

Strategic Growth Council (SGC) Meeting Minutes



November 7, 2012 Meeting Minutes **DRAFT**

Council Members present: Chair Ken Alex, Director, OPR; Vice-Chair Bob Fisher, Public Member; Secretary John Laird, California Natural Resources Agency; Secretary Matt Rodriguez, California Environmental Protection Agency; Secretary Diana Dooley, California Health and Human Services Agency; Secretary Brian Kelly, California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (*partial meeting*), Deputy Secretary Brian Annis, California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (*partial meeting*).

Call to Order

Chair Alex called the meeting to order.

Approve May 7, 2012 Minutes (Action Item)

Secretary Laird moved to approve the minutes. Secretary Rodriguez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Introductions of New Staff

Chair Alex introduced new SGC Executive Director (ED) Mike McCoy. Mr. McCoy was most recently the Founding Director of the Urban Land Use and Transportation Center (ULTRANS) at the University of California, Davis.

ED McCoy introduced the new SGC Deputy Director, Allison Joe. Ms. Joe most recently served as Senior Planner at the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

Secretary Laird introduced Ann Chan as the new Deputy Secretary for Climate Change and Energy at the Natural Resources Agency.

Agenda Item: Executive Report

ED McCoy spoke about his vision and goals for the SGC's coming year, including: 1) continue grant programs; 2) seek innovative ways for the state to bring more funding to locals and regions, 3) identify grant funds that the state could bundle together to encourage an integrated approach to planning; 4) examine how the state spends money on infrastructure (local & statewide) and explore opportunities to ensure that this spending fulfills the goals of AB 32 and SB 375; 5) bring state agencies together over joint planning exercises.

Agenda Item – Comments from the Chair and Council

Vice-Chair Fisher provided an update on the progress of the Barriers to Infill Development project (Strategic Plan Action Item 2). Access to infrastructure financing is the largest single barrier to infill development, and as of the previous Council Meeting it seemed that the some legislative action might address this issue, but the bill was vetoed by the Governor. Vice-Chair Fisher stated that he will continue to track the state of

future finance legislation with stakeholder's input in mind, and he expressed his hope that something regarding infrastructure financing will happen in the next legislative session.

Vice-Chair Fisher also stated that OPR has begun its process to update the General Plan Guidelines, which he hopes and expects will have a positive impact on infill. He expressed his plans to work with OPR staff as the guidelines are developed.

Vice-Chair Fisher also stated that because underperforming schools and poor school facilities are a factor that dampens demand for infill housing, he is exploring the benefits of better coordinating the planning and public processes of school districts and regional land use and transportation planning agencies. This effort feeds into the ongoing collaboration between the California Department of Education, the Strategic Growth Council, and others.

Vice-Chair Fisher reported that he recently convened an environmental justice stakeholders meeting, and he expressed his thanks to those who contributed.

Chair Alex provided an update regarding early mitigation planning in relation to High Speed Rail. High Speed Rail is the biggest infrastructure project in the state, and it seems like an excellent place to try to take on some of the challenges that early mitigation planning has faced. Chair Alex reiterated that it is a work in progress, and he stated that staff across a few agencies is trying to identify the issues that need resolution to make the program possible.

Secretary Rodriquez provided an update regarding the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen), which is intended to identify disadvantaged communities in California. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment just concluded a series of workshops on the tool. CalEnviroScreen is important to Cal/EPA because part of the agency's mission is to work on environmental justice issues, and they determined that a key step is to identify those communities where there should be focused efforts. Cal/EPA plans to use the tool for their own purposes, but Secretary Rodriquez added that he would also like to bring the tool to the Strategic Growth Council because it could help with some of the Council's work.

Agenda Item: Overview of Transportation Funding in California

Secretary Kelly provided an overview of transportation finance and highlighted some of the opportunities to enhance sustainability in California's transportation sector.

Secretary Kelly provided an overview of transportation in California. He stated that California operates a complex, multimodal transportation system with significant infrastructure investment in all modes. California's transportation system is the largest, most complex, and most decentralized of any state transportation system in the country. Secretary Kelly then spoke about some of the finance issues and challenges that the agency faces as they expand sustainability in the sector. These challenges include spending prioritization, legal restrictions to how various revenue sources are used, and insufficient revenues for identified transportation needs.

Secretary Kelly reported that Caltrans has undertaken a series of initiatives to improve energy efficiency, increase sustainability, and reduce the reliance on carbon-based energy. These efforts include solar rooftops, LED lighting, tire recycling, rail ridership, vehicle fleet greening, and increased coordinated planning.

Secretary Kelly's slides are posted at <http://www.sgc.ca.gov/meetings/20121107/>.

Agenda Item: Report on 2009 Modeling Incentive Awards

Kome Ajise, Deputy Director of Planning and Modal Programs at Caltrans, introduced the report on the 2009 Modeling Incentive Awards. Deputy Director Ajise gave a brief background on the program and stated that the report fulfills a bond accountability requirement. He stated that to date, 13 out of the 18 MPOs have fully expended the SGC funds to upgrade their models. The remaining five are showing progress and have re-appropriated their funds. Deputy Director Ajise introduced speakers representing three award recipients to speak further about their work funded by these SGC awards. More complete progress reports are included in the written staff report.

Gary Gallegos, Executive Director of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), reported on the \$400,000 award they received, which they used to leverage additional funds. The award was used in three areas: 1) They expanded and improved how they use GIS in their new activity-based model, which is in the calibration stage and will be used for their next RTP/SCS update; 2) By conducting a focused cross-border travel survey, they improved their model's consideration of how the region's transportation interacts with Mexico, which has tremendous impact on the statewide and national economy; 3) Market analysis to improve pricing and management of transportation infrastructure, which Mr. Gallegos explained is becoming a larger part of their strategy. Mr. Gallegos provided the example of their decision to *lower* the toll on a recently-purchased toll road because market studies revealed the need to prioritize increased utilization of that road. By using these tools, SANDAG can make more informed decisions about market segmentation. Mr. Gallegos reiterated his appreciation for the SGC's \$400,000 award, which SANDAG was able to leverage into a nearly \$1 million investment that has improved their modeling capacity.

Mike Bitner of the Fresno Council of Governments spoke representing the eight San Joaquin Valley MPOs: Kern, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin. Mr. Bitner identified himself as the project manager for the San Joaquin Modeling Improvement Plan, and he thanked the Council for the Modeling Incentive Award, which has been used to upgrade the models for all eight of these MPOs. Due to this award, Mr. Bitner stated that all eight regions now have state-of-the-art traffic models; each of the eight now have all-new trip-based models, including a three-county model for San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced Counties. This three-county region also developed an activity-based model, as did Fresno County. Additionally, Kern County developed a GIS land-use model. Some of these models are for future needs beyond the 2014 RTP/SCS. Mr. Bitner then emphasized the importance of his final point: the eight models now use a common modeling platform, and this standardization will greatly facilitate coordination and information sharing between the eight MPOs. This was the largest modeling project in the history of the San Joaquin Valley and the grant played a critical role in enhancing their ability to meet the requirements of SB 375. Chair Alex asked if the eight regions now use common land use designations, and Mr. Bitner said that they do. Vice-Chair Fisher asked how the data and model are shared with local governments, and Mr. Bitner responded that the regions do modeling for their local governments for free because the local governments are member agencies.

Vahid Nowshiravan of Caltrans reported on the Modeling Incentive Award given to Caltrans for the California Household Travel Survey Project. Mr. Nowshiravan thanked the Council for the award. The purpose of the project is to measure regional and interregional trips, collecting travel data that will be used for both 4-step and activity-based modeling done by Caltrans and regional agencies. This database will help

MPOs with their modeling efforts to respond to SB 375 and SB 391. This survey is conducted every ten years, but the SGC funding enabled them to conduct a more complex and detailed survey than they have in the past, including GPS for trip corrections and On Board Diagnosis data for emission studies. The SGC contributed approximately \$2 million to the \$10 million project. The project will be completed in February 2013, and they will have approximately 53,000 completed travel surveys from throughout the state.

Action: Urban Footprint: Defining SGC's Short-Term Role

ED McCoy reported on the Urban Footprint model. He presented a few slides and reminded the Council of its statutory mandate to foster sustainable planning and support the work of local agencies by providing data and information. He spoke to the value of integrated models that look at a variety of broad issues in a single framework. By facilitating the use of integrated models, the Council can meet its statutory charge. The state has lots of data it can provide to a model like this, and Urban Footprint can translate findings from research literature into equations. This allows regions, cities, counties and state agencies to jointly plan their own activities. These types of models foster collaborative planning, which has been shown to provide more positive, productive and enduring results.

ED McCoy explained that Urban Footprint is transitioning from the development stage to pilot use by MPOs. The final software development for this version of the model is complete, but it is still waiting for final, formal, detailed documentation that can be circulated throughout the professional community and among potential users. He stated that eminent professors, researchers and practitioners in the field that have examined Urban Footprint have found promising results. ED McCoy expressed his eagerness to see results from the pilot projects at SACOG, SCAG, and possibly some state agencies.

Secretary Laird asked for clarification regarding when it would be available for public use, and whether the lack of documentation is prohibiting public access. ED McCoy responded with that even without documentation, more sophisticated modelers will be able to begin work, and that these are the people who would be leading the pilot projects. However, he emphasized that the end goal is for the tool to be accessible to users of any experience level.

Vice-Chair Fisher asked about the relationship between Urban Footprint and the Modeling Incentive Awards discussed in the previous agenda item. Specifically, he wondered if Urban Footprint made the other models useless. ED McCoy explained that these are two very different types of models. The MPO modeling work funded by the Modeling Incentive Awards was for statistical probability models that consume more time and are far more specialized. By contrast, Urban Footprint is a sketch model that will produce results much faster. Urban Footprint allows planners to develop scenarios that can then be run through the more specific models.

Secretary Rodriguez asked how Urban Footprint fits within the other priorities of the SGC and how it promotes the interest of the Council. He also asked how the promotion of this model with local governments advances the goals laid out in the SGC's Strategic Plan. ED McCoy responded that staff is not at the point of wanting to promote the model, but the staff recommendation is to participate in the pilot projects. The SGC is charged with promoting sustainable planning in communities and delivering data and information, and Urban Footprint does this. Urban Footprint can bring multiple agencies together to evaluate, plan and promote activities jointly over time.

Chair Alex adds that Urban Footprint can provide a common platform across multiple jurisdictions. It also can conduct an interesting set of comparisons that will help planners acquire insight into what various development decisions mean.

Chair Alex motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Secretary Dooley seconded the motion.

Chair Alex opened the floor to public comment.

Will Barrett from the American Lung Association expressed his support for Urban Footprint and asked that the enhancement of the public health components be made a top priority.

Bill Higgins from CALCOG expressed that they would like time to further examine Urban Footprint. They would like to work collaboratively with state agencies on managing the model together. They would also like to ask for a presentation at the next CALCOG meeting and would like to report back to the Council with input.

David Mogavero, PCL expressed that Urban Footprint is critical to increasing the level of concreteness in measuring outcomes and making the process simpler and more certain. He would like to see the state follow a more standards-based approach throughout its programs, and Urban Footprint lends itself to using analysis tools at the project level to comply with standards.

Mike McKeever, Executive Director of SACOG, spoke about the need and advantages of moving toward a common platform across MPOs. By providing a common platform, he believes that Urban Footprint will be a successful tool if it can be used among the state agencies as well as the local governments and MPOs. He explained that SACOG is willing to set aside their current model, despite years of investment, to use Urban Footprint because of its value as a common platform.

Stewart Cohen of TransForm said that he is impressed with Urban Footprint and stated that it is potentially a groundbreaking tool. He commended the tool for being not only open source, but also web-based. He would like to see Urban Footprint serve as a common home for data. He encouraged the Council to continue participation in the progress of Urban Footprint.

Liz O'Donoghue of The Nature Conservancy also spoke about the value of a common platform to measure community growth and outcomes. However, she also expressed her concern that the conservation data in the tool is not sufficient, and she asked that staff consider that improvement to be part of their work plan. She stated that the measurement of water quality, open space, habitat conservation, and some other measures need to be more robust. She also stated that she would like the name to change to California Footprint, as she feels this would better represent the purpose of the tool.

Wendy Alfsen, California Walks, requested that the name be changed to California Footprint to make it clearer to a larger portion of Californians that it is available for them to use.

Vice-Chair Fisher proposed that the motion be amended to explicitly mention member agency support for or usage of Urban Footprint. Chair Alex stated that this may be premature, because the complete documentation is still lacking. Secretary Laird stated that he would like more information from staff about the tool before he can identify the best role for his agency. The motion remained unchanged.

The Council passed the motion unanimously.

Action: Re-Open Planning Grant Guidelines for Round 3

Michael Larsen, Strategic Growth Council staff, presented the staff report regarding the third round of the Sustainable Communities Planning Grants. He reminded the Council that in 2010 the SGC decided to administer the planning grants in three rounds. Six months ago, they awarded the second round and now 12.5 million dollars remains for the third round. He recommended that the council take the following, two-

part action: 1) re-open the program guidelines before soliciting applications; 2) wait six month before opening the guidelines.

Mr. Larsen explained that because the state of planning in California has changed since the guidelines were first drafted in 2009, they are now in need of an update. Only one in four applicants are funded, meaning that many hours and dollars of applicants' time have gone toward applying to our program, most of which without direct reward. With a much smaller pool of money, we run the risk of an even higher proportion of unfunded applicants. Thus, through this update process, staff will explore ways to screen out less qualified applicants earlier in the process. Additionally, the guidelines update process is intended to strengthen the evaluation component. Showing the progress of our grantees is critical to securing future funding for cities, counties, and regions.

Mr. Larsen went on to explain staff's rationale for waiting six month prior to re-opening the guidelines. He stated that these are long-range planning efforts, and it is still too early to see the outcomes even from the first round of funding. Staff would like a chance to first see some outcomes from Round 1 and use those lessons to inform the new guidelines. Additionally, the Department of Conservation grant staff is currently focused on finalizing the grant agreement for Round 2 awards.

Mr. Larsen then emphasized that it is critical that staff provides ample opportunity for public input when updating the guidelines. He stated SGC Staff's desire for a robust public process he reiterated their intention to rely on stakeholders to help revise the guidelines.

Finally, Mr. Larsen drew the Council's attention to a letter received from the City of Bishop, stating their wish that the Council move forward with Round 3 as soon as possible with the current guidelines.

Secretary Laird motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Deputy Secretary Brian Annis seconded the motion. Chair Alex opened the floor to public comment.

Chanell Fletcher of ClimatePlan expressed her support of the staff recommendation to wait six months to allow for Round 1 evaluation. She also stated her appreciation that SGC staff seemed committed to robust public participation in the guideline update process.

The Council passed the motion unanimously.

Agenda Item: Meeting Adjourned

Chair Alex adjourned the meeting.