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Consultation and Cooperation



Dust Bowl Brewing Company, Turlock, CA

11. Consultation and Cooperation

Introduction

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 2022 RTP/SCS brings the Stanislaus County community into the transportation planning process. As part of that process, StanCOG implemented an engagement approach that ensured the development of equitable plans that are fully informed by the ideas, insights, and the diversity of perspectives of those within the community.

Since the previous 2018 RTP/SCS 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. Virtual outreach meetings were held in-lieu of in-person meetings, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

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 had the following two high-level outreach goals:

Goal 1:
To engage the broadest cross section of Stanislaus County residents, businesses, and transportation providers in planning for our future transportation needs.

Goal 2:
To 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)
- Organizations advocating or representing underserved communities,
- Business and economic development interests that operate in the region
- Elected and appointed officials from across the county

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 that the 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 rely on a strong digital approach with dial-in options available to reach those with limited to no internet access knowing that most everyone could participate.

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, select other materials;
- Advertising/noticing in Spanish and English; and
- Provided a Spanish-language version of the project website.

Responses to comments on the Draft 2022 RTP/SCS can be found in **Appendix B**.

Project Content and Platforms

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 including an overview of purpose of the 2022 RTP/SCS
- 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
- Other RTP/SCS documents for public review and comment.

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.

Outreach highlights included:

- Workshops were promoted via Facebook, which yielded almost 18,000 views.
- Print ads were placed in both The Modesto Bee to promote workshops in Spanish and English.
- English and Spanish language outreach materials were created and placed on the project website.
- News releases were sent to publications and online services in Stanislaus County.
- The project website was consistently updated with information, presentations, and workshop recordings.
- Translation of project materials into Spanish and translation services provided at public meetings.
- Electronic surveys were conducted at public meetings to enliven events and promote meaningful interaction.

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

Additional Community Outreach Presentations

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, instead of doing face-to-face targeted outreach to specific organizations, StanCOG hosted additional virtual workshops during two rounds of community workshops. The two additional workshops were focused on community-based organizations (CBOs) and business/economic stakeholder participation.

To try and achieve the highest amount of participation in each of these workshops, individual CBOs and businesses/economic stakeholders were contacted by phone and email to invite them to their respective workshops. 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 CBO and business/economic stakeholders were provided with Spanish translation. A summary of the dates, times, and focus of each workshop can be found in **Appendix P**.

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
- Little support was expressed for maintaining Scenario A
- Strong support for active transportation/transit
- Concern about climate change and impacts to vulnerable populations and 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 fee-based VMT mitigation program solutions
 - Several participants voiced interest in EV infrastructure improvements

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. 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.

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