



*City of Ceres • City of Hughson • City of Modesto • City of Newman • City of Oakdale • City of Patterson
City of Riverbank • City of Turlock • City of Waterford • County of Stanislaus*

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Date: January 4, 2013
To: Responsible Agencies, Organizations and Interested Parties
From: Stanislaus Council of Government (StanCOG), Lead Agency
Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report

The Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) will be the lead agency for the preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). StanCOG is requesting input on the scope and content of the environmental information that should be contained in the EIR. Subsequently, other public agencies may use this EIR when considering approval of individual projects under the RTP/SCS.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP), including project description, location, environmental review requirements, and probable environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR, are available on the StanCOG website at www.stancog.org or at the StanCOG offices located at 1111 I Street, Suite 308, in Modesto.

Because of the time sensitive nature of the regional transportation planning process, we request your response at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after publication of this notice. We request that you return your comments by February 5, 2013.

Additionally, StanCOG has scheduled a Scoping meeting to receive public input on the scope of the program EIR. At the Scoping meeting, individuals, agencies, and organizations can provide StanCOG with their input on the content and analysis conducted for the EIR. **The EIR scoping meeting will be held in the StanCOG Board Room at 1111 I Street, Suite 308, Modesto, CA 95354 on Tuesday, January 22, 2013, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm.**

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Carlos Yamzon or Jaylen French at 209/525.4600.

Program Title: StanCOG 2014 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

Comments may be submitted in writing during the review period and addressed to:

Stanislaus Council of Governments
Attn: Carlos Yamzon, Executive Director
1111 I Street, Suite 308
Modesto, CA 95354



Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report

2014 Regional Transportation Plan & Sustainable Communities Strategy

Notice is hereby given that the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) will be the lead agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan ("RTP") and Sustainable Communities Strategy ("SCS"). Pursuant to section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), StanCOG is soliciting views from your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. StanCOG will also accept written comments concerning the scope and content of the EIR from interested persons of the general public and organizations concerned with the project.

The Draft EIR will be a Program EIR. A Program EIR is prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project. A program level EIR allows StanCOG to analyze the regional or general impacts of the projects and policies within the RTP. A more detailed or project-level environmental review (if required) of the projects included in the RTP/SCS will be conducted by the responsible agencies, including Caltrans, Stanislaus County, and the cities within the County, before each project is approved for construction and implementation.

The project description, location, environmental review requirements, and probable environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR are attached. An Initial Study is not attached and is not required because the need for an EIR has previously been determined, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d).

The 2014 RTP/SCS will address all transportation modes including motor vehicles, transit (commuter and local), rail, goods movement (rail freight and trucking), bicycle and pedestrian facilities, aviation systems, and transportation systems management (TSM) programs and projects within the horizon year of 2040. Specifically the RTP is intended to meet the region's transportation goals regarding current and future mobility needs through the identification of policies, actions, and a list of projects which will address these needs. The RTP will guide the development of the Regional and Federal Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIP and FTIP) as well as other transportation programming documents and plans throughout Stanislaus County.

This RTP will include a SCS, which is required by California Senate Bill 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 ("SB 375"). SB 375 mandates regional greenhouse gas ("GHG") reduction targets for passenger vehicles and, pursuant to that law, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) has established 2020 and 2035 GHG reduction targets for each region covered by one of the state's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). As the MPO for Stanislaus County, StanCOG is required to prepare an SCS that demonstrates how GHG reduction targets will be met through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning. StanCOG will develop multiple possible growth scenarios to measure the effect of various land use and transportation choices on meeting the established GHG emissions targets per SB 375.

StanCOG will host an EIR Scoping Meeting. The purpose of the Scoping meeting is to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental analysis that will be included in the Draft EIR.

The date, time and location of the meeting are as follows:

- **Tuesday, January 22, 2013**
4:00 PM to 6:00 PM
Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG)
1111 I Street, Suite 308
Modesto, CA 95354

Additional public workshops will be held to discuss development of the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Because of the time sensitive nature of the regional transportation planning process, we request your response at the earliest possible date. Mail comments to Jaylen French at **StanCOG, 1111 I Street, Suite 308, Modesto, CA 95354** or e-mail comments to jcfrench@stancog.org no later than **February 5, 2013**. Please identify the name, phone number, and email address of a contact person at your agency.

For more information, visit <http://www.stancog.org/rtp.shtm> or call 209-525-4600.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Project Title

Program EIR for the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) 2014 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS)

Project Location

The geographical extent of the proposed RTP/SCS includes the area within the corporate limits of Stanislaus County, California, including the incorporated cities of Ceres, Hughson, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock, and Waterford, and all unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of the County of Stanislaus. Capital improvement projects identified in the RTP/SCS are located on state highways, county roads and local streets, as well as on airport property, transit district property and public utility lands.

Project Description

The proposed 'project' is the preparation of the 2014 RTP/SCS. StanCOG is in the process of preparing the RTP/SCS as required by Section 65080 et seq, of Chapter 2.5 of the California Government Code, and federal guidelines pursuant to the federal surface transportation reauthorization, "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" (MAP-21), the Transportation Conformity for the Air Quality Attainment Plan per 40 CFR Part 51 and 40 CFR Part 93, and requirements set forth in Assembly Bill 32, The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, and Senate Bill 375, The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008.

StanCOG's previous RTP was adopted in July 2010. The 2014 RTP/SCS is the culmination of a multi-year effort that aims to improve the mobility and facilitate the movement of goods, services and persons efficiently. Further, the SCS will seek to balance land use and transportation systems to reduce emissions from cars and light trucks. StanCOG is required by federal law to develop an RTP/SCS that determines the needs of the transportation system and prioritizes proposed transportation projects. The RTP/SCS is also necessary to obtain and allocate federal funding for regional transportation projects.

RTP Framework

The 2014 RTP/SCS's unified strategy would include the following key elements:

- A comprehensive description of the region's current and future challenges in accommodating growth and meeting mobility needs.
- A fiscally-constrained transportation network that consists of US and State Highways, local roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit, airports and passenger and freight rail.
- An integrated land use capacity analysis that accommodates the region's future employment and housing needs, and that protects sensitive habitat and resource areas.
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures that improve system efficiency by influencing individual travel behavior. TDM measures typically offer programs and incentives to encourage alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle. ITS measures typically involve the use of technology to maximize the efficiency of the transportation network.
- A financial plan that lays out the funding sources and mechanisms required to implement the strategies of the RTP/SCS. The financial plan will also recommend additional innovative financing strategies that can be implemented to carry out additional needed projects and programs.
- A transportation system performance evaluation that lays out the ability of the proposed strategies to address challenges.
- Additional strategies and "Planned Projects" that have little or no money programmed for funding. Funding sources have, however, been identified and the projects are expected to receive funding within the timeframe of the RTP.

The compendium of projects, policies and programs which aim to meet the transportation needs of the region while reducing congestion and improving air quality comprise the 2014 RTP/SCS.

Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2014 RTP will include a newly required element called the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) pursuant to the requirements of SB 375. Under SB 375, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) such as StanCOG are required to develop an SCS as part of the RTP to reduce, to the extent feasible, greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks to meet a specified target for 2020 and 2035. The California Air Resources Board (ARB) issued StanCOG a regional GHG target of a 5% reduction in per capita GHG emissions for the planning year 2020 and a 10% reduction in per capita GHG emissions in planning year 2035, as compared to baseline per capita emissions levels in 2005. If the targets cannot be feasibly met, an APS will be prepared by StanCOG to show how the targets would be achieved through alternative development patterns, infrastructure, or additional transportation measures or policies. StanCOG's intent is to achieve these targets with the SCS. The GHG reductions are to be derived from fewer and/or shorter automobile and light truck trips resulting from integrated transportation, land use, housing and environmental planning.

Furthermore, SB 375 requires that the SCS shall identify general land uses, residential densities, and building intensities as well as areas to house future residents (see California Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(B) for the full list of SB 375 requirements).

Issues to Be Addressed in the EIR

The impact categories listed below have been preliminarily identified for analysis in the 2014 RTP/SCS EIR.

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forest Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Environmental Justice
- Geology/Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards/Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Public Health & Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities/Service Systems

In addition, the EIR will address cumulative impacts, growth inducing impacts, and other issues required by CEQA.

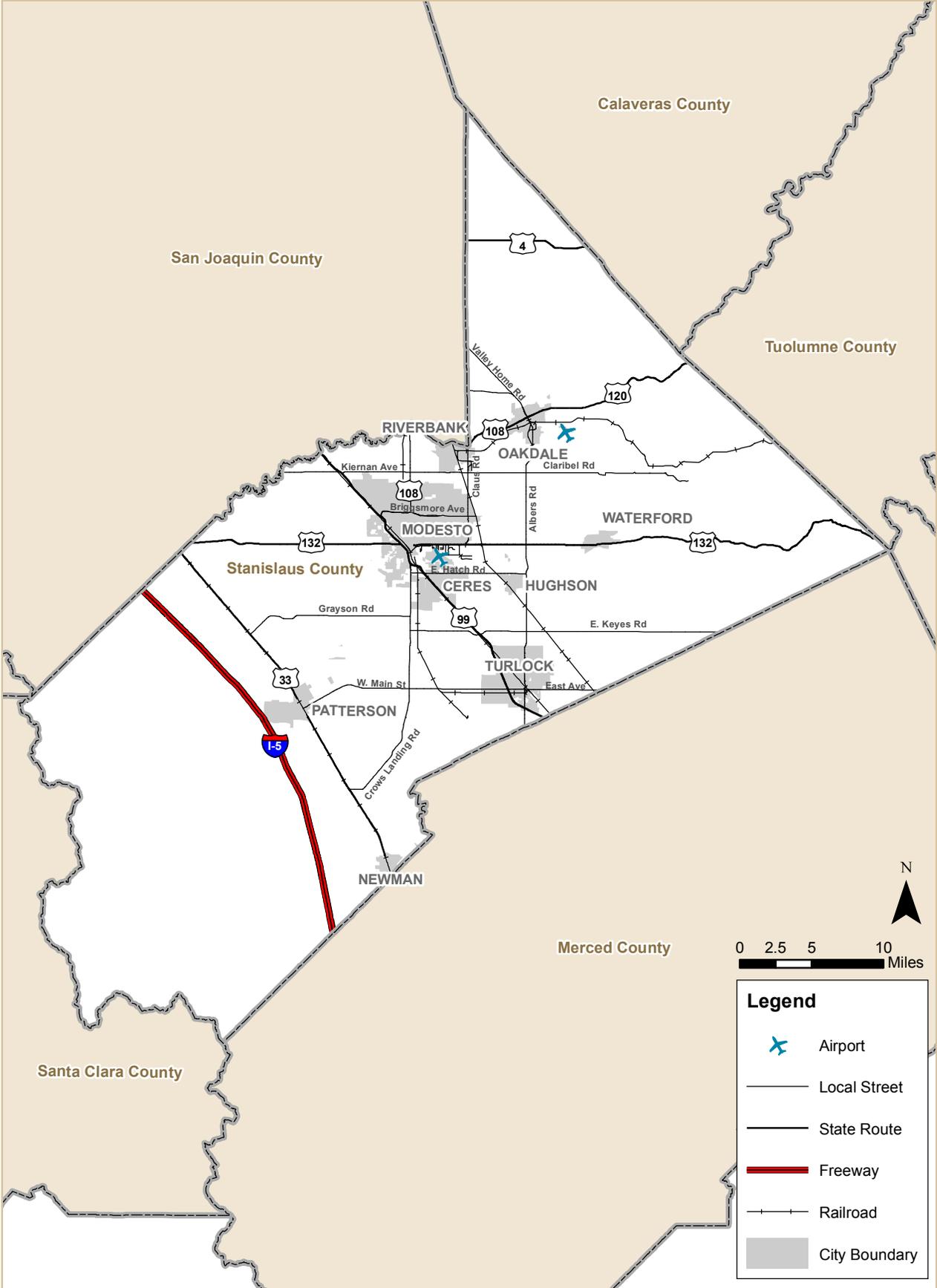
Through the NOP, StanCOG is seeking input on further categories of analysis or areas of focus within the specified categories above.

CEQA Streamlining

SB 375 contains CEQA incentives, or streamlining provisions at the project level, to encourage the implementation of coordinated land use and transportation planning within the RTP/SCS. Certain types of development projects (i.e., transit priority projects or residential/mixed use residential projects, as defined by the statute) may qualify for CEQA streamlining as long as the requisite criteria are met. Generally, this means that the proposed project seeking to utilize the CEQA incentives is determined to be consistent with an approved SCS. Consistency will be determined by the local jurisdiction that is the lead agency for each project to be streamlined. StanCOG's primary role is to include appropriate information in the SCS, such as land use information as required by SB 375 and/or guidance to aid in interpreting land use information that will allow a jurisdiction to make a consistency determination with respect to appropriate streamlining options on a project by project basis.

The programs and projects to be included in the 2014 RTP/SCS will be programmatically addressed in the EIR. This will allow StanCOG to analyze the regional or general impacts of the program and projects. A more detailed or project level environmental assessment, if required, will be provided by the various responsible agencies, including Caltrans, Stanislaus County, and the cities within the County, for the various projects included in the RTP/SCS, before the projects are approved for construction.

StanCOG 2014 RTP/SCS Project Area Stanislaus County



Legend

-  Airport
-  Local Street
-  State Route
-  Freeway
-  Railroad
-  City Boundary