

2. Evaluating and Prioritizing Greenfield Development in the Region's Long-Range Plan () (Est. Time:)



Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

Meeting Date: December 5, 2024

Agenda Item No. 2

Evaluating and Prioritizing Greenfield Development in the Region's Long-Range Plan

Action

Author: Clint Holtzen

Attachments: Yes

Referring Committee: Not Applicable

Issue:

Evaluating the performance of greenfield development in the context of SB 375 greenhouse gas reduction goals and the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS).

Request:

Approve

Recommendation for Board:

That the board direct staff to add the following statement to the implementation commitments adopted by the board in June 2024: "SACOG shall seek input during the preparation of the next comprehensive MTP/SCS update to determine which Developing Communities can most effectively assist the region in achieving its GHG and vehicle miles traveled reduction goals and prioritize such areas when preparing the land use scenario. SACOG will work with its partner agencies prior to the next update cycle to determine how GHG/VMT reductions in Developing Communities will be analyzed for purposes of this prioritization."

Recommendation for Committee:

That the Land Use and Natural Resources Committee recommend that the board direct staff to add the following statement to the implementation commitments adopted by the board in June 2024: "SACOG shall seek input during the preparation of the next comprehensive MTP/SCS update to determine which Developing Communities can most effectively assist the region in achieving its GHG and vehicle miles traveled reduction goals and prioritize such areas when preparing the land use scenario. SACOG will work with its partner agencies prior to the next update cycle to determine how GHG/VMT reductions in Developing Communities will be analyzed for purposes of this prioritization."

Background:

In the lead up to the June SACOG board action to adopt the 2025 Blueprint land use assumptions, the board requested staff explore the various ways that greenfield development, growth outside of the existing regional footprint, impacts climate goals. Specifically, there was interest in better understanding how greenfield developments in the region perform in relation to the (GHG) reduction target under SB 375 as well as a desire to unpack the distinctions between greenfield plan performance over time as plans move from groundbreaking to buildout. The 2025 Blueprint generally refers to these greenfield developments as

Developing Communities and relies on these areas to accommodate approximately 32 percent of future housing and 20 percent of future jobs through the year 2050.

Much of the board's interest in the role greenfield growth can play in meeting climate goals came out of an interest in understanding how SACOG's original 2004 Sacramento Region Blueprint project continues to guide development in the region 20 years after its completion and through the many plan updates that have occurred since. As a reminder, the original Blueprint is a smart growth vision for the region that was adopted by the SACOG Board of Directors in 2004 following two years of extensive outreach and engagement with elected officials, stakeholder groups, local jurisdictions, and residents. The vision of the Blueprint is to integrate land use and transportation planning to slow the loss of open space, farmland, and habitat to urbanization, cut down on vehicle emissions and congestion, and improve the quality of life for residents of the region. It accomplishes this by implementing smart growth, also known as Blueprint principles, that encourage a variety of housing options close to employment, shopping, entertainment hubs and daily needs, which reduces the distance people must travel and creates more options for people to walk, bike, or take public transportation in place of driving. These Blueprint principles apply equally to development within the existing regional footprint and to new greenfield developments around the urban edge.

The seven principles are:

- Housing Choice and Diversity;
- Provide Transportation Choices;
- Mixed Use Development;
- Compact Development;
- Design for Quality;
- Use existing assets; and
- Natural Resource Conservation.

Since the adoption of the Blueprint, SACOG has integrated these principles into each update of the region's long-range plan. And while it's been 20 years since the adoption of the Regional Blueprint, the principles remain relevant today. In combination with the board's decision to adopt the final land use assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint plan update in June, the board also adopted eight statements of commitment that define the relationship between the 2004 Regional Blueprint vision and the 2025 Blueprint plan and the challenges related to implementation (Attachment B).

Discussion/Analysis:

To operationalize the agency's commitment to the 2004 Sacramento Region Blueprint, the board directed staff to develop a recommendation for analyzing how greenfield development, by embracing the Blueprint principles, can support the region's efforts to achieve our greenhouse gas reduction target. Further, the board asked that staff consider how such an analysis can be used to inform future updates of the regional plan.

To begin this discussion, SACOG partnered with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD) to bring a presentation to the November committee meeting discussing the roles and responsibilities for reducing GHG emissions in our region and how that relates to SACOG's GHG target under SB 375. SACOG staff discussed how greenfield development impacts regional climate goals. SMAQMD staff provided examples and case studies from the last two decades to help illustrate some of the challenges facing greenfield development in the context of SB 375 as well as other climate and air quality goals. At the end of the presentation, the committee had a discussion on potential opportunities and considerations for

minimizing climate and air pollution impacts in greenfield areas. Staff is returning this month to discuss next steps and a recommendation for making good on the commitment made by the board this past June.

Following the board's final adoption of the land use and transportation investment assumptions for the 2025 Blueprint, SACOG must now draft a plan describing those assumptions and outlining the policies, strategies, and implementation commitments needed to realize the vision of the plan. To ensure that the board's commitment to the 2004 Sacramento Region Blueprint is clear, staff recommends that this committee request that the board direct staff to add the following statement to the implementation commitments the board previously adopted in June 2024:

SACOG shall seek input during the preparation of the next comprehensive MTP/SCS update to determine which Developing Communities can most effectively assist the region in achieving its GHG and vehicle miles traveled reduction goals and prioritize such areas when preparing the land use scenario. SACOG will work with its partner agencies prior to the next update cycle to determine how GHG/VMT reductions in Developing Communities will be analyzed for purposes of this prioritization.

Per Attachment A, staff has added "comprehensive" to the proposed language since the 2027 MTP/SCS will be a minor update and thus the analysis would be far more relevant for the more comprehensive update of the plan that will be adopted by the board in 2031. While that adoption date is further out, staff would begin work on the analysis much sooner, likely in the next year or two.

Staff has also considered the second of the two proposed bullet points from June 2024 (see Attachment A) which proposes the creation of a new regional greenfield initiative to provide assistance to the higher performing greenfield developments as determined by the analysis performed as a result of the first bullet point. Staff does not recommend adoption of this language that commits to a major new initiative for several reasons: (1) the scope of a new greenfield initiative would potentially require significant staff time and resources that currently don't exist; and (2) such a new initiative would require picking 'winners and losers' among greenfield developments across the region which would be a major challenge.

With the committee and board's direction, SACOG staff will incorporate the language from the first bullet point from Attachment A into the final 2025 Blueprint plan. Staff anticipates asking the board to release the draft plan and environmental analysis by May 2025. Final adoption of the plan is due by the end of 2025.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

The 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 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 – Proposed Language to Statements of Commitment

Attachment B – Draft Statements of Commitment

ATTACHMENT A - Proposed language to add to “Statements of Commitment to the Blueprint and Its Implementation”

Original proposal to add to the Blueprint statements of commitment (June 2024):

(1) SACOG shall seek input during the preparation of the next MTP/SCS update to determine which Developing Communities can most effectively assist the region in achieving its GHG and VMT reduction goals and prioritize such areas when preparing the land use scenario. SACOG will work with its partner agencies prior to the next update cycle to determine how GHG/VMT reductions in Developing Communities will be analyzed for purposes of this prioritization.

(2) SACOG will consider creating a greenfield initiative that will utilize objective GHG/VMT performance criteria and analysis to identify those Developing Communities under construction or likely to be under construction during the next plan cycle that will help the region meet state and federal environmental requirements through GHG/VMT reductions when fully built out. These projects are expected to pursue funding at the federal, state and local levels to incentivize Developing Communities that assist with achieving GHG/VMT reductions.

SACOG staff recommendation for adoption (December 2024):

(1) SACOG shall seek input during the preparation of the next comprehensive MTP/SCS update to determine which Developing Communities can most effectively assist the region in achieving its GHG and VMT reduction goals and prioritize such areas when preparing the land use scenario. SACOG will work with its partner agencies prior to the next update cycle to determine how GHG/VMT reductions in Developing Communities will be analyzed for purposes of this prioritization.

(2)

(Staff does not recommend adoption of language in 2nd bullet point)

ATTACHMENT B: STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT TO THE BLUEPRINT AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The following draft statements outline the region's commitment to the 2004 Regional Blueprint and its relationship to the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), also known as the 2025 Blueprint. With board direction, SACOG will incorporate these statements into the narrative of the 2025 Blueprint policy documents.

1. The 2004 Blueprint continues to guide development in the Sacramento Region; it is not being replaced. SACOG remains committed to the 2004 Blueprint vision as a north star for the region's future development.
2. The 2025 MTP/SCS, known as the 2025 Blueprint, is the latest in a series of regional plans to help implement the 2004 Blueprint.
3. The land use forecast for the 2025 MTP/SCS is consistent with and developed from adopted and pending local city and county general plans and policies in place at the time of plan development (June 2024).
4. The MTP/SCS identifies one of many ways to phase the buildout of the 2004 Blueprint and achieve greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reduction from passenger vehicles and light duty trucks, per Senate Bill (SB) 375. There are multiple ways this GHG reduction could be achieved through the strategic timing and location of development.
5. The MTP/SCS does not regulate local land use authority or preclude any local jurisdiction from planning and approving growth that is different in any way, including in terms of total units or geographic extent.
6. For the economic, environmental, and equity benefits of the Blueprint to be realized, the region—local governments, private, and nonprofit partners—must work in coordination and alignment to implement the Blueprint
7. Developing Communities (also commonly referred to as greenfield development) can provide more housing options and, when planned using principles such as smart growth, new urbanism, or SACOG's 2004 Blueprint principles, can reduce the demand for driving and thus lower vehicle miles traveled and related greenhouse gas emissions compared to when they don't use those principles. The challenges of Developing Communities include the cost of backbone infrastructure, difficulties in making public transportation or shuttles an attractive alternative to driving, and the location of some developing community areas further from existing jobs and activity centers. A further challenge is the erosion of street and urban design standards, land use mix (e.g., jobs-housing balance), and principles around which such communities were originally designed as the project builds out over time.
8. Development in Centers and Corridors (also commonly referred to as infill development) can provide more housing options in areas that typically don't require residents to drive as much, upgrade or repair aging infrastructure, and help provide a critical boost for economic revitalization of the region's town centers, commercial corridors and older

urban and suburban areas. The challenges of development in Centers and Corridors include the cost of offsite infrastructure upgrades, local planning requirements, the disparate location and ownership of multiple sites, and the need to work collaboratively with existing residents to ensure local support and minimize displacement, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Disclosure: The MTP/SCS does not necessarily reflect the full buildout of local land use plans because it is required to be fiscally constrained and based on most recent economic and demographic projections.

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