



Green Means Go: Local Efforts to Accelerate Housing

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Attachments: Yes

Referring Committee: Land Use & Natural Resources

Issue:

Over the last several years SACOG, our member jurisdictions, and a broad network of stakeholders have worked to accelerate the pace of infill development by addressing regulatory barriers and investing in critical infrastructure to unlock areas with development potential. The Green Means Go Program aims to fund the planning and build the infrastructure needed to facilitate infill housing development in the six-county region. Already the region has attracted nearly \$60 million in one-time federal and state discretionary awards to fund the first phase of the program. This item provides an overview of the various projects and efforts local agencies have conducted using Green Means Go-related funding, highlights some lessons learned to date, and explores where the program may be headed next.

Request:

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Recommendation for Board:

None; this is an information item only. Board members are asked to understand what efforts local agencies are putting towards planning for housing in their communities and how these ties into SACOG's regional planning efforts.

Recommendation for Committee:

None; this is for information only. The committee is encouraged to engage in a discussion about how the region and local agencies can help promote the development of housing.

Background:

The region's Green Means Go program objective is to revitalize and facilitate development, most specifically housing, in locally designated green zones throughout the region. Our work so far has focused on supporting local agencies with planning, policy changes, and infrastructure funding in the form of grants and technical support. In pursuing this work, the Green Means Go program has successfully received nearly \$60 million in grants from state and federal agencies over the past five years.

There are four grant programs since 2019 that form the initial set of Green Means Go investments. The region has received both formula and competitive grants from these sources. The four Green Means Go-related

grant programs are:

- (1) REAP 1 – the Regional Early Action Planning grants from the California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). Seventy-five percent of the \$6.76 million that was awarded to SACOG were distributed in the form of sub-recipient grants to SACOG members agencies. To start, each jurisdiction received funding to develop their 2021-2029 Housing Elements. In addition, each of the 28 jurisdictions received a formula-based grant, and another 12 grants were competitively awarded. Generally, jurisdictions used the grants for updating development and zoning codes, developing objective design standards, preparing plans and educational packets for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and conducting infrastructure and technical analysis of specific infill and corridor housing sites. These REAP 1 awards occurred while Green Means Go was being formed and many serve as precursors to Green Means Go projects. All projects were completed by the grant deadline in 2024. The list of grants is shown in Attachment A.
- (2) SGC Early Activation – The California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) awarded SACOG \$3.2 million to “Early Activation” projects that would immediately lead to housing development, as well as additional funding for Green Means Go development and technical assistance panels. Five Early Activation projects were awarded, with the largest going towards the San Juan Affordable Housing development located within the city and the unincorporated county of Sacramento. The list of five projects is shown in Attachment B.
- (3) REAP 2: Also administered by HCD, SACOG received roughly \$30 million in funding for activities related to the infrastructure needed to develop infill housing. Eighty-four percent of the funding is on eight capital projects that are constructing infrastructure that will support thousands of projected housing units. The remainder is being utilized for planning grants that will bring housing development closer. The statewide REAP 2 program drew on Green Means Go as a model, and despite the threat of a budget cut, which SACOG and other regions around the state fought hard to avoid, the REAP 2 grants are still moving ahead to spend their awards before funds expire in 2026. The list of the 21 grants is shown in Attachment B along with the grants for the SGC program.
- (4) Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) grant program. SACOG received a \$22.5 million award through this federal program, administered through the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans. The majority, nearly \$19 million, of the funds are distributed to nine projects throughout the region. Each of these projects are in a federally designated disadvantaged community where transportation, or lack of adequate transportation options, create obstacles to housing development. Attachment C shows the list of awarded grant projects.

Discussion/Analysis:

The funding and efforts supporting Green Means Go are instrumental in helping to implement the region’s long-range land use and transportation vision, currently the 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy and soon to be updated by the 2025 Blueprint.

For example, the REAP 1 program provided each city and county funds to conduct planning aimed at facilitating housing development but allowed flexibility to local agencies to use funds in context appropriate ways to meet local needs and challenges. Some agencies reviewed development codes and standards to ensure they meet new state requirements and best practices. Several smaller, more rural jurisdictions focused on setting up Accessory Dwelling Unit programs, as this is where they see the most development activity and interest. Other jurisdictions performed technical studies such as sewer, water, storm water or transportation for specific infill development areas. And some jurisdictions used their grants on specific plans to revitalize areas that have development potential but have yet to activate. The range of uses of the REAP 1

funds illustrates the many different strategies that local agencies are utilizing to promote infill housing development.

The SGC grant program focused on quick-strike projects that would free up housing development. The most notable is the San Juan Apartment project on Stockton Blvd. The funds were needed to connect the sewer system onto the site where 113 affordable housing units are going in a former motel. Another project in the SGC Early Activation program was in Folsom, where the city was able to work on the storm water drainage and hydraulic analysis to open 10 units of affordable housing. These two completed capital projects and the homes they are directly leading to are strong examples of public infrastructure investments that can support housing production.

The region's work on Green Means Go over the last few years has been largely focused on lobbying and applying for, suballocating, and delivering on the above discretionary grants from the state and federal government. The presentation for this item will highlight that work and some of what has been accomplished to date. Given the one-time nature of the funding captured for Green Means Go, and with no guarantees of more money in the immediate future, the committee will also have a chance to look ahead to the future of Green Means Go, including what could be next for the program. As the committee overseeing SACOG's work on the Green Means Go Program, the LUNR committee will have additional opportunities to shape the future of the program through discussions this year as we build up the implementation policies of the 2025 Blueprint and begin looking to the actions SACOG and the region will take to realize the plan's vision.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

Included in the Overall Work Program/Budget

List of Attachments:

Attachment A: REAP 1 program funded grants

Attachment B: Strategic Growth Council and REAP 2 funded grants

Attachment C: Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods funded grants