



## Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

Meeting Date: June 2, 2022

Agenda Item No. 5

### Coordinated Rural Opportunities Plan Update

Information

**Prepared by:** Renee DeVere-Okie

**Attachments:** No

**Approved by:** Clint Holtzen

**Referring Committee:** Not Applicable

#### 1. Issue:

Update on current outreach and development efforts of the SACOG and Valley Vision Coordinated Rural Opportunities Plan (CROP).

#### 2. Recommendation:

None; this item is for information and discussion.

#### 3. Background/Analysis:

On December 17, 2020, SACOG was awarded a \$250,000 Department of Conservation Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Planning Grant to develop a Coordinated Rural Opportunities Plan (CROP) in partnership with Valley Vision. CROP aims to elevate local conservation, economic development, and planning efforts by uniting them into a cohesive regional strategy that will help our members and partners compete for grants and secure other available funding to preserve, support, and expand critical agricultural infrastructure and services.

#### 4. Discussion/Analysis:

As a project partner, Valley Vision is working with SACOG in the development of a regional strategy for supporting agricultural lands rooted in the local planning and expertise that exists throughout rural and agricultural communities in the region. To create a regional strategy, CROP has three focus areas:

- (1) Develop an inventory of agricultural plans, strategies, and programs throughout the six-county region, including work out of SACOG's Rural Urban Connections Strategy, to foster an understanding of the challenges, best practices, and successful strategies for supporting and enhancing the region's working landscapes and agricultural economy and communities.
- (2) Identify gaps where existing strategies or programs may not be working as intended and where new strategies are needed.
- (3) Create an implementation framework that describes the unique infrastructure investments or strategies needed to support the continued success of agriculture in our region and that will serve as a starting point for identifying grant and other funding opportunities aimed at agricultural conservation and development.

To support the development of the CROP, SACOG staff and Valley Vision are utilizing a six-county advisory working group and engaging county level partners at key project milestones. Critical partners include each of the six counties' planning departments, agricultural commissioners, farm bureaus, local land trusts, the Regional Prosperity Partnership, and other relevant regional stakeholders. We continue to identify additional partners and stakeholders with the help of our existing working group and partners (e.g., infrastructure service providers, water districts, flood control agencies, land trusts).

Trish Kelly and Grace Kaufman of Valley Vision will provide an update to the committee on ongoing project outreach thus far in the project development. This presentation will offer an opportunity for the committee to gain greater insights into one of our region's most important economic sectors and continue the discussion on what we can be doing to ensure the future success of our region's natural and agricultural resources.

**5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

Funding for CROP comes from a \$250,000 grant from the state's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program and is included in SACOG's Overall Work Program.

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

**Goal 1 : Advance Economic Prosperity**