



Policy & Innovation Committee

Meeting Date: September 9, 2024

[[!Agenda Item No. {{item.number}}!]]

Advocacy Update & AB 350 Revisit

Information

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Attachments: Yes

Referring Committee: Not Applicable

Issue:

Update on state and federal advocacy activities, including an update on Assembly Bill 350 that granted SACOG a two-year extension to complete the update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Request:

Review & Discuss at Meeting

Recommendation for Board:

None, this is for information only.

Recommendation for Committee:

None, this is for information only.

Background:

In Washington D.C., SACOG's federal lobbyists, Capitol Transportation Consulting and Pavluchuk & Associates, continue to advocate for funding and programs that advance SACOG's priorities. Summer work efforts focused on continued identification and advocacy for programs and funding supportive of Green Means Go; including the PRO Housing grant program.

In Sacramento, staff have been working closely with SACOG's state lobbyists, Politico Group, advocating to save REAP 2.0 funding as part of the budget process and monitoring and responding to legislation as the 2023-2024 legislative session wraps up at the end of August. In July, state leaders closed California's budget shortfall of roughly \$47 billion using a broad array of solutions. The budget process ended with good news regarding the REAP 2.0 funding, with a significant amount of the funding saved. We continue to focus on identifying legislation and issues of interest to SACOG.

Finally, as work continues on the development of the 2025 Blueprint, SACOG is looking ahead to what is on the horizon for future plan updates. In 2023, Assembly Bill 350 (Aguiar-Curry) gave SACOG an extension on the current update to the region's long-range plan that granted SACOG until the end of 2025 to complete the update. As part of this legislation, SACOG's extension will sunset after adoption of this plan meaning that the

next update of the plan must occur no later than December 2027.

Discussion/Analysis:

Advocacy for Green Means Go funding at both the federal and state levels continues. On the federal funding side, SACOG's lobbyists are currently focused advocacy related to the PRO Housing grant program, also referred to as the "Yes in My Backyard" (YIMBY) program. The PRO Housing grant program could be an important tool to addressing critical housing challenges and transportation connections in our region. They were successful in including MPOs as eligible entities for funding. They also continue to seek other opportunities as part of the current federal budget process to improve the program to make it more accessible for GMG projects and to support larger infrastructure projects. On July 25, 2024, the Senate Committee on Appropriations approved the fiscal year (FY) 2025 S.4796 - Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (THUD) Appropriations Act, which includes significant funding for various transportation programs; including YIMBY. The House version of the bill which passed July 10, 2024 did not include YIMBY. The Senate and House versions of the THUD bill have notable differences in funding allocations and priorities. The two versions of the THUD bill need to go through the reconciliation process to resolve differences. Attachment A is a summary of this activity, and other federal updates, prepared by SACOG's federal lobbyists.

Governor Newsom and the Legislature negotiated the completion of the State Budget in July, and the outcome included a lesser cut to REAP 2.0 than anticipated; a \$40 million reversion as opposed to the original \$300 million proposed reduction. REAP 2.0 funds the Green Means Go program, and SACOG, along with our jurisdictions and partners, worked hard to advocate for the protection of REAP 2.0 funding. Our joint advocacy highlighted the importance of REAP 2.0 funding for implementation of Green Means Go as part of SACOG's Sustainable Communities Strategy. State leaders also winnowed down the number of ballot measures for the November elections. More information can be found in Attachment B, Politico Group's report.

Regarding AB350, SACOG must determine whether we will attempt to sponsor additional legislation in 2025 or 2026 to make the new plan update schedule permanent (next plan update in 2029) or return to our regular update schedule with the next plan due in 2027. There are several potential positive implications for either approach as well as several risks. The merits and risks associated with both approaches were a topic of discussion at the August 26, Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) Retreat. Members of the SPC recommended that staff bring this conversation to the broader board, beginning with the Policy and Innovation Committee this month to ensure the board has sufficient time to weigh the various pros and cons of both approaches.

SACOG staff and SACOG's state lobbyists will provide a more detailed update at the committee meeting with the latest information regarding state and federal advocacy efforts, including next steps on AB350.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

Included in OWP/Budget

List of Attachments:

Attachment A- Federal Advocacy Report;
Attachment B- State Advocacy Report

