



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN UPDATE

STANISLAUS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the MPO does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, and disability in the execution of this Public Participation Plan.

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I. Introduction and Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

The Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Stanislaus County and the incorporated cities of Ceres, Hughson, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock and Waterford. Our mission is to bring local government and the community together to resolve regional problems, particularly in transportation. This is done by implementing a proactive public involvement process that assures the opportunity for the public to be involved in the transportation planning and project development process.

II. Goals and Objectives

With the realization that transportation decision-making is critical to balancing the needs of the community, StanCOG's Public Participation Plan (PPP) has the following goals and objectives:

- ◆ To strive for a balanced representation of all stakeholders in the planning process;
- ◆ Provide varied opportunities for public review and input;
- ◆ Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means;
- ◆ Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the RTP and FTIP
- ◆ Treat all members of the public fairly, respect and consider all citizen input as an important component of the planning and implementation process;
- ◆ To educate local officials and the citizens of Stanislaus County in the realm of transportation-related services and planning documents;
- ◆ Promote a culture of dialogue and partnership among residents, property owners, the business community, organizations, other interested citizens, and public officials;
- ◆ Provide communications and agency reports that are clear and timely;
- ◆ Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the PPP to ensure a full and open participation process.

Meeting these goals and objectives will improve our region's ability to reach consensus on the highest priority transportation needs. In addition to the goals identified above, various state and federal rules and regulations have been implemented to foster greater public involvement in the decision-making process.

The Plan will highlight those rules and regulations, describe StanCOG's organizational structure and list of local stakeholders, and clarify the public involvement process used by StanCOG to maintain compliance in the development and approval of its various transportation plans and programs.

The Plan will also summarize special outreach techniques planned by StanCOG to focus

on the unique demographic characteristics of Stanislaus County and will identify StanCOG's intended methods to measure the effectiveness of those techniques.

StanCOG and its member agencies are responsible for determining policy, adopting plans and programs, and awarding funds to implement these plans. This procedural document is intended to give StanCOG elected officials and staff guidance in providing for public involvement and interagency consultation in the regional planning process. It contains procedures and strategies StanCOG uses to instigate, seek, and foster greater public involvement regarding transportation matters within its discretion. StanCOG's documented participation plan defines a process for providing reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

III. Compliance with Federal Requirements

SAFETEA-LU

Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations Part 450.212 states, *“Public involvement processes shall be proactive and provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement.”*

The Stanislaus Council of Governments Public Participation Plan (PPP) was amended on December 12, 2007 following the requirements of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of August 10, 2005. SAFETEA-LU continues the strong federal emphasis on public participation from the 1991 ISTEA and TEA-21, requiring that the public participation plans of metropolitan planning processes “shall be developed in consultation with all interested parties and shall provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan.”

As outlined in the bill, methods to accommodate these goals, to the maximum extent possible, include:

- Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Employing visualization techniques to describe plans; and
- Making public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information.

Metropolitan public participation or involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

SAFETEA-LU legislation also requires StanCOG, when developing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Federal Transportation Improvement Plan (FTIP), to coordinate transportation plans with expected growth, economic development,

environmental protection, and other related planning activities in our region. Toward this end, this Public Participation Plan outlines key decision points for consulting with affected local, regional, state, and federal agencies and Tribal governments. Broadly defined, StanCOG includes as its partners groups and individuals who are affected by or involved with transportation in Stanislaus County and the surrounding region. Examples include citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 stipulates involving the community, particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of services. All events held for programs or projects with Federal aid and open to the general public must be made accessible to everyone, including the disabled.

Title VI

Title VI is a statute provision of the Civil Rights act of 1964. Under this statute, each Federal agency is required to ensure that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, or religion. The federal statute was further clarified and supplemented by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 and a series of federal statutes enacted in the 1990s relating to the concept of environmental justice. The fundamental principles of environmental justice include:

- Avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations;
- Ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- Preventing the denial, reduction, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income communities.

Executive order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898: *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*. The Executive Order requires that each Federal agency shall, to the greatest extent allowed by law, administer and implement its programs, policies and activities that affect human health or the environment so as to identify and avoid “disproportionately high and adverse” effects on minority and low-income populations. Executive order 12898 instructed each federal agency and their departments to develop a strategy to address E.O. 12898 with the following actions:

- ◆ Identify activities that should be revised to promote enforcement of all health and environmental statutes in areas with minority and low-income populations;
- ◆ Improve public participation by minority and low-income populations;

- ◆ Improve data collection related to minority and low-income populations;
- ◆ Identify differential consumption patterns of natural resources by minority and low-income populations.

To comply, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a memorandum Implementing Title VI Requirements in Metropolitan and Statewide Planning on October 7, 1999. The memorandum provides clarification for field offices on how to ensure that environmental justice is considered during current and future certification reviews of Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPA), such as StanCOG. While Title VI and environmental justice have often been raised during project development, it is important to recognize that the law also applies equally to the processes and products of planning. The Federal Highway Administration considers three fundamental environmental justice principles:

1. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
2. To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
3. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

As a governmental agency receiving federal funds, StanCOG is responsible for implementing Title VI and its associated Environmental Justice requirements.

Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Executive Order 13166 states that people who speak limited English should have meaningful access to federally conducted and federally funded programs and activities. It requires that all federal agencies identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency and develop and implement a system to provide services so all persons can have meaningful access to services.

The Brown Act (Government Code sections 54950-54962)

The Ralph M. Brown Act governs the meeting and actions of governing boards of local public agencies and their created bodies. Requirements of the Brown Act also apply to any committee or other subsidiary body of a local agency, whether permanent or temporary, decision-making or advisory, which is created by such a governing board.

The Brown Act sets minimum standards for open meetings relative to access to the public, location of meetings, notice posting, agenda distribution, and public input. The public agency may adopt reasonable regulations ensuring the public's right to address the agency, including regulations to limit the total amount of time allocated for public testimony. The StanCOG Policy Board and its standing committees all adhere to these requirements involving proper noticing, access and the ability to address the Board and committees.

California Environmental Quality Act/National Environmental Policy Act

Both the CEQA and the NEPA define the minimum standards for reasonable public access to the decision-making process of project development. Not all of StanCOG's products fall under this category. However, the ones StanCOG determines to be "projects" must abide by the statutory requirements as outlined in CEQA/NEPA.

Other Requirements

A number of other federal and state laws require StanCOG to involve and notify the public in its decisions. **StanCOG complies with all other public notification requirements of the California Public Records Act, California Environmental Quality Act, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise plan, as well as other applicable state and federal laws.**

IV. Formal Decision-Making Process

Policy Board

Policy decisions are made by the StanCOG Policy Board. The Board is composed of City Council members of each incorporated city and the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, or their designated representatives. A Policy Board meeting is normally held the second Wednesday of every month, unless that day falls on a recognized holiday or a special meeting is required. The Policy Board agenda is posted outside the StanCOG office at 1111 I Street, Suite 308 in Modesto and on our website, at www.stancog.org at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. Copies are available at our office during business hours or on the website. In addition, the meeting notice is posted in the local Spanish newspaper, *Vida*, covering Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties with a weekly circulation of approximately 30,000 papers.

Time is included for general public comment at each Policy Board and advisory committee meeting (described below), in addition to plan and/or program-specific public hearings, which are posted 14-45 days in advance. Notices for public hearings are also posted in the Spanish language *Vida* and the English language *Modesto Bee* newspapers. Documents containing the proposals to be considered at StanCOG public hearings are made available to interested citizens upon written request. These documents are placed on file in the StanCOG Library and mailed to major libraries throughout Stanislaus County prior to the public hearing (see Stakeholders, Appendix A).

Management & Finance Committee

The Management & Finance Committee (MFC) is composed of the Chief Administrative Officer of each member agency or their designated representative. With the exception of urgency matters, all items must first be considered by the MFC before submission to the Policy Board. The MFC meets on the Thursday following the last Wednesday of every month and, similar to the Policy Board, the agenda is posted at the StanCOG office and on our website at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. An opportunity for the public to comment is included on each MFC agenda.

Citizen's Advisory Committee

The Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) is composed of up to fifteen voting members appointed by the Executive Committee of the StanCOG Policy Board. The CAC strives to include individuals who are interested in different facets of transportation, including streets and highways, transit, pedestrian, bicycles, airport, railroads, trucking, etc., and encourages membership from individuals or groups that are traditionally identified as underrepresented populations. With the upcoming Regional Transportation Plan update in 2009, StanCOG will be conducting presentations to various groups (See Outreach Strategies). As part of these presentations, StanCOG will explain the role of the CAC and distribute applications to individuals interested in becoming a CAC member.

The CAC provides "general public" comments and advisory recommendations to StanCOG staff and the StanCOG Policy Board on various regional issues with a focus on transportation. The Committee is a vital part of StanCOG's proactive public involvement process. The agenda for the monthly CAC meeting consists of transportation related topics, including items on existing and future roadway improvements, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian concerns, air quality matters and funding priority issues. The members discuss each item, provide their comments and suggestions to staff, and often make recommendations to the elected officials on the StanCOG Policy Board.

The CAC meets on the last Wednesday of each month. Meeting posting requirements are the same as the Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board.

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

In accordance with state law, StanCOG has established an advisory group known as the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). The SSTAC membership includes representatives of people or groups that are typically somewhat dependent upon public transit. These include senior citizens, the disabled, organizations serving disabled residents, and organizations serving low-income residents.

The SSTAC meets monthly at the StanCOG offices. A general goal/assignment for the SSTAC is to remain current regarding transit issues throughout this County. As a part of updating the SSTAC on transit issues, most transit related reports generated by StanCOG are reviewed by the SSTAC, and their recommendations are forwarded to the Policy Board.

The SSTAC has two specific assignments as well. The first relates to the annual "Unmet Transit Needs" process, which helps determine what transit services are provided, as well as the level of Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding required for public transit (see Unmet Needs section on page 7). The second requires scoring Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 grant applications for either public or private transit operators anywhere in Stanislaus County.

All SSTAC meetings are open to the public and are usually held the third Wednesday of every month. Citizens can request to be placed on the mailing list to receive committee agendas.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) is composed of a member selected by each jurisdiction and appointed by the StanCOG Executive Committee. BPAC members serve a four year term.

The BPAC is charged with reviewing transportation projects in Stanislaus County and recommending projects that will enhance non-motorized transportation opportunities in the region. The BPAC will also review and assist in the development of the StanCOG Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.

Members will meet on the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 PM. Meetings are held at the StanCOG office.

V. General Meeting Information

Citizens are welcome to present their views to StanCOG at all Policy Board and advisory committee meetings. As stated above, notices of all regular StanCOG meetings, complete with the date, time, location and preliminary agenda are mailed out prior to the date of the meeting. Final agendas are posted at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting time at the StanCOG office, located at 1111 I Street, Suite 308, in Modesto. Interested citizens can request to be added to the mailing list for particular meetings, or can access general meeting information on our website, at www.stancog.org. Agendas and meeting notices are also available upon request from StanCOG at (209) 525-4600.

The Brown Act (CA Government Code 54954.1) states copies of all documents constituting the agenda packet of any meeting of a legislative body shall be mailed to persons requesting such copies. The request is valid for the calendar year in which it is filed, and must be renewed following January 1 of each year (see Local Stakeholders – Appendix A). StanCOG maintains a database of all mailing requests, and normally does not remove or change these requests unless officially requested. The legislative body may establish a fee for mailing the agenda or agenda packet, which fee shall not exceed the cost of providing the service.

All StanCOG public meetings include an opportunity for the public to bring issues and concerns to the attention of StanCOG. Anyone wishing to speak before the Board or its committees will be heard. Due to time constraints, unscheduled comments by the public may be limited to 5 minutes in length. The public is encouraged to comment on issues when they are before a StanCOG committee. Comments also may be made on an agenda item when it is before the StanCOG Policy Board. Other non-agenda items may be brought up during the portion of the agenda when the meeting Chair requests items from the floor. This avenue is used to introduce a topic; however, no action can be taken except to place the item on a future agenda. Citizens are encouraged to provide a written copy of presentations to the Board or its committees, particularly if the statement is too long to be presented in its entirety. Citizens unable to attend StanCOG meetings can submit their concerns and ideas in writing to the StanCOG office. StanCOG staff will then present the information to the appropriate committee.

Written materials that accompany agenda items are made available to the public at the meetings. The materials are also available upon request from the StanCOG office. StanCOG regularly employs white board, enlarged maps, interactive maps, power point presentations, and interactive polling technology to enhance and improve the dissemination of information available to the public.

ADA

The Policy Board and committee agendas shall be made available upon request in alternative formats to persons with a disability, as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12132) and the Brown Act (CA Government Code § 54954.2). Persons requesting a disability related modification or accommodation in order to participate in the meeting should contact StanCOG staff, at (209) 525-4600, during regular business hours, at least twenty-four hours prior to the time of the meeting.

Limited English Proficiency

Pursuant to California Constitution Article III, Section IV, establishing English as the official language for the State of California, and in accordance with California Code of Civil Procedures Section 185, which requires proceedings before any State Court to be in English, all proceedings before the StanCOG Policy Board shall be in English and anyone wishing to address the Board is required to have a translator present who will take an oath to make an accurate translation into the English language.

VI. Public Involvement Opportunities

Overall Work Program

The Overall Work Program (OWP) is the critical document necessary for the scheduling and distribution of work, especially the allocation of resources needed to address each task in StanCOG's work elements. In effect, the OWP constitutes a set of instructions for the planning and project development work to be carried out by staff or consultants.

The OWP concentrates on activities that will be performed during each fiscal year, and is developed through an on-going process by staff. Through the course of the year, staff works with member jurisdictions, Caltrans, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, other transportation planning agencies, other public and private associations, and the general public, both independently and through the various StanCOG committees, to develop topics for study. These committees include the Citizens Advisory Committee, which has been extremely active in the areas of transportation funding, alternative travel modes, as well as other policy issues.

The initial list of proposed tasks, including consultant studies, is prepared and distributed by January of each year as part of the proposed OWP and Budget Concept Report. The public is invited to comment on the draft OWP during the specified review time, or at one of the StanCOG public meetings. Based on comments received, the draft OWP may be amended to form the basis for the final OWP.

Unmet Transit Needs Process

The StanCOG Policy Board shall hold at least two public hearings each year to receive testimony regarding potential unmet transit needs. The first of these shall be held no later than September 30th of each year. This shall not be at the same meeting at which the Unmet Transit Needs finding is made. StanCOG shall conduct a second public hearing, following staff analysis of any comments received, before making its final determinations with respect to unmet transit needs. This second public hearing shall be no later than January 31st of each year. The intent of the second public hearing is to receive comments on the staff analysis. Potential unmet transit needs heard for the first time at the second public hearing need not be analyzed or acted upon the same year, though, if not acted upon, they shall be acted upon in the subsequent year. Notice of each hearing, including the date, place, and specific purpose of the hearing shall be given at least 30 days in advance through publication in one or more newspapers of general circulation, including Spanish language newspaper *Vida*. StanCOG shall also send written notification to those persons and organizations which have indicated, through the StanCOG citizen participation process or any other source of information, an interest in the unmet transit needs process.

Major Transportation Projects

StanCOG has long worked with others to implement transportation projects, and we are now broadening our role to become an implementing agency, as well as a planning agency. As part of this transition, StanCOG will follow the Plan's guidelines to insure all stakeholder interests are given equal attention. Public participation is critical during the PSR phase, and is a two-way process. Not only does it provide the public an early opportunity to learn about a future project that may impact them, but it also presents an excellent way to gather input from the public for potential challenges to the proposed project. This information is invaluable when formulating the various alternatives for the project, and the subsequent environmental document.

StanCOG also utilizes Project Feasibility Studies in order to ensure early participation by those directly affected by projects. Early participation, by the use of feasibility studies, also reduces the number of alternatives to be considered and time required to complete PSR's. Status updates of the feasibility study progress are provided to the advisory committees and the StanCOG Policy Board on a regular basis. The public meetings will be held in a facility easily accessible by the affected communities for maximum public participation.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The RTP is the blueprint for major multimodal transportation investments in the Stanislaus Region over the 25 year period and serves as a master plan for all regional air, highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian and other transportation improvement projects. The RTP is updated every four years, as required, and clearly defines transportation alternatives, and provides the funding for transportation project priorities, local needs and alternate modes of transportation. In short, the RTP reflects the community's vision of how the transportation system will serve it in the future.

The RTP update that occurs at least once every four years reflects reaffirmed or new planning priorities and changing projections of growth and travel demand based on a

reasonable forecast of future revenues available to the region. As necessary, StanCOG prepares two technical companion documents for the RTP updates: (1), program-level environmental document, per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, and (2), air quality conformity analysis (to ensure clean air mandates are met) per federal Clean Air Act requirements.

RTP amendments are major revisions to a long-range RTP that are less extensive than a RTP update, including adding or deleting a project, major changes in project costs, and/or design and scope. Changes to projects that are included in the financially unconstrained portion of the RTP (as information only) do not require an amendment. An amendment requires public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based on expected funding, and/or a funding that the change is consistent with federal transportation conformity mandates. Amendments that require an update to the air quality conformity analysis will be subject to conformity and interagency consultation procedures (see appendix B – Program Components).

It is StanCOG's goal to conduct outreach activities to various groups and programs. Invitees to the Regional Transportation Forum will be the primary targets of this outreach process and will continue to perform a key function in the decision making process for future RTP updates as well as other StanCOG plans and programs.

Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP)

The FTIP is updated every two years, with amendments occurring as needed. For FTIP Amendments, FHWA identifies six types, each with specific participation requirements, as indicated below. FTIP updates follow public participation process similar to the Type 5 amendment below.

Expedited Project Selection Procedures (EPSP). EPSP allows eligible projects to be moved between FTIP fiscal years as long as the project cost and scope do not change. StanCOG staff is federally authorized to utilize EPSP without additional State or federal approval action. StanCOG does not require a formal public participation process for EPSP actions. A more detailed description of the EPSP is available from StanCOG staff upon request.

Amendment Type 1. Administrative

Administrative amendments include minor changes to project cost, schedule, scope, or funding sources. Administrative amendments require action by StanCOG and approval by CalTrans. Federal agencies are notified, but do not take approval action on Type 1 amendments. Public notification of an administrative amendment is posted on StanCOG's website at the time of StanCOG action, and subsequently posted on CalTrans website after CalTrans' approval.

Amendment Type 2. Formal Amendment – Funding Changes

Type 2 amendments include project cost changes that are greater than 25% of the total project cost or \$5 million, whichever is higher. Type 2 amendments require approval by StanCOG, CalTrans, and FHWA. Public notification of a Type 2

formal amendment is posted on StanCOG's website at least 14 days prior to StanCOG action, and distributed to local agency partners through StanCOG's Management & Finance Committee (MFC) and advisory boards. StanCOG will consider public comments on the amendment prior to approval action. The approved StanCOG amendment is forwarded to CalTrans and FHWA for approval both in hard copy and electronic format.

Amendment Type 3. Formal Amendment – Exempt Projects

Type 3 amendments primarily include adding or deleting projects that are exempt from regional air quality emissions analyses. These amendments typically include transit or safety projects. Public notification of a Type 3 formal amendment is posted on StanCOG's website at least 14 days prior to StanCOG action, and distributed to local agency partners through StanCOG's standing Management & Finance Committee. StanCOG will consider public comments on the amendment prior to approval action. Type 3 amendments require approval by StanCOG, CalTrans, and FHWA. The approved StanCOG amendment is forwarded to CalTrans and FHWA for approval both in hard copy and electronic format.

Amendment Type 4. Formal Amendment – Conformity Determination that Relies on a Previous Regional Emissions Analysis.

Type 4 amendments primarily include adding or deleting projects that have already been appropriately modeled for air quality purposes as part of the RTP. In this case, the federal approving agencies can use a previous analysis of the project's impact on air quality for approval purposes. Type 4 amendments may be accompanied by a RTP amendment to maintain consistency. Public notification of a Type 4 formal amendment includes:

- Legally noticed 30-day public comment period.
- Legally noticed public meeting.
- Posting of amendment information on StanCOG's website during public comment period.
- Publishing amendment information as part of the following publicly available StanCOG agendas: Management & Finance Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee, Social Services Technical Advisory Council, Technical Advisory Committee, and StanCOG Policy Board.
- Consideration and response to public comments received during the comment period.

Type 4 amendments require approval by StanCOG, CalTrans, and FHWA. The approved StanCOG amendment is forwarded to CalTrans and FHWA for approval both in hard copy and electronic format.

Amendment Type 5. Formal Amendment – Conformity Determination and New Regional Emissions Analysis.

Type 5 amendments are the highest level amendment and involve adding or deleting new projects that result in new modeling for air quality impacts or significantly changing the design concept, scope, or schedule of an existing project. These are accompanied by a new air quality conformity analysis that demonstrates conformity with applicable air quality requirements. If applicable,

these amendments may be accompanied by an RTP amendment to maintain consistency. Public notification of a Type 5 formal amendment includes:

- Legally noticed 30-day public comment period.
- Legally noticed public meeting.
- Posting of amendment information on StanCOG's website during public comment period.
- Publishing amendment information as part of the following publicly available StanCOG agendas: Management & Finance Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee, Social Services Technical Advisory Council, Technical Advisory Committee, and StanCOG Policy Board.
- Consideration and response to public comments received during the comment period.

Type 5 amendments require approval by StanCOG, CalTrans, and FHWA. The approved StanCOG amendment is forwarded to CalTrans and FHWA for approval both in hard copy and electronic format.

Air Quality Conformity Findings

StanCOG is required to conduct an air quality conformity analysis when certain updates are made to the RTP or FTIP, such as the addition or deletion of regionally significant projects or changes to project schedules that affect years that are modeled for air quality emissions.

Air quality conformity findings will be distributed for a 30 day public comment period, and a public hearing will be held by the StanCOG Policy Board, following all applicable posting requirements.

Project Implementation Plan Teams

Ad hoc transportation committees will also be formed, when necessary, to address specific needs and/or include representatives from a specific geographical area. Opportunities for these types of committees include corridor studies, major investment studies, access management strategies, regional impact fee assessments, etc. A form of ad hoc committee that has demonstrated recent success in Stanislaus County is the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) Team process.

The purpose of the PIP team is to form a public-private partnership to address some of the region's critical transportation issues. Two PIP teams are currently formed to address improvements for Highway 99 in Stanislaus County. One team is focusing on efforts to improve the image along 99 through the county, and the other is concentrating on improvements to the 99/132 interchanges. These Teams are comprised of elected officials or their appointed representatives, representatives from state level elected offices, Chambers of Commerce (including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), affected business owners, CalTrans representatives, neighborhood associations, business representatives, and other interested citizens. The objective of the PIP Teams will be to focus efforts on a specific project with as diverse a Team as possible to expedite project delivery.

The PIP Teams also function as advisory groups on specific projects to the StanCOG Policy Board. For more information on the PIP teams, log on to the StanCOG website, or call us at (209) 525-4600.

VII. Public Awareness Activities

Press Releases/Media

StanCOG Executive Director (or his/her designee) will establish and maintain an open and cooperative relationship with the local media to help improve the community's awareness of StanCOG's work programs and achievements. Under direction of the Executive Director, StanCOG staff will prepare press releases, highlighting StanCOG's projects, challenges and accomplishments. News releases and/or public service announcements encouraging involvement will continue to be published to address key decision-making points. When possible, the briefing of reporters and editorial boards of both newspaper and broadcast media with in-depth background on a project or program shall occur. This will assist them to understand StanCOG's approach, issues and challenges and foster objective and accurate reporting. StanCOG also promptly returns all phone messages from reporters and other media representatives, usually within half an hour.

Newsletter

StanCOG Planning and Programming staff will publish a quarterly newsletter called the "Pacesetter." This publication is distributed to approximately 1,000 individuals, groups and businesses and is a valuable information tool to present transportation planning information to the general public. Article topics range from project delivery and funding issues, to personal interviews with local officials and highlights of the region's transportation activities. Copies of the newsletter can be viewed on StanCOG's website, and can be obtained at the StanCOG office, 1111 I Street, Suite 308, Modesto. Please call the StanCOG office, at (209) 525-4600, if you wish to be added to the Pacesetter list.

Annual Report

StanCOG staff will publish an annual report summarizing the past year's activities and highlighting the fiscal year's revenue sources and expenditures. Copies of the report are currently distributed to approximately 1,000 individuals, groups and businesses and can be obtained at the StanCOG office, 1111 I Street, Suite 308, Modesto.

Bike/Hike to Work Day

StanCOG participates in Stanislaus County's annual Bike/Hike To Work Day, providing copies of StanCOG literature and an update on the bicycle/pedestrian projects planned and constructed in the county.

Website

StanCOG offers information about the agency, its programs and projects, and events via the Internet at www.stancog.org. This site is linked to other Stanislaus County

jurisdictions and other jurisdictions located outside of Stanislaus County on the variety of transportation and transit options available with links to other transit site and park-and-ride lots.

Public Notice and Review

It is important for the public to know when StanCOG is seeking their input. For this reason, press releases for public meetings, hearings or workshops are issued to the following local daily and weekly papers: Ceres Courier, Escalon Times, Modesto Bee, Mid Valley Publications, Mundo Hispano-Spanish News, Vida en el valle, Oakdale Leader, Patterson Irrigator, Ripon Record, Riverbank News, Turlock Journal, Waterford News, and West Side Index.

Translation of Public Notices

When requested or deemed appropriate, StanCOG will translate public notices and press releases into other languages (as determined by the Environmental Justice analysis of the subject or project area). StanCOG also distributes notices of planning documents and news releases to organizations that represent minority organizations that share information and are a resource for particular demographic groups, including Southeast Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and African American.

Executive Order 13166, Limited English Proficiency

This Executive Order directs Federal agencies, recipients and sub-recipients of Federal financial assistance to examine services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide services so LEP persons have meaningful access to them. As a recipient of federal funds, StanCOG offers accommodation to individuals with special needs as identified on our agendas for public meetings.

Accessibility to Information

Once members of the public decide to get involved in local decision-making, they should have easy access to information and the public comment process. The following strategies are designed to improve the public's access to StanCOG meetings and materials.

Written Materials

A wealth of written information on StanCOG activities is available on an ongoing basis. When preparing these documents, staff's goal is to make the information understandable to the average person in the community, to make the documents as concise as possible, to reduce or eliminate jargon and to explain acronyms. For staff reports, a brief background and a discussion section are included to give proper context on an issue. Plans and all handouts and other documents for public review include an executive summary, pictures, graphs, maps and/or other visual aids to make them more reader-friendly and understandable.

VIII. Outreach Strategies

Stanislaus County demographics

The 2000 census identifies the two major races in the county as “White only,” with 57.3% of the population and Hispanics making up 31.7%. All other races combined equal 11%, with Black or African American alone constituting 2.4% and Asian alone totaling 4.1%. It is StanCOG’s experience that formal public hearings do not provide the most effective means to gather public input. Given this, and combined with such a culturally diverse population in the region, StanCOG’s goal is to employ outreach approaches that encourage involvement of the underserved and transit dependent in project development and public workshops.

Spanish language flyers and advertising will be included in these approaches as necessary. When appropriate, StanCOG will hold meetings in different communities in the area to solicit comments on major plans and programs. To the extent feasible, meetings shall be accessible by public transit and located and scheduled to maximize citizen participation, which includes meetings held during evening hours.

It is StanCOG’s intent to present and discuss the following:

- ◆ StanCOG’s role as a transportation planning agency
- ◆ StanCOG’s organizational structure
- ◆ Transportation funding in Stanislaus County
- ◆ StanCOG’s plans and programs (Emphasis in the RTP)
- ◆ The Transportation Project Development Process
- ◆ StanCOG’s Public Involvement Plan
- ◆ Citizen Advisory Committee Recruitment
- ◆ Commute Opportunities (in conjunction with Commute Connection)
- ◆ Project status (SR 99, Caltrans)

Preceding these workshops, StanCOG will attend the meetings of various community groups, including those representing low income and minority populations. In addition, StanCOG will participate in the county’s Annual Retreat program, a workshop that includes the leaders of Stanislaus County’s unincorporated communities. The Retreat and community meetings will provide StanCOG the opportunity to introduce the organization and touch on the topics mentioned above. More importantly, StanCOG will utilize these events to invite community members to one of the four planned presentations.

Presentation highlights, to include a summary of comments and suggestions from the participants will appear on StanCOG’s website and was incorporated into the RTP.

Outreach to Tribal Government and Resource Agencies

Although there are no federally-recognized Native American Tribal Governments located in Stanislaus County, StanCOG will provide outreach to the following Northern California Native American organizations. A follow-up request will also be sent to these

agencies requesting additional information in this regard as it relates to Stanislaus County.

US Indian Affairs Bureau
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95818
916-978-6000

Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Indians of the Tuolumne Rancheria
P.O. Box 1300
Tuolumne, Ca 95379

Calaveras Band of Me-Wuk
P.O. Box 899
West Point, Ca 95255

Central California Indian Tribal Council
P.O. Box 1861
Stockton, Ca 95201

Native American Heritage Commission
915 Capitol Mall, Room 364
Sacramento, CA 95814

Resource Agencies

StanCOG engages resource agencies in the development of their plans, and specifically RTP development, by distributing notifications of preparation for the RTP, TIP EIRs and inviting their comments on these documents. These agencies include: state, local, tribal agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation and historic preservation. **A Resource Agency Listing for State and Federal resource agencies is maintained by the California State Department of Transportation, Division of Transportation Planning and updated periodically.** StanCOG adds local organizations and contacts to this list and will update it as necessary. A list of Local Stakeholders is also included in this plan as Appendix A.

IX. Review of Effectiveness

StanCOG staff will conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan one year after its adoption and every two years thereafter. This review will include the use of surveys (see Appendix F) at public meetings to determine how participants learned of the meeting/proposed project, in addition to addressing the following categories:

1. The accessibility of the outreach process to serve diverse geographic, language and ability needs.

2. The diversity of participants in the outreach process.
3. The impact of public outreach and involvement on the plan/project/program.
4. The satisfaction with the outreach process expressed by participants.

Based upon survey results and comments received, changes may be made to StanCOG's Public Participation Plan (PPP). These changes shall be published and available for public review and comment at least 45 days before final adoption of the plan.

A survey was conducted in September 2009 to evaluate the participation process and received input from interested parties on the development of the PPP. The results of the survey are presented in Appendix G.

In order to determine if StanCOG's goals for public participation are met by utilizing the Plan's guidelines, we need to be able to quantifiably measure our effectiveness. Therefore, for each of these four categories above there is a set of quantifiable indicators, which will be re-evaluated during StanCOG's bi-annual review of the Plan.

1. Accessibility

- ◆ Meetings are held throughout the county.
- ◆ All of the meetings are reasonably accessible by transit.
- ◆ All meetings are accessible under the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act.
- ◆ All non-English speaking individuals have reasonable access and the ability to contribute.

2. Diversity

- ◆ Demographics of targeted workshop/event/meeting roughly mirror the demographics of the Stanislaus County area.
- ◆ Percentage of targeted organizations and groups participating in at least one workshop/event/meeting.
- ◆ Participants represent a cross-section of people of various interests, places of residence, and primary modes of travel.

3. Impact

- ◆ All of written comments received are logged into the comment tracking system, analyzed, summarized, and communicated to the Policy Board during a regularly scheduled meeting.
- ◆ All of written comments are acknowledged so that the person making them knows whether their comment is reflected in the outcome of a Policy Board action, or conversely why the Policy Board acted differently.

4. Participant Satisfaction

- ◆ Accessibility to meeting locations.
- ◆ Materials presented in appropriate languages for targeted audiences.
- ◆ Adequate notice of the meetings provided.
- ◆ Sufficient opportunity to comment.
- ◆ Educational value of presentations and materials.
- ◆ Clear information at an appropriate level of detail.
- ◆ Responsiveness to comments received.

(Survey forms will be available on the StanCOG website and at each workshop/event/public meeting involving the plan or program.)

Where to Find Information

The StanCOG website, www.stancog.org is continuously updated with meeting agendas, announcements, planning documents, current projects, related links to other informational or helpful websites, contact information, job opportunities, and a variety of other information.

A mailing list and an email notification list of individuals who have expressed interest in StanCOG projects and programs shall be maintained. If you would like to be added to a mailing list, or have questions pertaining to this or any other StanCOG plan or program, please contact our office by mail or phone, at 1111 I Street, Suite 308, Modesto, CA 95354, (209) 525-4600.