



Air Quality Conformity and the Year Ahead

Receive and File

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Attachments: No

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Referring Committee: Land Use & Natural Resources

1. Issue:

What air quality planning and analysis activities will SACOG lead and participate in over the next year?

2. Recommendation:

None, this is for information only.

3. Background/Analysis:

As the designated metropolitan planning organization for the region, SACOG is responsible for ensuring that transportation projects and plans do not impede the region's clean air goals. SACOG evaluates all projects included in the federal Metropolitan Transportation Plan (newly branded Blueprint 2024) and the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) to ensure consistency with air quality objectives – a process referred to as finding or determining conformity. The ability to make a determination of conformity builds on long-term coordination between local air districts, California Air Resources Board, the federal government, businesses, and local agencies working together to develop and implement time constrained plans which lower pollution levels to public health standards at key milestone dates.

4. Discussion/Analysis:

In calendar years 2022 and 2023, SACOG will be participating in several air quality planning activities ranging from the collection, review, and analysis of transportation projects as part of planning and programming activities, to ongoing coordination with local air districts. At the April 7, Land Use & Natural Resources (LUNR) meeting SACOG and Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SacMetro) staff briefed the committee on SACOG's role in improving air quality and highlight activities that SACOG staff and board members will be participating in over the coming years.

Some of the highlights of work to come include:

- SacMetro along with El Dorado Air Quality Management District (AQMD), Feather River AQMD, Placer Air Pollution Control District, and Yolo-Solano AQMD are working together on an approach to demonstrate attainment of the 2015 health standard for Ozone, a pollutant tied to respiratory tract irritation and infection, as well as aggravation of lung diseases and asthma. The 2015 health standard represents the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's latest understanding about ozone's effects on

public health and welfare. The standards are intended improve public health protection, particularly for at-risk groups including children, older adults, people of all ages who have lung diseases such as asthma, and people who are active outdoors, especially outdoor workers. SACOG will participate in elements of this work related to transportation including the development of emissions budgets and reasonably available control measures for the attainment demonstration. Control measures, as the term is used in air quality conformity, are strategies that reduce transportation-related air pollution, GHG emissions, and fuel use, by reducing vehicle miles traveled and improving roadway operations.

- SACOG staff is also working on the development of the 2023 MTIP and corresponding Conformity Determination. This is a biennial process in which MPOs around the state extend their near-term programs of projects to capture additional projects from their long-range transportation plans, the 2020 MTP/SCS in SACOG's case. The MTIP represents a four-year regional spending plan for near-term transportation projects, programs, and investment priorities. Specifically, the MTIP lists projects or programs that have a federal interest—meaning projects or programs for which federal funds or actions by federal agencies are anticipated—along with locally and state-funded projects that are regionally significant. Any project that is likely to have a meaningful impact on air quality, positive or negative, eventually needs to be listed in the region's MTIP. In many ways, the MTIP represents the region's near-term implementation of the transportation investment strategies of the MTP/SCS.
- The region is in the beginning stages of development for the 2024 Blueprint, the region's long-range transportation and land use plan. The Blueprint is focused on a Triple Bottom Line set of goals built around Equity, Economy, and Environment. The Environment goal for the plan, as described in 2024 Blueprint Policy Framework adopted by the SACOG board in February is to build a plan for a "safe and resilient region for all residents, where natural resources and air quality are sustainably managed so people can thrive here for generations." This goal is very much aligned with the federal air quality conformity process which intends to reduce transportation related emissions to levels that do not pose health risks to residents, particularly residents that are sensitive or vulnerable to exposure to harmful toxic air contaminants. In fact, a portion of the funding available through SACOG's regional funding programs that help implement our long rang plan, specifically the Congestion, Mitigation, and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding, is tied directly to helping the region achieve our air quality objectives and funds many projects that reduce transportation related emissions.

5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

Work on Air Quality and Climate Planning is included in the adopted budget and Overall Work Program.

6. This staff report aligns with the following SACOG Work Plan Objectives:

Goal 2 : Connected Communities