



**Item #05-12-13**  
**Consent**

**SACOG Board of Directors**

December 8, 2005

**How to Use the SACOG Air Quality Earmark in the Transportation Reauthorization Bill**

**Issue:** How should we use the Air Quality Earmark in the Transportation Reauthorization bill?

**Recommendation:** The Transportation & Air Quality Committee recommends that the Board support dedicating approximately 50% of the \$5 million in earmark funds to assisting local governments with citizen engagement activities associated with successful Blueprint implementation

**Committee Action/Discussion:** While we still do not know definitively, we believe we will receive the full \$5 million in air quality earmark funds approved by Congress as part of the SAFETEA-LU bill. These funds appear to be quite flexible, and require a 20% match of local funds. At the October TAQ Committee meeting, some committee members expressed reservations about the staff proposal to target the majority of funds to a revolving loan fund for local government planning for infill projects. The Housing & Land Use Committee at its November meeting also had reservations about this approach, and asked staff to come back with a proposal for funding ongoing citizen engagement activities. Several members described in various ways the risks of policy makers moving too far down the road towards Blueprint implementation without continued proactive citizen engagement activities.

Staff supports this change of direction, at least for the majority of these funds. We have only had time to develop the broad outlines for such a program, but are looking for Board support for the basic concept before proceeding to fill in the details. The Housing & Land Use Committee members were supportive of the approach, although eager to see details. The Transportation & Air Quality Committee unanimously recommended Board support, with the refinements underlined. The TAQ is also eager to see the details. We propose the basic principles in the attachment as the foundation for designing the ongoing Blueprint citizen engagement program.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever  
Executive Director

MM:gg  
Attachment

Key Staff: Pete Hathaway, Director of Transportation Planning, (916) 340-6235

**DRAFT PRINCIPLES FOR AIR QUALITY EARMARK PROGRAM  
TO ASSIST LOCAL COMMUNITIES WITH BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION**

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1. Dedicate approximately half of the \$5 million earmark to this purpose.
2. In order to provide stability, make this a minimum 5 year commitment (which coincides with the earmark - \$1 million per year for 5 years, although we can probably get authorization to spend the first \$3 million starting as soon as February 2006).
3. Try to leverage the funds, not only with the required 20% match from local funds, but by seeking private and non-profit/foundation monies to add to the fund. The goal would be to double the fund, so if we dedicated \$500,000 per year to citizen engagement from the earmark, we would strive to have a minimum of an additional \$500,000 per year from other sources.
4. Administer the program in a way to ensure that the resources supplement, rather than replace, activities that government would conduct anyway, and explore ways to replenish some or all of the funds over time.
5. Link the citizen engagement specifically to Blueprint implementation activities that promote air quality. For example, General Plan amendments, zoning or subdivision code amendments, specific plans, or work with the community on specific details of development proposals, could all qualify. In order to assure a linkage to air quality, the citizen engagement process should include the use of the information database and modeling tools SACOG, with the assistance of the air districts, is developing.
6. Specific ideas for eligible activities could include interactive citizen workshops similar to the Blueprint and upcoming Metropolitan Transportation Plan, an education and training program for citizens like the City of Sacramento's Planning Academy, ongoing seminars for Planning Commissioners, and "train the trainer" programs to leverage the funds.
7. The funds should be spent for people, organizations and firms to assist local governments with citizen engagement for the types of planning projects described in #4. The specific delivery system would need to be worked out. One idea would be to pre-qualify a pool of entities that are skilled at using the Blueprint style public involvement methods and tools to be available to assign to local governments who request assistance. This is the model for smart growth planning and design skills that we are setting up through the Quick Response component of the Community Design Program. Another approach would be to talk with Valley Vision about co-designing a special, ongoing program for this purpose. They could either provide the services in-house, or through use of consulting firms, or a combination. SACOG staff does not believe that SACOG should hire staff to perform these functions, except for the administrative capabilities required for sound management of the program and funds.
8. Local governments would apply for access to these citizen engagement capabilities on a competitive basis similar to the Community Design funds (although probably on a more frequent cycle, perhaps every six months).