

## **APPENDIX B – COMMENTS AND RESPONSES**

Stanislaus Council of Governments  
2022 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

## APPENDIX B – COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The Stanislaus Council of Governments, as the Regional Transportation Agency, has reviewed the comments received on the Draft 2022 Regional Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) and has prepared written responses to the written and verbal comments received. The draft 2022 RTP/SCS was circulated for a 55-day public review period that began on June 8, 2022 and concluded on August 2, 2022. Comments to the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) are addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) document.

Three rounds of virtual workshops were held throughout the development of the 2022 RTP/SCS. The dates and locations for the first round of workshops are outlined below. These workshops were 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 areas around Stanislaus County, anyone was welcome to attend and contribute or ask questions specific to their community. All workshops also included region-wide information.

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

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

The comment letters included herein were submitted by public agencies, private organizations, and private citizens. Each comment that StanCOG received is included in this section. The comment letters have been numbered, and each comment has a number assigned to it (e.g., letter 1, comment 2 is referenced as 1.2). Comment responses identify the letter number and comment number.

In total, StanCOG received four sets of comments as either letters or e-mails during the public review period. Three of the sets of comments were received as letters while one set of comments was received as an email. The commenters are listed in **Table 1**.

**Table 1 – Comments Received Regarding the Draft 2022 RTP/SCS**

<b>Letter No.</b>	<b>Commenter</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Debbie Trujillo, Transportation Project Coordinator, Stanislaus County	8-1-22
2	Tom Dumas, Chief, Office of Metropolitan Planning, Caltrans	8-2-22
3	Lezlie Kimura Szeto, Manager of Sustainable Communities Planning and Policy Section, California Air Resources Board (CARB)	8-2-22
4	Nick Jensen, Staff Attorney, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc., Community Equity Initiative	8-3-22*

\*Comment received after the comment period closed

*Letter 1*

Commenter: Debbie Trujillo, Transportation Project Coordinator, Stanislaus County

Date: August 1, 2022

Response:

Response 1.1

The commenter states that the "Prioritization Criteria" color coded in orange are a new addition to Appendix K and asks how these criteria were developed or quantified.

The prioritization criteria are described in Chapter 10 – Action Plan on page 10-129. In addition, the project prioritization has been moved to a new appendix, Appendix X – Project Prioritization.

Response 1.2

The commenter states that, the prioritization projects could impact selecting one project over another and that they would want to understand how the prioritization criteria values were developed.

See Response 1.1.

Response 1.3

The commenter provides a list of modifications to projects within Stanislaus County's jurisdiction as they appear in the RTP/SCS Project List presented in Appendix K. There are 22 roadway projects listed and one (1) bicycle/pedestrian project.

Appendix K has been updated in response to the requested changes, and the overall project cost identified in Appendix K and elsewhere in the 2022 RTP/SCS has been updated to reflect the changes.

## *Letter 2*

Commenter: Tom Dumas, Chief, Office of Metropolitan Planning, Caltrans

Date: August 2, 2022

Response:

### Response 2.1

The commenter states that StanCOG is commended for, “providing thorough “Goals and Objectives” early in the Executive Summary, which sets up the rest of the Plan for the stakeholders to understand the proposed path over the next 24 years.”

Comment noted.

### Response 2.2

The commenter states that StanCOG is commended for, “dedicating investments to bicycle and pedestrian projects, doubling the funding levels when compared to the 2018 RTP. StanCOG has taken significant measures that pivot projects to focus on active and multimodal transportation since the 2018 RTP.”

Comment noted.

### Response 2.3

The commenter states that StanCOG is commended for, “Expanding on the methods used for public notices and participation to inform and seek feedback on the Plan. The Public Participation Plan has many benefits; the utilization of technology to reach target audience based on demographics and “social distancing” during the pandemic.”

Comment noted.

### Response 2.4

The commenter states that StanCOG is commended for, “Mentioning the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) robustly throughout the RTP. The Department encourages STANCOG to apply for grants through the IIJA to help in its RTP goals.”

Comment noted.

### Response 2.5

The commenter states that there are multiple grammar and sentence errors in the Executive Summary.

The Executive Summary was reviewed and updated.

### Response 2.6

The commenter requests consideration of making Figure 1.4 more uniform and Figure 1.5 larger.

In response to the comment the two figures have been updated accordingly.

#### Response 2.7

The commenter requests the rephrasing of the following sentence in the Executive Summary, “Improvements to (travel time) reliability offset the worst impacts of congestion through user frustration and emissions, extending the life of existing facilities and delaying the need for widening and other capacity increases. This RTP includes projects that address vulnerabilities in our transportation system and that aim to improve travel time reliability.” (Page 1-11)

This sentence has been modified in accordance with this comment.

#### Response 2.8

The commenter requests consideration of adding more background information regarding the methodologies for analyzing travel time reliability and what it represents in the Executive Summary. The commenter also asks how the travel time reliability information gets presented to the public.

The Reliability section on page 1-11 has been modified in accordance with this comment. Travel time reliability information gets presented to the public primarily via changeable message signs (CMS) on freeways.

#### Response 2.9

Regarding Chapter 3, the commenter states, “The Department commends the county for their efforts to update the Aviation Elements of their Regional Transportation Plan. It should also be noted that the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for the airports in Stanislaus County was last updated in July 2018. The California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook states that an ALUCP should have a comprehensive review and update at least every five years. Since the plan will be due for an update soon, the ALUCP lead agency may wish to consider applying for a grant for the update. We also commend the County for ensuring that the current 2018 ALUCP is available from the County’s website for public to access.”

Comment noted.

#### Response 2.10

The commenter recommends that regional planning agencies address the following areas of future focus:

- Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) services.
- Wayside equipment for electrified aircraft, and electric aviation in general.
- Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), currently in the testing stages for commercial aircraft, but will eventually trickle down to general aviation.

The Aviation section in Chapter 3 has been updated in accordance with this comment.

#### Response 2.11

The commenter states that special care must be taken to prevent encroachment on airports, sustain healthy communities, and preserve the viability of the aviation system as an economic engine for the region.

A sentence has been added to reaffirm this commitment in the aviation section in Chapter 3.

#### Response 2.12

The commenter would like to make note of its Airport Land Use Compatibility training program for Airport Land Use Commissions and local planning staff. The commenter further states that the

training is intended to review the airport land use compatibility process, compatibility criteria, and any specific questions participants may have.

Comment noted.

#### Response 2.13

The commenter states that, “The Department encourages StanCOG to support the goals and objectives of the California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050.”

A sentence has been added to affirm StanCOG’s support in the beginning paragraphs of Chapter 4. In addition, the goals/objectives of the CTP, CAPTI and other key state plans were considered in the development of the goals and objectives of the 2022 RTP/SCS.

#### Response 2.14

The commenter states that, “the financial aspect of maintaining these five airports can be challenging” and provides resources for financial assistance.

Comment noted.

#### Response 2.15

The commenter states that, “The Department encourages the addition of a disadvantaged communities map.”

Figures 2a – 2c in Appendix R – Environmental Justice Analysis includes maps that provide locations of the low income and minority populations, as well as the Environmental Justice (EJ) populations.

#### Response 2.16

The commenter states that, “There is no mention of Assembly Bill 617 (AB 617)” in Chapter 7 and requests that the RTP expand on assisting with the goals of AB 617.

Information regarding AB 617 has been added to Chapter 7 and Appendix R.

#### Response 2.17

The commenter states that, “special care must be included to prevent encroachment on airports, sustain healthy communities with a focus on equity when siting future development, and preserve the viability of the aviation system as an economic engine for the region.”

Note that this comment was provided as a part of Comment 2.11, so Response 2.11 also applies to this comment.

#### Response 2.18

The commenter recommends including information regarding The Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) into the 2022 RTP/SCS.

Information regarding the CAPTI has been included in Chapter 10 – Action Plan. Note that CAPTI is also referenced in Chapter 5 in the Recent Changes section.

#### Response 2.19

The commenter states that, “Appendix E “RTP Checklist” should reference RTP content locations in the body of the RTP, not just Appendix references.”

The checklist has been revised to include the locations within the RTP, in addition to the appendix references.

#### Response 2.20

The commenter states that, “as RTP edits and updates have changed page numbers and chapters, update referenced page numbers in the RTP table of contents and appendices.”

The page numbers in the TOC, appendices, and RTP checklist have been updated because of modifications to the RTP in response to comments received.

#### Response 2.21

The commenter states that, “at the time of review, there were a number of appendices that were only placeholders on the StanCOG website but are referenced as answers in the RTP Checklist.”

The contents of the appendices were not available at the time of publishing the draft RTP; therefore, placeholders were provided. These appendices have been updated.

#### Response 2.22

The commenter requests expanding on the narrative of what the long-range and short-range strategies/actions are in Chapter 10.

Additional description has been added.

#### Response 2.23

The commenter requests identifying where “areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region” can be found in the main document.

This information has been added to the final version of the checklist.

#### Response 2.24

The commenter requests identifying where “how travel demand modeling methodology, results and key assumptions were developed as part of the RTP process” can be found in the main document.

This information is provided in Chapter 2 on page 2-24 and a reference has been included in the RTP Checklist.

#### Response 2.25

The commenter wonders if Chapter 6 is the intended section to be referenced for a System Performance Report, that “show the progress achieved in meeting performance targets in comparison with performance in previous reports”?

Yes, Chapter 6 discussed the progress made on performance targets such as safety, reliability, roadway pavement conditions, transit operations, congestion management, and travel demand management.

#### Response 2.26

The commenter requests identifying where “include an evaluation of how the preferred scenario has improved conditions...” & “include an evaluation of...impacted costs necessary to achieve identified performance targets...” can be found in the main document.

This information can be found in Chapter 9 – Scenario Evaluations and Chapter 10 – Action Plan. References are included in the final RTP Checklist.

Response 2.27

The commenter requests reviewing the RTP checklist for grammar and clarity.

The RTP Checklist was reviewed for grammar and clarity and updated.

Response 2.28

The commenter requests identifying where “a public involvement program that meets requirements of Title 23, CFR 450.316(a)” is contained within the RTP document.

Chapter 11 presents the community outreach activities, and the Public Participation Plan is presented in Appendix P of the Plan.

Response 2.29

The commenter requests identifying where a “...report on the disposition of significant written and oral comments received...” can be found in the main document.

This can be found in Chapter 11 – Consultation and Cooperation while the public participation plan is found in Appendix P. In addition, further comment responses received on the RTP are found in Appendix B.

Response 2.30

The commenter requests identifying if StanCOG consulted with the airport and freight industry during the preparation of the draft RTP.

Representatives from the airport and freight industry were invited to participate in the targeted outreach meetings held during the second and third rounds of public outreach. In addition, representatives from the airports within the County were contacted to provide the projects related to the airports so they could be added to the project list.

Response 2.31

The commenter requests identifying where in the main RTP document [Consultation/Cooperation Questions #5 - #10] were addressed. The commenter further requests that if the questions were only addressed in the EIR, that the specific page numbers are specified to answer the questions.

The RTP checklist has been updated to reference specific page numbers to answer these questions.

Response 2.32

The commenter requests including a consistency statement ensuring that the first four years of the fund estimate is consistent with the 4-year STIP fund estimate.

A sentence has been added to Chapter 5 of the RTP in response to this comment.

Response 2.33

The commenter requests identifying where “cost estimates...reflect inflation rates” can be found in the main document. Chapter 5 appears to have the majority of this information. In addition, the

commenter requests considering adding a footnote to the Appendix K project chart, clarifying “year of expenditure dollars” reflect inflation rates.

Both Chapter 5 and Appendix K contain project cost information. A footnote has been added to Appendix K to clarify the year that the dollars represent.

#### Response 2.34

The commenter requests adding a statement that there is “consistency between the projects in the RTP and the RTIP.”

A sentence has been added to Chapter 5 of the RTP in response to this comment.

#### Response 2.35

The commenter requests identifying where “financial strategies required to ensure the identified TCMs from the SIP can be implemented” can be found in the main document. In addition, the commenter requests StanCOG consider matching the Appendix Q title, Transportation Control Measures, with the title on the actual document RACM Timely Implementation Documentation.

The RTP checklist was modified to include a reference to page 2-17 in response to this comment. The title of Appendix Q has been changed from Transportation Control Measures to RACM Timely Implementation Documentation in response to this comment.

#### Response 2.36

The commenter requests identifying where the RTP contains a list of projects specifically identified as TCMs. The commenter notes that it is somewhat unclear if Appendix Q is addressing TCMs and most projects show as “complete” and asks whether there are additional projects for the future.

Appendix Q presents the most up to date RACM Timely Implementation Documentation, which are listed as “Complete” in terms of Conformity. Future projects will be considered as they become available and provided in the next iteration of the RTP.

### *Letter 3*

Commenter: Lezlie Kimura Szeto, Manager of Sustainable Communities Planning and Policy Section, California Air Resources Board (CARB)

Date: August 2, 2022

Response:

#### Response 3.1

The commenter states that, “CARB staff appreciate StanCOG's efforts to include various strategies to meet the 2035 GHG reduction target as documented in Appendix M of the Draft 2022 RTP/SCS. In addition to this information, CARB staff request StanCOG provide further documentation of the policy, funding sources, timeline, and/or technical assistance commitments that are expected to support implementation of each of these strategies. These implementation commitments could include a variety of actions, from coordination and leadership by the MPO to ongoing or planned actions by other entities.”

StanCOG has identified/budgeted funding to develop/implement programs that support the various GHG reduction strategies. More detailed information will be provided as part of the final SCS GHG evaluation with CARB.

#### Response 3.2

The commenter asks, “[a]re there actions StanCOG and/or its local jurisdictions will take to help implement the growth pattern identified in the plan?” As the commenter notes, “MPOs can also lead supportive actions, including, but not limited to, working with and providing information to local jurisdictions within the region on planning for priority development areas, monitoring project development in the region to support alignment, creating incentives for policy alignment for local jurisdictions, and/or developing local policy toolkits.”

StanCOG has continually worked cooperatively with local jurisdictions to help implement the preferred growth pattern/scenario identified in the plans to date. This coordination has been recently bolstered by StanCOG's administration of REAP funding to assist local jurisdictions with updates to their housing elements for their respective general plans. More detailed information in regard to this comment will be provided as part of the final SCS GHG evaluation with CARB.

#### Response 3.3

The commenter asks, “[a]re there actions StanCOG and/or others in the region will take to promote the telecommute strategy identified in the plan?” Further, the commenter asks for clarification on what programs or funding will support VMT reduction through telecommute.

As noted in Appendix M – CARB SB 375 Methodology, trip reduction and administrative requirements of Rule 9410 applies to all employers in the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin with at least 100 eligible employees. With the implementation of this rule by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which includes strategies currently facilitated by DIBS (our Transportation Demand Management Program), the telecommute strategy will be promoted and implemented. StanCOG is currently transitioning to a StanCOG led TDM program, which will continue these efforts, that will be in effect no later than January 1, 2023

#### Response 3.4

The commenter asks, “[a]re there actions StanCOG and/or others in the region will take to promote the Electric Infrastructure Charging Incentives Program strategy identified in the plan?” Further, the commenter requests clarifying what funding will support VMT reduction through the Electric Infrastructure Charging Incentives Program what the impacts of this strategy would be on priority populations.

StanCOG has identified CMAQ funding for supporting development of a program and will work with CARB to provide the necessary information during the SCS review process. Note that StanCOG also completed an Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Study in 2022 that will provide important input into the development of this program. StanCOG will work with CARB to provide additional information regarding the planned program during the SCS review process.

#### Response 3.5

The commenter states that, “[a]ccording to the Draft 2022 RTP/SCS, the VMT mitigation bank strategy accounts for almost 2 percent of estimated GHG reductions in 2035. For CARB staff to evaluate this estimate, please provide further documentation of the quantification approach along with the policy, funding, timeline, and/or technical assistance commitments that will support the implementation of this strategy.”

As discussed in Appendix M, StanCOG has established the need and opportunity for a regional VMT mitigation program through its analysis of the amount of land use based VMT that is anticipated to exceed OPR thresholds based on SB 743 requirements. StanCOG has identified CMAQ funding for supporting development of this program and will work with CARB to provide the necessary information during the SCS review process.

#### Response 3.6

The commenter asks, “[w]hether and how the [VMT Mitigation Bank] assures that VMT reductions from this strategy are additional and not already accounted for by other projects or strategies in the SCS.”

While not yet implemented, the VMT Mitigation Bank would be set up to exclude projects or strategies that are implemented via other mitigation measures. Each off-model strategy has identified projects and/or programs that apply directly to these strategies and those projects/programs would not be included in the VMT Mitigation Bank. StanCOG will work with CARB to provide the necessary information during the SCS review process.

#### Response 3.7

The commenter asks, “[w]hether and how the [VMT Mitigation Bank] assures that GHG emission reductions will be achieved within the StanCOG region and that mitigation measures will be effective to reduce VMT from automobiles and light trucks.”

The VMT mitigation bank program will be set up to analyze VMT reductions within Stanislaus County borders and exclude any VMT reductions occurring outside of the region. StanCOG will work with CARB to provide the necessary information during the SCS review process.

#### Response 3.8

The commenter asks, “whether the [VMT Mitigation Bank] helps to advance housing and transportation equity in the region.”

When setting up the VMT mitigation bank program, equity is always a consideration to ensure that the benefits of the program are equally spread throughout all populations in the region. It is anticipated that depending on the projects selected by local jurisdictions that they would advance housing and/or transportation interests.

#### Response 3.9

The commenter states that, “[i]n the final 2022 RTP/SCS submittal, StanCOG should include information on household vehicle ownership, mode split, travel time by mode, transit ridership, average vehicle trip length, seat utilization, and per capita VMT and GHG for the years 2005, 2018, 2020, and 2035. Furthermore, CARB staff request that StanCOG provide data for the base year for each off-model strategy to support the final SCS trend analysis-GHG emission reduction evaluation.”

The requested information has been provided in an updated Appendix M.

#### Response 3.10

The commenter requests that, “StanCOG submit project lists from the 2018 and 2022 SCSs classified by project type (e.g., road expansion, road maintenance, active transportation, transit, and other), cost, funding sources (local, regional, state, federal), project time period (e.g., base year through 2020, 2020 through 2035, and beyond 2035), and location (jurisdiction, intersections) in support of the final SCS evaluation investment analysis.”

This information is provided in Appendix K for both the 2018 and 2022 RTPs. No further action is being undertaken.

#### Response 3.11

The commenter requests that Appendix M – Technical Methodology provides the required information related to incremental progress as per CARB's SCS Evaluation Guidelines by the time it submits its final SCS for evaluation.

StanCOG will work with CARB to provide the necessary information by the time it submits its final SCS for evaluation.

*Letter 4*

**Note: the following comment letter was received after the comment period closed on August 2, 2022**

Commenter: Nick Jensen, Staff Attorney, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc., Community Equity Initiative

Date: August 3, 2022

Response:

Response 4.1

The commenter states that, “Scenario B outperforms Scenario D on every relevant metric and must be chosen for the final RTP/SCS instead of Scenario D.”

This comment was also received from the commenter at a previously held public meeting. Scenario D was chosen over Scenario B because the land use projections in Scenario B were deemed by the VVS and the Policy Board to be less feasible than those under Scenario D. This determination was based on member jurisdictions’ current General Plans, stated policies, known development projects currently under consideration, and the public showing equal preference between Scenarios B and D during outreach workshops. In addition, Scenario D represents a significant improvement over the 2018 RTP preferred scenario. Best practices for scenario analysis do not dictate that the highest performing scenario always be selected when other relevant considerations are undertaken.

Response 4.2

The commenter states that, “to meet its civil rights obligations, StanCOG must amend the RTP/SCS to meaningfully address existing inequitable transportation infrastructure conditions and anticipated affordable housing availability.”

The RTP/SCS is committed to a significant increase in bicycle and pedestrian funding relative to the previous plan and makes great strides in supporting the County’s sustainability and equity goals. The project team conducted an equity analysis of all proposed plan investments, using an amplified process over previous RTP/SCS cycles, that evaluated plan impacts to all low-income and minority populations regardless of their location in incorporated or unincorporated areas. Previous analysis methods have used more traditional methods that focused on zones where the proportion of disadvantaged residents is above a defined threshold, which could (as raised in the comment letter) miss pockets of residents in unincorporated areas with very large transportation analysis zones. This cycle’s analysis accounted for every household that was identified as low-income or has minority members. Our analysis evaluated the level of investment in each of the transportation categories and found that we were providing equitable benefits that in the case of active transportation projects, provided more proportional benefit to the transportation disadvantaged populations than the population as a whole, bringing the equity of accessibility forward from where it has been in the past. The distribution of transportation improvements in this plan is so widespread that our analysis showed that almost all county residents will see direct mobility benefits. The RTP/SCS includes mapping that shows where and by how much low-income and minority populations are represented, and those maps were central to decision making on where transportation investments should be concentrated.

StanCOG is not a land-use authority, and it develops this plan and the Regional Housing Assessment (RHNA) Plan in close partnership with its member communities, and each scenario was developed with the goal of ensuring RHNA needs would be met by each member agency.

#### Response 4.3

The commenter states that, “the Environmental Justice analysis fails to adequately justify several of its conclusions and must be amended to include all necessary information.”

Analysis shows that most low-income households travel by auto modes and prefer that mode of transportation when available. Only a very small number of low-income households are dependent on non-auto modes. The relative concentrations of low-income households that are dependent on non-auto modes are similarly distributed to the low-income households that have access to an auto. The plan’s bicycle, pedestrian, and transportation projects do provide significant benefits to low-income households at a greater proportion than they do higher-income ones.

It is true that the burdens analysis shows more impact to the environmental justice communities than other areas in the County; however, this is due to the fact that this plan is attempting to address a historical lack of investment in these parts of the county. The needed infrastructure to provide more equitable mobility in these areas necessitates short-term burdensome construction activities to provide long-term local benefits needed to achieve equity goals.