

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 2015



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OUTREACH FOR PLANNING DOCUMENTS

There are a number of planning documents that SBCAG creates and publishes for which this Public Participation Plan outlines a specific public process. Since these documents are regularly updated, the public and reviewing agencies can expect the processes outlined below to be followed consistently.

Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Report. SBCAG is responsible for allocating Transportation Development Act funds under State law and for making findings following a public input process regarding the existence of unmet transit needs. The UTN report is developed and published annually in the spring after an effort to collect public input regarding transit needs, especially in north Santa Barbara County. (All TDA funds in south county are already spent only on transit and SBCAG's role is limited to determining the existence of unmet transit needs in areas where TDA funds are used for non-transit purposes.) Opportunities for public participation in the development of the UTN report include:

- SBCAG public hearing to solicit input on unmet transit needs
- UTN workshops across the County hosted by local transit agencies
- 30-day comment period on Draft UTN Report
- Public Hearing on Draft UTN Report
- SBCAG Board adoption of the Final UTN Report
- Occasional surveys distributed in north county

Transportation Planning Documents. For the Regional Transportation Plan, Federal Transportation Improvement Program, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the California Division provides the Central Coast region with specific outreach requirements. The following participation process is consistent with those definitions and requirements. For more detailed information about FHWA guidance, please contact SBCAG staff.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is generally updated every four years consistent with SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21 and State law requirements, with a limited number of amendments as needed in the intervening years. Opportunities for public participation for the RTP are different for RTP updates versus RTP amendments. RTP updates include significant revisions to the RTP document, while RTP amendments are generally specific to project scopes, schedules, or costs.

Outreach for RTP Updates:

Public meetings, workshops, and surveys during the RTP development period to solicit public dialogue and comment on the RTP process including, but not limited to 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 aligned with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other State law. CEQA generally requires:

- 30-days if RTP Update does not include a new Programmatic Environmental Impact Report.
- 45-days if the RTP Update includes a new Programmatic Environmental Update Report.

In addition, SB 375 requires preparation of a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) as part of the RTP and circulation for a minimum of 55 days before adoption of the RTP. This State law also prescribes certain procedural steps and adoption of a public participation plan specific to the preparation of the SCS or APS. Outreach for RTP Amendments:

RTP Amendments are generally triggered by a project-specific need to be consistent either with the project's environmental document or the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). As such, the public participation process for RTP amendments follow the requirements as outlined for the FTIP below, as applicable.

Federal Transportation Improvement Program.

The FTIP will need to be amended periodically following its adoption to reflect changes in the program including project additions, deletions and revisions. All requests to amend the FTIP must be submitted by the project-sponsoring agency. The request must clearly identify the proposed modifications and include all of the relevant programming information, such as the project description and scope, costs by project phase and program year, and the funding sources and amounts. SBCAG will consider amendment requests only if the proposed changes will not adversely affect the financial constraints findings of the FTIP. Proposed additions or changes to projects must also be consistent with the rules of the particular funding program involved.

The FTIP is usually updated every two years, with amendments occurring as needed. Federal requirements and SBCAG policy distinguish between two types of FTIP amendments—formal amendments and administrative amendments—which differ based on the magnitude of the proposed change and the level of review required by various federal, state and local agencies. Generally, significant changes to the cost scope or schedule of a project listing require a formal amendment. These formal amendments must be approved by the SBCAG Board as well as by Caltrans, FTA and FHWA.

Minor project changes, including its funding sources, description, a lead agency change, scheduling adjustments, and other items may be approved as an administrative amendment to the FTIP. Approval of administrative amendments has been delegated to the SBCAG Executive Director, and as a result, its streamlined procedure bypasses several steps in the amendment process, and generally expedites the approval timeframe by two to three months. All other amendments require formal approval by the SBCAG Board.

Administrative amendments must be consistent with the approved FTIP financial plan and changes in funding must be accommodated within the available resources identified in the plan. Administrative amendments are minor changes that:

- Revise a project description without changing the project scope or conflicting with the environmental document;
- Revise the funding amount listed for a project's phases. Additional funding is limited to the lesser of 40 percent of the project cost or \$10 million;
- Change the source of funds;
- Splits or combines individually listed projects; as long as cost, schedule and scope remain unchanged;
- Changes required information for grouped project listings; or
- Adding or deleting projects from grouped project listings as long as the funding amounts stay within the guidelines in the second bullet above.

Administrative amendments can be processed in accordance with these procedures provided that:

- They do not affect the air quality conformity determination, including timely implementation of Transportation Control Measures (SBCAG is presently an air quality maintenance area and does not prepare a conformity determination), and
- It does not impact financial constraint.

Amendments whose scale, type or other aspect precludes use of the administrative amendment option are processed as formal amendments. Formal amendments require SBCAG Board approval via resolution, and subsequent concurrence by Caltrans, the FHWA and FTA. At the discretion of the Executive Director, SBCAG may require that administrative amendments be treated as a formal amendment for amendments that are controversial or that are determined to be not clearly within the scope of an administrative amendment.

Currently the approval process for a project-related amendment to the FTIP lasts from thirty to sixty days, which can delay projects from advancing on schedule. Generally, projects that are amended in the FTIP require approval as formal amendments by SBCAG through adoption of a resolution and approval by Caltrans, FHWA, and FTA.

Federal regulations (23 CFR 450.332) require that SBCAG adopt procedures to expedite the amendment process for certain projects within the FTIP and require the annual listing of obligated projects. Projects that are eligible to use this process are:

1. Financially constrained and have been determined by MPO staff to be administrative in nature.
2. Do not need an adopted MPO Board resolution.

Utilizing the expedited procedures is optional for the project sponsor and SBCAG. Projects may still be amended using the regular FTIP amendment process.