



ECOS

ENVIRONMENTAL
♦ COUNCIL ♦
OF SACRAMENTO

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March 23, 2022

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Sent via email and County website

RE: March 23, 2022 - Item 3, PLNP2016-00063. Workshop On The Communitywide Climate Action Plan

Dear Supervisors:

Below is the testimony of Ralph Propper, Past President of ECOS and current Chair of the ECOS Climate Committee before the Board tonight on the County's Climate Action Plan. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Susan Herre
ECOS President

I am Ralph Propper. I was a research specialist in the Climate Science Section of the Air Resources Board, and subsequently taught chemistry at UC Davis. Although the extreme threat from climate change was obvious to me for many years, it's been frustrating to see the general reluctance to accept the fact that we need make major changes to survive. That's why I'm now chairing ECOS' Climate Committee.

As Barry Broome indicated, our county's economy will benefit from becoming a leader rather than a laggard in making these needed changes.

We're grateful for the effort that County staff has made developing this CAP draft. However, it doesn't address the biggest change we need to make: we need to increase housing in ways that don't increase commute distances and thereby make our air and climate less healthy.

A month ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its most dire report yet. UN Secretary-General Guterres said he had seen many scientific reports in his time, but nothing like this, calling it “a damning indictment of failed climate leadership,”

With that as a backdrop, let’s consider the role of Sacramento County. Sacramento County is the largest jurisdiction by population in the six-county SACOG region. And the smaller cities and unincorporated areas have a million more people than the largest city, Sacramento.

So, where the County goes, I would say, so goes the region.

To go into a bit of context:

In 2004, the six counties created a nationally acclaimed plan called the Sacramento BLUEPRINT.... The spirit of the Blueprint is to integrate land use and transportation planning to curb sprawl, cut down on vehicle emissions, and give options for walking and taking transit.

In 2008, SB375 was passed by the legislature. It was meant to apply the BLUEPRINT principles statewide. Pursuant to this law, CARB directed for our region a 19 percent per capita reduction of GHG emissions from passenger vehicles by 2035.

As we know, SACOG is now developing the next iteration of the Blueprint. The goal is not deviate from the original principles but in fact to fulfill them over the next thirty years. This new Blueprint effort will consider three pathways –

Business as Usual, All-Infill, and something in between.

The region can make the goal. It can achieve the required 19 percent reduction – but only if Sacramento County does not continue its own Business as Usual approach. So it is a serious concern that the CAP is structured around the BAU approach.

It is not exaggeration to say we need to make major changes to survive. SACOG has told us our region barely met the GHG target in 2020. And we now have a Climate Emergency. The last 20 years focused on development in outlying areas. The next 20 must be focused on transit-served inner suburbs. There is plenty of capacity, and we can revitalize these areas so that people of all incomes can live decently without a car.

- If we miss the 19 percent, the region will be ineligible for fed+state transportation funds.
- The BAU approach will ultimately violate state law. The state may step in and override local jurisdictions as it has done for HOUSING.
- The County’s tax revenue from inner suburbs will continue to decline.
- Finally, VMT from greenfield sprawl development will grow and will not be mitigated.

The County has a huge role in shaping the prospects for the region. I ask you to cease approvals of greenfield sprawl projects, and to commit to infill development, and to revise the CAP to reflect these major changes that are needed for us to survive.

Thank you very much for your leadership on this.