



## Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

Meeting Date: February 6, 2025

Agenda Item No. 3

### 2025 Blueprint Update and Upcoming Milestones

#### Information

**Author:** Clint Holtzen

**Attachments:** No

**Referring Committee:** Not Applicable

#### Issue:

In 2024, the board adopted an ambitious set of land use and transportation assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint that will allow the region to meet state climate objectives, federal air quality standards, and keep the region on a path toward advancing our Triple Bottom Line goals. In 2025, the board will be putting forward a full plan including policies and strategies for how to best achieve these goals.

#### Request:

Review & Discuss at Meeting

#### Recommendation for Board:

None; this is for information only.

#### Recommendation for Committee:

None; this is for information only.

#### Background:

The 2025 Blueprint, to be finalized by the end of 2025, represents the collective work of SACOG, our member agencies, and partners to plan for and build a connected region for today's and future residents.

The 2025 Blueprint will lay out a vision for the next 25 years of growth, supported by goals, policies, and strategies, for a thriving, inclusive future with a strong economy, healthy environment, and mobility options for all residents. To ensure a strong foundation on which to build, in early 2022 the SACOG Board of Directors adopted a Policy Framework outlining three strategic goals centered around Equity, Economy, and Environment, or the three "E's." This Triple Bottom Line concept has shaped the analysis, board discussions, and recommendations to date for the development of the 2025 Blueprint. Below are the goal statements that define the three E's of the Triple Bottom Line:

**Equity:** A just and inclusive region where government makes investments for and with historically marginalized communities so race can no longer be used to predict health or economic outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved.

**Economy:** A diversified regional economy in which all people have access to resources that give them the opportunity to realize their full potential. This future economy will also capitalize on key economic clusters where the region can achieve a competitive edge over our peers across the country, including agriculture and food, health sciences, and innovative mobility

**Environment:** A safe and resilient region for all residents, where natural resources and air quality are sustainably managed so people can thrive here for generations.

### ***What have we accomplished so far?***

In 2024, the SACOG board adopted a set of [land use](#) (June 20, 2024, Board Meeting; Item #9) and [transportation](#) (November 14, 2024; Item #5) assumptions designed to accommodate the nearly 600 thousand people, 260 thousand new jobs, and 278 thousand new homes we anticipate coming to the region by 2050. In the two years leading up to the board's adoption of final assumptions, SACOG engaged with local agencies from all 28 jurisdictions, Caltrans, transit operators, developers, advocacy groups, the public, and other partners to analyze and test multiple options for how the region could grow. The SACOG board weighed in on these discussions during multiple committee and board meetings in 2023 and in the Spring and Summer of 2024. Ultimately, the board elected to adopt a scenario that aims to maximize benefits for the 2.5 million existing residents as well as future residents whether they are newcomers to the region or young people raised here and looking to establish their own households.

#### ***Land Use (Housing and Jobs)***

The land use assumptions for the plan call for more than two-thirds of growth to occur within the region's existing developed footprint. This is in line with where growth has been occurring over the past 5-10 years, though the plan calls for increased emphasis on filling in the region's center and corridor communities (e.g., locally-designated rural main streets, downtowns, aging commercial corridors, and Green Means Go Zones) where growth has been slower, largely due to infrastructure and other regulatory constraints.

The plan also emphasizes the need for more options in the types of housing built in the region. Specifically, this means building more attached housing (e.g., apartments, condos) and housing on smaller lots (e.g., town homes, cottages). The plan calls for as much as half of new homes built in the region to be of the attached or smaller product types; though how this occurs varies greatly across jurisdictions and communities. This shift is not entirely without precedent. In fact, it is increasingly in line with the trajectory of recent permitting trends, longstanding demographic shifts, affordability concerns, and changes in product type preferences in the region and in similar regions across the country.

The plan also includes robust and strategic expansion into new growth areas as well as investment in rural communities. While this does include new housing and mixed used developments, it's particularly worth noting the plan's emphasis on strategic job growth in parts of the region that are rich in housing today or are critical for supporting the region's vital economic sectors such as agriculture and food, health and life sciences, and future mobility solutions (such as autonomous vehicles, zero-emission technology, and shared mobility). By emphasizing job growth in areas that haven't experienced the amount of growth seen in the region's major job centers, local agencies in the region have helped to create a 2025 Blueprint that plans for their economic success and provides existing communities with more options and destinations closer to home.

## *Transportation*

The theme of the transportation investments included in the 2025 Blueprint can be summed up as doing more with less. While the 2025 Blueprint includes roughly \$40 billion (in today's dollars) of investment in the transportation system over the next two and a half decades, not all this funding is guaranteed nor is it sufficient to meet all the region's needs or ambitions. Currently, the region collectively falls short of meeting our road and highway maintenance needs by several hundred million dollars each year. During the call for projects for the plan, project sponsors nominated nearly \$14 billion in road and highway expansion investments while the region has financial capacity for roughly half that amount. Transit agencies across the region face rising costs for new zero-emission vehicles and the need for new facilities at the same time as they try to recover from ridership losses that occurred during the pandemic.

While large, these challenges are not insurmountable and the board, with input from transportation partners throughout the region, designed the 2025 Blueprint transportation investment strategy to address them by:

- Phasing projects to advance critical investments while acknowledging financial constraints. This means not all investments are sized for the ultimate buildout of a community which may take decades to realize.
- Prioritizing maintenance and repair over expanding the system. More than a third of the total budget goes toward maintaining the existing road and highway system.
- Prioritizing the use of existing assets to both improve the state of repair on the system and make the most efficient use of existing capacity through the deployment of technology solutions.
- Prioritizing lower cost and quicker safety interventions to avoid waiting years or decades for solutions to problems that exist today.
- Prioritizing lower cost transit solutions such as high-frequency bus or bus rapid transit ahead of more costly light rail expansion.
- Investing in ways that plan for and are resilient to natural disasters and extreme weather, including thinking about the needs to evacuate or provide emergency services during natural disasters.
- Modernizing the way we pay for transportation including launching the first tolled facilities in the region, taking a leadership role in state conversations about solutions to replace the failing gas tax, and planning for local measures such as sales taxes to advance local priorities like reducing maintenance backlogs.

## **Discussion/Analysis:**

The board's actions in 2024 to finalize an ambitious set of land use and transportation assumptions for the plan were critical milestones in the update of the region's long-range plan, but more work remains. In 2025, the Land Use and Natural Resources (LUNR) committee will oversee the drafting of the plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Perhaps most importantly, the committee will lead the board's discussions on setting implementation policies and strategies to support the plan's Triple Bottom Line goals. These policies and strategies shape the work SACOG and many of our partners and members will engage in over the coming years.

## ***Implementing the 2025 Blueprint***

One example of how policy in the regional plan becomes action is the creation of the region's first tolling

authority. In 2020, the SACOG board adopted a regional plan that set a policy to:

*Take steps to implement tolling or pricing of specific lanes on major facilities, such as freeways, to improve traffic management, reliability, and operations of those facilities and to help raise funding for the cost of building and maintaining large capital investments.*

Since the adoption of this plan in 2020, the region has made huge strides in realizing this policy through the establishment of the Capital Area Regional Tolling Authority (CARTA) and begun working toward launching the region's first tolled facility on Interstate 80 between Yolo and Sacramento counties.

The plan also called for the establishment of a regional program to help overcome barriers slowing down development in the region's highest priority infill communities. The Green Means Go program has since awarded or helped to secure \$58 million for critical planning and infrastructure investments across 29 Green Zones in 15 cities and counties throughout the region.

As is true of most efforts to implement the plan, success is dependent on collaboration among multiple agencies and partners. SACOG relies on partnership with our members, transit agencies, Caltrans, county-level transportation agencies, and many others to realize the vision of the regional plan. Successes like the launch of CARTA and Green Means Go are incredibly important efforts that SACOG is well positioned to help lead and convene the region around.

Equally, if not more important for the success of the 2025 Blueprint are the collective efforts of cities, counties, transit agencies, and others across the region. Examples of local implementation include Citrus Heights' efforts to reimagine the outdated and aging Sunrise Mall or Yuba City's Downtown Specific Plan and Objective Design Standards aimed at clearing a path for revitalizing the city's core. The Trip to Green project in Placerville, a partnership between the city, county, El Dorado County Transportation Commission, and Caltrans, is using street design elements combined with creative signal timing to hold green light phases for freeway traffic while still accommodating across town travel to address bottlenecking on Highway 50 without the need to spend hundreds of millions on adding new lanes and interchanges.

The types of programs and activities described above don't necessarily start or stop with the update of the regional plan every four years. They represent the ongoing efforts of many actors to implement a living plan that adjusts to outside factors and new priorities on a recurring basis. One way to think of the plan update is a chance to reflect back on progress we've made to date, course correct based on new understandings, and to introduce new or innovative ideas for solving regional challenges.

#### **Next Steps:**

- **Starting in February and lasting through June**, SACOG is planning to visit each county board and city council in the region to discuss the 2025 Blueprint and co-present with local staff on how the plan reflects and is implemented by work happening in each jurisdiction around the region. Staff will provide a schedule for this tour of boards and councils as soon as they are scheduled.
- **In March and April**, SACOG staff will ask the LUNR committee to weigh in on policies aimed at realizing the vision of the 2025 Blueprint. As mentioned above, these policies will shape the actions, roles, and responsibilities for plan implementation that SACOG and our partners around the region will engage in over the coming years.
- **In May**, the board will consider releasing the draft plan and EIR for two months of public review and

comment. The draft plan will describe the land use and transportation assumptions and strategies of the 2025 Blueprint as well as the implementation policies and their associated actions, roles, and responsibilities. During this review, staff will continue to meet with interested stakeholders, hold public hearings, revisit the many community-based organizations that helped with outreach for the plan, and wrap up the tour of regional boards and councils.

- **In August, September, and October** staff will work to address input received during the public review, finalize changes to the plan and EIR, and brief the board on major themes in feedback we receive. The board will also have the opportunity to weigh in on any substantive changes that could affect the plan's major assumptions or policies.
- **In November**, the board will consider adopting the 2025 Blueprint and certifying the EIR. Following this action by the board, staff will submit the plan and EIR with all required appendices and documentation to our federal and state agencies for final approval.

**Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

Included in the Overall Work Program/Budget

**List of Attachments:**

Not applicable