

2022

Draft Regional Transportation
Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

Public Participation Plan



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Introduction

The 2022 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) serves to prioritize and guide the region's transportation development over 24 years. The RTP/SCS is the comprehensive blueprint for transportation investment (transit, highway, local roads, bicycle, and pedestrian projects), and establishes the financial foundation for how the region invests in its surface transportation system by identifying how much money is available to address critical transportation needs and setting the policy on how projected revenues are to be spent. The RTP/SCS provides the earliest and the best opportunity to shape regional policy and investment priorities for the transportation network.

At a minimum, developing the RTP/SCS requires a technical analysis of the interplay between potential transportation investments and land uses with projected population growth and economic development. But developing a vibrant and effective RTP/SCS requires much more than technical analysis. During each RTP/SCS update, StanCOG actively engages the public on the critical aspects of the plan, seeking out ideas from a wide variety of stakeholders and soliciting their feedback at critical junctures of the planning effort. The public outreach component of the RTP/SCS update brings the Stanislaus County community into the transportation planning process. StanCOG is using an engagement approach that ensures the development of equitable plans that are fully informed by the ideas, insights, and the diversity of perspectives of those active on the ground. Only through an open, transparent planning process and extensive public involvement can the RTP/SCS reflect the shared values and priorities of the region. Since the previous 2018 public involvement process, there have been significant social and technological changes, with a greater emphasis on equity in decision making, an increase in online access and improved online tools for participation. With the COVID-19 pandemic also upending traditional public involvement processes, StanCOG accounted for this through a robust online outreach approach.

In this spirit, StanCOG has developed this 2022 RTP/SCS and Public Participation Plan (PPP). The intent of the RTP/SCS PPP is to outline the process for communicating with the public throughout the RTP/SCS development and to document the specific outreach activities taken to support its development. This RTP/SCS PPP is consistent with StanCOG's federally required, agency-wide public participation plan adopted in June 2018, and it also meets the requirements for a Public Participation Plan as laid out in the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, also known as Senate Bill 375 or SB 375. SB 375, which requires that StanCOG develop and maintain an RTP/SCS that integrates planning for growth and housing with long-range transportation investments, specifies that StanCOG must develop an RTP/SCS PPP with the following elements:

- Outreach efforts to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups in the planning process;
- Informational meetings with elected officials;
- Consultation with local, state, and federal officials and other planning partners;
- At least three rounds of three community workshops throughout the region to provide the public with the information and tools necessary to provide a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices;
- Outreach presentations to stakeholder groups relevant to this planning process;
- Preparation and circulation of a Draft Sustainable Communities Strategy not less than 55 days before adoption of a Final Regional Transportation Plan;

- At least two public hearings, each in different locations around Stanislaus County, on the Draft Sustainable Communities Strategy in the Regional Transportation Plan; and
- A process for enabling members of the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information, and updates.

These elements are addressed in turn below.

Virtual outreach meetings were held in-lieu of in-person meetings, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and changing circumstances in the State of California and specifically Stanislaus County, at the direction of StanCOG.

Goals and Objectives for the 2022 RTP / SCS

Goal	Objective
Mobility & Accessibility	Improve the ability of people and goods to move between desired locations; and provide a variety of modal and mobility options.
Social Equity	Promote equitable access to opportunities by ensuring all populations share in the benefits of transportation improvements and are provided a range of transportation and housing choices.
Economic & Community Vitality	Foster job creation, business attraction, retention, and expansion by improving quality of life. Facilitate economic development and opportunities through infrastructure investments that support goods movement within and through the region, including but not limited to the county's strategic freight corridors.
Sustainable Development Pattern	Provide a mix of land uses and compact development patterns and encourage infill development to preserve agricultural land and natural resources.
Environmental Quality	Consider environmental impacts when making transportation investments and minimize impacts on clean air and natural resources. Support infrastructure investments that facilitate vehicle electrification and the provision of electrification infrastructure in public and private parking facilities and structures.
Safety & Health	Operate and maintain the transportation system to ensure public safety and security; and improve the health of residents by improving air quality and providing more transportation options.
System Preservation	Maintain transportation system in a state of good repair; and protect investment by maximizing use of existing transportation facilities.
Smart Infrastructure	Coordinate, monitor, and integrate planning and programming for intelligent transportation system (ITS), smart infrastructure, demand-responsive transportation, and automated vehicles.
Resiliency and Reliability	Harden infrastructure to resist, absorb, recover from, or successfully adapt to adversity or a change in conditions including climate change.
Congestion Management	Maintain or reduce congestion as compared to current levels.
Project Delivery	Efficiently use available transportation funding to expedite project delivery of transportation improvements within the region for the benefit of residents of Stanislaus County and the traveling public in general.

Outreach Approach

In accordance with SB 375, the RTP/SCS outreach effort is designed to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups in the planning process. As with the 2018 StanCOG RTP/SCS, this update has the following two high-level outreach goals:

- Engage the broadest cross section of Stanislaus County residents, businesses and transportation providers in planning for our future transportation needs.
- Make the planning process accessible, interactive and engaging.

In developing the 2022 RTP/SCS, StanCOG engaged audiences including residents that use the roads, public transportation systems, alternative mode facilities (bicycle and pedestrian facilities) in Stanislaus County, organizations advocating or representing underserved communities, business and economic development interests that operate in the region, elected and appointed officials from across the county, and local news media.

Once defining the overall outreach goals for the RTP/SCS development process, the target audiences, and the key messages, StanCOG employed a multi-pronged communications strategy to reach regional stakeholders. The communications strategy employed a branded website and shared information through stakeholders' networks, social media, and traditional media channels.

For the 2022 RTP/SCS, StanCOG used diverse engagement approaches and tools to reach and engage the widest section of the community as possible, especially underrepresented community members. This ensured feedback reflects the unique community characteristics of the region. With research showing high broadband (96% coverage) and computer (85%) access in Stanislaus County and typical access rates for underserved communities including Hispanic (95% internet; 85% smartphone) and rural residents (90% use internet), StanCOG was able to initiate a strong digital approach with dial-in options available to reach those with limited to no internet access.

Accessibility and Limited English Proficiency

StanCOG employed the following outreach approach to support community members with limited English proficiency:

- Provided a certified bilingual (Spanish/English) interpreter for all public meetings;
- Spanish translation services were also provided for the 2022 RTP/SCS Executive Summary, Public Meeting Presentation Boards, Flyers, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and select other materials;
- Advertising/noticing in Spanish and English; and
- Provided a Spanish-language version of the project website.

Project Collateral, Content and Platforms

Project information, project goals and objectives, participation opportunities (e.g., surveys), and digital platforms (e.g., website, Facebook) went through four cycles of development and update:

1. Introduce purpose and need, existing conditions and needs, and collect input related to scenario development and the RTP/SCS goals, objectives and indicators (metrics).
2. Present information on scenario performance and collect input on scenario preferences.

3. Present environmental impact report findings and the draft RTP/SCS.
4. Summarize the results and convey the significance of the planning effort.

Each round introduced the current process and purpose and shared how public input has influenced the RTP/SCS to date. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd updates included surveys and comment forms.

Website

StanCOG developed a project website, www.valleyvision2046.com, using the online platform Social Pinpoint to host a project website and updated it regularly to post relevant information including the features identified below. The Social Pinpoint site hosted all of the project's collaborative and interactive online features and is available in English and Spanish. Features include:

- Project information, overview and purpose of the RTP and SCS, including webinars and short presentations;
- Meetings notices and agendas;
- Presentations (including both presentation recordings and slide decks) and materials produced for public meetings and workshops;
- Goals and objectives of the RTP and SCS; and
- RTP/SCS documents for public review and comment.

Public Input and Contact

SB 375 requires a process for enabling members of the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information, and updates. StanCOG provided an input form on the project website, which it launched in September 2021, for members of the public to provide direct input on the project. In addition, StanCOG provided a way for the public to stay updated on upcoming meetings and updated project information. Interested persons could complete a short online form and provide their name, email address, and ZIP Code to be directly contacted regarding meetings and project information.

Promotional Approach

StanCOG regularly distributed news releases on the RTP/SCS development process, milestones and workshops using both social medial channels and traditional media channels. Information regarding the RTP/SCS and public hearing notices was disseminated via media outlets in both English and Spanish languages.

Print Media

Press releases for public meetings, hearings or workshops were issued to the following local daily and weekly papers for public notices and reviews: Ceres Courier, Hughson Chronicle, Modesto Bee, Oakdale Leader, Patterson Irrigator, Riverbank News, Turlock Journal, Waterford News, and the Westside Index (Newman).

Translated public notices in Spanish were published in the above newspapers to elicit the participation of the Spanish-speaking population of the Stanislaus region.

Social Media

Over the course of the project, StanCOG used Facebook in multiple ways. It promoted upcoming public meetings such as project workshops, opportunities for online information and participation

(such as webinars and topic-specific surveys) and provided information regarding the RTP/SCS process such as the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). StanCOG has also worked with partner agencies and stakeholders to share project information and participation opportunities to their own social media channels.

Agency Consultation

Valley Vision Stanislaus Steering Committee

The Valley Vision Stanislaus (VVS) Steering Committee is one of the StanCOG Standing Committees. This committee was formed in 2011 to collaboratively address the requirements of SB 375 which calls on StanCOG to prepare an integrated land use and transportation plan as part of all future RTP updates. The Plan sets a development pattern for the region, which when combined with transportation policies, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from vehicles. Members include a representative from each of StanCOG's local member agencies (the Planning and Development Directors or their designees), a representative from the Policy Board, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and other representatives (one building industry representative, one environmental justice representative, and one representative from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)).

The role of the VVS Committee is to provide direction and make recommendations to StanCOG staff and the Policy Board in its development and ultimate adoption of the 2022 RTP/SCS.

The VVS Steering Committee meetings are open to the public, and there is an opportunity on every agenda for the public to offer comments.

StanCOG Policy Board

StanCOG is governed by a decision-making body called the Policy Board. It is comprised of sixteen elected officials from StanCOG member agencies. This includes five representatives from the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, three representatives from the Modesto City Council, and one representative from each of the other eight City Councils in Stanislaus County. There is a designated Public Transportation Provider representative from among the members that operate public transit. Additionally, a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) representative serves as an "ex-officio" member on the Policy Board.

The Policy Board is responsible for the approval of the 2022 RTP/SCS and the certification of the accompanying Environmental Impact Report.

StanCOG Advisory Committees

Another avenue for outreach to interested stakeholders and the public is through StanCOG's standing committees. StanCOG's standing committees include the:

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC),
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC),
- Executive Committee,
- Management and Finance Committee (MFC),
- Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), and
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

City Council/Board of Supervisors Presentations

StanCOG requested time to present virtually to each of their member agency City Councils and the County Board of Supervisors. StanCOG used these opportunities to promote the RTP/SCS Update and collect stakeholder and public feedback. Agencies and typical meeting times are listed below.

1. City of Ceres – 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 6:00 PM
2. City of Oakdale – 1st and 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00 PM
3. City of Waterford – 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM
4. City of Hughson – 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7:00 PM
5. City of Turlock – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM
6. City of Riverbank – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM
7. City of Newman – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM
8. City of Modesto – 1st, 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 5:30 PM
9. City of Patterson – 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM
10. Stanislaus County – 1st, 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 9:00 AM; 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM

Tribal Organizations

While there are no federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments located in Stanislaus County, StanCOG coordinated with the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) during the 2022 RTP/SCS update to identify eleven tribal governments with ancestral ties to the Stanislaus region, as listed below:

- Calaveras Band of Mi-Wuk Indians
- Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
- Muwekma Ohlone Indian Tribe of the SF Bay Area
- Nashville Enterprise Miwok-Maidu-Nishinam Tribe
- Northern Valley Yokuts Tribe
- Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation
- The Confederated Villages of Lisjan
- Tule River Indian Tribe
- Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians
- Wilton Rancheria
- Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band

Per the requirements of AB 52 and CEQA, StanCOG contacted the tribal organizations about whether they would like to undertake formal consultation.

Community Outreach

Community Workshops

In order to comply with SB 375 requirements and provide ample opportunity for participation in the regional planning process, StanCOG has designed a community outreach approach built around community workshops. StanCOG scheduled and oversaw community workshops broken into three rounds of three workshops. Workshop materials are available on the project website, along with

recordings of the Zoom presentations (uploaded after the workshops). Participation opportunities from the workshops were also available on the project website for those unable to attend.

For these workshops, StanCOG developed a wide range of collateral materials on the 2022 RTP/SCS update for distribution at the public meetings and online. These materials included a PowerPoint on the RTP/SCS process and a Project Overview document.

Every workshop included a certified Spanish translator. During these workshops, attendees were able to switch audio to Spanish to hear live certified interpretation.

Community Outreach Presentation

While the first round of workshops were promoted to different areas around Stanislaus County, targeted outreach to individual neighborhoods and organizations was difficult due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of doing targeted outreach to specific organizations, StanCOG pivoted to host additional workshops during the final rounds of community workshops. Two additional workshops were held, one focused on the business community and the other focused on community-based organizations (CBOs).

To try and achieve the highest amount of participation in each of these workshops, individual businesses and CBOs were contacted by phone and email to invite them to their respective workshop. Follow-up calls were also made to those businesses and CBOs that did not respond to the first round of contact. As with the public workshops, the business community and CBO workshops were held virtually and Spanish translation was offered.

Round 1 (Virtual)

Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the project outreach activities were conducted with adherence to social distancing guidelines and restrictions on public gathering. As such, the first round of Community Workshops were held virtually.

The dates and locations for the first round of workshops are outlined below. These workshops are intended to provide an overview of the RTP/SCS update process.

- Tuesday, September 28, 2021 at 6:00 PM – promoted primarily to the Patterson area
- Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 6:00 PM – promoted primarily to the Oakdale area
- Thursday, September 30, 2021 from 6:00 PM – Spanish Language Community Workshop in the Modesto area

While each workshop was promoted to different area around Stanislaus County, anyone was welcome to attend and contribute or ask questions specific to their community. All workshops also included region-wide information.

Round 2 (Virtual)

The second round of community workshops were scheduled as shown below and occurred in early November 2021 to focus on scenario performance. The workshops were conducted to gather input on scenario preferences and were intended to illustrate the tradeoffs between the policy choices and the outcomes regarding investment in different transportation modes and different land use configurations.

- Monday, November 8, 2021 at 3:00 PM – Focused on the community-based organizations in the Stanislaus region
- Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 3:00 PM – Focused on the business community in the Stanislaus region
- Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 6:00 PM – English/Spanish Language Community Workshop
- Monday, November 15, 2021 at 6:00 PM– English/Spanish Language Community Workshop

Round 3 (Virtual)

The third round of community workshops were scheduled to finalize the preferred land use scenario and transportation strategies for the 2022 RTP/SCS.

- Monday, March 28, 2022 at 6:00 PM – English/Spanish Language Community Workshop
- Tuesday, March 29, 2022 at 3:00 PM – Focused on the business community in the Stanislaus region
- Wednesday, March 30, 2022 at 6:00 PM – English/Spanish Language Community Workshop
- Thursday, March 31, 2022 at 3:00 PM– Focused on the community-based organizations in the Stanislaus region

Public Outreach Feedback

After the three rounds of workshops with the public, business community, and CBOs, the following themes emerged:

- Greater support for Scenarios B and D than Scenarios A and C
- No support was expressed for maintaining Scenario A
- Strong support for active transportation/transit
- Concern about climate change and impacts to vulnerable populations/agriculture sector
- Interest in providing options for transportation disadvantaged populations
- Support received for all proposed Off-Model Strategies, including:
 - Strong support for CalVans, ACE, and Valley Flex
 - Several participants voiced interest in technology-based solutions
 - Several participants voiced interest in VMT Banking solutions
- Several participants voiced interest in EV infrastructure improvements

Draft Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

SB 375 requires the preparation and circulation of a draft SCS not less than 55 days before adoption of a final Regional Transportation Plan. StanCOG will provide a public notice stating it will release the Draft 2022 RTP/SCS on June 8, 2022 for a 55-day public review and comment period. The notice will specify that:

- The 2022 RTP/SCS will be the region’s long-range transportation plan through 2046 for the Stanislaus County metropolitan region;
- The 2022 RTP/SCS will be the long-term coordinated transportation/land use strategy and provides a framework for transportation investment out to the year 2046;
- StanCOG will host the SCS and EIR public hearings together.

Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR)

All public noticing and public review periods will be adhered to as required by CEQA, including publishing of a Notice of Preparation and release of the DPEIR for public review. The Draft EIR will provide a programmatic analysis of environmental impacts related to the implementation of the 2022 RTP/SCS as listed in CEQA Appendix G. It will disclose any significant effects on those resource categories including aesthetics; agriculture; air quality; biology; cultural resources; energy; geology and soils; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; land use, population and housing.

On January 4, 2022, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed per CEQA Guidelines for a 30-day public comment period seeking public, tribal, and agency input on environmental issues to be studied in the EIR. The NOP was uploaded to the State Clearinghouse via CEQA Submit for distribution to identified State agencies, and to other agencies via certified mail. StanCOG posted a copy of the NOP to the 2022 RTP/SCS project website and the StanCOG website. Tribes were also notified via AB 52 letters described previously. A notice was provided to the Stanislaus County Clerk's office as well.

The DPEIR will be released for a minimum 45-day review period ahead of a hearing to certify the PEIR. The release of the DPEIR will be coordinated with the public release of the SCS for public review. A Notice of Availability will be provided to the Stanislaus County Clerk's office and to a local paper of circulation noticing the 45-day public review period for the DPEIR.

A Final PEIR will be prepared that includes all the comments received, a response to all comments received on the DPEIR, and any minor changes and corrections to address public and agency comments.