, MPOs are required to prepare a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) that is included in the RTP and, if necessary, an alternative planning strategy (APS). The strategy to achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets must be submitted to CARB for review. At a minimum, the MPO must obtain CARB’s acceptance that an APS would, if implemented, achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets established for that region.
- Section 14522.1 was added to the Government Code as follows:
 - _“(a) (1) The commission, in consultation with the department [*Caltrans*] and the State Air Resources Board, shall maintain guidelines for travel demand models used in the development of regional transportation plans by federally designated metropolitan planning organizations. (2) Any revision of the guidelines shall include the formation of an advisory committee that shall include representatives of the metropolitan planning organizations, the department, organizations knowledgeable in the creation and use of

travel demand models, local governments, and organizations concerned with the impacts of transportation investments on communities and the environment. Before amending the guidelines, the commission shall hold two workshops on the guidelines, one in northern California and one in southern California. The workshops shall be incorporated into regular commission meetings.”

“(b) The guidelines shall, at a minimum and to the extent practicable, taking into account such factors as the size and available resources of the metropolitan planning organization, account for all of the following:

- (1) The relationship between land use density and household vehicle ownership and vehicle miles traveled in a way that is consistent with statistical research.
- (2) The impact of enhanced transit service levels on household vehicle ownership and vehicle miles traveled.
- (3) Changes in travel and land development likely to result from highway or passenger rail expansion.
- (4) Mode splitting that allocates trips between automobile, transit, carpool, and bicycle and pedestrian trips. If a travel demand model is unable to forecast bicycle and pedestrian trips, another means may be used to estimate those trips.
- (5) Speed and frequency, days, and hours of operation of transit service.”

Senate Bill 732 (SB 732; Steinberg, Chapter 729, Statutes of 2008) was signed by the Governor on September 30, 2008. SB 732 established a Strategic Growth Council that consists of the Director of the State Office of Planning and Research, the Secretary of the Resources Agency, the Secretary for the Environmental Protection Agency, the Secretary of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, and one member of the public to be appointed by the Governor. The Strategic Growth Council will:

- Award and manage grants and loans from Proposition 84 (The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006) to support the development of sustainable communities. The Council’s responsibilities will include establishing application requirements and evaluation criteria.
- Coordinate the four member state agencies, as they undertake infrastructure and development projects, to encourage sustainable land use; protect natural resources; improve air and water quality; increase the availability of affordable housing; improve transportation; and meet the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32).
- Recommend policies to the Governor, the legislature and state agencies that encourage sustainable development.
- Collect and provide data to local governments to help them develop and plan sustainable communities. While the State has little direct say in local land-use planning, the Council will provide leadership and support for locals.