

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments

Public Participation Plan

Adopted by the SBCAG Board of Directors on [Insert Month, Day, Year]

SBCAG SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Contributions

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2026 Board of Directors – Plan Development

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Alice Patino, Mayor, City of Santa Maria
Paula Perotte, Mayor, City of Goleta
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2027 Board of Directors – Plan Adoption

[Placeholder for the 2027 board roster -- to be added in January 2027]

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PEER AND LOCAL AGENCY PRACTICES REVIEWED

Development of this plan included a review of public participation plans, practices and resources from regional transportation agencies and other public agencies. The review helped identify practical approaches to public participation, examples of how other agencies address federal requirements and strategies that could be adapted to Santa Barbara County.

Regional transportation agencies reviewed include:

- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG)
- San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)
- Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG)
- Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG)

Local practices and resources were also considered from agencies and jurisdictions within Santa Barbara County, where relevant. These resources provide additional insight into communication and engagement approaches used with the communities SBCAG serves.

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Public Participation Quick Guide

Your voice matters in regional decisions.

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) plans and funds regional transportation projects and programs that affect how people move throughout Santa Barbara County. Public participation helps SBCAG better understand community needs, identify opportunities and concerns and make informed decisions.

No transportation expertise is needed to participate. Opportunities range from taking a quick survey and signing up for updates about projects in the community to attending meetings and speaking directly with decision-makers. There are many ways to get involved, depending on the time and level of participation that work best for each person.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

Follow Along

Visit www.sbcag.org

Find information about SBCAG and its projects, programs, plans, funding, meetings and upcoming public participation opportunities and events.

Subscribe to email updates

Receive news and project-specific updates by email.

Follow us on social media

Get announcements about workshops and listening sessions, committee recruitment, project milestones, employment opportunities, and other agency news.

Watch for public notices

Depending on the project, SBCAG may also share information through mailed notices, news media, community organizations, advertisements, signs or flyers.

Share Your Input!

Give us a call

(805) 600-4477

Send us an email

info@sbcag.org

Submit written comments

SBCAG may ask for input through surveys, questionnaires, and formal public review periods. Comments may also be sent by mail to:

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments
260 N. San Antonio Road, Suite B
Santa Barbara, CA 93111

Attend a public workshop or event

SBCAG holds workshops, listening sessions and other opportunities to learn about projects and provide input. These opportunities may be held in person or online.

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PARTICIPATE IN POLICY DECISIONS

Attend a Board or committee meeting

SBCAG Board of Directors and advisory committee meetings are open to the public. Agendas, meeting materials and information about providing public comments are available at www.sbcag.org.

Connect with SBCAG in your community

SBCAG staff participate in community events and meet with community organizations, businesses, public agencies and other groups throughout Santa Barbara County.



EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE

SBCAG is committed to providing everyone with a meaningful opportunity to participate in its programs, services and decision-making processes. Consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal nondiscrimination requirements, no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of or otherwise subjected to discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

We want public participation opportunities to be accessible. Language assistance, translated materials, interpretation services and reasonable accommodations are available upon request. To request assistance or an accommodation, visit www.sbcag.org, email info@sbcag.org or call (805) 600-4477.

We want our public participation opportunities to be accessible.

STAY CONNECTED

Public participation opportunities change throughout the year as projects and regional plans move forward. Visit www.sbcag.org or subscribe to SBCAG updates to learn about upcoming opportunities.

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Chapter 1: About SBCAG

1.1 Who Is SBCAG?

SBCAG is the regional agency that brings Santa Barbara County and its eight cities together to plan for the future, invest in transportation and help deliver projects and programs that keep people and communities connected.

With about 20 staff and an annual budget that averages about $90 million, SBCAG plans for the region's long-term transportation needs, secures and distributes local, state and federal transportation funding, manages major regional projects and programs and helps expand transportation choices throughout Santa Barbara County.

SBCAG was established in 1966 as a voluntary council of governments. Today, its Board of Directors includes all five members of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and one elected representative from each of the county's eight incorporated cities. This structure gives local governments a forum to work together on decisions that affect the region as a whole.

SBCAG works across communities to identify transportation priorities, secure state and federal funding and invest those resources in projects and programs throughout Santa Barbara County.

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1.2 What Does SBCAG Do?

SBCAG has several responsibilities under federal and state law and local voter authority. Together, these roles allow the agency to plan, fund, coordinate and deliver transportation improvements throughout Santa Barbara County.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The federal government designates SBCAG is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Santa Barbara County. In this role, SBCAG leads the federally required metropolitan transportation planning process, including development of the long-range Regional Transportation Plan and the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), a four-year program of federally funded and regionally significant transportation projects, in cooperation with local, state, and federal partners.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AGENCY

As the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), SBCAG coordinates regionaltransportationplanningandprogramming and allocates certain state transportation funds within Santa Barbara County.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

SBCAG serves as the Local Transportation Authority responsible for administering Measure A, Santa Barbara County's voter-approved half-cent sales tax for transportation. Measure A funds local streets and roads, highways, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements and other transportation programs identified in the voter-approved investment plan.

AIRPORT LAND USE COMMISSION

SBCAG serves as the Airport Land Use Commission, which promotes compatible land uses around public-use airports in Santa Barbara County to protect public health, safety and welfare.

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SERVICE AUTHORITY FOR FREEWAY EMERGENCIES

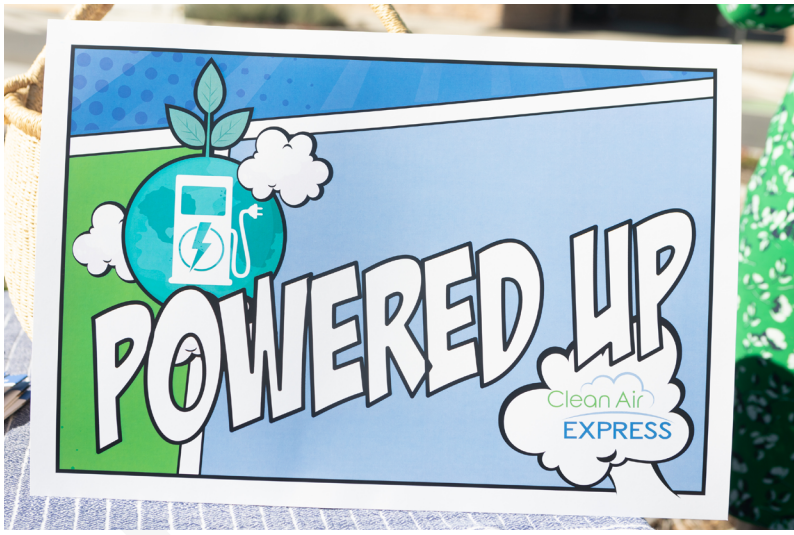
SBCAG administers the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies or SAFE, which supports motorist assistance and emergency communication along portions of the region's highway system.

CLEAN AIR EXPRESS BUS SERVICE

SBCAG operates the Clean Air Express (CAE), which is a public transit commuter bus service that travels between jurisdictions in the Northern Santa Barbara and South Coast areas of the county.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Through transportation demand management programs, SBCAG works with employers, commuters and community partners to expand transportation choices, including transit, passenger rail, carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling and walking.





SBCAG also performs other regional responsibilities, including serving as a Census Data Affiliate and administering transportation grants and projects in partnership with local, state and federal agencies.

1.3 How are SBCAG Decisions Made?

SBCAG is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors made up of all five members of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and one elected representative from each of the county's eight incorporated cities. The Board establishes agency policy, adopts regional transportation plans and funding programs, approves the agency budget and takes action on other matters within SBCAG's regional responsibilities.

Several Board and advisory committees support SBCAG's decision-making process. Board committees include the Executive Committee, North County Subregional Planning Committee and South Coast Subregional Planning Committee. Advisory committees include the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC), Technical Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC), Joint Technical Advisory Committee (JTAC), Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Committee (SBCTAC), State Route 154 Safety Committee and Measure A Citizens Oversight Committee.SBCAG may also establish project-specific advisory committees to support individual plans, studies or projects. These committees can provide a more formal opportunity for the public and other interested parties to participate in the planning process, share local knowledge and perspectives and provide input as recommendations are developed.

SBCAG's committees serve different purposes. Some provide technical recommendations on transportation, land use and regional planning; others focus on transit needs, Measure A implementation, safety or issues affecting specific areas of the county. Membership may include elected officials, staff from local and state agencies, transit representatives and community members, depending on the committee and its purpose.



Board and committee meetings are an important part of SBCAG's public decision-making process. Agendas and meeting materials are made available to the public and members of the public may attend meetings and provide public comment in accordance with applicable meeting procedures and state law.

Recommendations from committees help inform matters considered by the SBCAG Board, where final action is taken when Board approval is required. This process allows technical analysis, local perspectives and public input to be considered as regional decisions move forward.

Information about upcoming Board and committee meetings, agendas and opportunities to participate is available at www.sbcag.org.

1.4 WHICH COMMUNITIES DOES SBCAG SERVE?

SBCAG serves all of Santa Barbara County, including the cities of Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria and Solvang, as well as the county's many unincorporated communities.

Santa Barbara County is home to about 444,000 people spread across 2,745 square miles. The region includes urban, suburban and rural communities, the federally recognized Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, major agricultural areas and Vandenberg Space Force Base. Nearly half of the county's land is federally owned.

The people who call Santa Barbara County home are equally diverse. Nearly half of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino and about 40% of residents age 5 and older speak a language other than English at home. Spanish is the most common language spoken at home other than English. About 16% of county residents live below the federal poverty line. These differences can influence transportation needs as well as how people access information and participate in public decisions.

People travel between communities every day — living in one place, working or attending school in another and relying on highways, local roads, transit, passenger rail, bicycle and pedestrian connections to reach their destinations. U.S.

Highway 101 and the LOSSAN Rail Corridor are among the major transportation corridors connecting Santa Barbara County with the broader Central Coast and Southern California.

Those differences matter for public participation. Where someone lives, the language they speak, whether they have a disability, their income, work or family schedules, access to transportation or technology and other circumstances can affect how and when they are able to participate.

Understanding our communities helps SBCAG determine who needs to be part of the conversation and how best to reach them. That can mean providing information in multiple languages, working with community organizations, offering different ways to participate, selecting accessible meeting locations and times or bringing participation opportunities directly into communities. This approach also supports SBCAG's Title VI commitment to providing meaningful access to its programs and activities.

For those reasons, SBCAG does not rely on a single approach to public participation. The strategies in this plan are designed to provide meaningful opportunities for people throughout Santa Barbara County to learn about and participate in regional transportation decisions.[1]



1 *Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey; SBCAG 2024 Title VI Plan; SBCAG 2026 Federal Legislative Priorities.*



Chapter 2: About This Plan

2.1 What is Public Participation?

Public participation is how SBCAG shares information, listens to the people and communities we serve and creates opportunities for the public to inform transportation plans, projects, programs and decisions.

Public participation can happen in many ways. Someone might take a survey, attend a community event, comment on a proposed plan, participate in a workshop, serve on an advisory committee or speak at an SBCAG Board meeting. It can also mean SBCAG going into communities, working with local organizations and reaching people who may not typically participate in regional transportation planning.

Not every decision calls for the same type or level of participation. The approach should reflect what is being decided, who may be affected, how public input can inform the process and what federal, state or local requirements apply.

Meaningful public participation starts early enough for input to make a difference and continues at key points as decisions move forward. that affect the region as a whole.

2.2 What is a Public Participation Plan (PPP)?

The Public Participation Plan, or PPP, establishes how SBCAG provides opportunities for the public and interested parties to participate in regional transportation planning and decision-making.

As Santa Barbara County's federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, SBCAG is required to develop and use a documented participation plan. Federal regulations require SBCAG to provide individuals, affected public agencies, transportation providers and users, people with disabilities and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Federal requirements establish the foundation for this plan. SBCAG's goal is to put those requirements into practice in ways that are clear, accessible and meaningful for the communities we serve.

This plan serves three purposes:

A COMMITMENT TO THE PUBLIC

The plan describes what the public can expect from SBCAG, including timely information and reasonable opportunities to participate at key decision points. It also establishes SBCAG's commitment to seeking out people and communities that have traditionally been underserved by the transportation system.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SBCAG

The plan provides principles, strategies and tools that SBCAG staff can tailor to different plans, programs, projects and communities. It guides how the agency provides notice, shares information, makes participation accessible, gathers input and communicates how that input was considered. by the transportation system.

A FRAMEWORK FOR MEETING REQUIREMENTS

The plan documents how SBCAG meets federal public participation requirements as a Metropolitan Planning Organization and provides a foundation for meeting additional state and federal requirements that apply to specific plans and programs. State requirements may establish additional public participation, consultation, public notice or meeting requirements depending on the activity.

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Consistent with federal law[1], SBCAG will use the procedures and strategies in this plan to provide a full and open public participation process. At a minimum, SBCAG's public participation process will:

- Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and sufficient time for public review and comment at key decision points;
- Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and planning processes;
- Use visualization techniques to help explain transportation plans and programs;
- Make public information available in electronically accessible formats and through electronic means;
- Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Demonstrate explicit consideration of and response to public input;
- Seek out and consider the needs of people traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems;
- Provide additional opportunities for public comment when required because significant changes to a metropolitan transportation plan or transportation improvement program raise new material issues;
- Coordinate with statewide transportation planning public participation and consultation processes; and
- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies in this plan to support a full and open public participation process.

The chapters that follow establish the principles, procedures and strategies SBCAG will use to carry out these commitments. Chapter 6 establishes a framework for evaluating their effectiveness and informing future public participation efforts.

Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements summarizes key federal and state requirements applicable to SBCAG's public participation activities.

1 *23 CFR § 450.316, Interested parties, participation, and consultation.*

2.3 How Was This Plan Developed?

Federal regulations require Metropolitan Planning Organizations to develop their participation plans in consultation with interested parties. State laws and requirements also establish public participation, consultation, notice and hearing requirements for specific SBCAG plans, programs and activities. SBCAG used that requirement as the starting point for developing this plan.

The process included:

- Reviewing SBCAG's existing Public Participation Plan and current public participation practices;
- Reviewing applicable federal and state public participation requirements;
- Reviewing SBCAG's Title VI Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and other related plans and policies;
- Reviewing public participation plans and practices from peer regional agencies;
- Gathering input from the public and stakeholders about how they receive information, prefer to participate and what barriers may make participation more difficult;
- Consulting with SBCAG advisory committees, local jurisdictions, transportation agencies and providers, community organizations and other interested parties; and
- Providing the draft Public Participation Plan for public review and comment before consideration by the SBCAG Board of Directors.

Federal regulations require a minimum 45-calendar-day public comment period before an initial or revised Public Participation Plan is adopted. The approved plan must also be made available electronically and provided to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for informational purposes.

The draft Public Participation Plan was available for public review from November 9, 2026 through December 29, 2026. The SBCAG Board of Directors adopted the plan on **[PLACEHOLDER FOR BOARD ADOPTION DATE].**

Section 2.4 summarizes the key themes heard through the plan development process and how they informed this Public Participation Plan. A more detailed summary of comments received and how they were considered is included in **Appendix D: Public Participation Summary**.

2.4 What We Heard

As part of developing this plan, SBCAG asked the public and community stakeholders about how they receive information, how they prefer to participate, and what can make participation easier or harder.

SURVEY TAKEAWAYS

A Public Participation Survey was conducted over two weeks in October 2026 to help inform the update to SBCAG's Public Participation Plan. More than 200 people responded. The online survey was available in English and Spanish and distributed through SBCAG's website, e-newsletter, social media and partner organizations. The survey was not designed to produce statistically representative results, and the findings reflect the experiences and preferences of those who chose to respond rather than Santa Barbara County as a whole. The survey asked how respondents receive information, how they prefer to participate and what may make participation difficult.

What respondents said:

- Email stands out as the preferred way to hear from SBCAG. Nearly eight in 10 respondents selected email — more than twice any other option. Local news followed at 38% and social media at 30%.
- Local news remains an important way respondents learn about their communities. Nearly three in four selected local newspapers or online news, followed by about half who selected word of mouth. Local government and social media were each selected by about 45%.
- Online surveys stand out as the preferred way to provide input. Nearly nine in 10 respondents selected online surveys, far more than any other option. Email followed at 49%, while about three in 10 selected in-person community events or pop-ups and 27% selected public meetings or hearings.
- Not hearing about opportunities in time is the most common barrier to participation. 54% of respondents selected this as a barrier, followed by not having enough time at 40% and meeting times that do not work at 35%.
- Roughly one in five were unsure whether their input would make a difference, and about one in eight were unsure what SBCAG does.
- Interest spans a range of transportation topics. More than half of respondents expressed interest in biking and walking, highways and major roads, public transit, passenger rail, transportation projects and construction, and long-range transportation planning.

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Who the survey reached:

Survey responses provide additional context about who participated and where there may be opportunities to broaden participation in future outreach.

- Survey participation was highest in the South Coast. Santa Barbara accounted for 44% of responses and Goleta 15%, while Santa Maria accounted for 10% and Lompoc 7%. Respondents from unincorporated North and South County communities were also represented through write-in responses.
- Most respondents identified as residents or community members. About two-thirds selected this category, followed by government agency staff at 10% and community, environmental or nonprofit organizations at 8%. Smaller numbers identified as business representatives, transit riders, students or elected officials. The question about respondent roles allowed only one answer, so people who fit more than one category may have chosen "resident or community member."
- English was the preferred language for most respondents. 97% selected English for receiving SBCAG information, while 4% selected Spanish. One respondent each selected Japanese and Zapoteco. Respondents could select more than one language.
- Participation varied across respondent groups. Seven respondents identified as transit riders and three as students, while no respondents identified as agricultural or farmworkers, Tribal representatives or current SBCAG advisory committee members. One respondent reported living on the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Reservation, and six identified as American Indian.

The findings helped inform the public participation principles in Chapter 3 and the strategies and tools throughout this plan.



FOCUS GROUP TAKEAWAYS

... *[Placeholder for the Focus Groups data]*

What respondents said:

- ...
-

Who was reached:

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2.5 How Does this Public Participation Plan Align with Other SBCAG Plans?

This Public Participation Plan provides an agencywide foundation for public participation. Some SBCAG plans, programs and responsibilities have additional public participation and consultation requirements under federal or state law.

When a specific requirement establishes a different or more extensive public participation process, SBCAG follows that requirement in addition to the principles and practices established in this plan.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

The Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy or RTP-SCS establishes the region's long-range transportation and land use strategy. Development of the RTP-SCS is subject to federal metropolitan transportation planning requirements and additional public participation requirements under California law.

SBCAG develops a specific public participation process for each RTP-SCS update consistent with these requirements and this Public Participation Plan, including the principles and public participation tools described in **Chapters 3 and 4**.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Federal Transportation Improvement Program or FTIP is a four-year program of federally funded and regionally significant transportation projects in Santa Barbara County.

Federal regulations require SBCAG to provide reasonable opportunities for public review and comment during development of the FTIP. The public also has opportunities to review and comment on formal amendments to the FTIP. Public participation includes adequate public notice, access to information, consideration and response to public input and additional opportunities for comment when certain significant changes are made following public review.

OVERALL WORK PROGRAM AND BUDGET

SBCAG's annual Overall Work Program (OWP) and budget identifies transportation planning activities SBCAG will undertake during the fiscal year. Public participation associated with individual planning activities identified in the OWP and budget will follow this Plan and any applicable project- or program-specific requirements.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING ACTIVITIES

SBCAG coordinates with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities that may be affected by regional transportation planning. As applicable to the planning effort, this may include coordination related to local land use and growth, economic development, tourism, reducing risks from natural disasters, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement and other relevant planning activities.

As appropriate to the planning effort, SBCAG will identify the agencies to consult and establish roles, responsibilities and key points for coordination. Additional consultation procedures for Tribal governments and Federal Land Management Agencies are provided in Chapter 5.

SBCAG will also coordinate its public participation and consultation activities with applicable statewide transportation planning processes to help provide consistent opportunities for participation and avoid unnecessary duplication.

TITLE VI AND LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

SBCAG's Title VI Plan establishes the agency's policies and procedures for complying with federal nondiscrimination requirements and helping ensure that people have equitable access to SBCAG's programs, services and activities.

The Limited English Proficiency Plan is part of SBCAG's Title VI program and describes how SBCAG provides meaningful access to information, services and participation opportunities for people with limited English proficiency. This includes procedures for providing language assistance, translated materials and interpretation services when appropriate.

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PROJECT- AND PROGRAM-SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

SBCAG may develop additional public participation and outreach strategies for individual projects, studies and programs. These strategies should be consistent with this Public Participation Plan while being tailored to the communities involved, the decisions to be made and any additional public participation requirements that apply.

TRIBAL COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians is a federally recognized Tribal government within the SBCAG region and an important partner in regional transportation planning.

Federal metropolitan planning requirements call for appropriate involvement of federally recognized Tribal governments in development of the metropolitan transportation plan and FTIP when Tribal lands are located within the metropolitan planning area. SBCAG recognizes this consultation as a government-to-government process distinct from general public and stakeholder engagement.

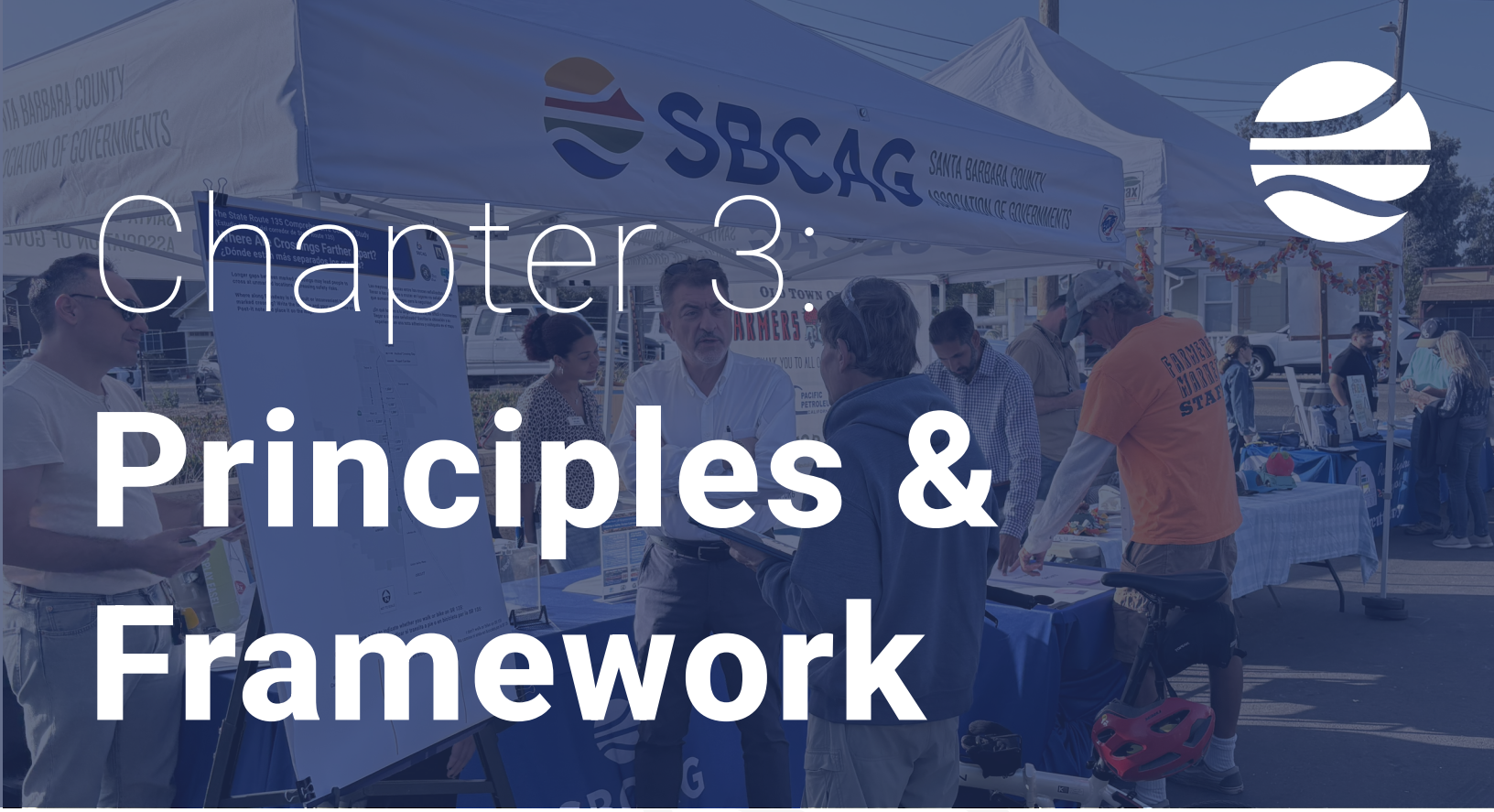
SBCAG also recognizes the importance of engaging California Native American tribes, including tribes that may not be federally recognized, when transportation plans, projects or decisions may affect Tribal interests, cultural resources or ancestral lands. The type of consultation or engagement may vary depending on the applicable federal or state requirements and the plan or project involved.

SBCAG's approach to Tribal coordination and consultation, including applicable federal and state requirements, is described in **Chapter 5: Audience-Specific Strategies**.

Looking for a plan or policy?

Additional SBCAG plans, policies and planning documents are available in the SBCAG Document Directory at www.sbcag.org.

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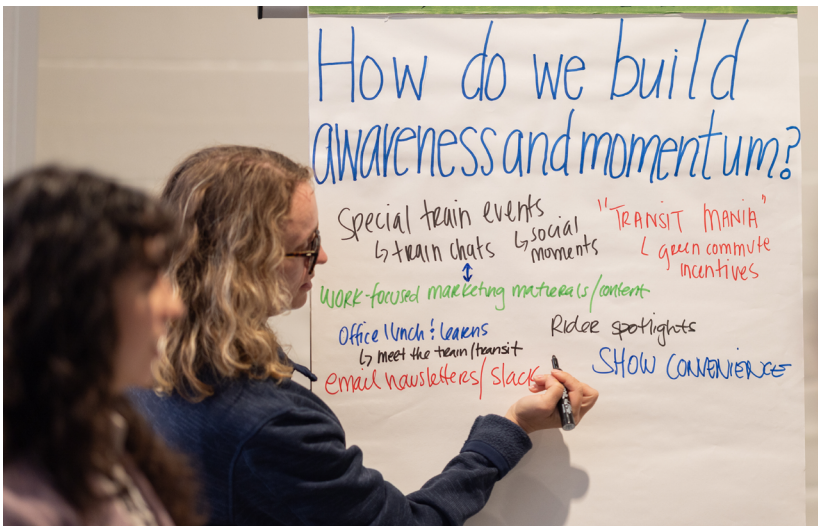


Chapter 3: Principles & Framework

SBCAG's public participation approach is grounded in principles that guide when, how and why the agency engages the public. Effective public participation is more than providing information or collecting comments. It means creating meaningful opportunities for people to understand issues, share their experiences and perspectives, and influence decisions when and where that influence is possible.

This chapter provides common principles and a framework for determining who to engage, when to engage them, how to engage them and what level of influence is appropriate.





3.1 Principles of Engagement

REACH

SBCAG seeks to reach people and communities who may be affected by, interested in or have knowledge relevant to a decision. Effective outreach considers who needs to be informed and who may be missing from traditional engagement processes. SBCAG will use multiple communication channels and community partnerships, as appropriate, to reach a broad range of participants rather than relying on a single outreach method.

REPRESENTATION

Public participation will seek to reflect the diversity of communities and perspectives within the region. When designing engagement, SBCAG will consider geographic, demographic, linguistic, socioeconomic and transportation-related differences. Particular attention will be given to communities and populations that have historically been underrepresented in transportation planning and decision-making. Chapter 5 describes how SBCAG identifies and considers the needs of specific audiences when planning public participation.

ACCESSIBILITY

SBCAG will seek to provide opportunities for people to participate without unnecessary physical, technological, linguistic, financial or logistical barriers. Depending on the engagement activity, accessibility may include language and disability access, meeting locations and times, technology, plain-language information and multiple ways to participate.

ENGAGEMENT QUALITY

SBCAG will prioritize meaningful participation rather than simply maximizing the number of participants or comments received. High-quality engagement provides participants with clear information, sufficient time to understand an issue, meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives and clarity on how their input will be considered.

TAILORED ENGAGEMENT

One-size-fits-all approaches to public participation are limiting. SBCAG will tailor engagement strategies to the particular community, decision, project stage and purpose. For example, a region-wide planning process may require broad digital and in-person outreach, while a project affecting a specific neighborhood may benefit from community-based outreach, site-specific meetings or partnerships with trusted local organizations.

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TRUST & TRANSPARENCY

Trust is built through clear communication, realistic expectations and follow-through.

SBCAG will be transparent about:

- What decision is being made
- What aspects of the decision are open to public influence
- What constraints already exist
- How public input will be considered
- When decisions will be made
- How the public will be informed of outcomes

SBCAG will also demonstrate reliability by following through on commitments. These may include commitments related to project outcomes, such as design elements, funding allocations or transit route locations, as well as procedural commitments, such as meeting dates, agenda items or follow-up communications.

OUTCOMES & RESPONSIVENESS

Successful engagement will produce more than a record of participation. SBCAG will consider what was learned through engagement and how that information informed planning and decision-making.

Evaluation may consider:

- Who participated?
- Who was missing?
- What did SBCAG learn?
- Did participants understand the issue?
- Did public input identify new information, concerns or opportunities?
- How did public input influence the process or decision?
- Was the public informed of the outcome?

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Public participation will evolve as communities, technology, projects and planning practices change. SBCAG will periodically review its engagement approaches, incorporate lessons learned and adjust strategies in response to participant feedback, staff experience, changing community needs, emerging technologies and applicable requirements.

These principles also provide a foundation for evaluating public participation. Chapter 6 provides a practical framework for assessing what worked, identifying gaps and improving future engagement.

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3.2 Spectrum of Engagement

The level of public participation will be appropriate to the purpose of the engagement and the degree of influence available to participants.

SBCAG uses a simplified spectrum ranging from **Inform** to **Co-Create**. Higher levels of engagement are not inherently better. The appropriate level depends on the decision being made, the stage of the process, the degree of public influence available, regulatory requirements and the needs of affected communities.

Table 3-1: Spectrum of Engagement

Level	Goal	Role of the Public	Examples
Inform	Provide clear, timely information	Receive information	Website updates, fact sheets, newsletters, presentations, milestone events
Consult	Gather feedback	Provide feedback	Surveys, public comment, listening sessions, online engagement
Involve	Incorporate perspectives throughout the process	Participate in discussion and development	Workshops, focus groups, advisory committees
Co-Create	Develop solutions collaboratively	Share in devleoping ideas and reccomendations	Working groups, collaborative planning, and co-design sessions

For additional information on different levels of public participation, SBCAG staff may reference the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation and Dr. Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation in **Appendix C: Practitioner Resources**.

3.3 How Does Public Input Fit into SBCAG's Processes?

Public participation occurs throughout SBCAG's work, but the purpose and appropriate level of participation may differ depending on the type of activity and stage of the process.

ENGAGEMENT AT DIFFERENT SCALES

Planning

Needs & Priorities ⇨ Alternatives ⇨ Draft Plan ⇨ Adoption ⇨ Monitoring

Engagement may help identify regional needs and priorities, develop and evaluate strategies and alternatives and inform the development, adoption and ongoing evaluation of regional plans.

Programming

Needs ⇨ Prioritization ⇨ Funding ⇨ Implementation ⇨ Evaluation

Engagement may help identify investment priorities, understand community needs, inform program development and funding decisions and evaluate whether investments are achieving intended outcomes.

Project Delivery

Plan ⇨ Concept ⇨ Design ⇨ Construction

Engagement may help identify community priorities, understand local conditions, evaluate alternatives, refine project concepts and designs and communicate project changes and construction impacts.

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PUBLIC INPUT ACROSS SBCAG PROCESSES

The planning, programming and project delivery framework applies differently across SBCAG's work. The examples below show where public participation commonly fits within several key SBCAG processes.

Public participation and notice requirements vary by plan, program and action. Staff should confirm applicable federal, state and local requirements early in the process, including requirements for public notice, review and comment periods, hearings and amendments. **Appendix A** identifies key requirements applicable to SBCAG's work.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) & Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

The RTP establishes a long-term vision and investment framework for the region's transportation system. In California, the RTP includes a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which integrates transportation, land use and housing planning to demonstrate how the region can meet state greenhouse gas reduction targets. Public participation may include identifying regional transportation and community needs and priorities; providing input on transportation, land use, housing and sustainability considerations; reviewing potential strategies, scenarios and recommendations; commenting on the draft RTP-SCS; and participating in plan adoption, amendments and updates.

Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP)

The FTIP identifies transportation projects receiving federal funding and regionally significant projects. Public participation may include learning about proposed project programming, reviewing and commenting on the draft FTIP and providing input on formal amendments when public review and comment are required.

Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)

The RTIP identifies transportation investments supported through applicable regional funding programs, including SBCAG's list of projects proposed for the region's share of State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding. Public participation may include providing input on investment priorities, project selection and programming decisions; reviewing proposed funding recommendations; and commenting on proposed updates.

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Overall Work Program (OWP) & Budget

The OWP and Budget outlines the transportation planning activities SBCAG expects to undertake during the fiscal year. Public participation may include opportunities to review and comment on the proposed work program and understand how planning resources will be allocated.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

The RHNA process involves coordination with local jurisdictions and stakeholders to assess regional housing needs and determine housing allocations. Public participation may help SBCAG understand housing needs, review methodologies and assumptions, and provide feedback at key stages of the process.



Matching Engagement to the Process

The opportunity for public influence may change as a process moves from identifying needs and developing alternatives to making decisions, implementation, and evaluation. The level of participation will reflect what is open to public input at each stage.

Chapter 6 provides a framework for evaluating whether public participation reached the intended communities, provided meaningful opportunities to participate and informed the process or outcome.

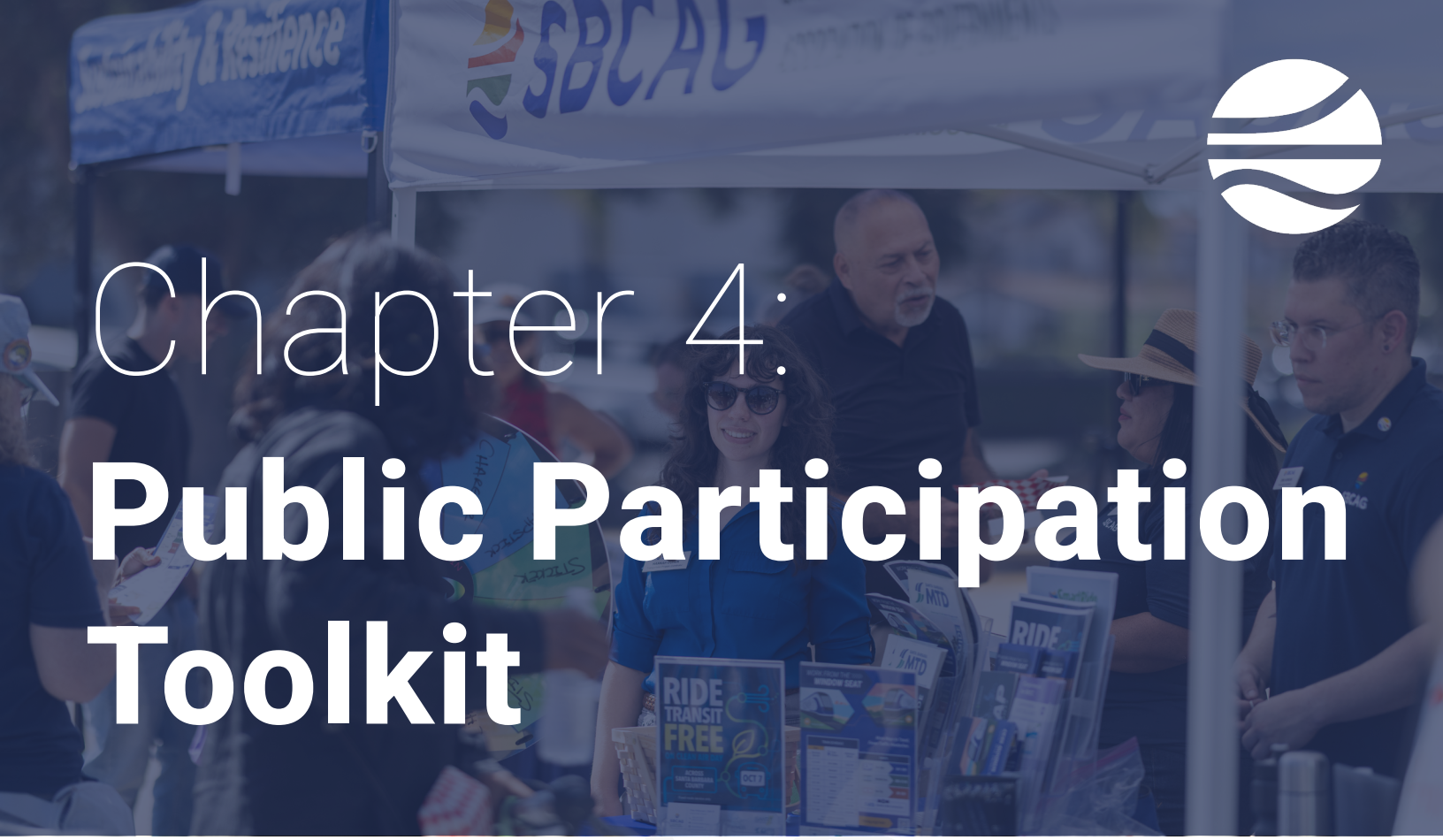
Table 3-2: Matching Engagement to the Process

Process Stage	Preliminary Engagement Purpose	Potential Level
Identify Needs	Understand experiences, priorities and concerns	Consult / Involve
Develop Alternatives	Explore ideas and potential solutions	Involve / Co-Create
Evaluate Alternatives	Gather perspectives on tradeoffs and impacts	Consult / Involve
Draft Recommendations	Review and refine the proposed direction	Consult / Involve
Decision / Adoption	Provide formal public comment	Inform / Consult
Implementation	Communicate outcomes and address impacts	Inform / Consult
Monitoring & Evaluation	Assess results and identify improvements	Consult / Involve

This framework is intended to help SBCAG move beyond a "check-the-box" approach to public participation and toward engagement that is purposeful, transparent and appropriately matched to each decision.

Public participation should answer three questions:

1. Who needs to be involved?
2. What role can they meaningfully play?
3. How will SBCAG demonstrate what it heard and what happened as a result?



Chapter 4: Public Participation Toolkit

This chapter is a working reference written for the SBCAG staff tasked with planning public participation for a plan, program or project. It provides a menu of communication and engagement tools that can be tailored to the decision being made, communities affected, level of participation, legal requirements, available resources and other project-specific needs.

Not every tool is appropriate for every effort. A focused combination of well-planned tools can be more effective than using many approaches without sufficient capacity for implementation and follow-through.







4.1 How to Use This Toolkit

BEFORE DESIGNING AN ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Work through the questions below before selecting individual tools. The answers will help determine who needs to be involved, the appropriate level of participation and the combination of tools that best fits the effort.

☐ What is the decision and what decisions are open?

Identify the decisions to be made and where public input can meaningfully inform the outcome. Match the level of participation to the influence the public can have, using the spectrum of engagement in **Chapter 3**. If a decision has already been made or is not open for reconsideration, communicate that clearly. Conducting engagement on a settled decision does more damage to public trust than sending a notice.

☐ Who is affected and who may be missed?

Identify the people, communities, organizations and agencies affected by the decision before selecting engagement tools. Consider who has participated in similar efforts, who has not and what barriers may affect participation. **Chapter 5** provides strategies for reaching specific communities; refer to the common stakeholder categories in **Appendix B**.

☐ What is required?

Review **Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements** as a starting point for identifying applicable participation requirements, including required notices, hearings, comment periods or consultation. Tactics marked Δ in this chapter carry a legal requirement in at least one circumstance. Legal requirements establish minimum obligations; additional engagement may be appropriate based on the decision, communities affected and level of public interest. Requirements are the floor of an engagement plan and usually are insufficient to meet stakeholder expectations.

☐ What resources are needed?

Identify staff time, consultant support, translation and interpretation, advertising, printing, meeting expenses and other participation costs early enough to include them in the project scope, schedule and budget. See **Section 4.10, Language Services, Participation Supports and Budget**.

☐ What combination of tools will work best?

No single communication or engagement method reaches everyone. Select a combination of tools that provide useful information and create opportunities for people to provide input.

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Consider how much SBCAG is asking of of participants, what information or value is provided in return, and whether people may face barriers to participating online or in person.

☐ How will success be measured?

Identify appropriate measures of success before engagement begins, based on the purpose and scale of the effort. Document relevant information throughout the process so the engagement effort can be evaluated using the framework in **Chapter 6**.

☐ How will accessibility and language needs be addressed?

Identify language, disability, digital access and other barriers to participation early. Provide interpretation and translation, accessible materials and meeting spaces and alternative ways to participate when needed. Use plain language and avoid unnecessary technical terms, acronyms and jargon. Consider both legal requirements and the needs of the communities affected.

☐ Plan for public participation early

Project managers will reference this Plan at the start of project development, including when developing project scopes, consultant responsibilities, budgets and engagement strategies. Early planning helps identify communication and engagement needs, language access, schedules, appropriate tools and resources. Once a project scope and budget are established, opportunities to strengthen the engagement approach may be limited.

☐ Consider participation supports

When selecting engagement methods, consider whether supports such as stipends, childcare, food, transportation or other assistance may help reduce barriers to participation. See **Section 4.10, Language Services, Participation Supports, and Budget**.

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4.2 Toolkit At A Glance

The table below provides a quick reference to the public participation tools described in this chapter. Most engagement efforts will use a combination of tools based on the decision, communities affected, level of participation, and available resources.

Table 4-1: Public Participation Tools

Tool	Level of Engagement	Staff Effort	Typical Lead Time	Works Without Internet?
Online and Media Tools				
Website and project or program web pages	Inform	Medium–High	2 weeks	No
Social Media	Inform	Low	2 weekdays	No
E-newsletter and targeted email	Inform	Low	2 weeks	No
Online engagement platform	Inform, Consult	Medium	3–4 weeks	No
Earned media and media relations	Inform	Medium	3–4 weeks	Yes
Paid media, advertising and legal classifieds ★ Δ	Inform	Medium	2–4 weeks	Yes
Printed materials and direct mail ★ Δ	Inform	Medium	3–4 weeks	Yes
Partner and trusted-messenger kit ★	Inform, Consult	Low	2–4 weeks	Yes
Phone hotline and telephone outreach ★	Inform, Consult	Low	2 weeks	Yes

Tool	Level of Engagement	Staff Effort	Typical Lead Time	Works Without Internet?
Meetings & Events				
Listening Session	Inform, Consult	Medium	6–8 weeks	Yes
Public Hearing Δ	Consult	Medium	Varies by requirement	Yes
Webinar or online meeting	Inform, Consult	Low	3 weeks	No
Site visit or walk audit	Inform, Consult, Involve	Medium–High	4 weeks	Yes
Milestone event	Inform	Medium–High	6–12 weeks	Yes
Small-Group and Targeted Engagement				
Workshop	Involve, Co-Create	Medium	6–8 weeks	Yes
Focus Group	Consult, Involve	Low–Medium	4–6 weeks	Yes
Community presentation and listening session ★	Inform, Consult	Low	3–4 weeks	Yes
Small-group and neighborhood meetings ★	Consult, Involve, Co-Create	Low	3–4 weeks	Yes
Stakeholder Interviews	Consult	Low	3 weeks	Yes
Going Where People Already Are				
Tabling and on-the-spot outreach ★	Inform, Consult	Low	2–3 weeks	Yes
Pop-up and community events ★	Inform, Consult	Low–Medium	3–4 weeks	Yes
Door-to-door canvassing ★	Inform, Consult	Medium	4 weeks	Yes

Table 4-1: Public Participation Tools Continued

Tool	Level of Engagement	Staff Effort	Typical Lead Time	Works Without Internet?
Gathering Input				
Survey or questionnaire	Consult	Medium	4–6 weeks	If paper version
Interactive Mapping	Consult	Medium	4 weeks	No
Live polling	Consult	Low	1 week	If in-person
Games, contests, and interactive exercises ★	Consult, Involve, Co-create	Low–Medium	4–6 weeks	Yes
Public review and comment period Δ	Consult	Low–Medium	Varies by requirement	Yes
Committees and Standing Bodies				
Existing board, subregional, and advisory committees	Consult, Involve	Low	2–3 months	Yes
Project-specific or community advisory committees ★	Involve, Co-create	Low	3–4 months	Yes
Closing the Loop				
Comment response and report back	All levels	Low–Medium	—	Yes

Δ *May carry a legal requirement in certain circumstances*

★ *Can be particularly effective in reaching communities underrepresented in traditional public participation processes*

*Staff effort is shown as **Low, Medium, or High** to provide a relative estimate of SBCAG staff time needed for a single use of each tool.*

Lead time is the estimated minimum calendar time from selecting a tool to delivery.

Actual staff time and lead time may vary based on project needs, consultant support, language access, legal notice and comment-period requirements, and other factors.

Start with a Mix. *Most public participation efforts benefit from more than one communication or engagement tool. Consider a combination that shares information, invites input and provides appropriate ways for people to participate online, in person or through other accessible channels.*

4.2 Online and Media Tools

Online and media tools help SBCAG share timely information, reach broad or targeted audiences and direct people to opportunities to learn more or participate. These tools are often most effective when used together and paired with non-digital approaches when needed to reach affected communities.

WEBSITE & PROJECT PAGES

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: Medium–High | Lead Time: 2 weeks

Think of the webpage as the project, program or plan's information hub. Social media, email, postcards, flyers, QR codes, and other outreach will point people there for current information and participation opportunities.

- **Use it when:** A project, program or planning effort has information the public may need to access over time, such as project updates, schedules, documents or opportunities to participate. Someone looking for the project two years from now should be able to find it and understand what happened.
- **Skip it when:** The information is short-term or limited in scope and can be easily maintained on an existing SBCAG webpage without creating a separate project or program page. Do not mistake a web page for outreach. Posting is not reaching.
- **Doing it well:**
    - **Use a consistent page structure.** Follow SBCAG's current project webpage format, as applicable, so people can easily find key information such as what the project or program is, why it matters, where it stands, opportunities to participate, upcoming milestones or

decisions and who to contact.

- **Keep it current.** Date substantive updates and update the page when project information, schedules or participation opportunities change. A stale page can make an active project appear inactive.
- **Make information easy to understand.** Use maps, graphics, fact sheets, reports, videos or other formats, as appropriate, to help explain the project and allow people to choose the level of detail they need.
- **Report back.** When an engagement effort closes, use the page to share what was heard and, when appropriate, how public input informed the process or decision.

- **Reaches:** Residents already following the agency, media, partner organizations and anyone given a link or QR code.
- **Misses:** Residents without home internet and people who do not know SBCAG exists.
- **Measure:** Page views, time on page, downloads, referral source and comment form submissions.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 2 days

Short, repeatable prompts that drive people toward a survey, meeting or project, program or plan webpage. Best understood as a communication channel, not an engagement method in itself.

- **Use it when:** You need to share timely information, extend the reach of other outreach or provide repeated, low-cost reminders about an opportunity.
- **Skip it when:** Social media would be the primary or only way to reach an affected community, the ask or information is too complex or you need a representative sample of public opinion.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Give every post a purpose.** Include one clear message and, when appropriate, a specific call to action. "Learn more" is not an action.
  - **Tailor content to the platform and audience.** Avoid automatically posting the same content everywhere. Check which platforms are actually used in the communities you are trying to reach.
  - **Make it visual and easy to understand.** Lead with images, graphics, short videos or maps. Limit acronyms and jargon.
  - **Make content accessible.** Add alternative text to every image and captions to every video.
  - **Extend the reach.** Ask partner organizations to share and provide ready-to-use copy and graphics (see Partner and Trusted-Messenger Kit).
- **Reaches:** People already following SBCAG, partner organizations or related community networks, local media and audiences reached through sharing or targeted paid promotion.
- **Misses:** People with limited internet or device access, people who do not use the selected platform and people outside SBCAG's or its partners' existing networks.
- **Measure:** Reach, engagements, link clicks and shares by partner accounts.

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E-NEWSLETTER & TARGETED EMAIL

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 2 weeks

A direct digital channel for reaching subscribers and targeted audiences. SBCAG controls when and how messages are distributed.

- **Use it when:** There is news or an update to share with an established audience, a participation opportunity or comment period to announce or a specific group of stakeholders or partners to reach.
- **Skip it when:** Email would be the primary or only way to reach an affected community. The audience you most need is often the audience not on the list.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Build the audience.** Provide opportunities to sign up for SBCAG updates through project webpages, surveys, meetings, events and other outreach.
  - **Organize lists by interest.** Keep one general list and separate project lists. Let people choose.
  - **Make the purpose clear.** Identify the requested action and provide links to additional information or opportunities to participate.
  - **Target messages when appropriate.** Use targeted email when a specific stakeholder, partner or community audience needs information directly.
  - **Keep sign-up simple.** An email address is generally all that is needed to subscribe. Request additional information as optional and only when it serves a clear purpose.
  - **Make it easy to unsubscribe.** Follow applicable email subscription requirements.
- **Reaches:** Subscribers, engaged community members, partner organizations, local agency staff, elected officials, media and targeted stakeholders when appropriate.
- **Misses:** Anyone not already subscribed and people without email or with limited internet access.
- **Measure:** List size and growth, open rates, click-through rates and unsubscribes. Periodically review and prune inactive addresses to maintain a useful distribution list.

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ONLINE ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 3–4 weeks

An online platform that can combine project information with interactive tools such as surveys, maps, comment tools and opportunities to provide input in one place, available at any time.

- **Use it when:** A project runs long enough to justify setup or would benefit from providing information and participation opportunities in one online location, particularly when participation may be limited by mobility or scheduling rather than internet access.
- **Skip it when:** The effort is short, the platform adds unnecessary complexity or the audience you most need to reach is the audience least likely to be online.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Plan for the cost.** Account for licensing costs during project scoping and budgeting; costs vary by platform and features.
  - **Plan how input will be managed.** Decide before launch how input will be collected, reviewed and managed, including how comments will be moderated and how SBCAG will respond. Establish a reasonable response timeframe and communicate it when appropriate.
  - **Explain how participation works.** Clearly identify how to participate, applicable deadlines and what will happen with the input received.
  - **Make input visible when appropriate.** Allow participants to see others' comments when appropriate. This can raise the quality of input and reduce duplicate submissions.
  - **Provide alternatives.** Offer other ways to access information and participate for people who cannot or prefer not to use the online platform, such as by phone, email, mail or in person.
- **Reaches:** People who prefer to participate online or on their own schedule, including those who may not attend an in-person or online meeting.
- **Misses:** People with limited internet access or digital literacy and people who do not learn about the platform through other outreach
- **Measure:** Unique visitors, participation or contributions, repeat visitors and geographic reach when available.

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EARNED MEDIA & MEDIA RELATIONS

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 3–4 weeks

News releases, media pitches, interviews and other outreach that can generate news coverage without purchasing placement. Earned media can extend SBCAG's reach beyond its existing communication channels, but SBCAG does not control whether or how a story is covered.

- **Use it when:** A project, program, decision or participation opportunity has broad public interest or a timely news angle, particularly when SBCAG needs to reach beyond its existing audiences.
- **Skip it when:** The information is unlikely to warrant news coverage, a specific audience must be reached directly or SBCAG needs to guarantee when and where information appears.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Make the news clear.** Give reporters plain-language information that explains what is happening, why it matters and what the public needs to know or do.
  - **Provide useful resources.** Offer visuals, maps, fact sheets, links and spokesperson access when appropriate.
  - **Connect coverage to participation.** Coordinate media outreach with other SBCAG communication channels so people know where to find more information or participate.
- **Reaches:** General audiences, people outside SBCAG's existing networks, local and regional news audiences and people reached through community or language-specific media.
- **Misses:** People who do not follow the outlets that cover the story and specific audiences that require direct or targeted outreach.
- **Measure:** Unique visitors, participation or contributions, repeat visitors and geographic reach when available.

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PAID MEDIA, ADVERTISING & LEGAL CLASSIFIEDS ★ Δ

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 2–4 weeks

Purchased placement in print, digital, radio and other media can help SBCAG reach audiences beyond its existing networks or target information to particular communities. Legal classifieds may also be legally required for certain plans, programs or decisions.

- **Use it when:** SBCAG needs to expand or target the reach of important information, participation opportunities, comment periods or major events or when paid legal notice is required.
- **Skip it when:** Existing communication channels and partnerships are sufficient to reach the intended audience or when dialogue rather than awareness is the primary objective.
- **Doing it well:**
  - ◊ **Choose outlets based on the audience.** Select media based on the communities SBCAG needs to reach, including Spanish-language, community and other relevant media.
  - ◊ **Provide translated advertising when needed.** Translate paid advertisements when needed to reach the intended audience.
  - ◊ **Match the format to the audience.** Consider how the intended audience receives and accesses information, including print, digital, radio and audio formats and radio reading services for people who are blind or have difficulty accessing print materials.
  - ◊ **Keep legal notices and outreach advertising distinct.** A legal notice satisfies a requirement; it should not be relied upon as the only way to inform or engage the public.
  - ◊ **Plan for the cost.** Account for advertising and placement costs during project scoping and budgeting.
- **Reaches:** General or targeted audiences, including people outside SBCAG's existing communication networks.
- **Misses:** Audiences the selected media outlet, publication or advertising platform does not serve. SBCAG cannot control who sees a placement.
- **Measure:** Placements, circulation, impressions or estimated audience reach when available, clicks or referrals and resulting traffic or participation.

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PRINTED MATERIALS AND DIRECT MAIL★ Δ

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 3–4 weeks

Fact sheets, postcards, flyers, posters, door hangers and other printed materials can reach people where they live or through places they already visit. They are an important complement to digital outreach and provide a way to reach people who may have limited internet access.

- **Use it when:** A project has a defined geographic footprint, information needs to reach specific households or locations or digital outreach alone may not reach the affected community.
- **Skip it when:** The message will change before the material is distributed.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Keep it focused.** Use one primary message, one clear action and one phone number or other non-digital way to get more information. When possible, aim for one page. A QR code may be added, but should not be the only path to more information.
  - **Put materials where people already go.** Consider libraries, community centers, clinics, laundromats, transit centers, schools, faith-based organizations and food distribution sites based on the community being reached.
  - **Consider who receives the mailing.** For mailings affecting a specific corridor or geographic area, consider how to reach both property owners and occupants, including renters.
  - **Use clear, accessible visuals.** Make project options easy to distinguish using clear labels, maps, graphics, symbols, patterns and color as appropriate. Do not rely on color alone to communicate meaning. Follow SBCAG and applicable project-specific branding so materials are consistent and easily recognizable.
  - **Plan for the cost.** Account for printing, translation, mailing and postage during project scoping and budgeting. Costs can vary significantly based on quantity, format, mailing area and distribution method.
  - **Check notice requirements early.** State or local laws, environmental review or permitting requirements may specify who must receive notice, where notice must be mailed, posted or published and when notice must be provided.
- **Reaches:** Households and businesses within a defined geographic area, people with limited internet access and people reached through trusted community locations.

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- **Misses:** People outside the distribution area, people who discard or overlook mailed materials and people who do not visit selected distribution locations.
- **Measure:** Pieces mailed or distributed, distribution locations, returned mail, calls or comments referencing the material and QR code scans or other trackable responses when available.

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PARTNER & TRUSTED-MESSENGER KIT ★

Level: Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 2–4 weeks

A ready-to-use packet of plain-language messages, graphics and materials that SBCAG member jurisdictions, partner organizations or elected officials can share through their own communication networks. SBCAG's direct reach is limited; its partners' combined reach can extend information into communities SBCAG may not otherwise reach.

- **Use it when:** Communities beyond existing SBCAG communication networks need to be reached, particularly when local organizations already have established relationships and trusted communication channels within those communities.
- **Skip it when:** A relationship with the partner has not been established before the outreach support is needed.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Build relationships early and continuously.** Maintain connections with jurisdictions, transit operators, community organizations, businesses, schools and other trusted partners beyond individual projects.
  - **Make it easy to share.** Provide ready-to-use, accurate materials, including translated content when needed, and allow partners to tailor messages for their audiences.
  - **Support and report back to partners.** Compensate partners for substantive outreach when appropriate and allowable, and share what SBCAG heard, what happened and what comes next.
- **Reaches:** Communities connected through existing trusted relationships, including limited English proficient and low-income residents and others who may not regularly receive information through SBCAG's own communication channels.
- **Misses:** Communities where SBCAG has not yet established partner relationships or where existing organizations do not reach the affected audience.
- **Measure:** Partners contacted, partners who share or distribute materials, estimated combined reach when available, referral traffic and how participants learned about the opportunity.

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PHONE HOTLINE & TELEPHONE OUTREACH ★

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 2 weeks

A published number or dedicated project hotline provides a direct, non-digital way to ask questions, receive information or provide comments. Language assistance should be available based on need.

- **Use it when:** A project affects a defined area, a comment period is open, ongoing public inquiries are expected or a participation option that requires only a phone is needed.
- **Skip it when:** Timely monitoring and callbacks cannot be maintained. An unanswered hotline is worse than none.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Make expectations clear.** Provide a useful voicemail greeting, identify the project or program, explain how messages will be handled, and establish a timeframe for returning calls.
  - **Plan for language access.** Provide recorded greetings and callback assistance in languages appropriate to the communities being served, consistent with SBCAG's Title VI and Limited English Proficiency procedures.
  - **Treat telephone input as public input.** Log every call as a comment received by phone so it is considered alongside comments received through other channels.
  - **Make the number easy to find.** Include it on relevant webpages and outreach materials in a readable format and clearly state that comments or questions may be provided by phone.
  - **Open the line early.** When a dedicated project hotline is used for a public participation period, make it available early enough for people to receive information and participate throughout the process.
- **Reaches:** People who prefer or rely on telephone communication, including some older adults, people without reliable internet access, people who prefer speaking rather than writing and limited English proficient residents when appropriate language assistance is available.
- **Misses:** People who are uncomfortable calling a government agency, people who cannot or prefer not to communicate by phone and people who need immediate assistance when only voicemail and callback service are available.
- **Measure:** Calls received, reason for the call, language assistance requested or provided, response time and comments received by phone.

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4.4 Meetings & Events

Meetings and events should create opportunities for interaction, not simply provide information. When planning an engagement opportunity, SBCAG will consider how people prefer to receive and share information, what types of interaction will be most useful and what times, locations and formats can make participation accessible and convenient.

Ask the community rather than assume. When possible, ask community members and partners what communication approaches work for them and what times, locations and formats make participation easier. These conversations can challenge staff assumptions and help avoid investing time and resources in an engagement approach that does not work for the people it is intended to reach.

Planning these opportunities should also include how and when the opportunity will be communicated to intended participants, using the communication tools in Section 4.3 and any applicable notice requirements.

LISTENING SESSION

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 6–8 weeks

An interactive meeting designed to share information, answer questions and hear directly from participants. Listening sessions may include a short presentation or a come-and-go format with maps, displays or activity stations and opportunities for one-to-one conversation.

- **Use it when:** Information or options are ready to share, decisions remain open for public input and conversation can help inform the process.
- **Skip it when:** A different format would better support the type of interaction needed, such as when a facilitated discussion is necessary to work through complex or contentious issues or when there is little opportunity for public input.
- **Doing it well:**
    - **Be clear about the format.** State clearly and in advance whether the session is come-and-go, includes a presentation or is a facilitated discussion and when scheduled activities will occur so participants can plan accordingly.

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- **Choose the venue deliberately.** Consider whether the location is familiar, welcoming, accessible and convenient for the communities being invited. Schools, libraries, community centers and other community-based locations may be more approachable than government facilities for some participants.
- **Consider timing and participation barriers.** Select times based on the communities being reached and consider transportation, parking, language access, accessibility and other needs. Evenings, weekends, food, childcare or other participation support may be appropriate depending on the audience, format and available resources.
- **Make staff easy to identify.** Use name badges, consistent apparel or another simple visual cue so participants can readily find staff.
- **Make it easy to provide input.** Provide multiple ways to participate, such as one-to-one conversations, comment forms, maps or activities. Staff should be prepared to document comments shared verbally when requested.

- **Reaches:** People who prefer conversation or one-to-one interaction, people who may be less comfortable speaking in a formal public meeting and people who want to ask questions or explore information before providing input.
- **Misses:** People who cannot travel or cannot attend at the scheduled time or location, people who face transportation or other participation barriers and people who did not learn about the session.
- **Measure:** Attendance, comments and other input received, geographic reach of participants when appropriate, languages requested or provided and how participants heard about the session.





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PUBLIC HEARING & PUBLIC COMMENT Δ

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: Varies by requirement

A formal opportunity to provide comments or testimony for the public record before the Board or a committee. Public hearings and comment periods may be required by law and provide an important avenue for public input, but the formal format is generally better suited to receiving comments than creating dialogue.

- **Use it when:** A legal requirement applies or a formal opportunity for public comment or record of testimony is needed.
- **Skip it when:** Interaction or dialogue is the primary goal. Formal hearings generally provide limited opportunity for conversation and may be less approachable for people who are not comfortable speaking in a public meeting.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Confirm requirements early.** Identify applicable notice, timing, hearing and comment requirements and build them into the project schedule.
  - **Make participation accessible.** Hold hearings at convenient and accessible times and locations, provide materials in advance, clearly explain how to participate and offer multiple ways to comment. Provide language access and accommodations as required.
  - **Go beyond minimum requirements when appropriate.** For region-wide or high-interest decisions, consider additional opportunities for information, interaction and participation across North County, Mid-County and the South Coast.
- **Reaches:** People comfortable participating in formal public meetings, people who want to address decision-makers directly and those seeking to place comments in the formal record.
- **Misses:** People who are uncomfortable speaking in a formal public setting, cannot attend at the scheduled time or location, face language, transportation, technology or other participation barriers or do not learn about the opportunity to comment.
- **Measure:** Speakers, written and other comments received, unique commenters, geographic reach when appropriate and language assistance or accommodation requests.

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WEBINAR OR ONLINE MEETING

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 3 weeks

A scheduled online session that allows people to participate from different locations. It can include presentations, questions, discussion, polling or other interactive activities and it may be recorded and posted for later viewing when appropriate. Online participation removes travel as a barrier and adds technology and internet access as potential ones.

- **Use it when:** The county's geography, travel time, or scheduling may make in-person participation difficult or the same information and opportunity for interaction needs to reach several communities.
- **Skip it when:** The communities most important to reach may have limited internet access, technology barriers or low comfort with online meeting platforms, particularly when another format would provide a more accessible opportunity to participate.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Provide more than one way to connect.** Offer a call-in number so participation does not depend solely on a video connection.
  - **Make technology easy to navigate.** Provide the meeting link, call-in information, and simple instructions in advance. Avoid unnecessary downloads, accounts, or technical steps when possible.
  - **Extend access beyond the meeting.** When appropriate, record and post the session with supporting materials so people who could not attend can access the information later. Clearly inform participants in advance when a meeting is recorded and provide alternative ways to ask questions or submit comments for people who cannot or prefer not to participate online.
- **Reaches:** People in geographically dispersed or outlying communities, people balancing work or other responsibilities who may benefit from remote participation, people who may have difficulty traveling to an in-person meeting and people who prefer participating remotely.
- **Misses:** People without reliable internet or telephone access, people who are uncomfortable using online meeting platforms, and people who lack the technology, privacy, or suitable space needed to participate.
- **Measure:** Registrations when used, live attendance, questions and comments received, poll or other activity responses, language assistance or accommodation requests and recording views when a recording is posted.

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SITE VISIT OR WALK AUDIT

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 4 weeks

An opportunity to bring participants to the location under discussion so observations and conversation happen in the context of actual conditions rather than relying only on maps, plans or technical documents.

- **Use it when:** Physical conditions are important to the decision, local knowledge can help identify issues or opportunities or a technical issue is difficult to understand without seeing the location firsthand.
- **Skip it when:** The site cannot be visited safely or accessibly, conditions cannot be reasonably accommodated or the area is too dispersed for an on-site format to be useful.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Consider how participants will get there.** Provide clear transportation, transit, parking and meeting-point information. Consider arranging transportation from a central location when access to the site may otherwise be a barrier.
  - **Plan for safety.** Identify site-specific risks in advance and determine whether safety briefings, protective equipment, waivers or other precautions are appropriate.
  - **Plan for language access and communication.** Provide interpretation based on identified needs and consider amplification or other communication supports when outdoor conditions may make it difficult for participants to hear.
  - **Capture observations on site.** Document comments and observations as the visit occurs through notes, maps, photographs or other appropriate methods rather than relying solely on participants to provide input afterward.
- **Reaches:** People with direct local knowledge of the location, community members affected by site conditions, agency partners and decision-makers and people who may engage more effectively with physical conditions than plans or technical documents.
- **Misses:** People who cannot travel to the site, people whose accessibility needs cannot be accommodated by the location or format and people unavailable at the scheduled time.
- **Measure:** Participation, observations, and issues identified, geographic or stakeholder representation when appropriate and how information gathered during the visit informed the project or decision.

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MILESTONE EVENT

Level: Inform | Staff Effort: : Medium–High | Lead Time: 6–12 weeks

An event tied to a significant point in a project or program, such as a groundbreaking, construction milestone, service launch or completion. Milestone events provide an opportunity to demonstrate progress, communicate key messages, raise awareness about SBCAG, recognize partnerships and help people understand what has been accomplished and what comes next.

- **Use it when:** A project or program reaches a meaningful milestone that provides an opportunity to communicate progress, explain upcoming work or changes, recognize funding and project partners or increase public awareness.
- **Skip it when:** The milestone is primarily administrative or technical, there is little new or useful information to communicate, or the event would not add value beyond other communication tools.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Start with the communication purpose.** Identify what the milestone means for the public, the key messages to communicate and what people should understand about what has been accomplished or what comes next.
  - **Make progress tangible.** Use the project location, visuals, demonstrations, tours or other elements when appropriate to help participants see or experience the progress being highlighted.
  - **Create opportunities for interaction.** Provide time for participants to ask questions, speak with project staff or partners and learn more about the project beyond the formal program.
  - **Recognize partnerships.** Coordinate with funding agencies, member jurisdictions, project partners and others whose participation or investment contributed to the milestone, as appropriate.
  - **Plan for media and broader communication:** Consider news media, photography, video, social media, project webpages and other channels that can extend the milestone beyond those attending the event.
  - **Look ahead as well as back:** Clearly communicate what happens next, including upcoming construction, service changes, additional project phases or future opportunities for public participation when applicable

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- **Reaches:** Community members affected by or interested in the project, elected officials and agency partners, news media, stakeholders and broader audiences reached through event-related communications.
- **Misses:** People who cannot attend at the scheduled time or location, people who do not learn about the event and communities not reached through accompanying communication channels.
- **Measure:** Attendance, partner participation, media coverage, digital reach and engagement, questions or comments received and other indicators appropriate to the purpose of the event.

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4.5 Small-Group & Targeted Engagement

Small-group and targeted engagement creates opportunities for deeper conversation, interaction and learning than may be possible in larger public settings. These approaches can help explore specific issues, understand different experiences and perspectives and work through questions or ideas with people who have relevant knowledge or are directly affected. Participants may be selected or invited based on the purpose of the engagement, but their input should not be assumed to represent the views of the broader community.

WORKSHOP

Level: Involve, Co-Create | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 6–8 weeks

A working session organized around a specific task such as setting priorities, testing alternatives or working through tradeoffs. Participants actively work with information, ideas and one another to produce an output.

- **Use it when:** The decision is genuinely open and participants can help work through choices, priorities or tradeoffs rather than react to a proposal.
- **Skip it when:** The decision has already been made or the question being presented is not genuinely open for input. A workshop on a settled question can damage trust more than no engagement at all.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Be explicit at the opening about what is open.** Explain what is open for input, what is fixed and how workshop results will be used.
  - **Design the task, not just the agenda.** Give participants something meaningful to work through and produce, such as a ranked list, marked map, priorities, recommendations or feedback on alternatives.
  - **Create opportunities for small-group interaction.** Use appropriately sized groups and facilitators when helpful so participants can contribute, work through ideas together and report back to the larger group. For example, small tables of six to eight with a facilitator at each table.

- **Capture the work as it happens.** Document workshop outputs through maps, notes, photographs, or other appropriate methods before materials are collected or the session ends.
- **Close the loop.** Share a summary of what was produced and, when appropriate, explain how the workshop results informed subsequent decisions or next steps.

- **Reaches:** People willing to participate in a more involved process, community members and stakeholders with relevant experience or perspectives and participants who benefit from working through issues with others.
- **Misses:** People who cannot commit to the time required, people who are uncomfortable participating in group activities and people who were not reached or invited to participate.
- **Measure:** Participants, communities or interests represented when appropriate, outputs produced, priorities or themes identified, and how workshop results informed subsequent decisions or next steps.

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FOCUS GROUP

Level: Consult, Involve | Staff Effort: : Low–Medium | Lead Time: 4–6 weeks

A structured, facilitated conversation with a small group of participants, generally six to eight people, designed to explore experiences, perspectives and the reasoning behind them rather than measure public opinion.

- **Use it when:** A deeper understanding is needed of why people hold particular views, how a specific community experiences an issue or how participants respond to proposed messages, materials, concepts, or approaches.
- **Skip it when:** A representative measure of community opinion is needed. Focus group findings are qualitative and should not be treated as representative of the broader population.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Recruit intentionally.** Identify the perspectives or experiences the focus group is intended to explore and recruit participants accordingly. Trusted community organizations and partners can help reach participants who may not respond to an open invitation.
  - **Keep the group small and the discussion focused.** Use a manageable number of participants, a short written discussion guide of open-ended questions and a neutral facilitator who can encourage participation from across the group.



- **Consider a stipend or compensation.** Compensation may help reduce barriers for people who cannot otherwise contribute their time and should be considered during project scoping and budgeting when appropriate and allowable.
- **Make participation convenient.** Select times, locations and formats based on the participants being recruited and consider transportation, accessibility and other barriers to participation.
- **Protect participants when reporting results.** Summarize findings as themes and use quotations only when appropriate. Do not attribute comments to individual participants unless they have agreed to be identified.

- **Reaches:** Specific communities or perspectives, people with direct experience related to the issue and participants who may be more comfortable contributing in a small group setting than a larger public meeting.
- **Misses:** The broader population and people outside the perspectives or communities intentionally recruited. Findings are qualitative and are not generalizable to the broader
- **Measure:** Participants, participant demographics or perspectives when appropriate, themes identified and how findings informed subsequent materials, engagement or decisions.

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COMMUNITY PRESENTATION & LISTENING SESSION ★

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 3–4 weeks

A short presentation and listening opportunity held as part of an existing meeting or gathering, such as a neighborhood association, service club, senior center, faith-based organization, chamber of commerce, school group or community organization. This approach brings SBCAG into spaces where people already gather rather than asking them to attend a separate meeting.

- **Use it when:** Existing community meetings provide an opportunity to reach people efficiently because the audience has already assembled. Prioritize groups and organizations connected to the communities affected by or interested in the issues and use the opportunity to share information, answer questions and listen to community perspectives.
- **Skip it when:** The host group has little connection to the issue or affected communities or participation would be treated as representative of the broader community rather than one source of input.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Work with the host.** Ask the host how much time is available, what format works for the group and what participants may already know or want to understand. Keep the presentation focused and preserve meaningful time for listening and interaction.
  - **Adapt to the audience.** Tailor the presentation, materials and level of detail to the group rather than bringing the same presentation to every meeting.
  - **Make it easy to stay involved.** Provide concise materials and clear ways to learn more, sign up for updates or participate in other engagement opportunities.
  - **Capture what is heard.** Document substantive questions, comments and perspectives shared during the discussion, including verbal comments when appropriate.
  - **Maintain community connections.** Keep current information about community organizations and recurring meetings across Santa Barbara County, including contacts, meeting schedules and communities served, to support engagement across projects and programs.
  - **Go back with the outcome.** Follow up when appropriate to share what happened next and how input from the group was considered.

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- **Reaches:** People already connected through neighborhood, community, civic, faith-based, school, business or service organizations, including people who may not attend an SBCAG-hosted meeting.
- **Misses:** People who are not connected to organized groups, people who cannot participate in the host organization's meetings and perspectives not represented within the particular group.
- **Measure:** Sessions held, host organizations and communities reached, attendance, comments and questions recorded, languages or geographic areas reached when appropriate and follow-up participation generated through the session.

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SMALL-GROUP AND NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS ★

Level: Consult, Involve | Staff Effort: : Low—Medium | Lead Time: 3–4 weeks

A series of small, informal meetings of residents or community members, often held in familiar neighborhood or community setting. These meetings can create space for deeper conversation and build relationships with people who may be less likely to participate in a larger or more formal meeting.

- **Use it when:** A project affects a specific neighborhood or community, people may be more comfortable participating in a small-group setting, trust or relationships need to be developed or larger public meetings have not effectively reached the people most affected.
- **Skip it when:** The geography is too dispersed for a series of small meetings to be practical, the issue is not sufficiently localized or the project schedule and resources cannot support the level of coordination and follow-through required.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Start small and build.** Begin with neighborhood-level conversations when appropriate, building toward broader engagement as relationships and understanding develop.
  - **Meet people where they are.** Work through trusted community members and organizations and meet in familiar, accessible locations.
  - **Make participation personal and accessible.** Keep conversations interactive, limit presentations, document input and consider language, accessibility, transportation, food, timing and other barriers.
  - **Support and follow through.** Compensate community-based support when appropriate and allowable. Report back on what was heard, how input was considered, and next steps.
- **Reaches:** Peeople directly affected by a project, people who may not attend a larger public meeting, people who prefer smaller and more conversational settings and communities that may have limited existing relationships with public agencies.
- **Misses:** People outside the specific geographic area or networks reached, people who are not connected to the hosts or participants, and perspectives not represented within the groups.
- **Measure:** Meetings held, total participants, neighborhoods or communities reached, issues and perspectives identified, follow-up participation when applicable, and how input informed subsequent engagement or project decisions.

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STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Level: Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 3 weeks

Individual conversations with people who hold specific knowledge, influence, experience or perspectives relevant to a project, program or decision. Interviews can help identify issues, relationships and participation needs that may not surface in a larger group setting.

- **Use it when:** An effort is being scoped and a better understanding of the landscape is needed before designing the engagement approach, specific knowledge or perspectives are important to understand or someone may be more comfortable speaking candidly in an individual conversation.
- **Skip it when:** Broad or representative public input is needed. Interviews provide depth rather than breadth and should not be treated as representative of the broader community.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Use a consistent discussion guide.** Ask a common set of core questions across interviews so responses and themes can be compared, while allowing flexibility to explore each interviewee's particular knowledge or perspective.
  - **Ask who else should be included.** Ask interviewees who else should be part of the conversation and who is usually left out. Use what is learned to identify gaps in the stakeholder or engagement approach.
  - **Be clear about how input will be used.** At the outset, explain the purpose of the interview, how information will be documented and whether comments may be attributed.
  - **Use interviews early.** Stakeholder interviews can identify issues, relationships and participation needs that change the engagement approach. When interviews are appropriate for scoping, plan and budget for them before the engagement strategy is set rather than adding them after key decisions have been made.
  - **Look across interviews for themes and differences.** Consider areas of agreement as well as differing experiences or perspectives rather than allowing a single interview to define the issue.
- **Reaches:** Agency and community partners, elected and appointed officials, community leaders, organized interests, subject-matter experts, and others with relevant knowledge or experience.

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- **Misses:** The general public, people not identified through the initial stakeholder network, and people who may not be viewed as a traditional stakeholder but are affected by the issue.
- **Measure:** Interviews completed, communities, sectors or perspectives represented, themes and gaps identified, and changes to the engagement approach or project informed by the interviews.



4.6 Going Where People Already Are

Not everyone can or will attend a meeting organized by a public agency. In Santa Barbara County, about 40 percent of residents age 5 and older speak a language other than English at home and about 16 percent of residents live below the federal poverty line. Work schedules, transportation, childcare, language, technology and other barriers can also affect participation.

Going where people already are can reach more people at a lower cost per participant than relying solely on attendance at a standalone public meeting. Bringing information and opportunities to participate into familiar places, events and everyday settings can help SBCAG reach people who may otherwise be missed.

TABLING AND ON-THE-SPOT OUTREACH ★

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 2–3 weeks

Brief, informal engagement in places where people already are, often using a table, map, display or short set of questions. This approach brings information and opportunities for input directly to people during their everyday activities or while they are already waiting or gathering.

- **Use it when:** People who may not participate in a scheduled meeting need to be reached, awareness of a project or participation opportunity needs to be increased, or brief input from people in a particular community or location would be useful.
- **Skip it when:** The issue requires an extended conversation or participants need significant background information to provide meaningful input. This approach is best suited to brief interactions rather than in-depth engagement.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Choose locations deliberately.** Go where people already gather, selecting sites, days and times based on the communities you want to reach.
  - **Keep it focused and accessible.** Use a clear, brief introduction and simple tools such as maps, visuals or focused questions to invite conversation.
  - **Capture input and stay connected.** Document feedback on the spot and provide clear ways to learn more, stay updated or provide additional input.

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- **Vary locations and times.** Use multiple sites and schedules to broaden geographic and demographic reach, including North County, Mid-County and the South Coast when appropriate.

- **Reaches:** People encountered through everyday activities and community gathering places, including people who never attend meetings, low-income households, limited English proficient residents and people with no prior awareness of SBCAG.
- **Misses:** People who do not frequent the selected locations or are not there during the outreach period, as well as people who need more time or information to participate meaningfully.
- **Measure:** Contacts made, responses or comments recorded, locations and times, geographic reach and languages when appropriate, participation generated through follow-up opportunities and awareness of the project when that is an objective.



POP-UP AND COMMUNITY EVENTS ★

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Low—Medium | Lead Time: 3–4 weeks

An interactive engagement opportunity that meets people where they already are, either by participating in an established community event or creating a pop-up at a gathering place or project location. Demonstrations and hands-on activities can help people learn about a project or program and provide input in a convenient, informal setting.

- **Use it when:** An established event, gathering place or project location provides an opportunity for more interactive engagement than a standard information table.
- **Skip it when:** A simple information table or brief outreach is sufficient or the topic requires an extended explanation or facilitated discussion that would be difficult in a busy or informal setting.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Choose the setting deliberately.** Select events, locations and times based on the communities to be reached. Develop a calendar of recurring events to support advance planning.
  - **Plan early and stay adaptable.** Account for event registration deadlines, fees, permits, staffing, accessibility, language access and other logistics. Design materials and activities so they can be transported, set up efficiently and work in different indoor and outdoor settings.
  - **Match the setting.** People attend community events and gathering places for their own reasons. Keep the SBCAG presence welcoming and low-pressure, with interactions that fit the setting.
  - **Keep participation flexible.** Make it easy to participate in a few minutes while allowing time for deeper questions and interaction. Consider families, caregivers and other participation needs.
  - **Coordinate with partners.** Work with member jurisdictions, event organizers and community partners that may already have a presence or connection to the community.
  - **Capture input as it happens.** Document comments, activity results and other substantive feedback so it can be considered alongside input from other engagement methods.
- **Reaches:** People attending an established community event or using the selected gathering place or project location, including people who may be unlikely to attend a separate SBCAG meeting but are willing to participate in a convenient, interactive setting.

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- **Misses:** People who do not attend the event or use the selected location, as well as people who need a quieter, more structured or more in-depth setting to participate.
- **Measure:** Contacts and participants, input received, activities completed, events and locations, communities and languages reached when appropriate and follow-up participation or sign-ups generated.



DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING ★

Level: Inform, Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 4 weeks

Direct outreach to households, businesses or properties within a defined project area. Staff or trained outreach teams provide information, answer questions and, when appropriate, gather input through brief conversations at the door or property.

- **Use it when:** A project has direct impacts within a defined geographic area, affected households or businesses need targeted information or other engagement methods have not effectively reached a community.
- **Skip it when:** The project area is too large or dispersed for canvassing to be practical, the information is not geographically targeted or staff and participant safety cannot be reasonably addressed.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Give advance notice when possible.** Use project communications, community organizations and trusted messengers to explain when outreach will occur and why.
  - **Prepare and protect outreach teams.** Use visible identification, two-person teams when appropriate, check-in procedures, reasonable canvassing hours and safety protocols. Provide appropriate training and, before field activities begin, coordinate with Human Resources or other appropriate staff on applicable safety, risk management and other requirements. Train outreach teams to clearly explain their role and avoid entering private spaces.
  - **Engage through trusted messengers.** Work with community partners when local relationships, knowledge or language skills can improve outreach; compensate partners for substantive support when appropriate and allowable.
  - **Make conversations useful and accessible.** Use consistent, open-ended questions; provide concise project information and ways to stay connected; and document comments, language needs and follow-up requests.
  - **Follow through.** Assign responsibility for responding to questions and incorporate canvassing input into the broader engagement record.
- **Reaches:** Households, businesses or other properties directly affected by or located near a project or program, including people who may not receive or respond to other SBCAG communications.

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- **Misses:** People who are not present when canvassing occurs, people who are uncomfortable engaging at the door and people outside the canvassed area.
- **Measure:** Properties or doors contacted, conversations held, comments and questions received, materials left, languages encountered or assistance provided, geographic coverage and follow-up needs.

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4.7 Gathering Input

These tools provide different ways for people to share their experiences, priorities, concerns and ideas. They can be used on their own or incorporated into meetings, events and other engagement activities.

Be intentional about what is asked. Collect information that can meaningfully inform the process or decision and be clear about how it will be used. Be mindful of engagement fatigue and extractive engagement, particularly when communities are repeatedly asked to provide input. Respect participants' time and experience by keeping requests focused, coordinating engagement when possible and reporting back on what was heard and what happened next.

SURVEY & QUESTIONNAIRE

Level: Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 4–6 weeks

A structured set of questions used to gather comparable input about experiences, needs, priorities or preferences. Surveys can reach many people, but results should be interpreted based on how participants were recruited and who responded.

- **Use it when:** Comparable responses are needed across a region, community or group, particularly when input can be gathered through a consistent set of questions and analyzed together.
- **Skip it when:** The primary need is to understand the reasoning behind people's experiences or perspectives, the topic requires substantial explanation or dialogue or the respondents likely to be reached would be too limited or skewed for the results to be meaningfully reported.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Start with who needs to be heard.** Identify the communities and perspectives needed, then choose distribution methods that can reach them.
  - **Make surveys accessible, focused and neutral.** Keep surveys reasonable in length, use clear and unbiased questions and collect demographic information when useful for understanding who is participating and evaluating the reach of engagement. Provide online, paper, phone, or in-person options and translated versions when needed.

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- **Test and plan distribution.** Test surveys with people outside the project team and use partners, communications and in-person outreach to reach intended participants—not just those who find the survey online.
- **Monitor participation.** Use available geographic, demographic and language information to assess participation while the survey is open and adjust outreach when gaps emerge.
- **Report results with context.** Clearly describe the number and characteristics of respondents, how the survey was distributed and any participation gaps or limitations. Unless statistically sampled, do not present results as representative of the broader population.

- **Reaches:** A potentially broad range of participants when distribution is deliberate and multiple ways to participate are provided.
- **Misses:** People not reached through the selected distribution channels, people who face language, literacy, technology or accessibility barriers and people who are less likely to respond to surveys. Self-selection is an important limitation of most open public surveys.
- **Measure:** Responses, completion rate, geographic reach, language and demographic information when collected, participation by distribution channel and gaps in participation.

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INTERACTIVE MAPPING

Level: Consult | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: 4 weeks

An online map tool that allows people to identify locations, draw routes or provide place-specific comments. Interactive mapping can capture location-specific information and local knowledge that may be difficult to gather through a traditional survey or comment form.

- **Use it when:** The issue is inherently geographic, such as identifying gaps, barriers, hazards, missing connections, preferred routes or locations where improvements may be needed.
- **Skip it when:** Location is not important to the question being asked or the communities most important to reach may have limited internet access or comfort using digital mapping tools and an accessible alternative cannot be provided.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Provide a non-digital way to participate.** When an interactive map is used online, provide comparable opportunities for location-based input when appropriate, such as printed maps at meetings, events, pop-ups or community locations where participants can use stickers, picture cards or other visual markers to identify locations and respond to the same categories used online.
  - **Keep the map and choices simple.** Limit categories to those needed to answer the engagement question and use clear labels, icons or other visual cues when helpful. Too many categories or unrestricted comments can make the map difficult for participants to use and the results difficult to interpret.
  - **Decide whether participants should see other responses.** Displaying existing pins or comments can encourage participation and help people build on ideas, but it can also influence subsequent responses. Make the choice based on the purpose of the engagement.
  - **Moderate and manage input.** Establish how contributions will be reviewed, categorized and addressed, particularly when participants can submit free-text comments or publicly visible information.
  - **Look for gaps as well as concentrations.** Review where input was received and where little or no input was provided. A lack of map contributions from an area should not be interpreted as a lack of needs or concerns.

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- **Report back.** Share what the mapping exercise produced and, when appropriate, how the geographic input informed further analysis, alternatives or decisions.

- **Reaches:** People with location-specific knowledge and people who find maps or visual tools easier to use than written descriptions, surveys or technical documents, including cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Misses:** People without reliable internet access, people uncomfortable with digital maps, people who have difficulty interpreting maps and communities not reached through the outreach used to promote the mapping opportunity.
- **Measure:** Contributions, unique contributors, geographic distribution of input, types of comments or locations identified and areas with limited or no participation.

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LIVE POLLING

Level: Consult | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 1 week

Instant responses collected during a meeting, webinar or other engagement activity, with results that can be displayed and discussed in real time. Polling can also be anonymous.

- **Use it when:** A quick way to engage participants, surface different perspectives or give people who may not speak aloud another way to participate would be useful.
- **Skip it when:** The result could be interpreted as representative of the broader community. Live polling measures the room, not the region.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Keep it focused.** Use a small number of clear questions and, when useful, show results immediately.
  - **Provide another way to respond.** Offer a paper, hand-raise or other option so participation does not depend on having a smartphone or using the polling technology.
  - **Use anonymity when it supports participation.** Anonymous polling can make it easier for people to share perspectives they may not be comfortable expressing aloud.
  - **Report results accurately.** Describe results as responses from participating attendees, not as broader public opinion.
- **Reaches:** Meeting and webinar attendees, including those who may be less comfortable speaking aloud.
- **Misses:** People who do not attend or participate in the meeting or activity.
- **Measure:** Responses per question, participation rate against attendance and distribution of responses.

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GAMES, CONTESTS, & INTERACTIVE EXERCISES ★

Level: Consult, Involve, Co-Create | Staff Effort: : Low–Medium | Lead Time: 4–6 weeks

Hands-on activities that help people explore choices, identify priorities or work through tradeoffs in an interactive and approachable format. Activities may include resource-allocation exercises, visual or mapping activities, games and contests.

- **Use it when:** The material is technical or difficult to explain through documents alone or the audience includes people who may face language, literacy or accessibility barriers that make traditional engagement formats difficult to use.
- **Skip it when:** The activity does not connect to a meaningful question or decision or it is being used as a substitute for other engagement needed to reach or hear from affected communities.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Make the exercise reflect a real question.** If participants are being asked to prioritize, allocate resources or make tradeoffs, use constraints that reasonably reflect the choices under consideration.
  - **Let participants work through tradeoffs together.** Small-group activities can shift the conversation toward discussing priorities and choices rather than reacting to a proposal.
  - **Use the results meaningfully.** Explain beforehand how results will be considered and report back on what happened. Participants are more likely to invest in an exercise when the connection to the planning or decision-making process is clear.
  - **Design for different ways of participating.** Use pictures, symbols, maps, physical objects or other visual and tactile approaches when appropriate, while providing language assistance and accessibility accommodations based on participant needs.
  - **Make room for ideas the exercise did not anticipate.** Provide a way for participants to identify priorities, concerns or options that were not included in the activity.
  - **Use contests thoughtfully.** Contests can be particularly useful for engaging youth and families when the activity has a clear connection to the project or planning question and participants understand how their contributions will be used.
- **Reaches:** People who prefer hands-on or visual participation, families and youth and people who may be less comfortable with technical documents or formal meeting formats.

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- **Misses:** People who are uncomfortable with the activity format, cannot participate in the way it is designed or view it as disconnected from the actual decision-making process.
- **Measure:** Participants, priorities or rankings produced, demographic reach and how results were considered in the planning or decision-making process.

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PUBLIC REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD Δ

Level: Consult | Staff Effort: : Low–Medium | Lead Time: Varies by requirement

A defined period of time during which a draft plan, program or other document is available for public review and formal comments are accepted.

- **Use it when:** A legal requirement applies or a substantive draft warrants formal public review before a decision is made.
- **Skip it when:** Never, when required. A formal comment period creates an opportunity to participate; accompanying outreach helps ensure people know the opportunity exists.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Confirm requirements early.** Use **Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements** as a starting point for applicable notice, review and comment periods and confirm any additional local, state or federal requirements. Build required notice time into the schedule. Where the requirement is 45 days, plan for 45 days plus the notice lead time.
  - **Make the draft understandable and accessible.** Provide a plain-language summary alongside lengthy or technical documents and make materials available online and, when appropriate, at libraries, community centers or other accessible locations. People should not have to read a 200-page document to understand what is being proposed and provide meaningful input.
  - **Promote the opportunity.** Use appropriate email, media, partner networks, printed materials and other outreach rather than relying solely on a legal notice.
  - **Provide multiple ways to comment.** When permitted, accept comments online, by email, mail, phone and in person and weigh them equally. Plan for language access and accessibility based on identified needs and applicable requirements.
  - **Check whether additional review is required.** For the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy and Federal Transportation Improvement Program, provide an additional opportunity for public comment if the final document differs significantly from the version made available for public comment and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen.
  - **Close the loop.** Summarize comments received and explain how they were considered or addressed. See **Section 4.9 Closing the Loop**.

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- **Reaches:** Organized stakeholders, agency and community partners, engaged residents and others reached through accompanying outreach.
- **Misses:** People who are unaware of the review period, do not regularly follow agency communications, face barriers to reviewing the materials or are not reached through accompanying outreach.
- **Measure:** Comments received, unique commenters, methods of submission, geographic reach, and substantive changes or decisions informed by public comments.

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4.8 Committees and Standing Bodies

SBCAG's committees and advisory bodies provide ongoing opportunities for technical expertise, local government perspectives, community experience and other input to inform regional decision-making. Some are standing bodies with roles and membership established through law, SBCAG governing documents, ordinances or other authorities. SBCAG may also establish project-specific advisory committees to support a particular plan, program or project.

This toolkit does not establish or modify the authority, membership, procedures or responsibilities of SBCAG's existing committees or advisory bodies. Those requirements are governed by applicable law, ordinance, Joint Powers Agreement, bylaws or other governing documents. The guidance below focuses on how these bodies can support meaningful public participation and how project-specific advisory committees can be used effectively.

EXISTING BOARD, SUBREGIONAL, & ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Level: Consult, Involve | Staff Effort: : Low | Lead Time: 2–3 months

SBCAG's standing committees provide structured opportunities for elected officials, technical staff, community members and other participants to review information and provide recommendations or oversight consistent with each body's established role.

- **Use it when:** A plan, program, or project would benefit from review, recommendations or coordination from an existing committee whose established responsibilities relate to the issue.
- **Skip it when:** The committee does not have an established role related to the issue or the purpose is to gather broader community input. Committee participation is not a substitute for public engagement.
- **Doing it well:**
    - **Use the appropriate committee.** Bring items to committees based on their established roles and responsibilities.

- **Make the purpose clear.** Identify whether an item is being presented for information, discussion, input, recommendation or another action consistent with the committee's authority.
- **Provide materials early enough for meaningful review.** Use plain language and supporting visuals where appropriate, particularly for complex or technical issues. Circulate material far enough ahead that members representing other agencies can consult within their own organizations.
- **Connect committee and community engagement.** When both are part of the process, coordinate timing so community input can meaningfully inform committee and Board consideration.
- **Rotate locations when practical.** Consider meeting locations in North County, Mid-County, and the South Coast when a committee's membership and function make that appropriate.
- **Report back.** Let committees know how their recommendations or input were considered as the process moves forward, including when a recommendation was not followed.

- **Reaches:** Depending on the committee, elected officials, member jurisdictions, technical and professional staff, community representatives and other participants identified through the body's established membership.
- **Misses:** The broader public and communities not represented through committee membership.
- **Measure:** Participation, jurisdictions or organizations represented, recommendations or input provided and follow-through when appropriate.

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PROJECT-SPECIFIC OR COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES ★

Level: Involve, Co-Create | Staff Effort: : Low–Medium | Lead Time: 3–4 months

An advisory body established for a particular plan, program or project to provide sustained input over time. Membership and structure can bring together community perspectives, lived experience and other relevant knowledge while building participants' understanding of the project and regional decision-making process.

- **Use it when:** An effort is long enough to support sustained participation, ongoing community perspectives would add value and there are meaningful questions or decisions for the committee to inform. It can also be useful when building community knowledge, relationships and informed community leaders would strengthen the project and broader engagement.
- **Skip it when:** The timeline is short, opportunities for influence are limited or other engagement methods can provide the needed input without asking people to make a substantial ongoing commitment. A committee that meets without influencing anything teaches its members that participation is not meaningful.
- **Doing it well:**
  - **Define the role and structure.** Establish the committee's purpose, responsibilities, membership process, meeting schedule, decision-making role and applicable legal requirements before recruiting.
  - **Recruit intentionally and remove barriers.** Reach beyond existing networks to engage diverse perspectives, while considering meeting times, locations, language access, transportation, accessibility and participation support.
  - **Build an informed, connected and ongoing role.** Provide members with the knowledge and opportunities to meaningfully contribute, connect their input to broader community engagement and report back on how their recommendations informed decisions.
- **Reaches:** Community members and others able to provide sustained participation, lived experience, local knowledge, or perspectives relevant to the project, while helping build informed community connections around the effort.

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- **Misses:** The broader community, people not reached through recruitment and people unable or unwilling to make an ongoing committee commitment.
- **Measure:** Recruitment and applications, applicant and member demographics, participation and retention, communities and perspectives represented, recommendations or input provided, and how that input informed the process.

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4.9 Closing the Loop

Public participation does not end when the comment period, meeting or engagement activity is over. Closing the loop means communicating what was heard, how input was considered and what happens next. The approach will be proportionate to the engagement effort and the decision being made, and participants will have a reasonable way to understand what came from the process. Reporting back builds trust, demonstrates that participation matters and helps communities see the connection between their input and the decisions, recommendations or next steps that follow.

COMMENT RESPONSE & REPORT-BACK Δ

Level: Applies at Every Level | Staff Effort: : Medium | Lead Time: None, Separate

The process of documenting public input, considering it as part of decision-making and reporting back on what was heard, how input informed the process and what happens next. Formal response requirements may apply depending on the plan, program, project or action. Use **Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements** as a starting point and confirm any additional federal, state or local requirements, including applicable environmental review, permitting or other action-specific requirements.

For the RTP-SCS and FTIP, when significant written or oral comments are received on the draft, the final document will include a summary and analysis of the comments and explain how the comments were addressed.[1]

- **Use it when:** Always, at the close of every engagement effort.
- **Skip it when:** Never.
- **Doing it well:**
  - ◊ **Plan for it from the beginning.** Establish how input will be documented, reviewed, addressed and reported back, with sufficient staff time and resources built into the project.
  - ◊ **Capture and respond to input.** Consistently document comments across engagement channels, acknowledge and address them when possible and explain when input cannot be incorporated or falls outside SBCAG's role.

1 *23 CFR § 450.316(a)(2).*

- **Close the feedback loop.** Identify key themes, explain how input influenced decisions or next steps, protect sensitive information and share outcomes with participants and the broader community in accessible formats.
- **Protect personal and sensitive information.** Public comments and other materials submitted to SBCAG may become public records. Inform participants that information they submit may be subject to public disclosure. Before publishing comments or other submissions, review them for personal, confidential or sensitive information and follow applicable law and SBCAG procedures for redaction, disclosure and public posting. Consult legal counsel when a submission includes sensitive information or raises questions about what may be disclosed or posted.

- **Reaches:** People who participated in the engagement and others following the project, plan or program, including people deciding whether future participation is worth their time.
- **Misses:** Nobody, when done consistently.
- **Measure:** Comments or input received, major themes identified, responses or acknowledgments provided, response time, changes or decisions informed by public input and communication of outcomes or next steps.

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4.10 Language Services, Participation Supports, & Budget

Meaningful public participation requires planning for the resources that make participation possible. Language services, participation supports and other engagement costs will be considered when a project is scoped and budgeted, not added after outreach is underway.

This section provides guidance for planning translation and interpretation, reducing barriers to participation and budgeting for public participation. The appropriate approach will vary based on the decision being made, communities affected, participation goals, legal requirements and anticipated barriers.

TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION

Language access will be planned early and provided consistent with SBCAG's Title VI Plan and Limited English Proficiency Plan. Language needs may vary by project, geography, audience and type of engagement.

- **Know the difference.** Translation is written communication from one language to another. Interpretation is communication of spoken or signed language in real time. Translated materials alone do not provide access to the conversation taking place at a meeting or event.
- **Identify language needs early.** Consider the communities being engaged, available demographic information, prior participation and input from community partners when determining translation and interpretation needs.
- **Plan translated materials alongside English materials.** When materials are provided in multiple languages, build translation into the same production schedule whenever practicable so participants have a comparable opportunity to receive information and participate.
- **Use qualified language professionals.** Public-facing translation and interpretation should use professionals appropriate to the assignment. Provide project context, transportation terminology, acronyms and technical materials in advance when possible to support accurate and consistent communication.

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- **Plan interpretation for interaction.** When interpretation is needed at a meeting or event, consider how participants will ask questions, hear responses and take part in discussion. Simultaneous interpretation may be appropriate when it improves the ability to participate and can be supported by the event format and resources.
- **Use language-identification tools when helpful.** An "I Speak" card or similar resource can help identify a participant's language when it is not otherwise known. See Appendix C: Practitioner Resources for a language-identification resource.
- **Work with trusted community partners.** Community organizations, schools, service providers and other trusted messengers can help identify language needs and connect SBCAG with communities. They can complement, but do not necessarily replace, professional translation or interpretation services.

APPROACHES THAT SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

Participation supports can reduce practical barriers and make it easier for people to take part. Consider them during project scoping based on the communities being engaged, the format and timing of participation, available resources and applicable funding requirements.

- **Reduce participation barriers.** Consider childcare, food, transportation, timing, technology and non-digital options based on community needs.
- **Support meaningful participation.** Provide stipends when substantial time or lived experience is requested and compensate community-based organizations for substantive outreach, facilitation, translation or recruitment when appropriate and allowable.
- **Provide flexible options.** Give participants adequate notice and, when appropriate, offer multiple times, formats or ways to participate.

BUDGETING FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation will be considered when the project scope and budget are being developed, including staff and consultant time and direct costs, as applicable. Agencywide public participation needs that are not attributable to a specific project should also be considered through SBCAG's annual budgeting process.

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Project size or cost alone does not determine the appropriate investment in public participation. A smaller project with significant community impacts, a complex or sensitive location or greater participation needs may require proportionally greater investment. A major capital project may also require substantial resources for sustained public participation and communication because of its duration, geographic reach, construction impacts, number of affected communities or other project complexities.

The appropriate investment will vary by project, program or activity and should reflect the decision being made, potential community impacts, communities affected, project duration and complexity, participation goals, legal requirements and anticipated barriers to participation. The public participation approach and budget may be adjusted as project needs and community participation needs become better understood.

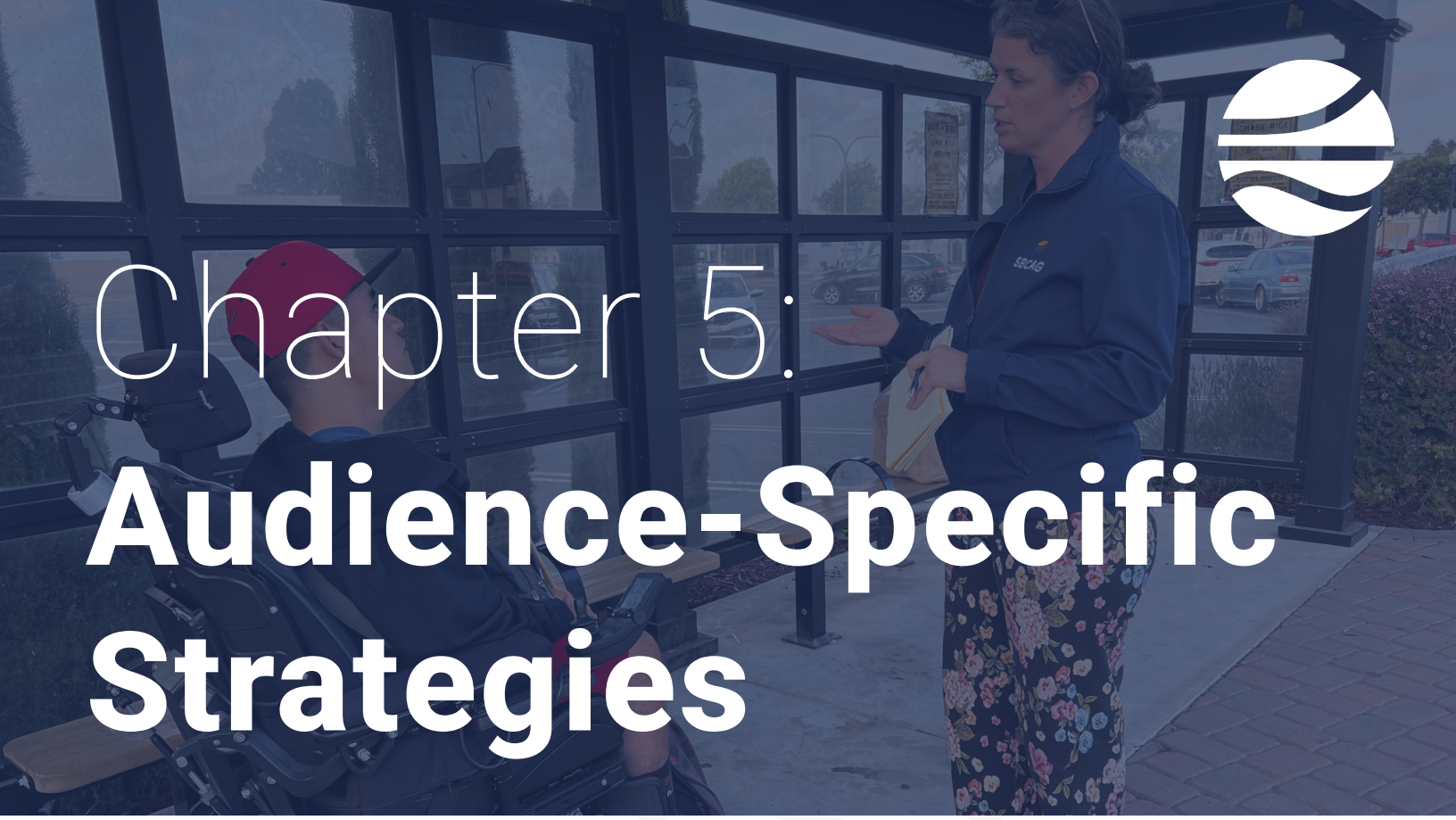
Public participation costs may include staff and consultant time, outreach and communication materials, advertising, meetings and events, translation and interpretation, accessibility services, community partnerships, participation supports, facilitation, interactive tools, ongoing project communications, documentation, evaluation and reporting back.

Funding eligibility should be considered during project scoping and budgeting, and proposed public participation costs should be consistent with applicable funding requirements.

Clearly identify public participation responsibilities in consultant scopes of work, including which activities and costs will be managed by the consultant and which will be provided by SBCAG staff

Public participation budgets will account for applicable legal requirements and identified language access and accessibility needs.

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Chapter 5: Audience-Specific Strategies

5.1 Native American & Indian Tribal Governments

Consultation with Indian Tribal governments:
Federal metropolitan planning requirements call for consultation with Indian Tribal governments during development of SBCAG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP).

State law establishes additional consultation requirements with California Native American tribes, including during environmental review of the RTP and other applicable plans and projects. ***See Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements*** *for more information.*

Tribal consultation is an important and distinct part of SBCAG's regional transportation planning process. Federally recognized Tribal governments are sovereign governments, and government-to-government consultation with them is distinct from general public participation or stakeholder engagement.

SBCAG also recognizes that other California Native American Tribes may have traditional, cultural or ancestral connections to lands within Santa Barbara County and may be consulted or engaged as appropriate under state requirements or for the planning effort. This section establishes SBCAG's agencywide approach to Tribal consultation and engagement and applies to regional plans, programs and projects as appropriate.

SBCAG will begin Tribal consultation early enough for Tribal perspectives, transportation needs, plans and priorities to be meaningfully considered as regional plans, programs and projects are developed. Consultation and engagement may take different forms depending on applicable requirements, the planning effort and the preferences of the Tribal government or California Native American tribe.

SANTA YNEZ BAND OF CHUMASH INDIANS

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians is the federally recognized Tribal government located within Santa Barbara County. The Santa Ynez Reservation is located in the Santa Ynez Valley near State Route 246, an important east-west transportation corridor connecting communities in the valley.

SBCAG recognizes its government-to-government relationship with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and will work directly with Tribal leadership and designated representatives on applicable regional transportation matters. The Tribe is also an important partner in transportation planning efforts affecting the Santa Ynez Valley. Recent collaboration includes the Santa Ynez Valley Trail, a regional active transportation project being advanced by SBCAG in partnership with the Tribe, the cities of Buellton and Solvang and the County of Santa Barbara.

SBCAG will continue to coordinate early with the Tribe on applicable regional transportation plans, programs and projects and to follow preferred communication and consultation protocols.

OTHER CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

SBCAG recognizes that other California Native American Tribes may have traditional, cultural or ancestral connections to lands within Santa Barbara County. The appropriate Tribes to consult or engage may

vary depending on the geography, subject matter, potential effects and applicable federal or state requirements. SBCAG may also engage Native American communities and organizations relevant to a planning effort as part of its broader public participation activities.

The following non-federally recognized California Native American Tribes and communities are identified for Santa Barbara County in a Caltrans resource addressing the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA) and the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA):

- Barbareño Band of Chumash Indians
- Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians
- Chumash Indian Council of Bakersfield
- Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation
- Northern Chumash Tribal Council
- San Luis Obispo County Chumash Council
- Xolon-Salinan Tribe
- yak tityu tityu yak tiłhini – Northern Chumash Tribe

This list provides a regional reference but should not be used as the sole basis for determining Tribal consultation needs. Other federally recognized or non-federally recognized Tribes may have traditional or cultural affiliations with a particular geographic area.

When considering Tribal consultation or engagement, SBCAG will use current information and resources from the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) to help identify Tribal governments and communities with traditional or cultural connections to the geographic area and determine the appropriate Tribal contacts for the particular planning activity or project.

Tribal Consultation Resource:

For more information, visit California Native American Heritage Commission at nahc.ca.gov.

SBCAG will use the most current available information to identify appropriate Tribal contacts and follow applicable federal and state consultation requirements.

HOW SBCAG WILL CONSULT AND ENGAGE TRIBES

Consult Early and Directly

- Maintain direct relationships with Tribal governments and California Native American Tribes, as appropriate.
- Begin consultation and engagement early enough for Tribal perspectives, transportation needs, plans and priorities to be meaningfully considered.
- Follow preferred communication and consultation protocols.
- Provide schedules, draft materials and technical information with sufficient time for review and response.

Create Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

- Consider Tribal transportation plans, priorities, cultural resources and other relevant Tribal interests during planning and project development.
- Offer government-to-government meetings with federally recognized Tribal governments when appropriate.
- Invite Tribal representatives to participate in relevant advisory committees, workshops or other planning activities.
- Consult and engage California Native American Tribes when appropriate or required based on the planning effort, potential effects and applicable federal or state requirements.

Establish and Document the Consultation Process

- Apply Tribal consultation practices as a distinct process, including government-to-government consultation with federally recognized Tribal governments.
- Establish roles, responsibilities and key decision points for consultation, as applicable.
- At the outset of a planning effort, identify applicable federal or state consultation requirements and appropriate Tribal governments or California Native American Tribes to consult or engage.
- Maintain appropriate records of consultation and engagement.
- Protect confidential or culturally sensitive information consistent with applicable requirements.

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5.2 Federal Land Management Agencies

Federal public lands make up a significant portion of Santa Barbara County and include lands and facilities managed by several federal agencies. SBCAG is federally required to appropriately involve Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMAs) in development of its Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP-SCS) and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). **Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements** contains more information about applicable federal requirements.

Consultation with FLMAs helps SBCAG consider transportation needs, plans and priorities affecting federal lands and the communities and transportation systems that connect to them. This section establishes SBCAG's agency-wide approach to FLMA consultation and coordination and applies to regional plans, programs and projects as appropriate.

FEDERAL LANDS IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Nearly half of Santa Barbara County's 2,745 square miles is federally owned land. Federal agencies with lands or major federal facilities in Santa Barbara County include:

- **U.S. Forest Service,** which manages portions of Los Padres National Forest;
- **National Park Service**, which owns or manages portions of Channel Islands National Park within Santa Barbara County;
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**, which manages the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge;
- **Bureau of Land Management**, which manages federal public lands including Point Sal;
- **Bureau of Reclamation**, which owns the Cachuma Project and manages Bradbury Dam and other federal water facilities;
- **U.S. Department of War**, including Vandenberg Space Force Base; and
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**, which has federal navigation and other infrastructure responsibilities in Santa Barbara County.

The federal agencies relevant to a particular planning activity may vary based on the location, federal lands or facilities affected and the agency's transportation interests. SBCAG will periodically verify federal land-management contacts and consult the appropriate agencies during applicable planning, programming and project activities.

HOW SBCAG WILL COORDINATE WITH FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

Coordinate early and directly

- Maintain current contacts for FLMAs with lands, facilities or transportation interests within the SBCAG planning area, using current Caltrans contacts, as appropriate.
- Begin coordination early enough for federal agency plans, transportation needs and priorities to inform applicable regional plans, programs and projects.
- Provide schedules, draft materials and technical information with sufficient time for meaningful review.
- Consider applicable federal land management, transportation and resource plans in regional transportation planning.

Create opportunities for meaningful coordination

- Consult FLMAs at key stages of applicable transportation planning and programming activities.
- Provide opportunities for FLMAs to identify transportation needs, priorities, access considerations and potential projects affecting federal lands.
- Coordinate with FLMAs when transportation projects or programs may affect access to, through or within federal lands.
- Invite FLMA representatives to participate on project advisory or steering committees when appropriate.

Establish and document the consultation process

- Apply the FLMA consultation practices established in this plan separately from general public participation and stakeholder engagement.
- Establish roles, responsibilities and key decision points for initiating, coordinating and documenting FLMA consultation.
- At the outset of applicable plans, programs and projects, identify the appropriate FLMAs to involve and key points for consultation.
- Maintain appropriate records of consultation activities, agency input and how that input was considered.

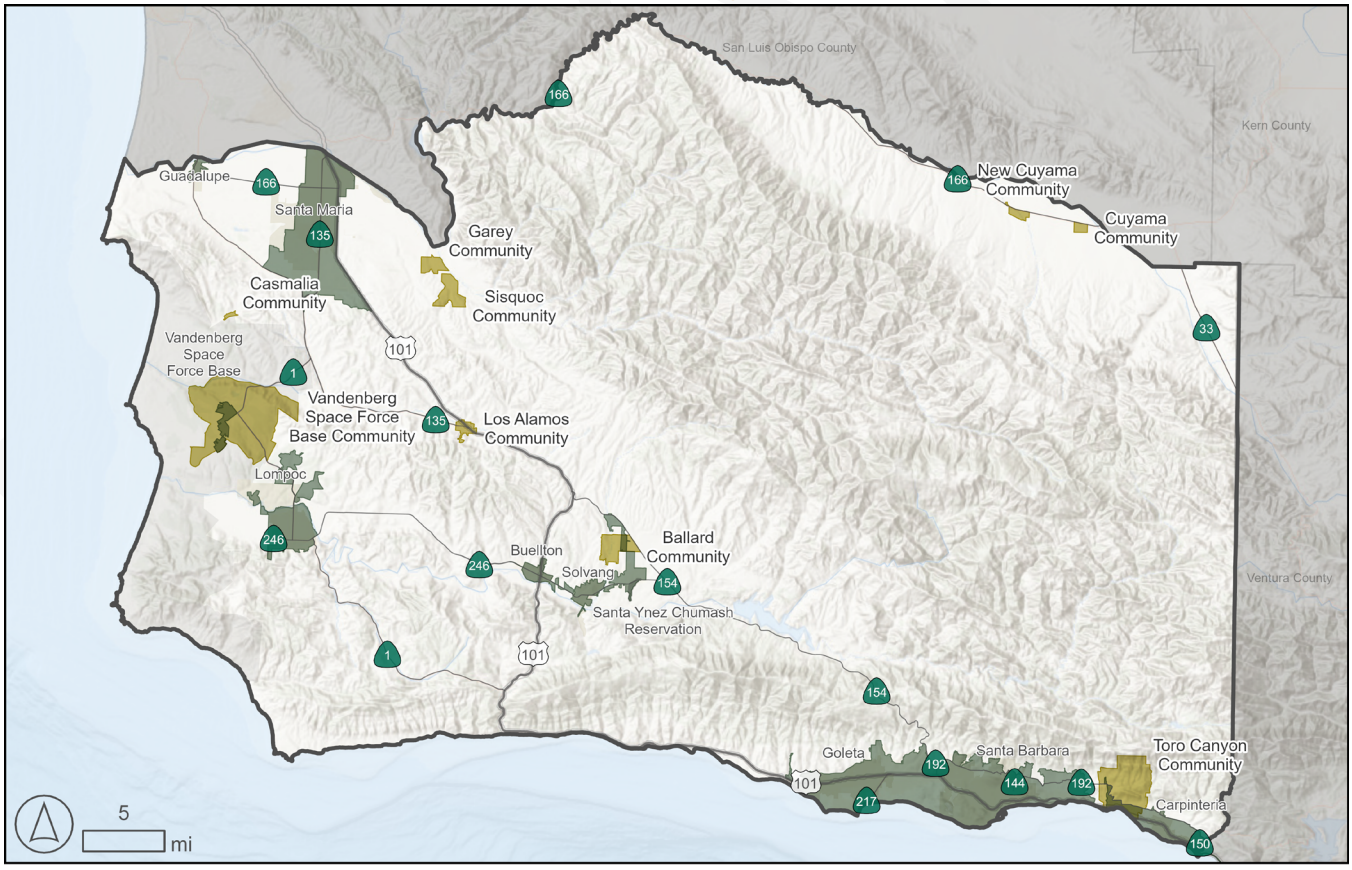
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5.3 Rural Communities

Santa Barbara County includes densely populated urban areas as well as rural communities and large areas of rural territory. According to the 2020 U.S. Census urban and rural classification used in SBCAG's Connected 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, approximately 24,600 people or 5.5% of Santa Barbara County's population, live in areas classified as rural.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines rural territory as all population, housing and territory located outside Census-designated urban areas. Consistent with the Connected 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, the map below identifies Census Designated Places outside the county's urban areas as rural communities. These include Casmalia, Garey, Sisquoc, Los Alamos, Vandenberg Space Force Base, Ballard, New Cuyama, Cuyama and Toro Canyon.

Rural Communities in Santa Barbara County



Sources: SBCAG, 2025; Census, 2023; Caltrans, 2024

Geographic distance, limited transportation options, internet access and other factors can affect how people in rural areas access information and participate in regional transportation planning. SBCAG will consider these factors when planning engagement for programs, plans and projects affecting rural communities.[1]

ENGAGING RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Bring participation opportunities into rural communities when feasible rather than relying solely on meetings in larger population centers.
- Consider travel distances, transportation options and community schedules when selecting meeting locations and times.
- Provide multiple ways to participate, including in-person, online, telephone and other non-digital options as appropriate.
- Work with local organizations, community groups, schools, libraries and other trusted community partners to share information and participation opportunities.
- Consider internet and technology access when selecting communication and engagement methods.
- Coordinate engagement with existing community events and gathering places when appropriate.

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1 *Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Urban and Rural Classification; SBCAG Connected 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, 2025 Update.*

5.4 Youth and Students

Young people make up an important part of Santa Barbara County's population and are current and future users of the region's transportation system. Approximately 22% of Santa Barbara County residents are under age 18 and more than 66,000 students are enrolled in K-12 public schools throughout the county.

Santa Barbara County has 20 public school districts serving communities throughout the county, along with public charter schools, alternative education programs and other educational settings. The Santa Barbara County Education Office maintains a directory of school districts and schools throughout the county, which SBCAG staff can use to identify education partners serving communities affected by a particular plan, program or project. The region is also home to several colleges and universities, including the University of California, Santa Barbara; Santa Barbara City College; Allan Hancock College; and Westmont College.

Youth and students may experience the transportation system differently from adults. Many rely on walking, bicycling, public transit, school transportation or family members to reach school, work and other activities. Traditional public meetings may also be difficult or impractical for younger people to attend.[1]

ENGAGING YOUTH AND STUDENTS

- Identify the school districts, schools, colleges or universities serving the communities affected by a plan, program or project and work with those institutions to reach youth and students when appropriate.
- Bring engagement activities to places where students already gather, including schools, campuses, community events and youth programs, when appropriate.
- Use participation methods that are accessible and engaging for different ages, such as short surveys, interactive activities, mapping exercises and classroom or campus presentations.
- Consider school calendars, class schedules, extracurricular activities and transportation needs when planning youth engagement.
- Provide opportunities for youth and students to participate directly in plans and projects that affect how they travel and access schools, jobs and other destinations.

1 *Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2024 American Community Survey/QuickFacts; Santa Barbara County Education Office, SBCEO At a Glance, 2026; California Department of Education, DataQuest.*

Local resources: Santa Barbara County Education Office School Districts and Schools Directory, sbceo.org; district and school websites; district Local Control and Accountability Plan processes; University of California, Santa Barbara; Santa Barbara City College; Allan Hancock College; Westmont College; and community organizations serving youth and students.



5.5 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Communities

Santa Barbara County is linguistically diverse. Approximately 40% of residents age 5 and older speak a language other than English at home and about 16%, or about 64,000 people, speak English less than "very well." Spanish is the predominant language among residents with limited English proficiency, followed by several Asian and Pacific Island languages.

SBCAG's Title VI Plan also considers California Department of Education English Learner data to identify languages that may not be fully represented in U.S. Census Bureau data. This information identifies Mixteco as an important language among students in Santa Barbara County, particularly in addition to Spanish.

Language can affect whether people are able to learn about transportation decisions, understand technical information and participate meaningfully in the planning process. SBCAG will consider language needs when developing public participation activities and provide language assistance consistent with its Title VI and Limited English Proficiency requirements.



LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY RESIDENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The table below highlights the largest language groups among Santa Barbara County residents with limited English proficiency; additional language groups are identified in SBCAG's 2024 Title VI Plan.

Table 5.1: Languages Spoken by Santa Barbara County Residents with Limited English Proficiency

Language	Speak English Less Than "Very Well"
Spanish	58,687
Chinese, including Mandarin and Cantonese	2,017
Tagalog, including Filipino	1,585
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	1,231
Other and unspecified languages	1,420

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, as reported in SBCAG's 2024 Title VI Plan.

Language needs can vary by community and may change over time. Staff will consider available information about the specific geographic area or community rather than relying solely on countywide statistics when planning engagement.

ENGAGING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY COMMUNITIES

- Review available demographic and language data early in the development of a plan, program or project to identify potential language-assistance needs.
- Consider the geographic area and communities affected rather than relying solely on countywide language statistics.
- Identify potential language-access needs early and budget appropriately for translation, interpretation and other language services, including the use of qualified language-access professionals.

- Provide translated materials and interpretation or other language assistance consistent with SBCAG's Title VI and Limited English Proficiency requirements.
- Use qualified language-access professionals, particularly for public meetings, hearings and other activities where meaningful participation depends on effective communication.
- Work with community organizations, schools, service providers and other trusted partners that serve multilingual communities to identify language needs and share participation opportunities.
- Provide clear information about how to request language assistance.

Staff resource: SBCAG's Title VI Plan and Limited English Proficiency Plan provide the agency's procedures for identifying language needs and providing language assistance. California Department of Education DataQuest provides current English Learner language data that can help identify languages spoken by students and families in Santa Barbara County.

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5.6 Disadvantaged and Low-Income Communities

Federal metropolitan planning requirements call for SBCAG to seek out and consider the needs of people traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including low-income and minority households. State transportation programs may also establish requirements related to disadvantaged and low-income communities, including programs funded through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). See **Appendix A: Federal and State Requirements** for more information.

Disadvantaged and low-income communities may face higher transportation costs relative to income, fewer travel options and greater exposure to pollution and other environmental burdens. People in these communities may also face barriers to participating in planning processes, including work schedules, limited time and limited access to transportation or the internet.

HOW DISADVANTAGED AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES ARE IDENTIFIED

Definitions and methods vary depending on the planning or funding program. Common state definitions include:

- **Disadvantaged communities**, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) designates disadvantaged communities under state law[1] using CalEnviroScreen and other applicable criteria. These designations are used by California Climate Investments and certain other state programs.
- **Low-income communities and households**, State law[2] also establishes definitions for low-income communities and households used by California Climate Investments and certain other programs.

SBCAG also identifies Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities as part of its Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP-SCS). SBCAG's regional methodology uses demographic, socioeconomic and transportation indicators to identify communities experiencing disproportionate burdens that statewide tools may not fully capture.

1 *Health and Safety Code §39711*
2 *Health and Safety Code §39713 (AB 1550)*

SBCAG's 2025 analysis estimates that about 30% of Santa Barbara County residents live in identified EJ Communities. These communities are located throughout the county, including the Santa Maria, Lompoc, Santa Ynez and Cuyama valleys and the South Coast. Over two-thirds, about 72%, of residents identified as living in EJ Communities are in North County. SBCAG's 2025 Environmental Justice Communities regional map provides an interactive view of identified EJ Communities throughout Santa Barbara County.

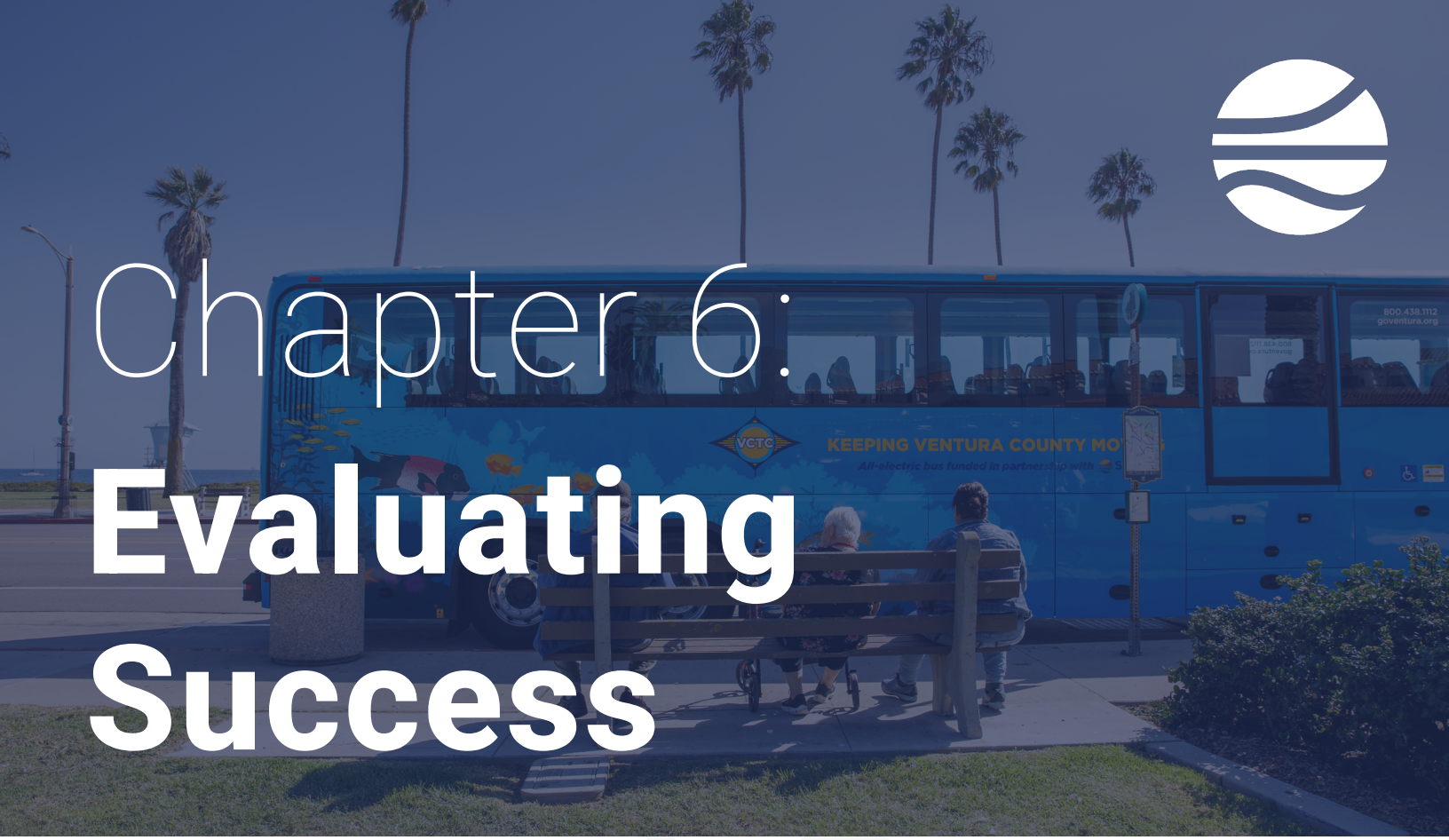
The applicable definition or methodology will depend on the plan, program or funding source. Staff will use definitions required by applicable federal or state requirements and funding programs and may also consider SBCAG's regional EJ Communities analysis and other local data when planning engagement.

ENGAGING DISADVANTAGED AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

- Identify communities early. At the outset of applicable plans, programs and projects, identify disadvantaged and low-income communities in the affected area using current CalEPA and CARB mapping tools and definitions required by the applicable program. SBCAG's regional EJ Communities analysis and other local data may also help identify communities that could face barriers to participation.
- Engage residents and community-based organizations directly to understand transportation needs, priorities and potential impacts, including when engagement is required or encouraged by an applicable funding program.
- Bring engagement to where people already are, such as transit stops and centers, community events, service providers and workplaces, and consider opportunities outside traditional work hours.
- Work with trusted community organizations, service providers and other partners that serve low-income residents. Consider compensating community partners when appropriate and allowable.
- Reduce barriers to participation through strategies such as multilingual materials, non-digital participation options and accessible meeting locations.
- Document engagement and outcomes, including how community needs were identified, how engagement was conducted and how input was considered in planning or project development, consistent with applicable requirements.

Staff resources: SBCAG Regional Environmental Justice Communities map and methodology; CalEPA SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities map; CARB California Climate Investments Priority Populations map and Funding Guidelines; applicable funding program guidelines.

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Chapter 6: Evaluating Success

SBCAG is committed to continuously improving public participation across its planning, programs and project efforts. The principles established in Chapter 3 provide the foundation for evaluating whether public participation is working as intended.

Public participation will be evaluated before, during and after engagement. Evaluation will consider not only how many people participated, but also who participated, whether they were able to participate meaningfully, what was learned and how public input informed the process or outcome.

SBCAG will also periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies in this Plan and use the results to identify opportunities to improve future public participation.

The table on the following page provides examples of quantitative and qualitative metrics for evaluating public participation across five goals. Not every metric will be appropriate for every activity; staff should select measures based on the purpose, audience, scale and level of engagement.

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6.1 Public Participation Evaluation Framework

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Table 4-1: Public Participation Tools

Goal	Guiding Question	Quantitative Metrics	Qualitative Metrics
Reach	Did we reach the people we intended to reach?	# of participants; website visits; social media reach and interactions; households or addresses reached through direct outreach; stakeholder organizations engaged	Public awareness and understanding; whether intended audiences were reached; geographic differences in participation
Representation	Did participation reflect the communities affected by or interested in the decision?	Participant demographics, when collected, compared to relevant population data; geographic distribution; stakeholder groups represented	Missing or underrepresented perspectives; participant perceptions of representation
Accessibility	Did we remove barriers to participation?	Language and accessibility services provided; translated materials; ways to participate offered (in-person, online, phone, survey); accessible meeting locations	Accessibility of meeting times and location; participant-reported barriers; ease of understanding; welcoming environment
Engagement Quality	Was the public engaged meaningfully?	# of participants providing input; # and types of comments/questions; participant satisfaction, when collected	Quality of dialogue; questions or issues identified; participant perceptions of being heard; new ideas or perspectives identified
Outcome	How did public participation inform the process or outcome?	# of revisions informed by public input; # of responses provided; # of comments or recommendations considered; commitments completed	Key themes heard; how input informed decisions or recommendations; communication about how input was used; explanation of why recommendations were or were not incorporated

6.2 Evaluating Before, During and After Engagement

BEFORE

Identify intended audiences, potential barriers, engagement objectives and measures of success.

DURING

Monitor participation, representation, accessibility and emerging issues. Adjust strategies when appropriate.

AFTER

Document what was heard, how input informed the process, what worked and what could be improved.

Evaluation will be proportional to the scale and purpose of the engagement activity. Staff do not need to collect every metric for every activity. Evaluation will help SBCAG identify gaps, demonstrate accountability and improve future engagement.



6.3 Closing the Loop

Closing the loop helps participants understand how their input was considered and what happens next. **SBCAG will communicate, as appropriate to the engagement effort:**

What we heard ⇨ What we did ⇨ Why we did it ⇨ What happens next

Public input will not always result in a change to a plan, project or decision. Clearly communicating how input was considered — including why particular recommendations were or were not incorporated — helps support transparency and accountability.

Closing the loop is also part of an ongoing process of learning and improving future engagement:

Plan ⇨ Engage ⇨ Evaluate ⇨ Learn ⇨ Adapt

What SBCAG learns through evaluation and public feedback will inform the next phase of engagement or future engagement efforts.



Appendix A: **Federal & State Requirements**

ABOUT THIS APPENDIX

SBCAG's public participation responsibilities come from a combination of federal and state laws, regulations and program requirements. The requirements that apply vary depending on the plan, program, project or decision.

This appendix summarizes key requirements applicable to SBCAG's work. The requirements establish minimum public participation, consultation, notice, review and hearing requirements; they do not determine the appropriate level of public participation for every activity. SBCAG will use the principles and strategies in this Plan to determine whether additional engagement is appropriate based on the decision being made, communities affected and opportunities for public input to inform the process.

COMMON PUBLIC NOTICE AND REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The table on the following page provides a quick reference to minimum public notice, review and hearing requirements for common SBCAG processes. Requirements may vary based on the activity and applicable law, regulation or program. Meeting a minimum requirement does not determine the appropriate level of public participation. Staff should use the principles and strategies in this Plan to determine whether additional engagement is appropriate.

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Table A-1: DRAFT Quick Guide to Minimum Public Notice, Review and Hearing Requirements

Process	Minimum Public Process	Timing/Notice	Primary Authority
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Provide an opportunity for public comment before adopting an initial or revised PPP.	Minimum 45-day public comment period before initial adoption or revision.	23 CFR §450.316(a)(3)
Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP-SCS)	Provide public notice and opportunities for review and comment throughout development. For the SCS, conduct required workshops and public hearings and release the draft for public review.	Federal: No specific minimum public review period. State/SCS: for SBCAG as a single-county MPO: at least one workshop and two public hearings on the SCS; draft SCS released at least 55 days before RTP adoption. Federal RTP participation requirements also apply.	23 CFR §450.316; Gov. Code §65080(b)(2)(F); Caltrans RTP Guidelines
Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) development and amendments	Provide adequate public notice and reasonable opportunity for public review and comment. Consider and respond to public input as applicable. Administrative modifications do not require public review and comment.	No universal federal minimum number of days. Provide reasonable time for public review and comment consistent with this Plan and applicable requirements.	23 CFR §450.316, 450.326 and 450.328
FTA Section 5307 Program of Projects	Publish the proposed program so affected individuals, private transportation providers and local elected officials can examine and comment; provide an opportunity for a public hearing; consider comments; make the final program public.	No universal federal minimum number of days. The process may be coordinated with the FTIP public participation process when applicable.	49 U.S.C. §5307(b)

Table A-1: DRAFT Quick Guide to Minimum Public Notice, Review and Hearing Requirements *Continued*

Process	Minimum Public Process	Timing/Notice	Primary Authority
Clean Air Express fare increase or major service reduction	Solicit and consider public comment before implementing a fare increase or major reduction in transportation service.	No specific federal minimum notice period. Follow SBCAG's applicable public participation procedures and any adopted Clean Air Express policies.	49 U.S.C. §5307(c)(1)(I)
Transportation Development Act — Unmet Transit Needs	Conduct at least one public hearing to receive testimony on unmet transit needs and use other required consultation mechanisms.	Public hearing notice at least 30 days in advance, including required publication and notification.	PUC §§99238.5, 99401.5
Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)	Conduct a public participation process in developing the methodology used to distribute the region's housing need among jurisdictions, including a public hearing on the proposed methodology. Provide opportunities for jurisdictions and interested parties to participate as required during development and adoption of the allocation plan.	Provide public participation and access during development of the allocation methodology and drafting and adoption of the RHNA. Publish and distribute the proposed methodology and conduct at least one public hearing to receive oral and written comments. No specific minimum public comment period identified. Follow the statutory RHNA schedule, including applicable notice, appeal and hearing requirements.	Gov. Code §§65584.04–65584.05

Table A-1: DRAFT Quick Guide to Minimum Public Notice, Review and Hearing Requirements *Continued*

Process	Minimum Public Process	Timing/Notice	Primary Authority
Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) adoption and amendments	Develop and consider the ALUCP through the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) public process. Establish the airport influence area after hearing and consultation with involved agencies. ALUCP adoption and amendments are considered by SBCAG acting as the ALUC at a public meeting.	No separate state or federal minimum public review period identified for ALUCP adoption or amendment. Follow applicable Brown Act notice requirements and any applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.	Public Utilities Code §§21670–21679.5, including §21675; California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook
Measure A Program of Projects	Each local jurisdiction holds a public hearing before adopting its five-year Program of Projects. SBCAG holds a noticed public hearing before adopting the programs submitted by the local jurisdictions.	SBCAG holds a public hearing before approving the annual Measure A Program of Projects. Annually. Follow applicable public hearing notice and Brown Act requirements.	Measure A Ordinance, §18
Measure A Ordinance and Investment Plan amendments	Consider the amendment through the applicable subregional process, as required. Hold a formal, noticed public hearing before adoption and consider the ordinance amendment at two SBCAG Board meetings. Final adoption requires a two-thirds vote of the SBCAG Board acting as the Local Transportation Authority.	Public hearing notice published for 10 days pursuant to Government Code §6062. Following adoption and required notice to specified agencies, the amendment becomes effective after 45 days, subject to the applicable appeal process.	Measure A Ordinance, §§17 and 21; California Public Utilities Code §180207

Table A-1: DRAFT Quick Guide to Minimum Public Notice, Review and Hearing Requirements *Continued*

Process	Minimum Public Process	Timing/Notice	Primary Authority
CEQA — Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)	Provide notice and make the Draft EIR available for public review and comment.	Generally at least 30 days; generally 45 days when submitted to the State Clearinghouse for state agency review.	PRC §§21091, 21092; CEQA Guidelines §§15087, 15105
CEQA — Negative Declaration/Mitigated Negative Declaration	Provide notice and make the proposed document and Initial Study available for public review and comment.	Generally at least 20 days; generally 30 days when submitted to the State Clearinghouse for state agency review.	PRC §§21091, 21092; CEQA Guidelines §§15072-15073, 15105
Regular SBCAG Board and Brown Act-covered committee meetings	Post an agenda identifying the agency's business to be considered and provide required opportunities for public participation.	At least 72 hours before a regular meeting.	Gov. Code §54954.2
Special SBCAG Board and Brown Act-covered committee meetings	Post and provide notice identifying the agency's business to be considered.	At least 24 hours before a special meeting.	Gov. Code §54956

Program- and Funding-Specific Requirements

The table above summarizes recurring public notice, review and hearing requirements for key SBCAG processes. Additional requirements may apply to specific projects, programs or funding sources and may change as program guidelines are updated. These may include requirements associated with federal and state transportation funding programs, transit programs, environmental review or other project-specific approvals. Staff should identify applicable requirements during project or program scoping and confirm current requirements with the appropriate program lead or funding agency..

FEDERAL METROPOLITAN PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Santa Barbara County, SBCAG must maintain a documented public participation process that provides reasonable opportunities for interested parties to participate in metropolitan transportation planning and decision-making.

Under 23 CFR §450.316, SBCAG's participation process must provide adequate public notice and sufficient time for public review and comment at key decision points; timely access to information; accessible public meetings; visualization and electronic information; explicit consideration of and response to public input; and additional opportunities for comment when certain significant changes raise new material issues. SBCAG must also seek out and consider the needs of people traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems and periodically evaluate the effectiveness of its participation procedures.

These federal requirements apply to development of SBCAG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). In California, the RTP also includes a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) developed pursuant to state law; additional state public participation requirements for the SCS are summarized below. When significant comments are received on draft plans or programs, applicable federal requirements also call for the final document to summarize and analyze those comments and describe how they were addressed.

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CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION REQUIREMENTS

Federal metropolitan planning requirements also require SBCAG to coordinate and consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation. These may include planning related to growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations and freight movement.

When applicable, SBCAG must appropriately involve Indian Tribal governments and Federal Land Management Agencies in development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). To the extent practicable, SBCAG must maintain a documented consultation process that identifies roles, responsibilities and key decision points for consultation. Chapter 5 provides additional information about SBCAG's approach to Tribal and Federal Land Management Agency consultation.

CIVIL RIGHTS, ACCESSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE ACCESS

SBCAG's public participation activities are subject to applicable federal civil rights and accessibility requirements. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. SBCAG will provide meaningful opportunities for participation and meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency consistent with applicable requirements and SBCAG's Title VI Program and Limited English Proficiency Plan.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act establish disability nondiscrimination and accessibility requirements applicable to SBCAG programs and activities. SBCAG will provide people with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate, including reasonable modifications, auxiliary aids and services, effective communication and accessible information as required.

State Planning and Public Participation Requirements

California law establishes additional public participation, consultation, public notice and meeting requirements that apply to specific SBCAG plans, programs and responsibilities. These requirements supplement the federal metropolitan planning requirements described above and vary depending on the activity. Key state requirements applicable to SBCAG's work are summarized below, with minimum public notice, review and hearing requirements identified in **Table A-1.**

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

California law requires each Metropolitan Planning Organization to prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as part of its Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Government Code § 65080 establishes specific public participation requirements for development of the SCS, including public workshops and public hearings. These state requirements supplement the federal public participation requirements that apply to development of the RTP. **Table A-1** summarizes the minimum public process requirements applicable to SBCAG.

REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION

State law requires SBCAG, as the Council of Governments for Santa Barbara County, to conduct a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process that distributes the region's housing need among local jurisdictions. Government Code §§ 65584 et seq. establish requirements for public participation in development of the allocation methodology and provide opportunities for local jurisdictions and the public to participate in the allocation and appeals process. **Table A-1** summarizes the minimum public process requirements applicable to SBCAG.

TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT ACT — UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS

The Transportation Development Act (TDA) establishes public participation requirements related to the allocation of certain Local Transportation Fund revenues. As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Santa Barbara County, SBCAG conducts an annual Unmet Transit Needs process that includes

consultation and a public hearing to receive testimony on transit needs. SBCAG must make findings regarding unmet transit needs before certain TDA funds may be allocated for non-transit purposes. **Table A-1** summarizes the minimum public process requirements applicable to SBCAG.

AIRPORT LAND USE PLANNING

California law establishes requirements for airport land use commissions and airport land use compatibility planning. SBCAG serves as the Airport Land Use Commission for Santa Barbara County and is responsible for preparing and maintaining airport land use compatibility plans consistent with the State Aeronautics Act. Adoption and amendment of these plans are subject to applicable public meeting and environmental review requirements. **Table A-1** summarizes the minimum public process requirements applicable to SBCAG.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes environmental review and public participation requirements for certain public agency actions. Depending on the type of environmental document, CEQA may require public notice and an opportunity to review and comment before an agency takes action. SBCAG must consider comments received during applicable CEQA review processes and comply with applicable notice and review requirements. **Table A-1** summarizes minimum public review periods for draft Environmental Impact Reports and Negative Declarations or Mitigated Negative Declarations.

RALPH M. BROWN ACT

The Ralph M. Brown Act establishes open-meeting requirements for California local legislative bodies, including requirements for public notice, agendas, public access to meetings and opportunities for public comment. SBCAG Board and committee meetings subject to the Brown Act must comply with applicable meeting and notice requirements. **Table A-1** summarizes the minimum agenda-posting requirements for regular and special meetings.

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MEASURE A TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT PLAN

Measure A is Santa Barbara County's voter-approved transportation sales tax measure administered by SBCAG acting as the Local Transportation Authority. The Measure A Ordinance and Investment Plan establish public process requirements for certain actions, including approval of the annual regional Program of Projects and amendments to the Ordinance and Investment Plan. **Table A-1** summarizes the applicable minimum public hearing and notice requirements.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL CONSULTATION

California law establishes Tribal consultation requirements for certain plans, projects and environmental review processes. These requirements may apply to SBCAG activities in addition to federal requirements for consultation with Indian Tribal governments. **Chapter 5** describes SBCAG's approach to Tribal consultation, and applicable state requirements should be identified during project or plan scoping.

Changes in Requirements and Guidance

Federal and state laws, regulations, program guidelines and funding requirements may change during the life of this Plan. SBCAG will follow current applicable requirements and update its public participation practices as appropriate. Where a current legal or program requirement differs from information summarized in this appendix, the current requirement governs.

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Appendix B: **Common Stakeholders**

The appropriate stakeholders for a public participation effort will vary based on its purpose, geography, communities and potential impacts. The categories below provide a starting point for identifying potential audiences and are not intended to be exhaustive. Not every category will be relevant to every effort.

Stakeholder contact information is maintained separately from this Plan so it can be updated as organizations, representatives and community relationships change. Staff should draw from existing agency contacts, project- and program-specific relationships and resources available through the Government Affairs and Public Information Division when identifying stakeholders for engagement.

Table B-1 provides common stakeholder categories and examples for staff to consider when identifying audiences for public participation.

Table B-1: Common Stakeholder Categories

Stakeholder Category	Examples
Community Members and Organizations	Residents; neighborhood and community associations; civic organizations; and individuals or groups interested in or affected by a planning, program or project effort
Transportation Users and Providers	Pedestrians; bicyclists; transit and rail riders; motorists; people with disabilities; transit operators and employees; transportation agency employees; private transportation providers; freight shippers and carriers; and others who use or provide transportation services.
Local, Regional and Public Agencies	Cities; County of Santa Barbara; transit agencies; neighboring transportation planning agencies; school districts; public works and planning departments; and other public agencies affected by or interested in the planning effort
State and Federal Agencies	Caltrans; California Highway Patrol (CHP); Federal Land Management Agencies; state and federal transportation agencies; resource and environmental agencies; and other agencies with responsibilities relevant to the planning effort

Table B-1: Common Stakeholder Categories *Continued*

Stakeholder Category	Examples
Tribal Governments and Native American Communities	Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians; other California Native American Tribes, as applicable; and Native American organizations and communities relevant to the planning effort
Business, Economic and Institutional Interests	Businesses and employers; chambers of commerce and business associations; major employment centers; educational institutions; health care providers; property owners; and organizations representing economic or commercial interests
Community-Serving and Advocacy Organizations	Social service providers; nonprofit organizations; organizations serving older adults, people with disabilities, low-income communities, immigrants and people with limited English proficiency; housing organizations; health and human service organizations; and other advocacy groups relevant to the planning effort
Elected Officials and Advisory Bodies	SBCAG Board members; city council members; County supervisors; state and federal elected officials; SBCAG advisory committee members; and members of other relevant boards, commissions and advisory committees
Media and Communications Partners	Local news media; Spanish-language and other multilingual media; community and neighborhood publications; public information officers; and other communications partners that can help share information with affected communities
Other Interested Parties	Individuals, organizations, agencies or groups with an interest in or potentially affected by the planning, program or project effort that are not otherwise reflected above

Appendix C: **Practitioner Resources**

The following resources provide additional guidance and practical tools that may assist SBCAG staff in planning and carrying out public participation activities. Resources are provided for reference and may be updated or supplemented as practices, technology and federal or state guidance change.

Table C-1 provides resources staff may use when preparing public information, planning engagement activities and supporting accessible participation.

Table C-1: Public Participation Resources

Resource	How it Can Help
International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) — Spectrum of Public Participation - Spectrum of Public Participation	Framework for identifying and communicating the public's role and level of influence in a decision-making process.
Sherry R. Arnstein - A Ladder of Citizen Participation	Foundational framework for considering levels of public influence and power in participation processes.
U.S. Department of Transportation — Public Involvement and Plain Language Resources • Plain Language Checklist • Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making (2022)	Provides a practical checklist for writing clear, understandable public-facing information, including organization, word choice, sentence structure and document design.
Federal Highway Administration — Low-Literacy and Limited-English-Proficiency Engagement Guide	Provides practical strategies for involving people with low literacy and limited English proficiency in transportation decision-making.
CalHR — Language Identification Guide	Helps individuals identify the language they speak so staff can determine appropriate language-assistance needs.

Table C-1: Public Participation Resources *Continued*

Resource	How it Can Help
Federal Communications Commission — National Broadband Map	Shows broadband availability by location and can help staff consider internet access when selecting online and in-person engagement approaches.
Institute for Local Government — Public Meeting Resources • Dealing with a Grandstander • Dealing with Emotional Audiences	Provides practical guidance for facilitating public meetings and responding constructively when discussions become challenging or emotionally charged.
U.S. Department of Justice — ADA Requirements: Effective Communication	Provides practical guidance on communicating effectively with people with disabilities, including auxiliary aids and services and considerations for different communication needs.

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Appendix D: **Public Input Received During Plan Development**

This appendix will document the public and stakeholder participation conducted during development of the Public Participation Plan, including input received through the public participation survey, stakeholder engagement and the formal public review period. It will summarize key themes and describe how input was considered in development of the final plan.

[PLACEHOLDER: Complete following the public review period. Include a summary of participation activities, survey and stakeholder input, public comments received during the formal review period and how input was considered in the final Public Participation Plan.]

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