

AB 350 (Aguiar-Curry): SACOG Sustainable Communities Strategy Update

SUMMARY

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to adopt Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCSs) as part of their long-range regional transportation plans to align transportation investments and land use planning to achieve state greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is seeking a two-year extension to its next SCS update to improve megaregional alignment with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) and significantly enhance community engagement in this important regional planning process.

BACKGROUND

SACOG, MTC and SJCOG comprise the Northern California Megaregion, which includes 16 counties and 136 cities with a total population of nearly 11 million. The regions have been collaborating to advance interregional projects that will benefit quality of life, transportation, and commerce throughout Northern California, including passenger rail expansions, and freight-related facilities, such as truck scales and electric truck charging infrastructure.

The SACOG Board of Directors has also taken several actions in support of updating the Sacramento region's long-range plan, including adopting a triple bottom line framework (Economy, Environment, Equity); updating a regional forecast for population, employment, and housing growth; updating the agency's forecasting models and data; and conducting a call for transportation project nominations from local and state partners.

Furthermore, SACOG received a planning grant in August 2022 through the federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program to establish a model for equity-centered, community co-created infrastructure project development that will reinvent how regional transportation projects are prioritized for state and federal investment. Due to

the timing of the award, the results will not be available for inclusion in the SCS under the existing SCS adoption timeline.

PROBLEM

As SACOG has begun its work on the next phases of developing its regional plan, it has become clear that additional time in the schedule is crucial in better aligning the SCS update with those of its megaregional partners, and ensuring that the technical work of the plan does not diminish the important work of engaging member jurisdictions. Moreover, without an extended timeline the community engagement efforts related to the RAISE grant will not be able to inform the current SCS update process.

THIS BILL

AB 350 will facilitate greater interregional collaboration by aligning SACOG's next SCS update with those of MTC (November 2025) and SJCOG (August 2026) and ensure that future SCS updates will better align with its Megaregion partners. It will also provide SACOG more time to meaningfully collaborate and iterate with partner agencies and it will allow SACOG's RAISE grant work to inform the SCS update, in particular the additional robust outreach and engagement of under-resourced communities beyond what is currently planned and well beyond what is required by law. Specifically, this bill:

- Changes the deadline for SACOG's next regional transportation plan/ SCS update and accompanying Environmental Impact Report from November 2023 to December 2025 and requires ongoing four-year updates.
- Allows SACOG's current regional transportation plan/SCS to remain in effect for relevant purposes until December 2025; allowing for maintaining and meeting federal requirements.
- Allows SACOG to adopt and submit a metropolitan transportation plan to Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration during the interim period to fulfill state and federal transportation planning requirements