



SACOG Board of Directors

Item #06-3-19
Receive & File

March 9, 2006

Air Quality Earmark Update

Issue: How is SACOG moving forward to use its federal air quality earmark toward implementing the Blueprint citizen involvement assistance program?

Recommendation: Receive and file only. Staff will answer questions if Board members request.

Discussion: At its February meeting, the SACOG Board authorized staff to proceed with a first round of projects to assist local governments with citizen involvement regarding Blueprint implementation. The idea is to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, at least for the first \$500,000; to experiment with a variety of ideas (I have re-attached the examples of ideas that were included in the Board packet). We intend to send out a letter to our members in March that encourages them to submit brief (1 page) letters of interest to us explaining the basic types of assistance they would like. Our staff will then work with them to fashion an assistance package that hopefully meets their needs and is within our budget. We did something similar to this when we were developing the first round of the Community Design program and it worked well. We hope to be able to move fast enough to start at least a few projects this spring.

We have already received inquiries from Sacramento County and Citrus Heights and may be able to bring forward some specific ideas from one or both of those jurisdictions.

Also, we have decided as one of our secondary priorities to seek another earmark this year through the federal appropriations process for an additional \$1 million through this air quality program. If we succeed, some of those funds may be available to supplement this public outreach process. Finally, in the next few months we expect to seek Board action for targeting the next \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 of funds that are available through the existing air quality earmark. If demand for citizen involvement assistance is high, it is possible that staff will recommend that the Board consider allocating more of the remaining funds for that purpose.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

MM:ts

Attachment

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EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR AIR QUALITY EARMARK

1. *Local governments updating their General Plan to address Blueprint principles who are seeking citizen input on the feasibility of doing this.* Examples of possible activities: 1) tailored educational materials such as maps, illustration and “before and after” three-dimensional graphics that depict the location and type of development that would be consistent with the Blueprint and clearly describe the linkages between the land use choices, travel behavior and air quality; 2) PowerPoint shows and speakers/facilitators to speak and answer questions at regularly scheduled meetings of neighborhood, civic, business and other organizations; and 3) interactive workshops with use of laptop computers and the Blueprint software to allow citizens to provide informed input on the best ways to implement Blueprint principles in their neighborhood and advise local governments where there are both opportunities and constraints to such development patterns. At least a half dozen SACOG members are at some stage of updating their General Plans right now; some are almost certain to have an interest in this type of assistance.
2. *Additional MTP workshops.* SACOG and its partners have scheduled 16 citizen involvement workshops on the MTP this spring. Some local governments may want additional workshops in their jurisdictions. Also, some non-governmental organizations (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, neighborhood associations, etc.) may want either complete or abbreviated workshops to help them develop informed opinions. These funds could be spent to support the staff work needed to organize, recruit attendance, and conduct the workshops as well as develop any specialized materials that are necessary to support them.
3. *State Implementation Plan and Long-Range Transit Plan workshops.* At the same time as the MTP process, the region’s 5 air districts and 13 transit districts are developing new long-range plans. Their issues have been integrated into the MTP process, but it is likely that additional education and outreach specific to the air quality and transit issues will be necessary. These funds could support the staff work needed to organize, recruit attendance, and conduct this outreach, as well as develop any specialized materials that are necessary to support them.
4. *Local government zoning codes updates, specific or community plans, and review of development proposals that relate to Blueprint implementation.* Many local governments are not in a General Plan update cycle right now. But they are actively working to implement Blueprint. The activities are varied: Some are updating codes and policies to change development and design standards to allow mixed use and more compact development; others are working on community or specific plans for transportation corridors, neighborhood or major development proposals; others are looking for ways to have a constructive dialogue with citizens, interest groups, and developers over specific development proposals that use some or all of the Blueprint principles. Some cities and counties are doing all of the above. In all cases, citizens need a way to be actively and constructively involved in the processes. These funds would support mapping, graphics, technical computer analysis, and people to assist in conducting meetings and workshops.

Note: Through this spring as funds are committed to the types of processes described above, SACOG would be working with the Board and staff from member and partner agencies to consider the feasibility of other ideas such as: 1) “Train the trainer” programs so that local and member agency staff as well as citizens and organizations that are regularly involved in planning issues develop the capacity to use the technical computer tools and interactive workshop techniques to conduct this type of citizen involvement on an on-going basis; and 2) Educational seminars and support materials on Blueprint principles and the basic principles and processes of land use planning for elected officials, planning commissioners and citizens. The Planning Academy course currently conducted by the City of Sacramento would be one model considered in this process.