



Sustainable Communities Strategy

Overview

The Sustainable Communities Strategy aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by integrating planning for transportation and land use and housing. Required by SB 375, a state law approved in 2008, the Sustainable Communities Strategy will be developed in close collaboration with local elected officials and community leaders.

Sustainable Communities Strategy Basics

- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in 18 regions across California need to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- The Strategy must identify specific areas in the nine-county Bay Area to accommodate the entire region's projected population growth, including all income groups, for at least the next 25 years.
- The Strategy must try to achieve targeted reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks.
- The Strategy will reflect the "Three E" goals of sustainability: Economy, Environment and Equity, by establishing targets or benchmarks for measuring our progress toward achieving these goals.

Development of the SCS

- MTC, as the Bay Area's MPO, and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the region's Council of Governments, will develop the SCS in partnership with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission.
- The four regional agencies will team with local governments, county congestion management agencies, public transit agencies, interested

residents, stakeholders and community groups to ensure that all those with a stake in the outcome are actively involved in the Strategy's preparation.

- MTC must adopt the SCS as part of its next Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Bay Area, which is due in 2013. State and federal law require that everything in the plan must be consistent with the SCS, including local land use plans.
- State law requires that the SCS must also be consistent with the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). ABAG administers RHNA, which ABAG will adopt at the same time that MTC adopts the RTP. Local governments will then have another 18 months to update their housing elements; related zoning changes must follow within three years.

SCS Benefits

- Since over 40% of the Bay Area's emissions come from cars and light trucks, integrating land uses (jobs, stores, schools, homes, etc.) and encouraging more complete communities will become an important strategy to reduce the Bay Area's auto trips.
- Clustering more homes, jobs and other activities around transit can make it easier to make trips by foot, bicycle or public transit.
- Planning land uses and transportation together can help improve the vitality and quality of life for our communities, while improving public health.

How do I get involved?

- Ongoing public and local government engagement has begun and will continue through 2013. For more information on how you can get involved, go to www.OneBayArea.org.






SCHEDULE OF MILESTONES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

This schedule documents both past achievements and upcoming deadlines and decision points. This schedule will be posted on OneBayArea.org and will be updated as the Sustainable Communities Strategy unfolds in more detail. This schedule does not include the many sub-regional and stakeholder meetings which continue to occur every week.

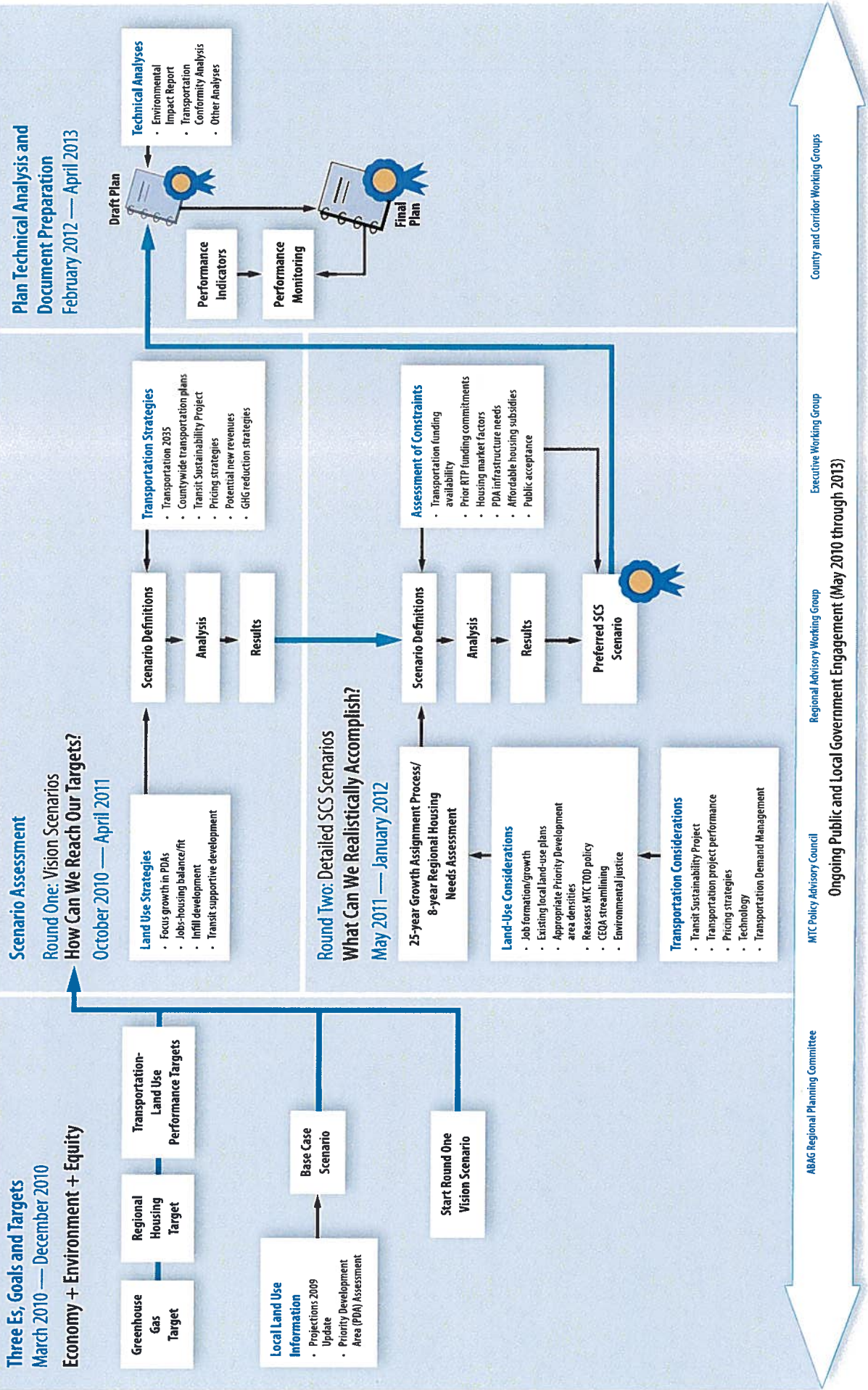
Date	Event
September 30, 2008	SB 375 becomes law
September 30, 2009	State-wide RTAC recommends methodology for establishing regional greenhouse-gas targets to CARB
December 16, 2009	All four regional agencies complete adoption of implementation policies
March 10, 2010	Regional public workshop to review RTAC methodology for GHG-target-setting and to assess Bay Area GHG-target options
April 22, 2010	Sustainable Communities Strategy kickoff event: <i>Bay Area 2010: The Future Begins Today</i> , Oakland Marriott Hotel
April 28, 2010	First meeting of Regional Advisory Working Group (local planners and regional stakeholders)
May 12, 2010	CARB workshop on GHG Targets (Sacramento)
May 25, 2010	Second meeting of Regional Advisory Working Group
June 7, 2010	First meeting of Executive Working Group (regional agency executive directors, CMA directors, representative city managers)
June 30, 2010	CARB releases draft regional greenhouse-gas targets
July 6, 2010	Third meeting of Regional Advisory Working Group
August 3, 2010	Fourth meeting of the Regional Advisory Working Group
September 7, 2010	Fifth meeting of the Regional Advisory Working Group
September 10, 2010	MTC Planning Committee to provide final comments on GHG targets
September 22, 2010	MTC to take final action on recommendation to CARB on GHG targets

September 30, 2010	CARB releases final regional greenhouse-gas targets
October 1, 2010	Completion of initial Leadership Roundtable meetings by county
November 4, 2010	Sixth meeting of the Regional Advisory Working Group
November 2010	Regional agencies release method for determining 25-year housing targets
Late 2010	Define/Adopt SCS Performance Targets
December 3, 2010	Seventh meeting of the Regional Advisory Working Group
Late 2010	Define first round of SCS "land use" scenarios
February 2011	County/Corridor group review
Jan – March 2011	Define/Adopt SCS Performance Indicators
May 2011	Define SCS "land use" scenario
July 2011	Release Proposed RHNA Method
August 2011	County/Corridor group review
September 2011	Written public comments on SCS "land use" scenario and projections
September 2011	Adopt Final RHNA Methodology
November 2011	Adopt RHNA Draft Allocation
Early 2012	Regional agencies release first draft of SCS
March 2012	County/Corridor group review
September 2012	Adoption of Final RHNA Allocation
Mid- to late-2012	Prepare Draft EIR and Final Draft SCS/RTP
Late 2012	Regional agencies release Final Draft SCS/RTP and Draft EIR for public review
Early 2013	Three formal public hearings
Early 2013	Prepare final SCS, RTP and EIR
March 2013	Regional agencies adopt SCS/RTP and RHNA
June 2013	CARB certifies SCS
June 2013	HCD Adopts RHNA Allocation

*CARB: California Air Resources Board
 *EIR: Environmental Impact Report
 *GHG: Greenhouse Gas
 *RTAC: Regional Target Advisory Committee
 *RAWG: Regional Advisory Working Group
 *RHNA: Regional Housing Needs Allocation
 *RTP: Regional Transportation Plan

GHG Targets	
Meetings and Local Jurisdiction Input	
SCS Draft and Adoption	

Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS): Planning Process



OneBayArea

Sustainable Communities Strategy

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Sustainable Communities Strategy?

The Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) is an integrated land use and transportation plan that all metropolitan regions in California must complete under Senate Bill 375. In the San Francisco Bay Area this integration includes ABAG's Projections and Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and MTC's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

What will the SCS do?

State law requires that the SCS accomplish three principal objectives:

1. Identify areas to accommodate all the region's population associated with Bay Area economic growth, including all income groups, for at least the next twenty-five years;
2. Develop a Regional Transportation Plan that meets the needs of the region; and
3. Reduce greenhouse-gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks.

In responding to these three state mandates, the SCS will also need to be responsive to a host of other regional and local quality-of-life concerns.

What size of population will the SCS need to accommodate?

The Bay Area currently has 7.3 million people. Over the next twenty-five years it is expected to grow by about another two million; this additional growth is equivalent to approximately five times the current population of the City of Oakland.

What are the greenhouse-gas reduction targets?

On August 9, 2010, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) staff proposed a seven percent reduction target for 2020 and a fifteen percent reduction target for 2035 for the Bay Area. These targets are based on per capita greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles relative to 2005. Final greenhouse gas (GHG) targets will be adopted by ARB on September 23, 2010.

Who will prepare the SCS?

Within the Bay Area, the law gives joint responsibility for the SCS to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). The two agencies will work with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District

(the Air District) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). They will also partner with local governments, county congestion management agencies and a wide range of stakeholders to ensure broad public input in the SCS's preparation.

How will the SCS affect local land-use control?

SB 375 does not alter the authority of city and county governments to make decisions about local land use and development. However, the law does require that the SCS be consistent with the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and therefore affects the next iteration of housing elements in local general plans.

How does the SCS relate to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and RHNA?

Regional Transportation Plans include land use projections. The SCS will be the land use allocation in the next RTP, slated for adoption in March 2013. SB 375 stipulates that the SCS will incorporate an 8-year housing projection and allocation pursuant to RHNA.

Aside from the RHNA requirement, why would local governments want to conform to the SCS?

1. To benefit from incentives that will be available to conforming localities—for example, Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) funding, Station Area Planning Grants, investments from the Regional Transportation Plan, and assistance in meeting the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
2. To improve the quality of life of our neighborhoods by providing cleaner air, improved public health, better mobility, more walkable streets, and homes closer to transit, jobs, and services.

Why the emphasis on automobiles and light trucks?

Transportation is the largest single source of greenhouse gases in California. In the Bay Area, it accounts for 41 percent of our emissions, and over three quarters of these come from personal travel in on-road vehicles. If we are to significantly reduce our contribution to global warming, then we need to reduce the impact of our travel within the region. The SCS aims to reduce emissions by:

- Reducing the separation of land uses (jobs, stores, schools, and homes) and encouraging more complete, mixed-use communities, so people can drive less and increase their walking, biking, and use of transit;
- Clustering more homes, jobs and other activities around transit, so people will be encouraged to take transit rather than drive; and
- Planning land uses and transportation together, so we can manage traffic congestion and vehicle speeds, reducing emissions from excessive idling and other inefficiencies.

Land use development changes very slowly and many places will not change much. How much difference can the SCS really make?

We acknowledge that it will likely be decades before changes in the land use pattern make an appreciable difference to the total emissions from personal vehicles. Improvements in vehicle technology and transportation pricing mechanisms (e.g., parking) are likely to have a greater impact, both in the short and longer term. However, the impact of more efficient vehicles could be significantly reduced if the amount we drive and congestion continue to increase because of inefficient land uses. There is a broad consensus that there isn't just one thing that we should do; we will need to move on all fronts. Changes in technology will have to be accompanied by changes in travel behavior if we are have any hope of reducing emissions to the levels required by the middle of this century. If we are to be successful in reconfiguring the region by 2050 or so, we need to start now.

While we implement the long-term land-use changes, is there anything we can do that will have more immediate impact?

Yes. The state law which requires an SCS allows us to use transportation measures and policies. These might include road pricing (new and increased tolls), parking regulations, and incentives to accelerate the adoption of alternative vehicles like electric cars, among others.

The extraordinarily high gas prices in 2008 demonstrated that an increase in the cost of driving had an immediate effect on travel patterns: fewer people drove, while more took transit. However, while transportation pricing policies could be powerful and fast-acting measures, the impact on people's pocketbooks will be politically contentious and difficult to implement. In addition, the equity consequences could be particularly challenging: we do not want to make life more unaffordable for those who are already struggling. If we increase the costs of driving, we need to supply land use and transportation choices so people have a genuine ability to avoid or mitigate those costs.

What are some of the other regional efforts related to the SCS?

The Air District and BCDC are developing policies and regulations that will affect the region's land use pattern and placement of public infrastructure, including transportation.

In its effort to control local and regional air pollution (smog, particulate matter, and airborne toxins), the Air District is considering an indirect source rule (ISR) that regulates the construction and long-term transportation impacts of land development. The ISR may require mitigation or payments in lieu of development that increases automobile travel and vehicle emissions. The Air District also recently adopted new thresholds for the evaluation of development projects under CEQA.

BCDC will be releasing an adaptation plan to prepare for inevitable sea-level rise and storm surges affecting areas on and near the Bay shoreline. This will have implications for the location of future development and perhaps for the relocation of existing development and infrastructure. The SCS needs to consider this adaptation work.

What if the SCS is not able to meet its targets?

If we cannot meet the greenhouse-gas reduction targets in the SCS, then we must prepare an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) to accompany the SCS. The APS will be structured like the SCS, but it is an unconstrained plan that does not have to be as feasible or achievable as the SCS, since it would not be adopted as part of the RTP. The APS would identify the physical, economic, or political conditions required to meet the regional greenhouse gas targets. The APS may provide some CEQA streamlining to housing or mixed-use development projects which are consistent with certain aspects of its land use pattern.

What type of CEQA assistance might be provided through the SCS or APS?

The CEQA relief to be provided through the SCS or APS could include the following:

1. Residential or mixed use projects that comply with the general use designation, density, building intensity and other policies specified for the project area in the SCS will not be required to deal with growth-inducing impacts or transportation-related project-specific or cumulative impacts on global warming or on the regional transportation network required by CEQA.
2. Transit priority projects, which meet a number of land use, density and location criteria as well as including high-quality transit might be totally exempt from CEQA or might qualify for a streamlined review called a sustainable communities environmental assessment.

The SCS sounds like a big project. Are we starting from scratch?

Thankfully, we are not. For over a decade, the Bay Area has been encouraging more focused and compact growth to help revitalize older communities, develop complete communities, reduce travel time and expense, make better use of the existing transportation system, control the costs of providing new infrastructure, protect resource land and environmental assets, promote affordability, and generally improve the quality of life for all Bay Area residents. Reducing greenhouse-gas emissions just provides another reason to continue and accelerate these ongoing efforts.

Responding to the regional agencies' FOCUS program, over sixty local governments have voluntarily designated over 120 Priority Development Areas (PDAs). Located within existing urbanized areas and served by high-quality public transit, PDAs consume only about three percent of the region's land area but are being planned by their local jurisdictions to house nearly one-half of the region's projected population growth to the year 2035. FOCUS PDAs and associated incentive programs like TLC – which has reached its 10-year anniversary – provide a solid foundation upon which to build the SCS.

How much time do we have to complete the Sustainable Communities Strategy?

According to the State, the Bay Area's SCS is due in March 2013. However, a draft SCS needs to be completed by the beginning of 2012 so it can guide the investments in the transportation plan, to ensure consistency with the eight-year RHNA, and make sure that environmental impact documents are completed in time to allow sufficient public review. We will receive our final greenhouse-gas targets from the California Air Resources Board in September 2010. That leaves less than a year and a half to work with all our partners to actually produce the SCS.

Over the next few months, we will build the necessary analytic tools, strengthen partnerships with local governments and other stakeholders, and work out the information and engagement mechanisms to make the process transparent and worthy of public support.

Who should we contact with questions?

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- Joe LaClair, BCDC, (415) 352-3656, joel@bcdca.gov

