



## 2016 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

**Adopted September 22, 2016**

Public Review and Comment Period:  
July 22, 2016 to September 6, 2016

MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
369 W. 18<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
MERCED, CA 95340  
(209)723-3153  
[WWW.MCAGOV.ORG](http://WWW.MCAGOV.ORG)



MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
**2016 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	About Merced County Association of Governments .....	1
	Purpose of the Public Participation Plan .....	1
	MCAG’s Commitment to Public Participation .....	1-2
<b>II.</b>	<b>Federal &amp; State Public Participation Requirements</b>	<b>2</b>
	Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act .....	3
	Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 .....	3
	The Brown Act .....	3-4
	Americans with Disabilities Act .....	4
	2008 California Legislation .....	4
	Other Requirements .....	4
<b>III.</b>	<b>Opportunities for Public Engagement</b>	<b>5</b>
	MCAG’s Boards and Committees .....	5-6
	Valleywide Committees .....	6-7
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Project or Plan Specific Public Participation Requirements</b>	<b>7</b>
	Regional Transportation Plan .....	7-9
	Federal Transportation Improvement Program .....	9
	Federal Transit Administration Program of Projects – Public Participation Requirements .....	9-12
	Annual Listing of Obligated Projects .....	12
	Air Quality Conformity Public and Interagency Consultation .....	12-13
	Intergovernmental Review via Regional and State Information Clearinghouses .....	13
	Overall Work Program (OWP) .....	13
	Unmet Transit Needs Assessment .....	13-14
<b>V.</b>	<b>Public Participation Plan Evaluation &amp; Updates</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Public Participation Strategies</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	<b>2014 Regional Transportation Plan Outreach Strategy and Sustainable Communities Strategies Public Participation Plan</b>	



# I. INTRODUCTION

## About Merced County Association of Governments

As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) addresses issues of mutual concern to the county and the cities in the Merced County region, and satisfies federal and state transportation planning and programming mandates. MCAG provides a forum for planning, discussion, and study of area-wide issues, prepares and adopts regional plans and programs, serves as the regional agency for federal and state transportation programs and funding opportunities and addresses other area-wide issues based on the desires of the member jurisdictions. MCAG represents its member agencies as planner, programmer, and broker in developing an efficient and effective inter-modal transportation system that provides for the mobility needs of people, goods, and services while protecting the environment.

MCAG and its member agencies are responsible for determining policy, adopting plans and programs, and awarding funds to implement these plans. This procedural document is intended to give the MCAG Governing Board and member agency staff guidance for public involvement and interagency consultation in the regional planning process. It contains procedures and strategies MCAG uses to initiate, seek and foster greater public involvement in all of the agency's transportation planning activities. MCAG's documented participation plan defines a process for providing reasonable opportunities to be involved in the regional and metropolitan planning processes.

## Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

MCAG developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP) as a guide to meeting the MPO requirements for early coordination, public involvement and project development. The PPP is intended to provide direction for public participation activities conducted by MCAG and contains the requirements, procedures, strategies and techniques used by MCAG to communicate with the public and appropriate affected agencies. This plan defines a process that outlines roles, responsibilities and key decision points for consulting with affected public agencies and other interested parties, and providing reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

## MCAG's Commitment to Public Participation

### Commitment 1: Early Engagement

- Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and opportunities, and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to, a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP);
- Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about MCAG's issues and processes.

### Commitment 2: Access to All

- Employ visualization techniques to describe the RTP and FTIP;

- Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the internet;
- Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- No individual shall, on the basis or grounds of disability, race, age or sex, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs, or activities, or be subjected to discrimination by MCAG.

**Commitment 3: Response to Public Comment**

- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the RTP and FTIP;
- Forward all formal public comments to the MCAG Governing Board or appropriate committee for consideration during decision making.

**Commitment 4: Open Communication**

- Provide additional opportunity for public comment, if the final RTP or FTIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by MCAG and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
- Coordinate with statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes.

**Commitment 5: Review**

- Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in this PPP to ensure a full and open participation process.

## **II. FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS**

Developing an effective PPP involves the identification of techniques designed to meet the needs of a given situation relating to the development of a transportation plan, program, or project. Current federal and state statutes and regulations provide general guidelines for public involvement processes and procedures. There is great flexibility available to transportation planning agencies in developing specific public involvement and participation plans. However, while the set of techniques for any given situation may differ depending upon such factors as demographics and identified potential impacts, the general approach contains elements that are relevant and responsible to all communities. This information is provided to help practitioners identify legal requirements related to engaging the public that were created to protect and promote good practices. Phrases are provided from statute, regulation

and executive orders relating to different aspects of engaging the public. To understand the broader context of those requirements, MCAG encourages interested parties to refer to the complete statute, regulation or executive order.

## **Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**

New federal surface transportation legislation, known as the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, (H.R. 22), signed into law in December 2015, underscore the need for public involvement. The law requires metropolitan planning organizations such as MCAG to “provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, public ports and certain private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs and other interested parties” with a reasonable opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs. In addition, MPOs should consult with agencies and officials responsible for tourism and natural disaster risk reduction in developing plans and TIPs.

The FAST Act also requires MCAG - when developing the RTP and TIP – to coordinate transportation plans with expected growth, economic development, environmental protection and other related planning activities with the region. Toward that end, this PPP outlines key decision points for consulting with affected local, regional, state and federal agencies.

## **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that transportation planning and programming be non-discriminatory on the bases of race, color, national origin or disability. The federal statute was further clarified and supplemented by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 and a series of federal statutes enacted in the 1990s relating to the concept of environmental justice. The fundamental principles of environmental justice include:

- Avoiding, minimizing or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations;
- Ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- Preventing the denial, reduction or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income communities.

## **The Brown Act (State of California Government Code Sections 54950-54962)**

The Ralph M. Brown Act governs the meeting and actions of governing boards of local public agencies and their created bodies. Requirements of the Brown Act also apply to any committee or other subsidiary body of a local agency, whether permanent or temporary, decision-making or advisory, which

is created by such a governing board. The Brown Act sets minimum standards for open meetings relative to access to the public, location of meetings, notice posting, agenda distribution, and public input. The public agency may adopt reasonable regulations ensuring the public's right to address the agency, including regulations to limit the total amount of time allocated for public testimony. The MCAG Governing Board and its standing committees adhere to these requirements involving proper noticing, access and the ability to address the Board and committees.

Due to time constraints, unscheduled comments by the public may be limited to 3 minutes in length, however the agency encourages interested citizens to provide written copies of presentations to the Board or committees, particularly if the statement is too long to be presented in its entirety. Citizens able to attend the meetings may submit their concerns and ideas in writing to staff, who will then present the comments to the respective Boards and/or committees in either a written or oral format.

## **Americans with Disabilities Act**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) stipulates involving the community, particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of services. All events held for programs or projects with federal aid and open to the general public must be made accessible to everyone, including the disabled.

MCAG complies with the ADA by providing accessible formats, notifications and locations for workshops, meetings and public hearings, consulting with individuals from the disabled community, conducting outreach by maintaining an extensive contact/email lists, and by other means of notification and accommodation to participate in the planning process.

## **2008 California Legislation**

State law (SB 375, Steinberg, Chapter 728, 2008 Statutes) calls on agencies such as MCAG to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy – a new element of the Regional Transportation Plan – to integrate planning for growth and housing with long-range transportation investments, to strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for cars and light trucks. The law also calls for a separate Outreach Strategy and Public Participation Plan for the development of the Regional Transportation Plan and the Sustainable Communities Strategy, respectively. Appendix A contains the Outreach Strategy and Public Participation Plan for MCAG's long-range transportation plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

## **Other Requirements**

A number of other federal and state laws call on MCAG to involve and notify the public in its decisions. MCAG complies with all other public notification requirements of the California Public Records Act, the California Environmental Quality Act, as well as other applicable state and federal laws.

### III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

#### MCAG's Boards and Committees

Below are descriptions of each of MCAG's standing or advisory boards, committees and commissions. They offer the organization an excellent opportunity for expanding public participation opportunities during the transportation planning process. This is accomplished not only by active membership but also by presentations made before them and attendance at open meetings. To find out more about each group, who staffs them and how to get involved with the work they are doing, contact MCAG at (209)723-3153, email Public Information Officer, Stacie Dabbs at [stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org](mailto:stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org) or visit the MCAG website at [www.mcagov.org](http://www.mcagov.org).

#### **Citizens Advisory Committee**

The 17-member Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) provides policy and program recommendations directly to the MCAG Governing Board. It is comprised of private sector individuals who are appointed by the MCAG Governing Board to serve based on the geographic location of their home or business and their work experience. According to the CAC by-laws, no member of the CAC can be an elected official in Merced County. The CAC meets at 8:30am on the first Friday of every month at MCAG.

#### **MCAG Governing Board**

The Governing Board establishes policy and guides MCAG's work programs. It is an 11-member board that includes the supervisor for each of Merced County's five districts and an elected official from each of the six incorporated cities in Merced County: City of Atwater, City of Dos Palos, City of Gustine, City of Livingston, City of Los Banos, and City of Merced. The board also serves as the Board of Directors for the Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority and the Transit Joint Powers Authority for Merced County. The Governing Board typically meets at 3:00pm on the third Thursday of every month at various locations throughout Merced County. For information about a specific meeting date and location, call MCAG at (209)723-3153.

#### **Social Services Transportation Advisory Council**

The purpose of Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) is to solicit the input of transit dependent and transit disadvantaged persons, including the elderly, disabled, low-income persons, and youth regarding transit needs in Merced County. Members of the SSTAC are appointed by the MCAG Governing Board, representing a broad range of service providers representing the elderly, handicapped, and persons of limited means. In the appointment of council members, MCAG strives to attain geographic and minority representation. The SSTAC is convened annually, at minimum, for the Unmet Transit Needs process as required by the Transportation Development Act. The SSTAC is convened annually, at minimum, for the Unmet Transit Needs process as required by the Transportation Development Act.

#### **Technical Planning Committee**

The Technical Planning Committee is a seven-member ad-hoc committee composed of professional municipal employees from each of the jurisdictions in Merced County. This committee provides recommendations on issues to the MCAG Governing Board by way of the Technical Review Board. Each jurisdiction selects a staff person to serve on the committee.

### **Technical Review Board**

The Technical Review Board (TRB) is comprised of the city managers from each of the six cities in the region and the executive officer of Merced County. The TRB provides recommendations on policies and programs directly to the MCAG Governing Board. TRB meetings are held at 12:00pm on the second Wednesday of the month at various locations throughout the county. For information about a specific TRB meeting, contact MCAG at (209)723-3153.

## **Valleywide Committees**

MCAG staff is actively involved with Valleywide committees comprised of staff from the eight MPOs in the San Joaquin Valley. These groups meet regularly on issues of mutual interest and/or of regional concern. In addition to the committees listed below, the San Joaquin Valley MPOs are also active in the state's high-speed rail efforts, promotion of State Route 99, goods movement through the region, RTP/SCS development and other areas of regional significance. Together, the eight valley MPOs have developed and contribute to a San Joaquin Valley Council of Governments website: [www.sjvcogs.org](http://www.sjvcogs.org).

### **Model Coordinating Committee**

The Model Coordinating Committee (MCC) has been established to provide a coordinated approach to valley air quality, conformity and transportation modeling issues. The committee's goal is to ensure Valleywide coordination, communication and compliance with federal and state Clean Air Act requirements. Each of the eight valley MPOs and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) are represented, as well as, the Federal Highway Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the California Air Resources Board and Caltrans.

### **Programming Coordination Group**

The Programming Coordination Group has been established to provide a coordinated approach to valley air quality, conformity and transportation programming issues. The committee's goal is to ensure Valleywide coordination, communication and compliance with federal and state Clean Air Act requirements. Each of the eight valley MPOs and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) are represented, as well as, the Federal Highway Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the California Air Resources Board and Caltrans.

### **San Joaquin Valley Greenprint Planning Process Steering & Technical Advisory Committees**

The Greenprint Planning Process addresses rural land management challenges and opportunities that deepen our understanding of the land, water and living resources in the region and assures that those resources continue to benefit the region economically and environmentally for future generations. The

Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee work to assemble the perspectives of the residents of the San Joaquin Valley into a shared vision, and to identify a series of strategies for the conservation and management of the region's land, water and living resources. These strategies are being developed with extensive public input and will be based on sound science and economics. The resulting Greenprint can then serve as a guide to local, state, federal and private sector decision makers as they make choices about the futures of the San Joaquin Valley's resources.

### **San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Agencies Directors' Committee**

The Directors' Committee is comprised of the Executive Directors from each of the eight MPOs in the San Joaquin Valley. This committee was formed to provide regular opportunity to discuss issues of mutual concern to all of the valley MPOs. Meetings are typically held at 10:00am on the first Thursday of the month at various locations throughout the valley. The meeting schedule, as well as, agendas and minutes can be found at [www.sjvcogs.org](http://www.sjvcogs.org).

### **San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council**

The San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council is a sixteen-member council that was established to discuss and build valleywide consensus on issues of regional significance in the San Joaquin Valley. The Council consists of two elected officials and one alternate appointed from each of the eight MPO governing boards, and exists to provide guidance on common interregional policy issues and to represent the San Joaquin Valley at public forums with the California Transportation Commission, the Governor and his administration, as well as, state and federal legislative bodies that requires a common voice from the San Joaquin Valley. Meeting agendas, minutes and information about the Council are available at [www.sjvcogs.org](http://www.sjvcogs.org).

## **IV. PROJECT OR PLAN SPECIFIC PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**

There are two key transportation initiatives that are specifically called out in federal law as needing early and continuing opportunities for public participation – development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Federal Transportation Improvement Plan (FTIP). The long-range RTP and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) prioritizes and guides all Merced County regional transportation development over 20-25 years. The FTIP is the programming document that identifies funding for those programs and projects that are included in the RTP/SCS.

### **Regional Transportation Plan**

The RTP is the comprehensive guide for transportation investments (transit, highway, local roads, bicycle, and pedestrian projects), and establishes the financial foundation for how the region invests in its surface transportation system by identifying how much money is available to address critical

transportation needs and setting the policy on how projected revenue will be spent. The RTP is generally updated every four years with the opportunity for amendments as needed.

Due to its comprehensive, long-term vision, the RTP provides the easiest and best opportunity for interested residents and public agencies to influence MCAG's policy and investment priorities for transportation in Merced County. It is at the RTP development state where investment priorities and major planning-level project design concepts are established and broad, regional impacts of transportation on the environment are addressed. Under California Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, Chapter 728, 2008 Statutes), the RTP must include a SCS to integrate planning for growth and housing with long-range transportation investments, including goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for cars and light trucks.

Opportunities for public participation with the RTP are different for RTP updates compared to RTP amendments. RTP updates include significant revisions to the RTP document while RTP amendments are generally specific to project scopes, schedules or costs.

### **RTP Update**

The RTP update reflects reaffirmed or new planning priorities and changing projections of growth and travel demand based on a reasonable forecast of future revenues available to the region. As necessary, MCAG prepares two technical companion documents for RTP updates: a program-level Environmental Impact Report per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, and transportation air quality conformity analyses (to ensure clean air mandates are met) per federal Clean Air Act requirements. Certain revisions to the RTP may warrant a revision or update to these technical documents, as well as an amendment to FTIP.

In general, outreach for RTP updates include public meetings, workshops and surveys during the RTP development period to solicit public dialogue and comments on the RTP process including, but not limited to topics and issues such as:

- Overview of the planning process
- RTP goals, objectives, performance indicators
- RTP project lists
- RTP funding scenarios
- Legally noticed public comment period on the Draft RTP update (the length of the public comment period is generally 30 days)
- Legally noticed public hearing

The RTP and SB 375 call for a separate Public Participation Plan that specifically addresses outreach for the RTP and the SCS. Appendix A includes MCAG's RTP/SCS Public Participation Plan that details strategies MCAG uses to communicate with nontraditional and traditional audiences to include them in the transportation planning process.

### **RTP Amendment**

An amendment is a major revision to a long-range RTP, including adding or deleting a project, major changes in project costs, and/or design concept and scope (e.g. changing project locations, open to traffic dates, or the number of through traffic lanes). An amendment requires public review and

comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based on expected funding, and/or a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation conformity mandates. Amendments that require an update to the air quality conformity analysis will be subject to conformity and interagency consultation procedures. Changes to projects that are included in the financially unconstrained portion of the RTP (as information only) do not require an amendment.

### **RTP Administrative Modification**

An administrative modification is a revision to the RTP for minor changes to project/project phase costs, or funding sources. It does not require public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based on expected funding, nor a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation conformity requirements. As such, the public participation process for RTP administrative modifications follows the requirements as outlined for the FTIP, as applicable.

## **Federal Transportation Improvement Program**

The Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) implements the policy and investment priorities expressed by the public and adopted by MCAG in the RTP. In this way, public comments made as part of the RTP are reflected in the FTIP as well. The FTIP covers a four-year timeframe and all projects included in the FTIP must be consistent with the RTP. The FTIP is a comprehensive listing of Merced County area surface transportation projects including transit, highway, local roadway, bicycle and pedestrian investments that:

- Receive federal funds, or are
- Subject to a federal required action, or are
- Regionally significant, for federal air quality conformity purposes.

The FTIP includes a financial plan that demonstrates there are sufficient revenues to ensure that the funds committed (or programmed) to the projects are available to implement the projects or project phases. Adoption of the FTIP also requires a finding of conformity with federal transportation air quality conformity mandates.

The FTIP is updated every two years with amendments occurring as needed. FTIP “updates” or “adoptions” are generally considered similar to the Type 5 amendment (see below), and follow a similar public participation process. For FTIP amendments, FHWA identifies six types, each with specific participation requirements as indicated below.

Expedited Project Selection Procedures (EPSP) allow eligible projects to be moved between FTIP fiscal years as long as the project cost and scope do not change. MCAG staff is federally authorized to utilize EPSP without additional state or federal approval action. MCAG does not require a formal public participation process for EPSP actions. A more detailed description of the EPSP is available from MCAG staff upon request and is incorporated into the FTIP document.

Federal rules allow MPOs to group or combine projects that are not considered to be of appropriate scale for individual listing. Such groups are often referred to as “Grouped Projects” also previously

referred to as “Lump Sums.” MCAG uses this ability to program Grouped Projects within the FTIP. Such projects may be grouped by function (e.g. bike lanes), work type (e.g. maintenance), or geographical area. Once grouped, the MPO is required to maintain, outside the FTIP, a detailed list of projects contained in each group called a “Grouped Projects Detailed Listing.”

Modifications to the projects or costs within the Grouped Projects Detailed Listings are conducted on an as needed basis and do not require a formal public participation process. However, any changes to the overall Grouped Project costs or scope are done in accordance with the amendment types below. Grouped Projects Detailed Listings are made available through the MCAG website and distributed to Caltrans and FHWA.

### **FTIP Technical Corrections**

Technical corrections may be made by MCAG staff as necessary. Technical corrections are not subject to an administrative modification or an amendment and may include revisions such as:

- Changes to information and projects that are included only for illustrative purposes;
- Changes to information outside of the FTIP period;
- Changes to information not required to be included in the FTIP per federal regulations;
- Changes to correct simple errors or omissions including data entry errors.

These technical corrections cannot significantly impact the cost, scope or schedule within the FTIP period, nor will they be subject to a public review and comment process, re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination.

### **Amendment Type 1 – Administrative Modifications**

Administrative modifications include minor changes to project cost, schedule, or funding sources and do not require published public notices, public review and comment, or a public hearing with the exception of certain types of Federal Transit Administration Projects which must go through a formal amendment process. Administrative modifications only require approval by MCAG. State and federal agencies are notified, but do not take approval action on administrative modifications. Administrative modifications do not require re-demonstration of fiscal constraint or conformity determination. These modifications are posted on MCAG’s website at the time of action and subsequently posted on Caltrans’ website.

### **Amendment Type 2 – Formal Amendment: Funding Changes**

Type 2 formal amendments primarily include project cost changes that are greater than minor changes identified under administrative modifications procedures. The projects in a Type 2 formal amendment do not change in design concept or scope and the conformity analysis years as assumed for the regional analysis of the currently conforming RTP/SCS and the FTIP remain unchanged. Type 2 formal amendments do not require published public notices or a public hearing, with the exception of certain types of Federal Transit Administration Projects. These

amendments require approval by MCAG, Caltrans and FHWA/FTA. Publicly accessible notification of a Type 2 formal amendment is posted on MCAG's website at least 7 days prior to action and distributed to local agency partners through MCAG's standing committees. MCAG will consider public comments on the amendment prior to approval action.

### **Amendment Type 3 – Formal Amendment: Exempt Projects**

Type 3 formal amendments significantly revise, add or delete projects to/from the FTIP that are exempt from regional air quality emissions analyses or are non-regionally significant projects or project phases. These amendments typically include transit or safety projects. Type 3 formal amendments require approval by MCAG, Caltrans and FHWA/FTA. Public notification of a Type 3 formal amendment is posted on MCAG's website at least 7 days prior to action and distributed to local agency partners through MCAG's standing committees. Type 3 formal amendments do not require published public notices or a public hearing, with the exception of certain types of Federal Transit Administration Projects. MCAG will consider public comments on the amendment prior to approval action.

### **Amendment Type 4 – Formal Amendment: Conformity Determination that Relies on a Previous Regional Emissions Analysis**

Type 4 formal amendments primarily include adding or deleting projects that have already been appropriately modeled for air quality purposes as part of the adopted RTP/SCS. In this case, the federal approving agencies can use a previous analysis of the project's impact on air quality for approval purposes. Type 4 formal amendments may be accompanied by an RTP/SCS amendment to maintain consistency. The FTIP amendment and RTP/SCS amendment (if applicable) follow the same public process. Type 4 formal amendments require approval by MCAG, Caltrans, and FHWA/FTA.

Public notification of a Type 4 formal amendment includes the following:

- Legally noticed 30-day public comment period
- Legally noticed public hearing
- Posting of amendment information on MCAG's website during public comment period
- Publishing amendment information as part of the following publicly available MCAG agendas: Technical Review Board and MCAG Governing Board
- Consideration and response to public comments received during comment period

### **Amendment Type 5 – Formal Amendment: Conformity Determination and New Regional Emissions Analysis**

Type 5 formal amendments are the highest level amendment and primarily involve deleting or adding new projects that must be modeled for their impacts, or significantly changing the design, concept, scope or schedule of an existing project. Type 5 formal amendments require an Air Quality Conformity document that demonstrates conformity with applicable air quality

requirements and a new regional emissions analysis. An RTP amendment may be needed to maintain consistency. The FTIP amendment, Air Quality Conformity document, and RTP amendment (if application) follow the same public process. Type 5 formal amendments require action by MCAG, Caltrans and FHWA.

Public notification of Type 5 formal amendments include:

- Legally noticed 30-day public comment period
- Legally noticed public hearing
- Posting of amendment information on MCAG's website during public comment period
- Publishing amendment information as part of the following publicly available MCAG agendas: Technical Review Board and MCAG Governing Board
- Consideration and response to public comments received during comment period

## **Federal Transit Administration Program of Projects – Public Participation Requirements**

As required by federal law and guidance, a Program of Projects (POP) for FTA projects must be developed by the Designated Recipient of FTA funds. The POP is a list of proposed FTA funded projects that must undergo a public review process. Guidance provided by FTA allows the FTIP to function as the POP as long as the public is notified through public notice that the FTIP public review process satisfies the public participation requirements of the POP. Once the FTIP is approved, the document will function as the POP for recipients of FTA funds in the MCAG region.

This public participation plan follows the procedures for public involvement associated with the FTIP development and therefore satisfies public participation requirements for the POP. More specifically, this plan satisfies the Transit Joint Powers Authority for Merced County's public participation for the POP. All public notices of public involvement activities and time established or public review and comment on the FTIP will state that they satisfy the POP requirements for FTA programs.

## **Annual Listing of Obligated Projects**

By federal requirement, at the end of each calendar year MCAG publishes an annual listing of obligated projects which is a record of project delivery for the previous year. The listing is also intended to increase the awareness of government spending on transportation projects to the public. Copies of this annual listing may be obtained from MCAG's website at [www.mcagov.org](http://www.mcagov.org). Hard copies are also available upon request by contacting MCAG at (209)723-3153.

## **Air Quality Conformity Public and Interagency Consultation**

A dialogue between agencies regarding air quality conformity considerations must take place in certain instances prior to adoption of the RTP/SCS or FTIP. These consultations are conducted through the San Joaquin Valley Interagency Consultation Group which includes representatives of the United States

Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the eight San Joaquin Valley MPOs, and Caltrans. These agencies review updates and, in certain instances, amendments to the RTP/SCS and FTIP to ensure they comply to federal transportation conformity regulations via air quality transportation conformity analysis.

## **Intergovernmental Review via Regional and State Information Clearinghouses**

The intent of intergovernmental review, per Executive Order 12372, is to ensure that the Merced County region's federally funded or assisted projects do not inadvertently interfere with state and local plans and priorities. Applicants in Merced County with programs and/or projects for intergovernmental review should submit documentation to MCAG and/or the State Clearinghouse in Sacramento (as required by Executive Order 12372) which are responsible for coordinating state and local review of applications for federal grants or loans.

## **Overall Work Program (OWP)**

The OWP is a critical document for the scheduling and distribution of work, especially the allocation of resources needed to address each task required of MCAG. In effect, the OWP constitutes a set of instructions for the planning and programming work to be carried out by staff or consultants each year. Throughout the course of each year, MCAG staff works with local agencies, Caltrans, other transportation planning agencies, other public and private associations and the general public, independently and through MCAG committees to develop the program for the year. A draft of the OWP is taken through the MCAG committee process with a final adoption by the Governing Board typically occurring in May.

## **Unmet Transit Needs Assessment**

Each year, pursuant to the Transportation Development Act (TDA) requirements, MCAG, as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and MPO for Merced County, is required to identify any unmet transit needs that may exist in the Merced County region. Should any unmet transit needs be identified, a further determination must be made to establish whether or not those needs are reasonable to meet. In accordance with state law, TDA funds must be allocated first to unmet transit needs, which are found to be reasonable to meet, before any remaining funds can be distributed to local jurisdictions for non-transit purposes. At the conclusion of each Unmet Transit Needs process, the MCAG Governing Board must adopt a resolution making one of the following three findings:

1. There are no unmet transit needs;
2. There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet;
3. There are unmet transit needs, including transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

Under TDA regulations, the Unmet Transit Needs Assessment must include the following elements:

- An annual assessment of the size and location of identifiable groups likely to be transit dependent or transit disadvantaged, including but not limited to, the elderly, the handicapped, including individuals eligible for paratransit and other special transportation services, and persons of limited means, including but not limited to, recipients under the CalWORKs program;
- An analysis of the adequacy of existing public transportation services and specialized transportation services, including privately and publicly owned services; and
- An analysis of the potential alternative public transportation services and specialized transportation services, including privately and publicly owned services.

To further implement the Unmet Transit Needs Assessment process, the MCAG Governing Board has adopted definitions for both “unmet transit needs” and “reasonable to meet” which are reviewed every annually in compliance with the TDA requirements. All unmet transit needs identified during the annual Unmet Transit Needs Assessment process are reviewed by the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC).

Public participation is an important component of the Unmet Transit Needs process. The TDA requires MCAG to hold at least one public hearing for the purpose of receiving public input regarding potential unmet transit needs in the region. Although the TDA only requires MCAG to hold one public hearing, staff makes the effort to go beyond the minimum requirements to provide public hearings throughout the region. Public notice of the hearings, including the date, time, location and specific purpose is provided at-least 30 days in advance of the meeting through publication in one or more newspapers of general circulation, including a Spanish language publication. Written notification is also provided to those persons and organizations that have indicated an interest in the unmet transit needs process, including private social service agencies and public transit operators that are represented on the SSTAC.

Public hearings are held to give members of the public the opportunity to identify potential unmet transit needs in the region. After the conclusion of a hearing(s), a report is prepared that addresses the three required Unmet Transit Needs Assessment elements listed above, analyzes any identified unmet transit need with the definition of “reasonable to meet,” and provides a recommended finding for the Governing Board to adopt. Any new comments received after the public hearing, or during the Governing Board’s meeting to adopt the Unmet Transit Needs finding, are assessed during the subsequent year’s Unmet Transit Needs Assessment process.

## **V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN EVALUATION & UPDATES**

MCAG’s Public Participation Plan is not a static document, but an on-going strategy that will be periodically reviewed and updated based on experiences and the changing circumstances of the agency and the transportation community it serves. This plan may be subject to occasional minor changes. Any major updates will include a review by MCAG’s formal committees and Governing Board, a public hearing and a 45-day public review and comment period.

## VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

MCAG uses several strategies to provide interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation planning process. Staff understands the importance of educating members of the public on MCAG's mission and an overview of the issues/projects under consideration prior to involvement in planning activities.

Below is a list of participation strategies that serves as a menu for MCAG staff to use in the development of specific outreach strategies for each plan/program on a case-by-case basis. The following list is not exclusive, meaning additional strategies may be identified for specific projects or circumstances.

### Public Workshops/Meetings

- Participate in or speak at meetings of existing agencies/community groups
- Co-host workshops with community groups, business associations, etc.
- Partner with community-based organizations in low-income and minority communities for targeted outreach
- Various format types:
  - Open houses
  - Facilitated discussions
  - Question and Answer sessions
  - Break-out sessions for smaller group discussions
  - Interactive exercises
  - Customized presentations

### Visualization Techniques

- Maps
- Charts, graphics, illustrations, photographs
- Table-top displays and models
- Web content and interactive games
- Electronic voting
- PowerPoint slide shows and/or videos

### Polls/Surveys

- Electronic surveys
- Intercept interviews where people congregate, such as transit hubs
- Printed surveys distributed at meetings, community events, etc.

### Focus Groups

- Recruit participants by interest area or area of expertise/field
- Recruit participants randomly/voluntarily through an open public recruitment process

### Printed Material

- User-friendly documents, including use of executive summaries and simplified language

- Post cards
- Maps, charts, photographs, and other visual means of displaying information
- Translated material into Spanish, or other languages as deemed appropriate

#### **Targeted Distribution (Mail/Email)**

- Work with community-based organization to deliver material to community members, businesses and schools
- Mail/Email to targeted contact lists – either MCAG’s, and outside agency’s or purchased
- Distribute flyers to key community organizations
- Place notices on monitors inside transit vehicles and at transit hubs

#### **Local Media**

- News releases and press advisories
- Submit human interest stories that center around MCAG projects
- Invite reporters to public hearings, etc
- Meet with editorial staff
- Opinion pieces/commentaries
- Purchase display ads or radio spots
- Participate in or place speakers on radio/tv talk shows
- Public Service Announcements
- Include minority media outlets in all activities listed above

#### **Electronic Access to Information**

- Keep website updated with current content and simplified layouts
- Audio/video of current and past public meetings/workshops
- Electronic duplication of open house/workshop material
- Online access to maps, charts, plans, etc
- Post event/meeting information on website calendars

#### **Newsletters**

- MCAG’s monthly electronic newsletter
- Submit articles for publication in community/corporate/online newsletters

#### **Public Notification Tools**

- Email blasts for e-newsletters, press releases
- Social media accounts
- Printed materials
- Electronic access to information
- Local media
- Notices placed in local papers, on MCAG’s website and distributed through the media
- Public utility bill inserts

#### **Other Outreach Techniques**

- Information/comment tables or booths at community events and public gathering places
- Form public review committee during plan development to review documents for readability
- Form a public outreach committee to include representatives from interested member agencies and community groups

## **Appendix A**

Regional Transportation Plan Outreach Strategy including  
a Sustainable Community Strategy Participation Plan

# Regional Transportation Plan Outreach Strategy

including a

## Sustainable Communities Strategy Participation Plan

September 2012



Merced County Association of Governments

369 West 18<sup>th</sup> St., Merced CA 95340

Phone: 209-723-3153

Fax: 209-723-0322

Website: [mcagov.org](http://mcagov.org)

Email: [info@mcagov.org](mailto:info@mcagov.org)



## Introduction

The Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) is required by federal and state law to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and the RTP is required by Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) to contain a new element called a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS).

The RTP is MCAG's long-range plan which specifies the policies, projects, and programs necessary over a 25 year period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation systems. The purpose of the SCS is to demonstrate how a feasible combination of future land use patterns and transportation investments can result in greenhouse gas emission reductions that meet targets set by the California Air Resources Board. If the targets cannot be met, an APS must be prepared. An APS does not need to meet feasibility standards.

MCAG will soon begin developing the RTP, including extensive public outreach, with adoption in about a year – in the Fall of 2013. As part of the RTP, MCAG will also be preparing an SCS for the first time.

### *SCS Participation Plan*

MCAG is required by SB 375 to adopt a public participation plan for development of the SCS / APS. This document includes that required plan – see the next section. It includes all of the required elements of state law. Additionally, this document outlines the specific strategies that MCAG will use in outreach for not only the SCS but the RTP, which the SCS is a part of.

MCAG is also working with its seven sister agencies in the San Joaquin Valley ("Valley" or "SJV") on a Valleywide Outreach Strategy. Most of the agencies have a similar timeframe for their RTP and SCS adoption, and have joined forces to share some common tasks, while retaining their individual processes.

Note that this document is complementary to MCAG's Public Participation Plan (PPP), which was last updated in September 2011 and is available on the MCAG website or on request. However this document is not the same as the PPP, nor is it a part of it. This document concerns the 2012-2013 RTP/SCS cycle specifically, whereas MCAG's Public Participation Plan details how MCAG meets Federal and State requirements for public participation in all aspects of transportation planning.

To summarize, this document serves two purposes:

- Regional Transportation Plan Outreach Strategy
- Public participation plan for development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy

There are two closely related documents:

- MCAG's Public Participation Plan (September 2011)
- Valleywide SCS Public Outreach Strategy DRAFT (August 28, 2012)

## Sustainable Communities Strategy Participation Plan

Meeting or exceeding the requirements of SB 375, MCAG will do all of the following:

1) **Notifications:**

- a) Any interested party may make a request to receive notices, information, and updates on the development of the RTP and SCS. ***That request may be made by:*** contacting Lori Flanders at [lori.flanders@mcagov.org](mailto:lori.flanders@mcagov.org), Matt Fell at [matt.fell@mcagov.org](mailto:matt.fell@mcagov.org), or either Lori or Matt by phone (209-723-3153) or regular mail (MCAG, 369 West 18<sup>th</sup> St, Merced CA 95340). Also note that all updates will be posted on the MCAG website at [mcagov.org](http://mcagov.org)

2) **Outreach:**

- a) MCAG will make significant outreach efforts to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups in the planning process, consistent with the agency's adopted Federal Public Participation Plan, including, but not limited to, affordable housing advocates, transportation advocates, neighborhood and community groups, environmental advocates, home builder representatives, broad-based business organizations, landowners, commercial property interests, and homeowner associations.

3) **Public Agency Consultation:**

- a) MCAG will consult with transportation agencies, transportation commissions, and other public agencies. (This is also required and documented in MCAG's full PPP).

4) **Public Workshops:**

- a) MCAG will hold several workshops (only one is required by SB 375) during development of the RTP, including the SCS or APS, to provide the public with information and tools necessary to provide a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices. Some of the workshops held in 2013 (dates to be determined) will include urban simulation computer modeling to create visual representation of the SCS or APS.

5) **55+ day review of draft:**

- a) MCAG will prepare and circulate the draft RTP, including the draft SCS or APS, at least 55 days before adopting the final RTP.

6) **Info meeting(s):**

- a) MCAG will conduct an informational meeting on the draft RTP and SCS with members of the County Board of Supervisors and the six Cities' Councils, to consider their input and recommendations.
- b) A second informational meeting will be held if the first is not attended by representatives of the Board of Supervisors AND City Council members representing a majority of the cities representing a majority of the population in incorporated areas. (Note: any set of four cities including Merced would satisfy the second half).
- c) Notice of the meeting(s) will be sent to the clerks of all 7 local jurisdictions (the county and the six cities).

7) **Public Hearings:**

- a) MCAG will hold at least two publicly noticed public hearings on the draft RTP, including the draft SCS or APS. The hearings will be in different parts of the county.

## **RTP Outreach Strategy**

The MCAG Public Participation Plan describes in detail what the federal and state requirements for public participation are and how MCAG meets and exceeds them. This section instead focuses on the overall strategy and themes that MCAG will use as it prepares the Regional Transportation Plan, including the Sustainable Communities Strategy or Alternative Planning Strategy.

### ***Objectives***

- Build awareness and understanding of the RTP and SCS
- Gather meaningful input
- Reach under-represented groups (Valleywide SCS Outreach will help achieve this)

### ***Key Messages***

- The public's input MATTERS.
- The RTP is not just about transportation.
- The RTP and SCS position our communities for economic development and future funding opportunities

### ***Tools and Visuals***

- Voting "clickers"
- Maps and charts "worth a thousand words"
- Fact sheets that simplify complex matters
- High-tech computer simulations

### ***Electronic Outreach***

- "One stop shop" RTP/SCS web page
- MCAG Newsletter sent via email
- Social media – Facebook and Twitter

### ***Key Groups***

- Everyone is invited!
- Board of Supervisors and all six City Councils
- Municipal Advisory Committees
- Chambers of Commerce
- Farm Bureau
- UC Merced, Merced College, School Districts
- Community groups, service clubs, organizations
- MCAG standing advisory committees (Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Planning Committee, Technical Review Board)

## *Approach*

MCAG will go above and beyond the public outreach required by law, including making an extra effort to include traditionally underrepresented groups, and creating a frequently-updated web page where all materials will be made available. We will conduct two main rounds of preliminary public outreach followed by outreach after the draft RTP is released:

- Fall of 2012 – focus on education and visioning
  - Education
    - “What is the RTP?”
    - “What is the SCS?”
    - “Why do they matter?”
  - Visioning
    - Gather input on community values, goals, concerns
    - Transportation and housing preferences and goals
    - Specific enough to feed into Round 2
- Spring of 2013 – focus on scenarios and choices
  - Scenarios
    - Interactive mapping of future land use
    - Sets of transportation investments
  - Choices
    - Via “clickers” choose options to build scenarios
    - Explore implications of those choices and trade-offs
    - “What the MCAG Board has to do” when they select an option
- Summer of 2013 – receive comments
  - Release of draft RTP, SCS/APS, Environmental document (EIR)
  - About 2 month comment period, including informational meeting with electeds and public hearings.
  - Adoption in Fall 2013

In addition to this outreach, the San Joaquin Valley COGs have received a grant to help us all do SCS-related outreach. The grant includes assistance with developing materials and preparing and purchasing advertising for workshops and public hearings. Fresno COG is administering this grant for the Valley COGs and they have hired a consultant (MIG).

## *Evaluation*

- Monthly press releases beginning in October 2012, until adoption of RTP
- Goal of 250 participants
- 25 workshops / presentations over the course of a year



# 2018 Regional Transportation Plan Public Outreach Strategy

*& Sustainable Communities Strategy  
Public Participation Plan*



*A supplement to the 2016 MCAG Public Participation Plan  
Adopted: September 22, 2016*

**ADOPTED: NOVEMBER 17, 2016**



# CONTENTS

---

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Federal and State Requirements</b>	<b>2</b>
	Public Participation Requirements for the Regional Transportation Plan	
	Additional Sustainable Communities Strategy Participation Requirements	
<b>III.</b>	<b>Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Plan</b>	<b>4</b>
	Notifications	
	Outreach	
	Public Agency Consultation	
	Public Workshops	
	Public Review and Comment Period	
	Informational Meetings	
	Public Hearings	
<b>IV.</b>	<b>RTP Public Outreach Strategy</b>	<b>6</b>
	Objectives	
	Key Messages	
	Visuals	
	Key Groups	
	Approach	
	Timeline	
<b>V.</b>	<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>12</b>



## I. INTRODUCTION

Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) is required by federal and state law to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and the RTP is required by state law (Senate Bill 375) to contain a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS).

The RTP is MCAG's long-range planning document that specifies the policies, projects, and programs needed over a 20-year period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation systems. The purpose of the RTP is to establish regional goals, identify present and future needs, deficiencies, and constraints, analyze potential solutions, estimate available funding and propose investments. The purpose of the SCS is to demonstrate how a feasible combination of future land use patterns and transportation investments may result in greenhouse gas emission reductions that meet targets set by the California Air Resources Board. If the targets cannot be met, an APS must be prepared. An APS does not need to meet the same feasibility standards required in the SCS.

This document, the 2018 RTP Public Outreach Strategy and SCS Public Participation Plan, outlines MCAG's approach to comprehensive public engagement throughout the development of the RTP/SCS. The goal of the public outreach effort is to ensure that stakeholders, elected officials and interested members of the community have ample opportunity to understand and provide meaningful input into the region's transportation planning process.

Finally, it is important to note that the SCS public participation plan included in this Public Outreach Strategy is complementary to, but distinct from, MCAG's federally required Public Participation Plan (PPP) which was updated in 2016. The following SCS public participation plan concerns the 2018 RTP/SCS cycle specifically, whereas MCAG's PPP details how MCAG meets federal and state requirements for public participation in all aspects of transportation planning.

For more information about MCAG's Public Participation Plan (September 2016), visit <http://www.mcagov.org/243/Public-Participation-Plan> or contact Stacie Dabbs at (209)723-3153 or [stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org](mailto:stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org).

To summarize, this document includes two components:

1. Regional Transportation Plan Outreach Strategy
2. Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Plan

Numerous abbreviated names and acronyms are used throughout this document. The table to the right summarizes these abbreviations for quick reference.

Acronym	Full Name
APS	Alternative Planning Strategy
PPP	Public Participation Plan
SCS	Sustainable Communities Strategy
MCAG	Merced County Association of Governments
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
RTPA	Regional Transportation Planning Agency
RHNA	Regional Housing Needs Assessment

## II. FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS

---

### Public Participation Requirements for the Regional Transportation Plan

This RTP Public Outreach Strategy outlines MCAG's commitment to meeting and exceeding federal public participation requirements concerning participation and consultation as per Title 23 CFR Part 450.316.

- The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft RTP and as a result of the participation process or the interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis and report of the proposed comments shall be made as part of the final RTP.
- The public participation plan should be prepared prior to the development of the RTP. The opportunity for public input will be provided through a 45-day comment period before the MPO/RTPA board adopts the plan.

*MCAG's Public Participation Plan was adopted September 22, 2016 following a 45-day public comment period— this RTP public outreach strategy and SCS public participation plan is a supplemental document to that plan.*

- Visualization techniques should be used to describe the RTP. Such techniques range from a simple line drawing or hand written chart to web cast public meetings and GIS modeling and computer generated maps. The specific type of visualization technique is determined by the MPO/RTPA.
- The public participation plan and the draft and adopted RTP shall be posted on the MPO/RTPA's website to the maximum extent practicable and for the life of the RTP.

*MCAG's public participation plan can be found at: <http://www.mcagov.org/243/Public-Participation-Plan>. All information related to the development of the current RTP/SCS, including the draft and final plan can (when available) be found at: <http://www.mcagov.org/216/RTP>.*

- It is recommended MPOs/RTPAs place hard copies of the draft and adopted copies of RTPs in locations where the public would have access to these documents.

*Hard copies of the draft and adopted RTP/SCS are available at MCAG, 369 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced CA 95340.*

- The MPO shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies.
- MPOs and RTPAs are also encouraged to involve the media, including ethnic media as appropriate, as a tool to promote public participation in the RTP development, review and commenting process.

### Additional Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Requirements

California law, as per SB 375, requires that regional agencies provide opportunities for input by local officials and the public into the development of the sustainable communities strategy (SCS) and the alternative planning strategy (APS), if one is prepared.

The key public participation requirements for these processes include:

**Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Plan.** Each MPO must adopt a public participation plan for the development of the sustainable communities strategy and, if applicable, the APS. Actions the regional agency intends to make to meet this requirement can be incorporated into the public outreach strategy for the RTP. The SCS public participation plan is not required to be reviewed or approved by any state agency.

The public participation plan for the sustainable communities strategy must include all of the following:

- Outreach to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups in the planning process, including but not limited to:
  - Affordable housing
  - Transportation
  - Neighborhood and community groups
  - Environmental advocates
  - Developers and Landowners
  - Broad-based business organizations
  - Commercial property interests
  - Homeowner associations
- Consultation with congestion management agencies, transportation agencies and transportation commissions.
- Workshops throughout the region to provide the public with the information and tools necessary to provide a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices. At least one (1) workshop in each county. At least three (3) workshops in counties with a population greater than 500,000. To the extent practicable, the workshops should include urban simulation computer modeling to create visual representations of the SCS and the APS, if applicable.
- Preparation and circulation of a draft SCS (and APS, if applicable) not less than 55 days before adoption of the final RTP.
- For a single county MPO, at least two (2) public hearings on the draft SCS (and APS, if applicable) shall be held. To the maximum extent feasible, the hearings shall be in different parts of the region to maximize the opportunity for participation.
- A process enabling the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information and updates.

**City and County Informational Meetings.** Pursuant to Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(E), MPOs must conduct at least two (2) informational meetings in their respective regions for members of boards of supervisors and city councils. The purposes of the meeting are to present a draft of the SCS to council and board members and to solicit and consider their input and recommendations. An MPO may conduct only one (1) informational meeting if it is attended by representatives of the county board of supervisors and city council members representing a majority of the population of the incorporated areas of that county.

While local elected officials serve on regional agency boards, expanded consultation is required to provide outreach to all local elected officials and their member jurisdictions affected by the SCS.

**Outreach to other key decision-makers.** Pursuant to Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(G), in preparing an SCS, the MPO shall consider spheres of influence that have been adopted by Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) within the region. MPOs should also consult with LAFCOs regarding special districts within the region that provide property-related services such as water or wastewater services, and should consult with these regional special districts, as appropriate, during the development of an SCS.

Additionally, MPOs should consider consultation with school districts within their region during the development of the RTP/SCS as school-related trips constitute a significant portion of all vehicle trips.

**Interagency Coordination.** Throughout the RTP/SCS development process, advanced and continuous coordination with all appropriate federal and state agencies is highly recommended. MPO development of the RTP/SCS should include interagency coordination with, but not limited to, the following entities:

- Federal agencies including:
  - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- State agencies including:
  - California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
  - California Air Resources Board (CARB)
  - California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Appropriate resource agencies
- Adjacent MPOs and RTPAs with which the MPO shares a significant amount of interregional travel.

MPOs are also encouraged to work with HCD to incorporate the appropriate Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) within their RTPs.

### III. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

---

The following section outlines MCAG's approach to meeting and exceeding the requirements described above related to engaging the general public and a broad range of stakeholders in the development of the region's 2018 Sustainable Communities Strategy.

## Notifications

Any interested party may make a request to receive meeting notices, information and updates on the development of the RTP and SCS by contacting Stacie Dabbs at [stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org](mailto:stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org) or Anthony Zepeda at [anthony.zepeda@mcagov.org](mailto:anthony.zepeda@mcagov.org), or by calling (209)723-3153. Requests can also be made in writing to MCAG, 369 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced CA 95340. All meeting notifications will also be posted on the MCAG website at [www.mcagov.org](http://www.mcagov.org).

## Outreach

As outlined in the following section related to RTP outreach and consistent with the agency's adopted federal Public Participation Plan (September 2016), MCAG is committed to a robust public engagement effort to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders in the RTP/SCS development process. See page 7 of this document for a list of specific key groups to be targeted throughout the development and adoption of the RTP/SCS.

## Public Agency Consultation

MCAG will consult with transportation agencies, transportation commissions, and other public agencies as noted throughout this document and in the agency's full Public Participation Plan (September 2016).

## Public Workshops

MCAG will hold a total of six (6) public workshops throughout the RTP/SCS development process. A workshop will be held in Merced, Los Banos and Livingston/Delhi during each of the two key phases of public outreach (Phase 1: Visioning and Education, and Phase 2: Transportation and Land Use/Scenarios). The purpose of the public workshops will be to educate audiences about key transportation planning concepts and greenhouse gas emission targets, to foster a better understanding of the RTP and SCS, and to build awareness of the importance of robust and meaningful public input in the development of the document. MCAG is committed to using visualization tools and techniques such to help participants develop a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices. Spanish translation services and materials will be provided.

## Public Review and Comment Period

MCAG will prepare and circulate the draft RTP, including the draft SCS, at least 55 days before adopting the final RTP.

## Informational Meeting(s)

MCAG will conduct an informational meeting on the draft RTP and SCS with members of the Merced County Board of Supervisors and the six City Councils to present key concepts, help foster a greater understanding of policy choices, and to solicit input and recommendations. A second informational meeting will be held if the first is not attended by representatives of the Board of Supervisors and City Council members representing a majority of the cities with a majority of the region's incorporated population. (Note: any combination of four cities that includes the City of Merced could satisfy this majority requirement). Notice of these informational meetings will be sent to the clerks of the seven (7) jurisdictions in Merced County: City of Merced, City of Atwater, City of Livingston, City of Gustine, City of Los Banos, City of Dos Palos and the County of Merced.

## Public Hearings

MCAG will hold two (2) public hearings on the draft RTP and draft SCS. These hearings will be publicly noticed in local newspapers and will be held in the east and west sides of the county.

## IV. RTP PUBLIC OUTREACH STRATEGY

---

The MCAG Public Participation Plan (September 2016) outlines the federal and state requirements for public participation and provides guidance on the types of tools and approaches that may be used throughout the various transportation planning processes. The following section of this document focuses on the specific strategy and themes that MCAG will use as it prepares the 2018 RTP/SCS.

### Objectives

MCAG sought to satisfy several objectives when developing this RTP Public Outreach Strategy and SCS Public Participation Plan.

- Build awareness and understanding of the RTP and SCS
- Solicit meaningful input from a broad range of groups and individuals with an emphasis on engaging historically marginalized and/or under-represented populations
- Stimulate dialogue and enhance understanding about the transportation challenges facing the Merced County region
- Incorporate lessons learned from the previous RTP/SCS cycles
- Build support for and understanding of the transportation improvements outlined in the RTP/SCS

### Key Messages

- Public participation and input matters.
- The RTP/SCS is not just about transportation.
- The RTP/SCS positions our communities for future economic development and funding opportunities.
- The RTP/SCS is the primary document that guides future transportation investment decisions.

### Visuals

- Fact sheets that simplify complex issues
- Maps and charts
- Surveys – paper and electronic (mobile friendly)
- User-friendly RTP/SCS web page

### Key Groups

#### Elected Officials/Public Agencies

- Merced County Board of Supervisors
- City Councils

- Municipal Advisory Committees
- LAFCO
- School Districts
- University of California, Merced
- Merced College
- San Joaquin Rail JPA
- High Speed Rail Authority

#### **Private Sector and Industry**

- Chambers of Commerce
- Farm Bureau
- Association of Realtors
- Building Industry Association
- Dignity Health

#### **Community Based Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations and Service Clubs**

- Rotary, Kiwanis, Soroptimist, etc
- Bicycle Coalition
- League of Women Voters
- Sierra Club
- Golden Valley Health Centers
- United Way / Building Healthy Communities

#### **MCAG committees**

- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Technical Review Board
- Technical Planning Committee
- Social Services Transportation Advisory Council
- 2014 APS/RTP Steering Committee

GENERAL PUBLIC	ELECTED OFFICIALS & PUBLIC AGENCIES	PRIVATE SECTOR	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS & INTEREST GROUPS	MCAG COMMITTEES
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear information about public engagement opportunities</li> <li>• Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts</li> <li>• Engage in visioning efforts</li> <li>• Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario</li> <li>• Ensure participation of historically marginalized or under-represented groups</li> <li>• Collect input on draft RTP/SCS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts</li> <li>• Engage in visioning efforts</li> <li>• Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario</li> <li>• Collect input on draft RTP/SCS</li> <li>• Build partnerships for ongoing engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts</li> <li>• Engage in visioning efforts</li> <li>• Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario</li> <li>• Collect input on draft RTP/SCS</li> <li>• Build partnerships for ongoing engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts</li> <li>• Engage in visioning efforts</li> <li>• Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario</li> <li>• Collect input on draft RTP/SCS</li> <li>• Ensure participation of historically marginalized or under-represented groups</li> <li>• Build partnerships for ongoing engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts</li> <li>• Engage in visioning efforts</li> <li>• Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario</li> <li>• Collect input on draft RTP/SCS</li> </ul>
<b>TOOLS</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTP/SCS webpage</li> <li>• Electronic newsletter</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Community workshops</li> <li>• Community events/meetings</li> <li>• Public hearings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTP/SCS webpage</li> <li>• Electronic newsletters</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Presentations at existing meetings</li> <li>• Advisory committee or working group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTP/SCS webpage</li> <li>• Electronic newsletter</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Speakers bureau</li> <li>• Advisory committee</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTP/SCS webpage</li> <li>• Electronic newsletter</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Speakers bureau</li> <li>• Presentations at existing meetings</li> <li>• Advisory committee</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTP/SCS webpage</li> <li>• Electronic newsletter</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Presentations at existing meetings</li> <li>• Advisory committee or working group</li> </ul>

## Approach

This RTP Public Outreach Strategy and SCS Public Participation Plan is structured around three main phases of public outreach during the RTP/SCS development process:

### Phase 1: Visioning and education (Winter 2016-17)

- Education- What is the RTP and the SCS? Why are they important?
- Visioning - Gather input on:
  - community values, goals, concerns
  - transportation and housing preferences and goals

### Phase 2: Transportation/land use scenario options (Summer 2017)

- Scenarios- Offer options with visualization tools
  - Interactive mapping of future land use
  - Sets of transportation investments
- Select preferred scenario – Use interactive tools
  - Clickers or other interactive process
  - Explore implications of those choices and trade-offs

### Phase 3: Public Comment: Draft RTP/SCS and preferred transportation/land use scenario (Winter/Spring 2018)

MCAG will use several key strategies to implement the three phases of this RTP/SCS outreach effort. These strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### Stakeholder/Focus Groups

To consult and coordinate the development of the RTP and SCS with stakeholders interested or involved with plans or projects related to specific areas of industry, MCAG will work with existing organizations where possible. For specific industries that currently do not have existing organizations, MCAG will organize focus groups. Between these two approaches, MCAG intends to involve representatives from the following areas:

- Transportation
  - Non-Motorized Transportation: users and providers of bicycle and pedestrian facilities
  - Rail: providers and users of rail service and freight shipping
  - Aviation: Merced Regional Airport and Castle Airport
  - Transit: providers and users of public, private and school transit services (urban and rural) and public transportation employees, taxi company representatives, bus operators, vanpool companies, etc.
  - Trucking companies and associations
- Environment and Natural Resources
  - San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
  - Environmental resource agencies
  - Community groups with an environmental focus
- Business and Industry
  - Large employers
  - Chambers of commerce
  - Business organizations

- Developers
- Housing/Real Estate
- Social Equity and Community Health
  - Representatives of the disabled and elderly population including MCAG’s Social Services Transportation Advisory Council
  - Community organizations with a social justice/social equity focus
  - United Way / Building Healthy Communities
  - local hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers
- Education
  - UC Merced
  - Merced College
  - Merced County Office of Education
  - School districts

### **Advisory Committee**

MCAG will form a committee to support MCAG staff and standing committees in the development and preparation of the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy. This committee will be a key advisory committee as it will consider technical issues and policy choices, and provide recommendations via consensus to MCAG’s standing committees throughout the development process to help inform and prepare the MCAG Governing Board for action on the final RTP/SCS.

The Advisory Committee will be comprised of no more than two representatives from each of the stakeholder/focus groups, as well as, at least one representative from the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Technical Planning Committee, the Technical Review Board and the Governing Board.

### **Surveys**

MCAG may utilize a survey tool to solicit input from the general public, elected officials, private sector representatives, community organizations and others throughout the RTP/SCS development process. This tool can be used to assess whether the transportation priorities and community values identified in the 2014 RTP/SCS still hold true today, as well as, for specific input related to community development and growth preferences that can help inform the development of the SCS.

### **Electronic Newsletters**

Regular updates regarding RTP/SCS development, including specific opportunities for public engagement, will be included in MCAG’s monthly electronic newsletter. The e-newsletter is distributed broadly through email, social media and as a newflash on the MCAG website. The monthly edition is also included in the agenda packets for all of MCAG’s standing committees and the Governing Board. To sign-up to receive the monthly newsletter, interested parties are asked to submit the request via email to [stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org](mailto:stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org).

### **Social Media**

Project updates, workshop and meeting announcements, press releases related to the RTP/SCS, public hearing notices and other key information related to the development of the RTP/SCS will be posted to the MCAG Facebook page and Twitter account (@MercedCAG).

## Website

Several features of the MCAG website ([www.mcagov.org](http://www.mcagov.org)) will be used to share information throughout the RTP/SCS development process. Dates and locations of workshops, meetings, public hearings and other events will be posted on the MCAG calendar. These postings are automatically linked and distributed by email to the distribution list populated by the 'Notify Me' feature on the website. They are also automatically posted to MCAG's social media accounts. In addition, the MCAG website will feature a 2018 RTP page where regular updates, schedules, agendas, presentations and other key information will be housed.

## Regularly Scheduled Meetings

The following lists of committees will be involved in the development of the RTP & SCS as outlined below:

MCAG's standing committees and board to be consulted/updated monthly:

- Citizens Advisory Committee – Meets at 8:30am the first Friday of the month at MCAG, 369 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced
- Technical Review Board – Meets at 12:00pm the second Wednesday of the month at various locations throughout the county
- Governing Board – Meets at 3:00pm the third Thursday of the month at various locations throughout the county

Other MCAG committees to be consulted or coordinated with periodically:

- Social Service Transportation Advisory Council
- Technical Planning Committee

Valleywide committees and boards that will be consulted or coordinated with as needed:

- Model Coordinating Committee/Programming Coordination Group
- San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Agencies – Executive Directors Committee
- Valley Blueprint Planners Network

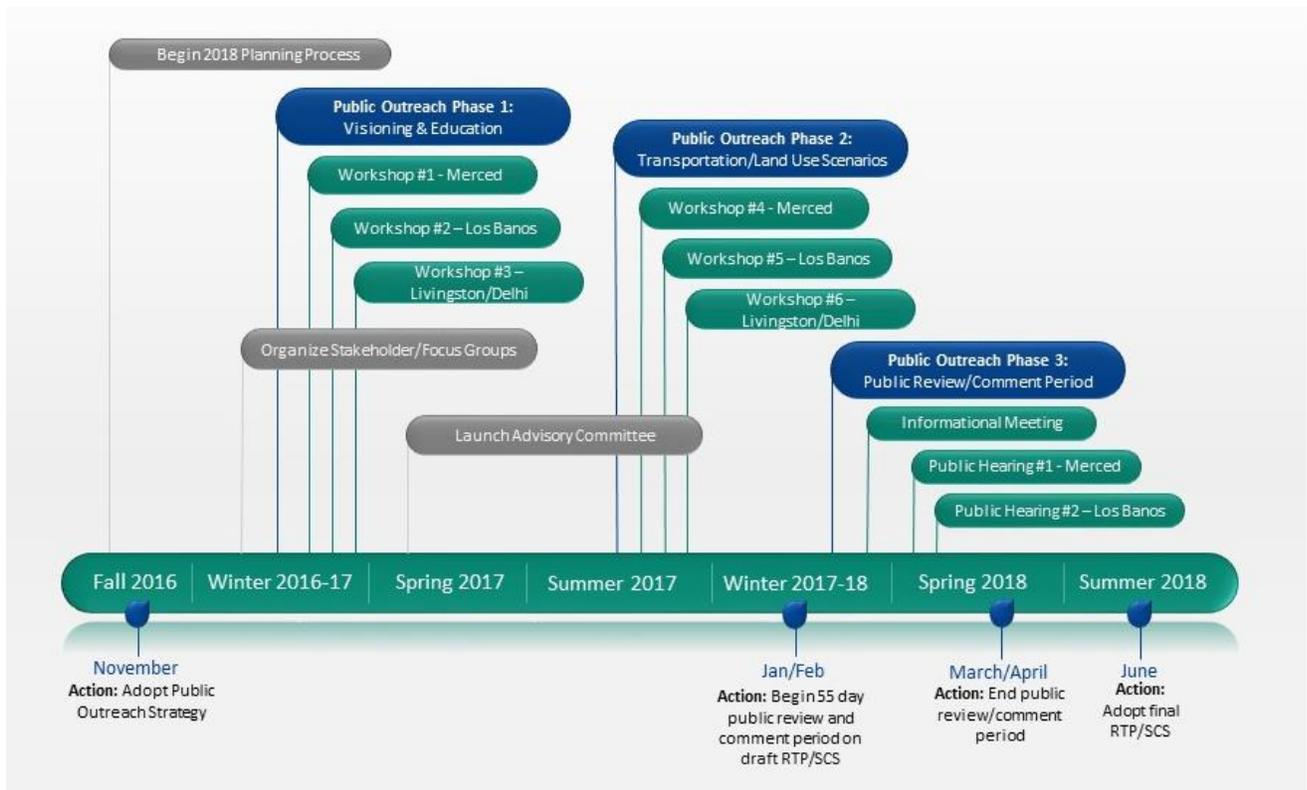
## Community Meetings

MCAG staff will make presentations at existing meetings of community groups, service-clubs, organizations and associations throughout the various development stages of the RTP/SCS. The purpose of these presentations will be to educate, inform and solicit input from attendees.

## Technical Working Group

MCAG staff will consult and coordinate with technical staff from the seven member agencies to develop/draft technical portions of the plans that require specific expertise.

## Timeline



## V. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

**Diversity** – Participants must represent a range of socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural, geographic and user (mode) groups. They must also include a range of people with varying interests: social service, business, environment, social justice/equity, etc.

- Targeted groups include all those listed within the section titled “Public Outreach Strategy Requirements” related to both the RTP and SCS public participation requirements, as well as, additional MCAG partners and contacts.
- Participating citizens should represent a cross-section of people of various interest, places of residence and primary modes of travel, as reported on surveys and comments or other communications received throughout the RTP/SCS development process.

**Reach** – The outreach effort should make every effort to include the greatest number of people possible. Different levels of participation will make it more inviting for people with a range of involvement preferences to join the discussion. The success of the outreach program will be measured by the following:

- Number of comments received
- Number of individuals who actively participated in the outreach program, as measured by survey responses, focus group and workshop attendance, and comments received
- Number of presentations made to various audiences
- Number of visits of “views” to the MCAG RTP/SCS webpage and/or requests for information during active periods of the public outreach program
- Assessing active participation from residents or their representatives from urban and rural locations

**Accessibility-** Every effort should be made to ensure that anyone who wants to participate can do so. This goal can be met by taking the participation activities to where people already are located, whenever possible. It can also be met by providing ways to participate, regardless of an individual’s language or ability to attend a meeting, access the internet, etc.

- Meetings are held throughout the region and during existing meeting dates/times whenever possible.
- All meeting locations are accessible by transit where transit services are offered.
- Meetings are linguistically accessible to all participants, with 3 working days advance request for translation services. Meeting announcements will offer translation services with advance notice to participants speaking any language with available professional translation services in the immediate area.
- All meetings are accessible under the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**Impact** – The feedback received through this outreach and participation program should be analyzed and provided to the MCAG Governing Board wherever appropriate. Interested participants should be informed of the Board’s actions. Decisions to not incorporate recommendations should be noted, with a rationale provided and ready to be discussed.

- All written comments received are logged, analyzed, summarized and communicated in time for consideration by staff and the MCAG Governing Board.
- All written comments are acknowledged in the form received so that the person making them knows whether his or her comment is reflected in the outcome of a Governing Board action.

**Education** – This outreach program is an opportunity for MCAG to inform a wide range of stakeholders and the public about transportation issues in the Merced County region, as well as the link to climate change and sustainable growth, among other issues. Each step of the process should include an educational element, whether it is about Merced County area transportation in general, specific projects being considered for including in the long-range plan or background on the outreach results to date.

**Participant Satisfaction** – Members of the public who take the time and energy to participate in this process should feel it was worth their while to join in the discussion. The following targeted performance measures are associated with each of the goal topics aforementioned.

- Majority of participants rate the MCAG outreach program as *excellent* or *good* in regards to the following categories (or other specific features to be determined):
  - Accessibility (meeting locations, materials presented in appropriate languages for targeted audiences, etc)

- Adequate notice
  - Sufficient opportunity to comment
  - Clear understanding of items that are established policy versus those that are open to public input
  - Clear information at an appropriate level of detail
  - Educational value of presentations and materials
  - Responsiveness to comments received
  - Understanding of other perspectives and differing priorities
  - Quality of the discussion
-