



SACOG Board of Directors

Item #07-7-14
Action

July 12, 2007

SACOG Position on SB 375 (Steinberg)

Issue: What should SACOG's position be on SB375 (Steinberg)?

Recommendation: Because there was no quorum, the Strategic Planning Committee did not take an official vote on this item. However, it was the consensus of the members present that the Committee forward this item on to the Board for further direction to staff to follow the principles identified below in its negotiations on this bill over the summer legislative recess.

Committee Action/Discussion: Senator Steinberg briefly presented the bill to the committee and answered questions from committee members. After Senator Steinberg left for his legislative committee meeting, there was discussion among the committee members both favorable and unfavorable to the bill. The following is an overview of the SB 375 Issue:

The Sacramento region's award winning Blueprint growth strategy is widely seen as the best of its class in the State of California. It promotes greater housing and transportation choices for citizens in the future through more compact growth patterns and a mixture of land uses within neighborhoods and communities. Modeling analysis has shown that if the Blueprint's goals of building livable communities are achieved that traffic congestion and the time devoted to travel will be substantially lower than under a "base case" growth pattern.

The California Environmental Quality Act too often works against achieving Blueprint growth principles in development projects, particularly in the areas of urban infill and "inner" greenfields (e.g. larger development that are near to existing infrastructure). Legislation that helps regions with high performing Blueprints by amending CEQA to help rather than hinder urban infill and Greenfield projects that meet Blueprint principles would greatly benefit the Sacramento region.

SB375 Steinberg, is the only active bill currently attempting to address these issues. Everyone expects that additional substantial amendments will need to be made to the bill if it is to move forward and have good prospects of being signed by the Governor. SACOG should pursue the following principles during negotiations over the summer recess:

1. The primary incentive should be reform of CEQA to make it easier to build development projects consistent with the Blueprint. SACOG's approach should be that if new language providing meaningful CEQA reform is not agreed to by the author, sponsor, SACOG and other key parties in the near future that the bill should not be acted on this year (i.e. making it a 2 year bill);
2. The CEQA incentives must apply both to "greenfield" projects (i.e. large new developments within the Blueprint footprint) as well as infill projects;

3. The bill should be focused on incentives, not mandates;
4. The bill should not erode local government land use authorities, but rather be based on the same voluntary principles used in the Blueprint;
5. The language in the bill related to natural resources and farmland protection should be scrutinized carefully to ensure that it honors these principles;
6. The bill should not threaten or disrupt funding for transportation projects that are consistent with SACOG's MTP;
7. Regional agencies should have strong procedural protections to ensure realistic input is provided to CARB as it sets carbon targets for the regions;
8. The transportation modeling requirements in the bill should be carefully reviewed to ensure that they do not impose unreasonable restrictions in statute, and if this test cannot be met they should be removed from the bill;
9. The bill should be thoroughly edited to make it clearer and easier to understand.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

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