



Transportation Project List Development for the 2025 Blueprint

Receive and File

Author: Zach Miller

Attachments: No

Referring Committee: Land Use & Natural Resources

Issue:

Over the past year SACOG has made a great deal of progress on foundational pieces of the 2025 Blueprint. This culminated in the SACOG board's adoption of the land use assumptions in June 2024. The next step in the process is to create a transportation investment strategy that complements the land use assumptions.

The purpose of this item is to: (1) summarize steps to date to develop transportation assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint; (2) give an update of ongoing efforts to develop the transportation project list for the 2025 Blueprint; and (3) present next steps to develop a fiscally constrained transportation project list that helps the region achieve the goals and targets of the 2025 Blueprint.

Request:

Review & Discuss at Meeting

Recommendation for Board:

None; this item is for Receive and File.

Recommendation for Committee:

Staff is looking for board feedback and discussion on the presentation.

Background:

SACOG is updating the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), known as the 2025 Blueprint. This plan will outline a set of transportation and land use strategies that achieve various federal, state, regional, and local policy objectives while considering financial, growth, and regulatory constraints.

Where We Have Been

Since 2022, SACOG has taken steps to develop a long-range transportation and land use plan that is shaped by the Triple Bottom Line goals of equity, economy, and environment and informed by the objective of achieving the region's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target.

In November 2024, the board will recommend a list of transportation projects and programs to serve the

region's projected housing and jobs growth as described in the land use assumptions adopted by the board in June 2024. The transportation project list we are developing for the 2025 Blueprint looks to answer the question of how the region should use our limited money to build, maintain and operate a multimodal transportation system; align state, regional, and local priorities; and attract a talented workforce to help drive a strong and diverse economy.

The steps we've taken that will inform the transportation project list are outlined below. These steps are intended to ensure the data and assumptions that support this process are vetted by local agencies and statewide experts and informed by extensive public outreach.

Adoption of Regional Growth Forecast

For each plan update, SACOG prepares a long-range projection of regional population, employment, and household growth. For the 2025 Blueprint, the projections [adopted by the SACOG board in 2022](#) cover a timeframe from 2020 to 2050 and anticipate the region will grow by nearly 600,000 people, 263,000 jobs, and 278,000 homes; roughly a 20 percent increase from today. This growth projection assumes the region remains one of the fastest growing places in California in the coming decades.

Call for Transportation Projects and Transportation Project Sponsor Interviews

SACOG staff conducted a call for transportation project nominations and a series of local agency kickoff meetings with local planning, departments of transportation, and public works staff in late 2021 and into Spring 2022. We received nominations for more than \$28 billion in transportation investments, including new or expanded roads and highways, light rail expansions, new transit vehicles, maintenance and rehabilitation, active transportation projects, and other programs. We also interviewed all 28 member agencies about key development projects, changes since the last MTP/SCS update, and local policy priorities.

Development and Evaluation of Pathways

To help inform the board's deliberations on land use and transportation decisions for the 2025 Blueprint, SACOG developed three pathways, or scenarios, that explore the many complex and intersecting growth issues facing the region. As part of this effort in June of 2023, committees and the board discussed evaluation of pathway transportation assumptions and performance metrics ([Staff Report/Attachments, Presentation](#)). Our Pathways work showed that land use and transportation are inextricably linked. The region has many choices in how we grow and the path we choose greatly influences Triple Bottom Line outcomes such as the preservation of our agricultural economy, housing affordability, climate resilience, access to opportunity, air quality, and resident's transportation options.

Public Outreach and Engagement

SACOG conducted robust public input in the initial phase of the plan update to ensure that residents' vision for the region's future is reflected in the 2025 Blueprint. This was conducted through polling, pop up workshops, surveys, focus groups, and a regional workshop which in combination reached more than 7,000 residents, elected officials, business leaders, and staff from every jurisdiction in the region. Staff used the input from this public input to develop seven principles that capture the opinions and needs of residents. The purpose of these principles is to synthesize what we learned through our outreach in a way that the SACOG board and staff can use to ensure the assumptions, policies, and implementation strategies we develop for the 2025 Blueprint consider and integrate the needs and opinions of residents from across the region. In March 2024, we summarized the outcomes of this outreach in presentations to each of the SACOG board committees ([staff report](#) and

presentation). These principles are reflected in the analysis and development of a regional transportation investment strategy.

Development and Evaluation of the Discussion Scenario

SACOG staff used feedback from the public, local planners, the SACOG board, and analysis of the Pathways performance metrics to develop a Discussion Scenario to inform SACOG board, partner agency, and stakeholder discussions about how the region should grow over the next 25 years. We presented the Discussion Scenario, which included a preliminary transportation project list designed to serve growth over the next 25 years, to committees and the board in April 2024.

We created the Discussion Scenario as a potential path that achieves the policy goals outlined by the board in the [policy framework](#), would very likely achieve our GHG emissions target, is consistent with locally adopted land use and transportation plans, and is responsive to what we heard from the public outreach and engagement.

The land use assumptions of the Discussion Scenario were adopted by the board in June 2024, and are the starting point for the development of a final set of transportation investments. We expect to refine the discussion scenario between now and November when the board will be asked to adopt the final transportation project list.

Transportation Project Sponsor Engagement (Phase 1)

During the period of March through May of 2024, SACOG asked transportation project sponsors to provide feedback on the initial transportation project list developed as part of the Discussion Scenario for both near-term funded projects (2025-2028) and longer-term priorities (2025-2050). This process began with SACOG staff hosting a kickoff workshop to provide an overview of what we have been doing since the call for projects, reviewing the discussion scenario, and discussing how transportation project sponsors should go about reviewing, updating, and providing input on the development of a fiscally constrained project list for the 2025 Blueprint. Following the kickoff meeting, feedback on the Discussion Scenario transportation project list was gathered through staff-to-staff meetings, email correspondence, and official comment letters.

Discussion/Analysis:

Where We Are

Following adoption of the land use assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint at the June 2024, board meeting, SACOG staff has continued the development and refinement of the transportation project list. Prior to sharing a draft transportation project list with committees and the board in September, it is important to highlight and understand the key considerations that we are using to develop the list of transportation investments.

As part of this presentation, we are hoping to gather feedback on the policy priorities we are using to develop and refine the transportation project list. Feedback and direction provided by the committee, along with feedback provided by transportation project sponsors on the transportation project list presented in September 2024, will be used to inform the transportation project list the board will be presented in November 2024, for adoption.

Key Considerations for Developing the Transportation Project List for the 2025 Blueprint

The transportation assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint are guided by the following policy objectives and regulations:

The Triple Bottom Line (regional policy objective)

While achieving the GHG target is a key regional policy priority, there are a variety of other policy priorities in the [2025 Blueprint Policy Framework](#), focused on the Triple Bottom Line (equity, environment, and economy as co-equal goals). The 2025 Blueprint should lay out a collective vision, 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, the SACOG Board of Directors created 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. Therefore, the way we develop the transportation investments needs to optimize the transportation network in ways that maximize performance across the Triple Bottom Line, help meet state and federal requirements, and incorporate transportation project sponsor and public feedback and priorities. Examples of how the development of the transportation project list is incorporating the Triple Bottom Line are outlined in Table 1, below.

TABLE 1

<i>Equity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure access from under-resourced communities to essential destinations such as hospitals, schools, and job centers.• Take a proactive and genuine approach to engage representatives of Black, Indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and other communities of color along with rural, urban, and under-resourced communities to help shape the strategies and policy priorities in the 2025 Blueprint.
<i>Economy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and prioritize transportation investments that create or improve access to jobs, job centers, and economic development opportunities.• Advance a fix-it-first approach to preserve and better maintain our transportation system in a state of good repair, including identifying affordable, near-term solutions for areas with significant bottlenecks or safety concerns today.• Prioritize infrastructure investment strategies and growth patterns that support the region’s key economic clusters including Food and Agriculture, Health and Life Sciences, and Advanced Mobility.• Identify infrastructure and program investments that better connect the region’s workforce, in particular lower income residents, to jobs and opportunities.
<i>Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize investment in infrastructure and development that supports a more resilient region in the face of climate change and ensures that vulnerable and marginalized communities don’t endure the worst of climate-induced natural disasters.• Invest in transportation and development that can reduce or mitigate harmful tailpipe emissions and other automobile related pollutants that negatively contribute to health, such as asthma, heart disease, and lung disease.• Invest in transportation and development that can reduce GHG emissions in line with the regional GHG reduction target.

Fiscal Constraint (federal regulation)

The 2025 Blueprint must be fiscally constrained. Fiscal constraint is the demonstration of sufficient funding (Federal, State, local and private) to operate and maintain transportation facilities and services and to implement planned and programmed transportation system improvements. Fiscal constraint can also be thought of as the description of fully funded projects in the 2025 Blueprint based on the

projected available revenues during the 25-year planning horizon. The financial forecast for the plan is based on the latest trends and information about existing funding sources for transportation. In every plan update, there are more transportation investments needed and wanted than money available to pay for them. For perspective, the 2025 Blueprint nominations proposed more than \$14 billion in road and highway expansion projects while only a little over \$6 billion was included for these types of transportation investments in the region's current long-range plan (the 2020 MTP/SCS). As a result, SACOG must work with transportation project sponsors and the board to prioritize the most critical and cost-effective investment strategies.

Air Quality Conformity (federal regulation)

SACOG must demonstrate that implementation of the 2025 Blueprint will help the region meet federal standards for healthy air. The federal Clean Air Act tasks SACOG with reducing pollutants created by transportation, including ozone precursors and particulate matter, which are byproducts of combustion engines and road dust created by moving vehicles.

The package of road, highway, and transit expansion projects in the plan can affect the region's ability to meet air quality standards by increasing or decreasing vehicle travel. Some strategic road and highway expansion could help improve air quality by reducing congestion or smoothing travel speeds, but adding too much capacity to the regional road and highway network too early could result in increased vehicle travel and more tailpipe emissions. Improvements in vehicle technology over time help with this, but are not sufficient by themselves to meet the air quality standards the region must achieve.

A land use and transportation strategy that achieves the 19 percent GHG reduction target (regional policy objective and state regulation)

The 2025 Blueprint must measure the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by modeling the forecasted land use pattern and supporting transportation network designed to serve regional transportation needs. The greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for the 2025 plan is a 19 percent reduction of per capita emissions by 2035 compared to a 2005 base line.

The primary mechanism by which the Blueprint can plan for a reduction in GHG emissions from passenger vehicles is by shortening the distances people must travel to reach their destinations, thereby shortening vehicle trips and making non-driving modes a more reasonable option for many people.

The land use assumptions adopted by the board in June outline a future with modest increases in the proportion of housing located in centers and corridors and established communities relative to the current MTP/SCS as a means of improving GHG performance while remaining reasonable, advancing the Triple Bottom Line, and incorporating local feedback. The land use assumptions also call for ambitious employment growth outside of the region's urban core areas as a means of improving jobs-housing balance and lowering VMT in parts of the region that currently have fewer jobs, services, and destinations. The transportation investments being developed for the 2025 Blueprint are focused on supporting the land use pattern adopted by the board such that the associated GHG performance benefits can be realized.

Where Are We Going

Staff is in the process of developing and revising the initial transportation project list that was included in the April committees and board presentation of the Discussion Scenario. In short, the transportation project list

being developed is intended support the land use assumptions adopted by the board in June of 2024, demonstrate improvements in air quality over time, achieve the GHG reduction target, all while closely considering the other considerations (e.g., transportation project sponsor priorities and the Triple Bottom Line). Staff will be returning to committees and the board in September with a revised transportation project list for comment as well as detailed modeling results on the performance of the Draft Final Scenario.

In parallel, SACOG staff will be entering phase 2 of the engagement process with transportation project sponsors to ensure that they have ample time to review and comment on the revised transportation project list being developed for September committees and board.

The policy priorities listed in Table 1 above are intended to reflect the board-adopted Policy Framework, while also incorporating the input and direction we have heard in committee and board discussions since then, and input from the public and stakeholders. We are asking the committee to weigh in on whether the policy priorities being used to develop and refine the transportation project list are appropriate, need refinement, or if any clarification is needed. Staff will use the committee's feedback, along with input from transportation project sponsors, this month to inform the final transportation project list we will present to the board in November 2024, for adoption.

During the Transportation Committee meeting staff received two questions. The first item was a clarification requested by a board member related to how funding was allocated across the five major project categories for the "Preliminary 2025 Blueprint Budget" column on the tables found on slides 12 and 13 of the PowerPoint presentation. The budget figures for the 2025 Blueprint shown in those tables assume the same distribution of funding across major project categories as that of the adopted 2020 MTP/SCS. Using an estimated budget of around \$38 billion, which is what our very preliminary estimate anticipates our total budget could be for the 2025 Blueprint, staff calculated the amounts of each budget category using the same proportions as that which was included in the last plan (i.e., the 2020 MTP/SCS). These figures are meant to be used as a point of reference, they are not final or exact numbers by any means. Staff noted that there are strings attached to a good deal of the funding included in this plan which limits our ability to allocate that money to a different major project category. However, there is some flexibility for a certain amount of funding, and this will be highlighted in the September 2024, meeting.

The second item discussed during the Transportation Committee meeting was related to the connection between vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and whether VMT is a good proxy for GHG emissions. Although the relationship between VMT and GHG emissions is not a one-to-one ratio, it still serves as a good proxy. As noted by the board member making the inquiry, using VMT as a proxy for GHG is not perfect due to the VMT metric not accounting for vehicle speeds. However, in our detailed GHG modeling we do account for vehicle speeds by categorizing trips into speed bins, and each speed bin has a different emissions factor applied to get the GHG emissions. Finally, while the emissions from travel at different speeds do matter, they are not as significant as the emissions reductions we can achieve through reducing the distances or amounts people need to drive (i.e., reducing VMT).

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

The 2025 Blueprint is funded by a combination of sources including Federal Metropolitan Planning funds, state Sustainable Communities Formula Program Funds, and Transportation Development Act-Local Transportation Funds. The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency and El Dorado County Transportation Commission also provide some funding to SACOG to support development of the 2025 Blueprint to assist with the planning activities, data development, and analysis that is necessary to ensure coordination and consistency between the regional plan and the county-level Regional Transportation Plans.

List of Attachments:

Not applicable