



Item #06-2-18 Action

SACOG Board of Directors

February 9, 2006

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Reform Legislation (SB 832)

Issue: What direction and license should the Board provide to guide staff in shaping CEQA reform legislation (currently SB 832, Perata) this session?

Recommendation: The Legislation & Public Affairs Committee recommends that the SACOG Board of Directors approve the staff recommendation to support SB 832 in concept and direct staff to continue working to ensure the specific language in the bill assists SACOG in the implementation of its voluntary Blueprint Growth Strategy.

Committee Action/Discussion: This is a companion bill to SB 1024, Infrastructure Bond, although the infrastructure bond bill may continue moving on its own if agreement cannot be reached on the CEQA reform elements of SB 832. Several efforts to develop a proposal for CEQA reform over the last year have stalled; the latest, in which SACOG staff is participating directly, is led by the League of California Cities and includes the California State Association of Counties, CALCOG (the State Association of Regional Governments), American Planning Association, and environmental organizations. The group is focused on helping to implement regional growth strategies like Blueprint successfully.

The group is attempting to develop a relatively simple three-part standard to determine when a regional growth strategy truly provides smart growth performance. The standard would address travel performance through vehicle miles traveled (a reduction from existing conditions), efficient use of land (some form of density measure for new growth), and quality placement of new growth (some upper limit on how much new growth would be allowed to occur on high quality farm/natural resource lands). Staff is reasonably confident that these standards will be written in a such a manner that the 2030 version of Blueprint, once completed, will qualify.

The group's current proposal would eliminate CEQA analysis for transportation impacts (and possibly some air quality impacts) for development projects in areas where:

- an EIR for transportation and air quality impacts was conducted on the regional transportation plan, and
- a local government has completed an EIR for a general plan that was consistent with the regional growth strategy.

The group is debating whether excluding CEQA transportation and possibly air quality impact analysis in these circumstances would apply broadly to all development projects within the footprint of a Blueprint or whether it would be limited, for instance only to infill housing projects.

Staff recommends that the Board support staff efforts to craft language that will support our regional planning consistent with the basic approach described above.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

MM:ts

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