



2025 Blueprint: Revised Draft Transportation Project List Options and Performance

Receive & File

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**Attachments:** Yes

**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. In June 2024, the SACOG board adopted the land use assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint. The next step in the process is to create a transportation investment strategy that complements these land use assumptions.

The purpose of this item is to: (1) Update the committee on the status of SACOG's engagement with local agencies on the transportation investment strategy for the 2025 Blueprint; (2) Review two potential options for moving forward with a transportation project list in November; and (3) Review the full suite of greenhouse gas reduction strategies available for the plan update.

**Request:**

None; this is for information only.

**Recommendation for Board:**

None; this is for information only.

**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. The board adopted a final set of land use assumptions in June 2024, that lay out a strategy for the general type, location, and density of housing and job growth the region may experience over the next 25 years. The adopted land use assumptions envision a future with a greater diversity of housing options through the provision of a housing product type split that continues a trend towards more attached and small lot single family housing types and where approximately 68 percent of growth occurs in centers and corridors and established communities. Additionally, the distribution of employment growth in the adopted land use for the 2025 Blueprint assumes robust job growth outside of the traditional job centers of the region and in more housing rich areas.

SACOG must now identify a set of financially constrained multimodal transportation investments that serve the plan's land use strategy. To develop this list of transportation projects, staff reviewed more than 1,600 projects nominated by cities, counties, transit operators, and others. Staff analyzed projects using the triple bottom line framework to gauge their potential to minimize critical congestion bottlenecks, reduce emissions, provide transportation choice, increase access to opportunity (jobs, education, shopping, key services), and improve safety.

In September, staff presented a draft transportation project list to the Land Use and Natural Resources (LUNR) and Transportation committees and received feedback from committee members. The committees were supportive of and emphasized the need for staff's ongoing discussions with project sponsors about local priorities for the 2025 Blueprint's transportation investment strategy. Both committees were also generally supportive of the distribution of investments across budget categories for the 2025 Blueprint.

Following the release of the draft transportation project list at the end of August, and concurrent to the committee and board's review, staff held over twenty meetings with transportation project sponsors to gather additional information on projects to inform the draft final transportation project list. Further, staff received formal comments in the form of emails or letters from 16 transportation project sponsors. Comments received from transportation project sponsors included, but were not limited to the following:

- Administrative corrections (e.g., changes to lead agency or project category).
- Changes to project scope, cost, and/or year of completion.
- Addition of new projects to the list that were not previously nominated.
- Removal of projects from the list completely due to no longer being a viable project or having been completed recently.
- Requests that capacity projects previously nominated for the plan, but not recommended by SACOG staff in the draft list shared with the board in September, be brought in.

Staff compiled all the comments and requests for changes to the transportation project list for consideration of inclusion in the draft final transportation project list being presented here today.

SACOG staff worked to accommodate changes proposed by local staff where new information on projects aligned with triple bottom line policy objectives, could be paid for by reasonably foreseeable revenues, or where local resources are already paying for an improvement. Staff made every effort to prioritize and include the transportation projects that were identified as local priorities by sponsors; however, staff was not able to accommodate all requests for road and highway capacity projects to be included in the transportation project list without eroding the plan's performance in key areas, most specifically in the achievement of the regional greenhouse gas reduction target. To provide the board with potential options on how to prioritize and balance the policy objectives of the plan (i.e., Triple Bottom Line framework, the greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target, local priorities), staff developed two options for the board to consider for potential adoption in November. Further, the board may determine that achieving the regional GHG reduction target is infeasible or incompatible with local planning priorities and direct SACOG to pursue an Alternative Planning Scenario (APS). An APS would illustrate how the region could meet the GHG reduction target with additional resources or through additional steps; however, an APS would make the region ineligible for certain state funding programs.

To support a committee discussion on the next steps for the 2025 Blueprint, the two options for the board to consider are detailed below.

## **Discussion/Analysis:**

### **Option 1**

Option 1 (Attachment A) of the transportation project list represents an investment strategy that meets the objectives of the Triple Bottom Line and provides the region with a reasonable chance of achieving the state assigned GHG reduction target. This version of the transportation project list was developed to support the land use assumptions adopted by the board in June 2024. Option 1 would include the following allocation of funding across major project categories (please note not all major project categories shown):

- Road and Highway Capacity: \$7.7 billion
- Transit Capital: \$2.4 billion
- Bike and Pedestrian: \$2.3 billion
- Maintenance and Rehabilitation: \$17 billion

Rooted in the assumption that the 2025 Blueprint needs to achieve the regional SB 375 GHG target, and that Maintenance and Rehabilitation needs are a high priority in the region, the transportation investments in this option add strategic capacity to the system. Specifically, the road and highway capacity projects included in this option are intended to serve the jobs and housing growth projected within the plan. Projects were reviewed for their potential to provide multimodal benefits, improve safety, alleviate existing or forecasted bottlenecks, connect housing to jobs, and meet future projected travel volumes in a way that manages, rather than eliminates, congestion. This option is staff's best attempt to achieve the Triple Bottom Line goals for the plan, incorporate the priorities of transportation project sponsors, and set the plan up to achieve its GHG target. To achieve this outcome, staff did not include all projects requested by sponsors that would have eroded the region's performance relative to the GHG reduction target.

### **Option 2:**

Option 2 (Attachment A) of the transportation project list includes projects which, based on staff's analysis, did not satisfy the regional priorities for the plan though they remain in local plans and could be paid for by reasonably available funding sources. This version of the transportation project list includes all the projects included in Option 1 plus an additional 45+ projects discussed with local staff during the latest round of project review. The addition of these projects adds over \$740 million dollars to the road and highway capacity budget category for Option 2 as compared to Option 1. The funding for these projects would largely come from local sources (impact fees, road funds, sales taxes), though project sponsors would also likely seek additional support from state or federal grants. Overall, the Blueprint budget could accommodate these projects by more fully accounting for revenues that would be made available by local governments and by reallocating some funding from other flexible funding sources that could otherwise help support state-of-good repair projects, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit capital, or other operational investments. Option 2 fundamentally differs from Option 1 in that it:

- includes an additional 45+ road and highway capacity projects;
- includes approximately 125 additional lane miles; and
- adds over \$740 million dollars to the road and highway capacity budget.

These projects are consistent with local planning documents and exist in areas with at least some planned growth in the 2025 Blueprint land use assumptions. However, based on staff's analysis, these projects would add capacity beyond what is needed to support the amount of travel likely to be on these roads within the time frame of the 2025 Blueprint. While these expansions may be important to support the final buildout of

the plan areas they support, staff is concerned that the inclusion of these projects at this time would add road or highway capacity that would result in increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and GHG emissions, thus, making it harder for the region to achieve our GHG reduction target. Staff conducting a sketch level estimate of the additional GHG emissions generated by Option 2 that was presented at the LUNR and Transportation committees on Thursday, October 3. This estimate will help the board make an informed decision related to the implications of bringing these additional capacity-increasing projects into the plan and the relative tradeoffs between the two options being presented.

#### **Additional GHG Reduction Strategies:**

Land use and transportation projects alone are insufficient to achieve the GHG target for either option. In addition to maintaining programs from 2020 plan such as bike- and scooter-share, transportation demand management (TDM), car sharing, a mileage-based user fee, and electric vehicle (EV) support (see Attachment B for detailed descriptions); it is likely that both options would require measures to further reduce GHG emissions. There are a number of other strategies that the board could include in the 2025 Blueprint to help the region achieve its GHG target. A general description of each of the additional GHG reduction strategies are provided below.

- **School Bus Renewal Program:** This strategy would consist of increasing school bus ridership in order to reduce the overall emissions from school transportation. This program could also lead to the benefits of improving traffic flow and safety near schools, thus providing a more inviting and safe experience for bicyclists and pedestrians to access school sites.
- **TDM Telework Policies:** This general strategy is designed to increase transportation system efficiency and reduce demand on the system. This strategy would consist of a TDM telework policy or program that would increase teleworking.
- **Reduced Transit Fares:** This strategy would provide discounted or free transit passes for employees and/or residents. Reducing the out-of-pocket cost for choosing transit improves the competitiveness of transit against driving, increasing the total number of transit trips and decreasing vehicle trips. This decrease in vehicle trips results in reduced VMT and thus a reduction in GHG emissions.
- **Increased Mileage-Based User Fee:** As an additional strategy this would consist of an increase to the mileage-based user fee assumption from last plan to better manage demand. A higher mileage-based user fee would result in greater reduction in VMT.

At the October Transportation and Land Use & Natural Resources (LUNR) committee meetings, both committees expressed support for striving to achieve the greenhouse gas (GHG) target set for the SACOG region by the State such that the region as a whole would remain eligible for important state funding programs. There was acknowledgement at both committees that Option 2 was not a feasible path forward, but that SACOG staff should continue to work with transportation project sponsors to further refine the project list in a manner that would continue to account for local priorities and input while also not compromising the region's ability to remain within striking distance of the GHG target. Staff committed to continue to work with sponsors to refine and finalize the list prior to the November committee and board meetings.

During the Transportation Committee meeting additional details and information were requested on the modeling process used to calculate the GHG emissions for the plan. Staff committed to providing additional information to the board during a future lunch session. Finally, in the LUNR Committee there was an inquiry about the cost to implement the additional GHG reduction measures detailed in the staff report and presented to committees by staff. Staff committed to bringing additional information to committees and the

board in November on the relative costs and feasibility of implementing these additional GHG reduction measures.

**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:**

Attachment A: Option 1 and 2 Draft Transportation Project List

Attachment B: 2020 SCS GHG Reduction Strategies