

Connections

August 2009

Transportation and Land Use Workshop

On Thursday, August 27, a Transportation and Land Use workshop will be held at Sierra 2 Community Center in Sacramento.

To date, the RUCS project has been moving ahead via working groups formed around individual topic areas. As several of the working groups complete existing conditions and innovations research, SACOG will begin to integrate the topics with each other and the broader project objectives. To do this, we are starting by establishing a connection between the Land Use and Transportation working groups as each group moves into its implementation phase.

SACOG will host a single workshop for participants of both the Land Use and Transportation working groups. The workshop will review work to date for both working groups in the context of rural land use and transportation data that have been developed for the RUCS project. Workshop participants will have the opportunity to consider the innovations of both topic areas in an exercise focused on rural priorities in our region.

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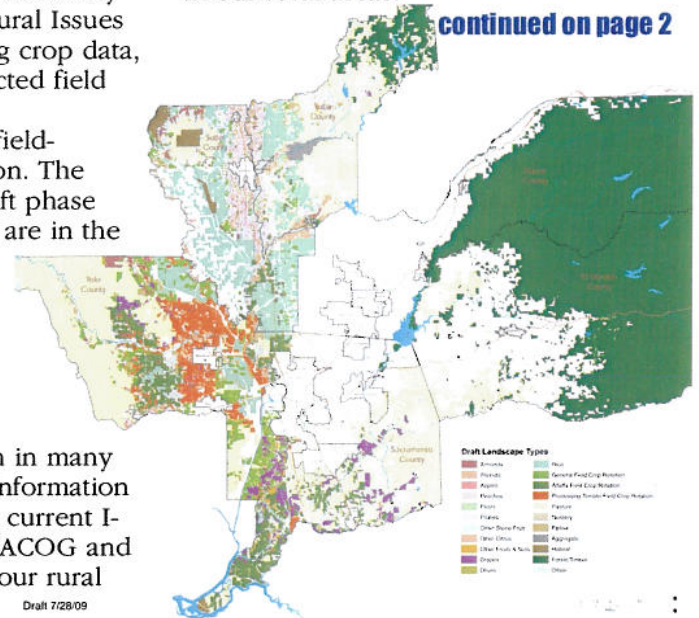
Crop Mapping

Last summer, SACOG began developing a crop inventory for the six-county region with assistance from the University of California Kearney Agricultural Center and the University of California, Davis Agricultural Issues Center. Starting with existing crop data, researchers and staff conducted field surveys and aerial image review to develop a field-level crop map for our region. The data are currently in the draft phase (see map) and SACOG staff are in the process of vetting the data with county agricultural commissioners and farm bureaus for accuracy.

These crop data serve the RUCS project and the region in many ways. Once complete, this information will be used to enhance the current I-PLACE³S modeling tool so SACOG and others can begin to look at our rural areas with the same level

of detail with which urban areas can be analyzed. Additionally, this mapping effort is intended to provide a more in-depth look at the variety of land uses in our rural areas.

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Infrastructure and Fiscal Modeling Update

Identifying where gaps exist between the costs for developing, maintaining, and serving public infrastructure and services and the revenue a municipality generates is a key challenge to the rural communities around the region. As part of the RUCS small communities topic, SACOG will analyze the impacts various land use patterns have on infrastructure and service demands, and what revenue may be available to cover those costs.

SACOG will enhance its existing infrastructure cost model with updated cost variables and a new module for estimating operation and maintenance costs. This work will also include a fiscal impacts model to estimate the revenue that is typically available with rural development patterns, and costs for services such as police, fire, parks, and libraries. The integration of these

models will be the basis for small communities analysis. They will be used to identify the thresholds of development at which new infrastructure is needed, when new or expanded public services are needed, and what new or revenue expansion opportunities exist.

As part of this work, SACOG will be forming a technical advisory committee charged with reviewing model inputs and outputs. The committee, formed from experts from local jurisdiction staff and partner agencies from around the region, will also help guide the small communities topic. The goal of this effort is for the committee to take ownership of the process, and help create a tool that they can use to help answer the questions facing the region's small communities.

Crop Mapping (continued)

A typical general plan map depicts agriculture as one color, green, throughout a jurisdiction. This crop mapping effort provides a more accurate picture of what is happening within agricultural areas, highlighting the variety of land use activities (i.e., production) in the region, and informing planning for transportation patterns related to agricultural needs.

Look for more updates related to this crop inventory later this year as SACOG works towards adding small and local-serving farms to complete the picture.

For more information on the crop mapping project, contact Joe Concannon at (916) 340-6234 or jconcannon@sacog.org.

Workshop (continued)

To RSVP for the workshop, contact Monica Hernández at (916) 340-6237 or mhernandez@sacog.org.

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Stay current on rural-urban issues
at www.sacog.org/rucs

Open Space Easements in the Region

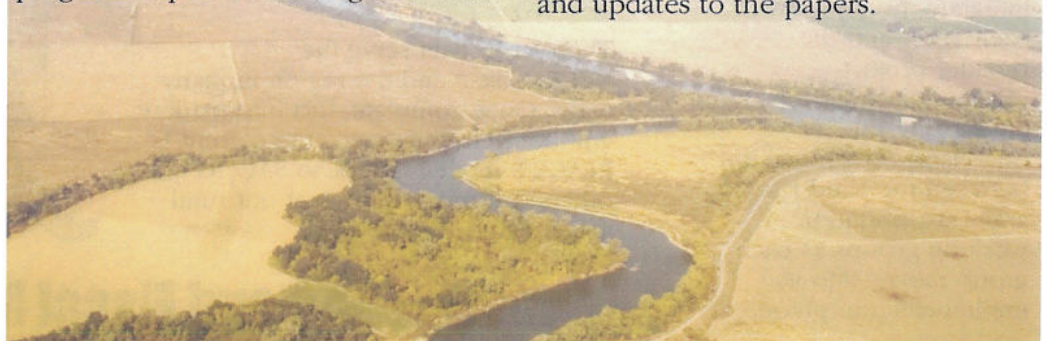
In June, SACOG conducted an e-survey of the Land Use Working Group to get a sense of the types of conservation programs that have been used in the SACOG region. Survey respondents indicated that the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Conservancy Program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program are important programs for funding permanent conservation easements on agricultural land.

Another set of easement funding programs, available through the California Wildlife Conservation Board, focus on protecting agricultural lands that also provide habitat. Respondents stated that these habitat-oriented programs were very effective in protecting land, though it was more difficult to meet the program requirements of grants with

habitat restrictions.

In SACOG's research on current conditions and innovations in rural land use, this theme of balancing habitat requirements with market flexibility for farming is a difficulty that land owners, local governments and others continue to struggle with. Multiple-use open lands do coexist in the region, and some of these situations have been protected in perpetuity through conservation easements. The question is, "how do we maintain that balance of economic viability and environmental sustainability over the long term?"

Research will continue to explore this question and others through the draft papers on the RUCS Wiki. To review the papers and add to the discussion, visit: www.sacog.org/RUCS. From there, you can also get involved by signing up for notifications of meetings and updates to the papers.



Rural Funding Guide and Technical Assistance

Securing funds to maintain and improve our region's transportation infrastructure is a difficult task for any agency, but the task is even more difficult in rural areas. In order to help local agencies take advantage of the competitive funding programs that are available, SACOG has created a rural funding guide.

With limited tax revenue and higher fuel and materials costs, many agencies find themselves deferring maintenance, leading to costlier future repairs. Using transportation grant funds for infrastructure improvements can be an effective

alternative to dwindling tax revenues, but finding and applying for such programs is time- and labor-intensive. The SACOG rural funding guide highlights programs that are targeted or available to rural agencies, briefly describing each funding program, listing types of projects eligible, and providing other relevant information.

Through its technical assistance program, SACOG offers application and data analysis support to make agencies' applications to these programs more competitive. The rural funding guide will be available at www.sacog.org/RUCS.