



Attachment 1 – January 9, 2011

## **WALKSacramento’s comments on the specific provisions of the 2011 Draft SACOG Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy 2035 Update**

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction: Building a Sustainable System**

The 2011 Draft MTP-SCS is a milestone in SACOG’s progress toward integrated transportation and land use, performance-based planning that began a decade ago. WALKSacramento has participated in the process of this evolution since SACOG’s Transportation Roundtable of 2002. SACOG is to be commended for the steady progress toward this integration including the improved outcomes of this plan. The summary provided in this chapter illustrates how SACOG, step by step, has developed incremental and significant improvements to the plan, most notably the Blueprint approach and most recently the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy and SB 375.

- We urge that SACOG’s next area of focus should be on Complete Streets. We ask that SACOG to develop a Complete Streets focus for the next plan iteration by developing and implementing a work-plan that focuses on how Complete Streets can be achieved in our region and how this will improve the region’s economic and environmental sustainability.

### **Chapter 2 – Planning Process**

This chapter outlines the reasons for preparing a MTP including to assure the region’s eligibility to receive federal transportation funds. Any project that would receive federal funding must be included in the project list of the MTP. The deadline of April 2012 is mandated by SB 375.

WALKSacramento has a seat on the SACOG Bike/Ped Advisory Committee and has worked informally with SACOG staff as part of the Complete Streets Coalition. WALKSacramento participated with the Safe Routes for All Coalition in the nine region-wide workshops in October 2010 on the draft scenarios. We advocated for a “4<sup>th</sup> Scenario” that would support completing the bicycle – pedestrian network. At several of the workshops, participants supported even greater emphasis on walking and bicycling beyond the most intensive 3<sup>rd</sup> scenario. Anecdotally, it appeared that there was a region-wide desire by most participants no matter which scenario they favored that walkable and bikable communities be incorporated into all scenarios.

We note that the work to develop the project list was primarily a SACOG-local government staff to staff process with little public input. In the future, greater involvement of the public in the development of the project list would lead to a greater likelihood that the project list reflects the true desires of the community.

## **Chapter 6 – Policies and Supportive Strategies**

This chapter provides the policy framework that supports the MTP beginning with the MTP’s Six Guiding Principles adopted by the SACOG Board of Directors in 2005:

1. Smart Land use
2. Environmental Quality and Sustainability
3. Financial Stewardship
4. Economic Vitality
5. Access and Mobility
6. Equity and Choice

Thirty-one policies are grouped under 4 policy/strategy areas:

1. Land Use and Environmental Sustainability Policies and Strategies (1-10)
2. Finance Policies and Strategies (11-16)
3. System Maintenance & Operations Policies and Strategies (17-26)
4. System Expansion Policies and Strategies (27 – 31)

The chapter outlines the existing adopted policies and strategies of the prior plan and targeted modifications “to reflect new projects, research, and conditions since the last MTP, such as the, Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) and Lifeline Transit Study.” Additionally changes necessitated by SB 375 including requirements to “open a path for qualifying residential/mixed-use projects to use the CEQA streamlining benefits” of SB 375 are included.

Complete Streets policies are incorporated throughout the policies and strategies though there is no specific policy devoted to Complete Streets. It would be helpful to have a section fully devoted to Complete Streets with some additional strategies not now included under the MTP’s 31 draft policies such as:

- Developing a regional Complete Streets Plan with a goal and a timeframe for achieving a system of Complete Streets throughout the region.
- Developing an inventory of Complete Streets and an annual or biannual progress report on progress toward a complete system.
- Encouraging all cities and counties in the region to develop and adopt pedestrian and bicycle master plans and project lists.

- Training for local and regional staff on the latest pedestrian and bicycle quantification, engineering and planning methodologies.
- Consideration of the development of a regional levee maintenance and rehabilitation plan that includes multiuse trail development.

There is no specific policy related to safety but a few of the strategies do address the issue of safety. We think this is an area that deserves greater focus, especially the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

We offer the following suggested additions and/or changes to underscore the importance of Complete Streets and the provision of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure:

### **1. Land Use and Environmental Sustainability Policies and Strategies**

Policy 1: Information, tools & incentives –

- We recommend a new Strategy 1.6: “Create and invest in a Complete Streets strategy and program to achieve Complete Streets/Safe Routes for All throughout the region consistent with the Blueprint Principles.”

Policy 2: Education

- 2.3: Add the underlined to this strategy: Monitor and report on commute patterns, traffic levels, transit use, and bicycle & pedestrian mode share compared with the projections in this MTP/SCS.
- 2.4: Add to this strategy: “Additionally, provide training on the latest analytic methods related to pedestrian and bicycle planning, modeling, data collection, and infrastructure design.”

Policy 3: Community activity centers & transit.

While not mentioned in the policy, we appreciate the emphasis on complete streets in some of the strategies. It might be useful to rename this policy so that complete streets are given greater emphasis.

Policy 7: Rural-Urban Connection Strategy

- Strategy 7.4: Add to this strategy the following: “Additionally, consider how rural land use strategies affect access by active transportation (walking and bicycling).”

Policy 8: Reducing vehicle emissions to achieve clean air and better public health

- Add a new Strategy 8.5: “Study and document the emission reduction benefits of Complete Streets infrastructure and the potential for increased emission reductions from increased walking and bicycling.”

## Policy 9: Greenhouse Gas emission reductions

- Modify Strategy 9.1 (as noted by underlines): Adopt a transportation pricing policy, adopted a Safe Routes to School policy and implement a pilot program, expand public access to travel information through 511 program, and adopt a Complete Streets policy and implementation program.

## 2. Finance Policies and Strategies

### Policy 11: Pursue sustainable funding sources ...

- Add Strategy 11.5: “Advocate for funds to complete the streets for the region so that residents can walk and/or bicycle to locations within 10-30 minute distance from housing and workplaces.”

### Policy 13: SACOG’s investments of federal and state funds ...

- Add new Strategy 13.6: “Study, coordinate discussions, and explore options for establishing a region-wide program dedicated to funding the full implementation of Complete Streets including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure necessary for a fully interconnected Complete Streets system.”

### Policy 14: SACOG seeking special funding

- Add new Strategy 14.8: “Work with local, state and federal agencies to develop new sources of transportation funding based on improving public health including new sources of funding for expanding pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.”

### Policy 15: Manage state and federal funding

- Add new Strategy 15.5: “Work with local agencies to improve and accelerate project delivery, especially of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure project.”

## 3. System Maintenance & Operations Policies and Strategies

This grouping of policies and strategies is particularly relevant to cost-effectively maximizing the current system for walking and bicycling. We recommend adding the following paragraph after the first paragraph:

- “Road and highway maintenance and rehabilitation can be an economical way to increase Complete Streets and mobility for walking and bicycling. The addition of bike lanes, the consideration of lane restriping to make room for bike lanes and sidewalks, and the addition of crosswalk markings and other crossing enhancements can greatly expand the pedestrian and bicycle network with minimal investment. By reviewing in

advance the roadways programmed for maintenance and rehabilitation, the specific plans can incorporate provision for walking and bicycling at a low cost compared with retrofits completed at a later date.”

Policy 17: Acknowledge preservation as top priority and help secure funding

- Add new Strategy 17.5: “Assist local agencies in developing multi-year maintenance and rehabilitation programs that enable early identification of cost-effective enhancements to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.”

Policy 19: Ensure coordination among all forms of transit services

- Add new Strategy 19.3: “Support development of plans and investment strategies for prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle access-to-transit infrastructure projects.”

Policy 21: Rural transit services

- Add new Strategy 21.3: “Enhance access to rural transit through planning for safe bicycle and pedestrian access.”

Policy 23: Service to transit-dependent populations and attracting new riders who now drive

- Add Strategy 23.3: “Increase the attractiveness of transit by involving the community in improving the environment of transit stops and stations and the pedestrian and bicycle access to those transit stops and stations.”

#### **4. System Expansion Policies and Strategies**

Policy 28: Transit investments for transit-dependent and choice riders

- Add Strategy 28.13: “Support strong collaboration between city and county transportation and land use planners and transit planners to achieve optimum pedestrian access within ½ mile of transit routes and stations and bicycle access within 3 miles of transit routes and stations.”

Policy 30: Road expansion to support infill development and reduce midday congestion

- Modify Strategy 30.1 as follows (recommended additional wording underlined). Pursue strategic road expansion that ~~improves~~ reduces congestion, ~~and~~ supports effective transit services and maximizes provision for Complete Streets – access for walkers and bicyclists.
- Modify Strategy 30.2 as follows: Expect that feasibility and corridor studies, project study reports, and environmental studies will consider high-quality transit and pedestrian and bicycle investments when examining how to provide additional capacity on main highway or bridge corridors.

- Modify Strategy 30.4 as follows: Give priority for roadway and intersection expansion to routes where midday demand approaches existing capacity or excessive peak period demand threatens to spill over into midday, so no part of the system fails to function continuously for much of the day fully considering the safety and level of service of all modes utilizing the new multi-modal level of service analysis methods.

### **Chapter 7 – Environmental Sustainability**

- This chapter would benefit from more information on specific communities – how much VMT and emissions they contribute. This would help to increase awareness on the importance of land use and complete streets.

### **Chapter 8 – Equity and Choice**

One of the key aspects addressed in this chapter is access to transit which is critical for individuals without access to a personal motor vehicle. Yet while mentioned briefly, pedestrian and bicycle access is also critical to people without cars. Walking and bicycling are low cost and health promoting.

In WALKSacramento’s “Los Rios Transportation Connections” study and plan completed in 2008 we learned that there are significant opportunities to reduce students’ economic burden with transportation improvements. For example, over ½ of students of American River College live within 5 miles of the college. Yet access by bicycling in this area of Sacramento’s unincorporated area is unsafe and walking in the vicinity of the college is difficult because of the lack of sidewalks on many streets. Parking is low cost and most students drive to the campus. If students were able to forgo the costs of a car, they would in effect have as much as a \$8,000 bonus which could assist them with their other college expenses.

- We urge that access to walking and bicycling be addressed more comprehensively in this chapter.

### **Chapter 9 – Economic Vitality**

We appreciate the note on Page 9-24 that “Increased interest in bicycling and walking has had additional economic benefits.”

- We suggest this aspect of economic vitality be expanded.
- Additionally we suggest that this chapter address the economic importance of health and the costs of our health care as it related to transportation. What would be the

economic benefits of the development of a truly walkable and bikable region contribute to our health and the reduction of health care costs?

## **Chapter 10 – Financial Stewardship**

As we have mentioned in our letter and in our policy recommendations, we believe there is a significant financial stewardship opportunity to increasing the cost-effectiveness of our road rehabilitation funds by incorporating early consideration and planning for Complete Streets improvements to those roads that are integrated into the rehabilitation when it occurs.

- We urge SACOG to include this concept in its Financial Stewardship approach.

It is suggested on page 10-7 that the MTP/SCS assumes a reliance on sales taxes anticipating a new ½ cent “Measure B” sales tax in Sacramento County beginning in 2014 – and assumes that this new revenue would be split between transit and capital needs. What portion of this potential new funding will be used for road rehabilitation?

- We urge Sacramento’s elected leaders to include provision for Complete Streets as part of any new sales tax measure.

Pedestrian safety is a critical issue in this region. Though pedestrian trips are a relatively small portion of all trips, they are a significantly greater proportion of all traffic fatalities. As noted on page 10-17, pedestrian fatalities from motor vehicle collisions exceed 18% of all fatalities in the State – much higher than in the national as a whole. In 2009, 18% of traffic fatalities in this region were pedestrian fatalities. In Sacramento County in 2009 pedestrian fatalities were 25% of total fatalities (source, California Office of Traffic Safety website).

While roadway fatalities have gone down overall in the state, we believe that pedestrian fatalities have not declined.

- We urge that the section on Roadway fatalities in the SACOG region include statistics on pedestrian fatalities.

The greater proportion of pedestrian fatalities in the region and particularly in the region’s urban areas underscores the need for improved transportation infrastructure for safe pedestrian mobility.