

December 20, 2007

RE: Draft MTP2035 Project List Comments

Dear SACOG Members:

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Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide public comment on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035. The MTP has come a long way since the 2020 MTP plan envisioned by public forums, including the 2004 Transportation Roundtable. The MTP for 2035 sought public input during planning process at community workshops, the Blueprint workshops, and a regional TALL Order forum. The MTP is a living document that has undergone changes and revisions over the years. SACOG implemented the Blueprint process to provide better traffic models complimented by suggested land uses to improve transportation systems throughout our region; to improve conformity to SAFETEA-LU, new federal requirements, and improve air quality as a target for attainment of clean air quality in our region. Clearly these are lofty objectives and remain constraints for SACOG in the future. However, SACOG is not prevented from approving projects as listed in the 2035 MTP. In review of the draft

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2035 MTP, several issues of concern related to long-range transportation plans will become financially constrained by our federal and state dollars. This makes the selection process for projects more competitive, and provides an impediment to the Blueprint preferred scenario process if our local cities and counties resist in recognizing the basic principles of prioritizing the right projects. Considerable funds are still allocated to feed into the increased demand for new roads and highways, car pool lanes, road widening, extensions, intersections, and interchanges. Without a proper balance of alternate transit modes our dependency on cars, coupled with a lack of investment in smart growth principles will do little to assist in reducing VMT throughout the region in the future. Increased constraints related to our push for expanding highways, does little to assist SACOG with air quality conformity in the future. Our region cannot decrease carbon dioxide emissions in the future without every city and county recognizing the need for adoption of smart growth principles. Without meaningful dialogue, SACOG's

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Blueprint process and long-term scenarios may evolve into some other giant. During review of SACOG's project lists for MTP 2035, we are still headed to heavy congestion on our freeways. Additionally, land use and planning mentioned in the MTP 2035 does not give SACOG any authority to implement its best model over land uses in the future. Further expansion of highway to meet travel demand from place A to B will become very cumbersome without alternate modes of travel, light rail, rail, bus, shuttles, and other choices, such as serious implementation of the Blueprint principles to invest in our inner cities, while not cutting through our natural valleys, creeks, rivers, and sensitive lands. If we continue to build transportation systems that rely on the use of vehicles we will impede our ability to provide clean air for future generations. SACOG needs to continually educate the public and encourage alternative modes of transit through our local cities and counties. Sadly, our heavy reliance on vehicles, with increased demand for more freeways, interchanges, and bypasses seep into our communities and eventually slice them down the middle.

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Communities translate into regional impacts. It is time to take a fresh look at what our local decision makers, our regional bodies are supporting, and continually include the public in this process, so that future investments across the region, over 28 years, will support better growth principles and land uses that contribute to positive and significant benefits for better air quality for future generations.

Sincerely,

Angela Torrens

Former Member of SACOG Transportation Roundtable