



Land Use & Housing Committee

March 3, 2008

Rural-Urban Connections Strategy Work Plan

Issue: Staff is seeking approval of a work plan for the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy project.

Recommendation: That the Land Use & Housing Committee recommend that the Board approve the attached work plan for the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy project.

Discussion: Last month the Committee received a summary of the issues that were presented and discussed at the board retreat in January as well as a list of ten possible working groups that would provide detailed analysis to the SACOG Board on those issues. This month, staff is proposing a work plan for the project (Attachment A) that includes a series of agriculture field trips, technical work that will underpin the project, and an update to the working group structure and schedule. A budget for the project is pending since a draft of the full budget for SACOG will be presented to the Board in April. Items for which staff is seeking comment and approval include:

1. **Agriculture Field Trips.** At last month's committee meeting, Chair Silva proposed a field trip to help the SACOG Board learn about agriculture operations in the region. The work plan includes a task to schedule four field trips throughout the region over the next year. Chair Silva is leading the planning for a kick-off tour in Sutter and Yuba counties in April or May. This will be followed by tours in Yolo County, Placer and El Dorado counties, and Sacramento County. Staff is seeking recommendations from the committee on schedule, logistics, or sites to visit during these field trips.
2. **Technical Work.** To date, staff has not provided a substantive discussion of the technical work that will be needed to support the project. Three key technical tasks in the work plan will be discussed in more detail at the meeting. Much of the work is related to the update and use of the PLACE³S model for rural areas, and may also be used by the working groups as needed.
3. **Working Groups.** At last month's meeting, staff proposed ten topic areas for the challenges and opportunities that were presented at the Board retreat in January and suggested that working groups be formed for each topic to provide the SACOG Board with detailed analysis and recommendations. Chair Silva suggested that these could be collapsed into fewer topic areas. There are now five topic areas, but three of them will have multiple working groups since many of the subtopics are related, but require specific review and analysis to fully understand the issues. Individual reports will be generated by the working groups (or by staff or a consultant for subtopics that do not require a full working group). These reports will also be assembled into one paper for a given topic area. Attachment B lists the topic areas, working groups, and proposed calendar for this task. Staff is seeking recommendations on the arrangement of the topic areas, as well as the proposed working group composition for two studies that will start soon, Land Use Policies and Plans and Rural Roads.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

MM:DS:ts
Attachments

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Rural-Urban Connections Strategy Work Plan

March 3, 2008

Agriculture Field Trips

SACOG will host four agriculture field trips around the region. The objective of the field trips is to familiarize the Board with the diversity of activities involved in agriculture production, as well as other issues such as conservation, recreation, and regulation will be discussed as they relate to agriculture. Tours will occur on the same days as Board meetings. Bus transportation from downtown Sacramento will be arranged and lunch and dinner will be served.

Proposed Schedule

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sutter and Yuba Counties | April or May 2008 |
| 2. Yolo County | June 2008 |
| 3. Placer and El Dorado Counties | November 2008 |
| 4. Sacramento County | March 2009 |

Technical Work:

1. Data Development, Modeling, Mapping

Gathering and rectifying spatial data for the project is an on-going task. Staff has also been gathering economic and employment data for rural areas. Much of the data gathering and development will occur during the first six months of the project; however, there will be data and modeling needed throughout the project, particularly as working groups identify specific needs. Data will also be developed for a fiscal analysis model developed for Blueprint. Staff will determine the feasibility of using the infrastructure cost model used for Blueprint.

2. Landscape Typology for PLACE³S

Rural land use analysis will be conducted using PLACE³S. "Landscape Types" for this exercise will be developed with an emphasis on the economic opportunities of various uses including agriculture, resource easement, and tourism. Resource and environmental attributes will also define the landscape types and scenario analysis. A landscape typology outline that was completed by UC Berkeley, Agriculture at the Metropolitan Edge (AME) is attached. That outline will be updated with more specific identification of landscape types, inputs and values provided by UC Davis, Agriculture Issues Center and UC Berkeley, AME.

3. PLACE³S Modifications

The PLACE³S model will be modified with the landscape types and other ways needed to apply the model to rural areas. A key modification will be to the Return on Investment calculator in order to conduct pro forma analyses of rural scenarios. Another important component will be a distance calculator for proximity to production facilities, irrigation, and other relevant infrastructure that contributes to agriculture viability. A variation on the constraint function will be used to determine compatibility of a landscape type with underlying attributes such as soil (or farmland), availability of infrastructure (including irrigation), zoning, and other potential constraints. Current menus for specifying development types or place types will be modified to build landscape types.

Rural Challenges and Opportunities Analysis:

1. Form and Convene Working Groups

Working groups will be assembled to provide more detail on the challenges and opportunities in rural areas. These challenges and opportunities have been assembled into five broad topic areas. Three of the topic areas have multiple subtopic working groups so that issues can be studied in depth. Some subtopics may be better addressed in a working paper written by staff or a consultant in lieu of the full working group process. Individual subtopic reports and full topic reports will be written. The proposed topic areas and working groups is attached, as well as a proposed schedule for launching the working groups or working papers.

2. Rural Trends Interviews

Interviews of local public and private stakeholders will continue to better understand economic and resource conservation activities throughout the region, as well as issues that may be impediments to continued development of these opportunities. Interviews conducted by SACOG staff will be augmented with information gathered from interviews that Valley Vision is conducting as part of its Open Space Initiative.

Outreach and Educational Materials

Maps, statistics, and PowerPoint presentations will be created to update the Board and stakeholders about the project. These and any other needed materials will also be used to engage the working groups. Initial products will focus on project orientation and outreach. Throughout the project, outreach and education materials will be tailored to specific stakeholder and interest groups and include project updates. Working group materials will build upon these outreach and education materials.

Specify Innovations that are Applicable to the SACOG Region

Innovations are ways that the region can address challenges and take advantage of opportunities, particularly to increase or create economic value in rural areas. Advantageous resource conservation outcomes will also be sought, particularly those that create economic value (e.g., purchase of easements, environmental services, and environmental permit streamlining).

Test Innovations

Once a list of innovations for the region has been assembled, they will be modeled in PLACE³S or other models to estimate how various strategies perform according to economic and environmental indicators. This process will highlight those innovations and strategies that show the most promise for promoting economic and environmental sustainability in rural areas.

Develop Implementation Steps

The project will conclude with the development of a “toolkit” of ways to implement innovations for rural areas. The toolkit will include strategies for policy and planning, funding, regulatory reform, data and modeling, and other ways to implement innovations.

Rural-Urban Connections Strategy ***Draft Topic Areas and Working Groups***

March 3, 2008

Rural challenges and opportunities have been arranged into broad topic areas listed below. Specific working groups within each topic area have been identified (two examples of group composition are included below). Some of the working groups may be preceded with technical work or a working paper. Some issues may not require a working group to understand the subject. In that case, staff or a consultant will develop working papers in lieu of a full working group process. For topics with several working groups, individual reports will also be assembled into one topic paper for the Board.

Land Use and Conservation: Policies and Plans That Shape Rural Areas

This topic area examines the policies and plans that affect the use of rural lands. A key objective is to understand where development may occur; however the location of conservation and recreational areas also influence how rural areas may function the future. The interface between urban and rural areas is another important component to be addressed under this topic.

Working Groups or Working Papers

1. Land Use Policies and Plans: Minimum parcel size and use, Right to Farm ordinances, Jobs-Housing ratios; Spheres of Influence, Utility and service districts; Transfer of Development Rights

Proposed Working Group Composition

- a. Planners
 - b. Farmer and Ranchers
 - c. Farm Advocacy Groups
 - d. Agr. Commissioners
 - e. BIA
 - f. Property Owners
 - g. Land Trusts
 - h. Environmental Groups
 - i. Academics
 - j. LAFCo
2. Conservation Plans: Natural resources or habitat of concern; Historic and cultural resources; Take and receiving areas; Mitigation ratios; Existing protected lands; Williamson Act
 3. Open Space and Recreation Plans: Beyond conservation planning areas, location of desired recreation and open space areas; Existing recreation open space lands; Private conservation lands

4. Small Communities: Needed and required infrastructure; Costs and fiscal challenges; Land use decisions and tendency toward housing; Employment and economic development; Municipal and professional service needs

The Infrastructure of Agriculture: Challenges to the Production Process

This topic area covers the basic input and output components of the agriculture production process. This is a diverse topic area so five working groups will be assembled to study the range of subjects.

Working Groups or Working Papers

1. Rural Roads: Impacts of traffic on agriculture; Movement of equipment and goods to market; Vehicle miles of travel and emissions; challenges with road improvements (including traffic increases and cost sharing); Level of service

Proposed Working Group Composition

- a. County DOTs
 - b. Caltrans
 - c. Farmers and Ranchers
 - d. Agr. Transportation Companies
 - e. Farm Advocacy Groups
 - f. Agr. Commissioners
 - g. Law Enforcement
 - h. Tribes/Casinos
 - i. Agritourism Promoters
2. Processing Facilities: Closures affecting crops grown; Loss of rural jobs; Transport distance, cost, and emissions; Linking local growers with local markets
 3. Labor: Shortages and costs; Lost harvest; Immigration; Housing and transportation needs; Aging farmers and ranchers
 4. Non-labor Agriculture Inputs: Cost of land and water; Availability and cost of equipment, fuel, chemicals, seed, veterinary service, etc.
 5. Water: Supply and quality; Competition: urban, agriculture, and habitat uses; Costs, particularly for pumping; Conservation and storage; Flood control and aquifer recharge; Integrated Regional Water Management Plans

Economic Opportunities: New Ways to Grow Revenue

This topic area covers a number of opportunities for farmers and ranchers to increase revenues beyond traditional agriculture markets. A working group or working paper will be structure around existing or potential economic opportunities.

Working Groups or Working Papers

1. Agritourism: Visits to farms, ranches, and other agriculture-related operations; Opportunities to include restaurants and hotels
2. Local Markets: Restaurants, schools, hospitals, other institutions; CSAs, farmers markets, fruit stands, value added products
3. National and International Markets: Product demand; Product differentiation; Supply chains
4. Energy Production: Biomass to generate energy; Technology; Markets
5. Carbon Sequestration: Farm and ranch practices that take carbon out of the atmosphere; Carbon trading markets
6. Easements and Transfer of Development Rights: Easements types and values, including flood control; Layering potential; Private markets
7. Other Economic Opportunities: solar panels, cellular phone towers, military or law enforcement training, etc.

Forest Management: Firing up Economic and Environmental Value

This working group will look at the challenges and opportunities in the forests. Forest fires, reduced timber harvests, recreation, habitat and watershed issues and costs will be detailed. The group will explore new management practices and how the aforementioned issues can be mitigated. Watershed opportunities in water storage, water quality and flood control will be studied. Carbon sequestration potential will be a key issue.

Regulations: Navigating Federal and State Environmental Guidelines

This working group will focus on understanding and meeting federal and state environmental requirements that affect rural areas including: water quality, air quality, endangered species, flood control, and pesticide use. The group will identify challenges to meeting those requirements and impacts on agriculture and land use patterns. Particular impacts on small agriculture operations will be highlighted. Possible ways to expedite review and permitting will be explored, as will regulatory reform ideas.

Proposed Calendar for RUCS Working Groups

3-Mar-08

	FY 07/08						FY 08/09					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Land Use and Conservation												
Land Use Policies and Plans			X	X	X	X	X	X				
Conservation Plans				O	O	X	X	X				
Open Space and Recreation Plans					O	O	X	X				
Small Communities			O	O	X	X	X	X				
Agriculture Infrastructure												
Rural Roads			X	X	X	X	X	X				
Processing Facilities				O	O	X	X					
Labor				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Non-labor Agriculture Inputs					O	O	X	X				
Water					O	O	X	X	X			
Economic Opportunities												
Agritourism				X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Local Markets				X	X	X	X	X	X			X
National and International Markets				O	O							
Energy Production					O	O						
Carbon Sequestration						O	O					
Easements and TDR							O	O				
Other Economic Opportunities								O	O			
Forest Management							O	X	X	X	X	
Regulations				O	O	X	X	X				

X = Working Group

O = Working Paper or Technical Work