

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is a voluntary association of governments. Member jurisdictions include: the County of Sacramento (including the cities of Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt, Isleton, Rancho Cordova and Sacramento); the County of Yolo (including the cities of Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, and Woodland); the County of Sutter (including the cities of Live Oak and Yuba City); the County of Yuba (including the cities of Marysville and Wheatland); Placer County (including the cities of Auburn, Colfax, Lincoln, Rocklin, Roseville and Town of Loomis) and El Dorado County (including the City of Placerville). Figure 1-1 identifies the SACOG planning area.

SACOG is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Sacramento, Davis and Marysville/Yuba City urbanized areas. Under federal transportation regulations, an MPO is a regional transportation planning body that is responsible for comprehensive transportation planning and programming for in urbanized areas with populations of over 50,000. An MPO is the designated regionwide recipient of Federal funds for the transportation planning process. SACOG is also the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for the counties of Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter and Yuba. The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency and the El Dorado County Transportation Commission are the state-designated RTPAs for those counties. A RTPA is a multi-county or county-level agency responsible for regional transportation planning to meet state planning mandates. RTPAs can be Local Transportation Commissions, Councils of Government, MPOs or statutorily created agencies. In the Sacramento region SACOG is both a Council of Government and an MPO.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the comprehensive long-range transportation plan for the region's multi-modal transportation system and one of SACOG's primary statutory responsibilities as the region's MPO. An up-to-date MTP is a legal requirement if projects are to use federal or state transportation funds. Under federal and state law, SACOG must adopt an MTP and update it at least every four years if the region is to receive federal or state transportation dollars. The MTP provides project priorities for public transit, streets/roads, bicycles, and pedestrian improvements.

SACOG has prepared the MTP for 2035 to address anticipated transportation needs of the Sacramento Region forecasted for the year 2035. In federally designated air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) require that the region submit an MTP in order to ensure that proposed transportation improvements do not adversely affect regional air quality attainment goals. Portions of the MTP Plan Area are in a federally designated ozone non-attainment area. The MTP must cover a period of at least 20 years into the future. This MTP is a 28-year plan for transportation improvements in the six-county region based on projections for growth in population, housing and jobs. The MTP is key to the quality of life and economic health of the six-county region.

An MTP is prepared by SACOG for the purpose of implementing regional transportation projects and has been previously completed every three years. With the passage of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU), this requirement changes to every four years. The federal regulations require all federally-funded and all regionally significant projects to be included in a document called the federal Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP. Specific funding decisions regarding MTP projects are often included in what SACOG refers to as the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program or MTIP. Many of the projects contained within the MTP for 2035 have been carried forward from the 2006 MTP and from the 2007 – 2010 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP). Once a project is included in the MTIP it is considered to

be reasonably foreseeable in terms of its likelihood of implementation. This Draft EIR evaluates the entire MTP for 2035 with a focus on new projects.

PURPOSE OF THIS EIR

The subject of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035 (MTP 2035) of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments. As the MTP 2035 consists of a group of discretionary actions on the part of SACOG, the MTP 2035 is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines. CEQA requires that state and local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on those projects (Public Resources Code 21000 et seq.) Although the individual programs and projects included in the MTP 2035 will be implemented by various public agencies, at the regional plan level, which is the scope of this program EIR, SACOG is responsible for carrying out and approving the MTP 2035 and as such, is the lead agency for the purpose of preparing the environmental review of this proposed project. This EIR has been prepared by SACOG pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 15000 et seq.) .

An environmental impact report (EIR) is an informational document used in state, regional, and local planning and decision-making processes to meet the requirements of CEQA. The EIR for a proposed project must disclose environmental effects that cannot be avoided; growth-inducing effects; effects found not to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of all past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects. In addition, an EIR must identify potential methods of avoiding or reducing significant effects (i.e., mitigation measures) and alternatives to the proposed project or program.

The purpose of this EIR is to analyze, on a program level, the environmental effects of the MTP for 2035, and to provide local decision-makers and the public with an objective analysis of the potential environmental consequences of implementation of the proposed set of improvements to the metropolitan transportation system. The information presented in this document is intended to provide a full disclosure of the potential impacts and to increase public awareness and participation in the regional transportation planning process.

PURPOSE OF A PROGRAM EIR

The State CEQA Guidelines define a program EIR under Section 15168 as "...an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) Geographically, (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, (3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways."

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program, which will be implemented through a series or group of later actions. Each of those individual later actions or projects would be required to comply with CEQA. The individual impacts of projects are more appropriately addressed at the time that specific projects and programs are designed and undergo environmental review by implementing transportation agencies, authorities, and local governments.

A program EIR has several advantages. In this case, use of a program EIR allows SACOG (the lead agency) to characterize the MTP as the "project" being analyzed and approved and to consider the broad, regional effects of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory

Sacramento Metropolitan Planning Area

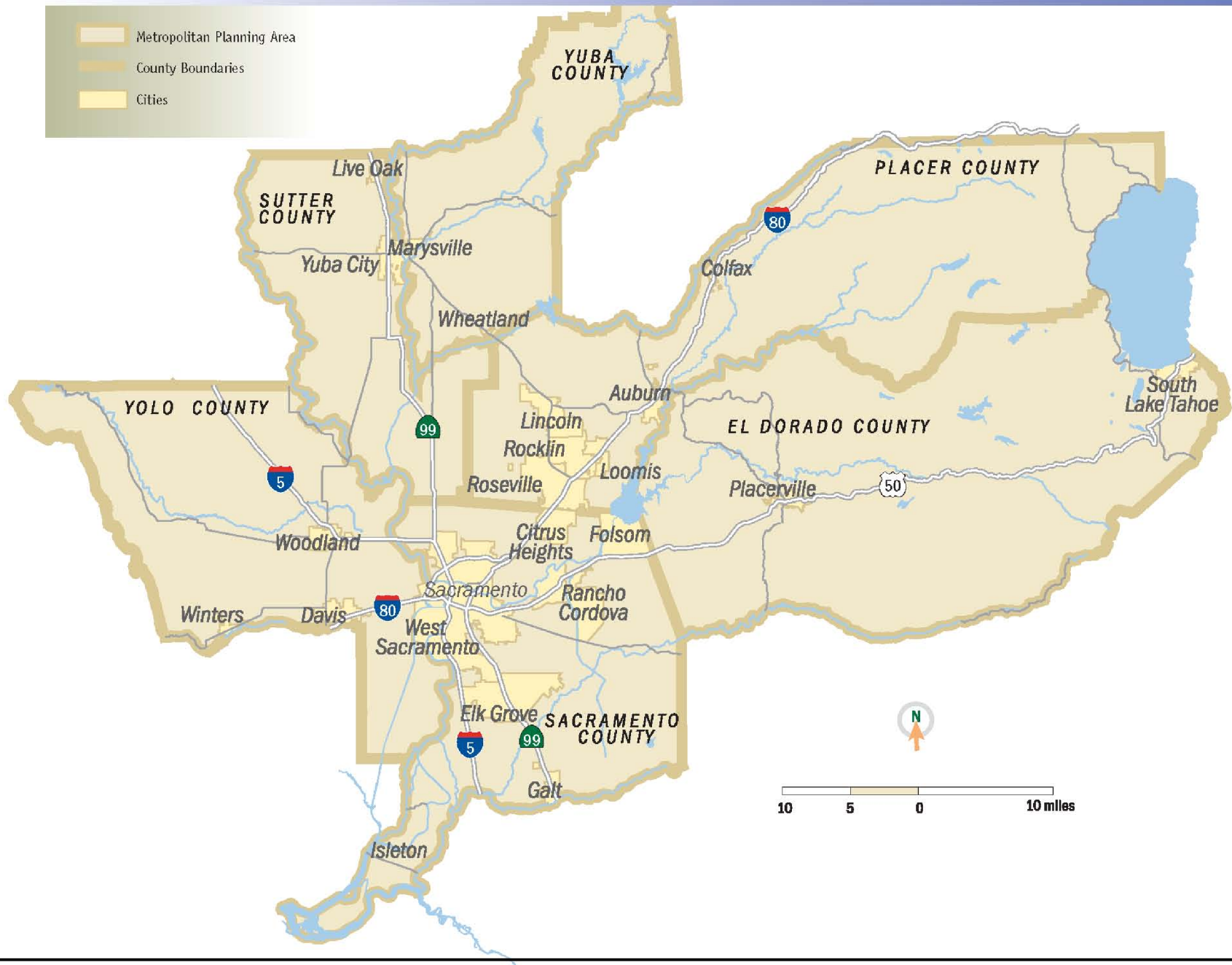


Figure 1-1: Sacramento Metropolitan Planning Area

approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative effects. It provides a basic reference document to reduce repetitive analysis of issues that may be relevant to multiple projects.

The State CEQA Guidelines encourage agencies to use a program EIR in circumstances involving implementation of a series of related projects. A program EIR is an environmental document that provides a framework for future environmental analyses. Environmental analyses of individual projects within the MTP would be tiered off this program EIR, as identified in State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15152:

- a. “Tiering” refers to using the analysis of general matters contained in a broader EIR (such as one prepared for a general plan or policy statement) with later EIRs and negative declarations on narrower projects; incorporating by reference the general discussions from the broader EIR; and concentrating the later EIR or negative declaration solely on the issues specific to the later project.
- b. Agencies are encouraged to tier the environmental analyses which they prepare for separate but related projects. This approach can eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and focus the later EIR or negative declaration on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review.

As a programmatic document, the EIR presents a region-wide assessment of the Plan’s impacts. The focus of this program EIR is to address the impacts of projects which, individually or in the aggregate, may be regionally significant. Specific analysis of site-specific impacts of individual projects is not the intended use of a program EIR. Many specific projects are not currently defined to the level that would even allow for such an analysis. Individual specific environmental analysis of each project will be undertaken by the appropriate implementing agency prior to each project being considered for approval.

It is anticipated that this environmental impact report will assist SACOG’s member jurisdictions and Caltrans in future project-specific environmental reviews. The focus of this Draft Program EIR is to highlight potential impacts which will need to be further evaluated once precise scopes, designs, and locations of transportation facilities are more clearly defined. This document also recommends mitigation measures which should be incorporated into the environmental documentation for specific projects and which would be the responsibility of outside agencies to implement.

RELATIONSHIP OF THIS EIR TO METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The MTP is a planning and policy document that identifies long-range transportation needs and funding priorities for the region. The MTP is intended to provide guidance and direction to the cities and counties in determining priorities for transportation projects and expenditures. The MTP is implemented through subsequent project-specific transportation programming by local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

This program EIR is designed to inform decision-makers, responsible agencies and the general public of the range of environmental impacts associated with approving the MTP for 2035. Because CEQA requires that the mitigation measures identified in this EIR be fully enforceable, mitigation measures identified in this EIR must be incorporated into the policies of the MTP or into the conditions for approval of individual projects proposed within the MTP to the extent that SACOG is empowered to implement mitigation measures.

Simultaneously, to the extent that MTP policies would contribute to avoidance or reduction of potential environmental effects, this EIR will account for avoidance or reduction of potential environmental effects in considering their significance. Section 15382 of the State CEQA Guidelines define a "significant effect on the environment" as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This program EIR is the first tier of environmental documents prepared and later would be augmented by second-tier environmental documents when additional details for those specific transportation projects are developed during the engineering design process. Specific projects included in the MTP would be reevaluated when they are proposed for implementation. Planning for each specific project would involve refining project information to indicate the type of project to be implemented, location of the project, and a description of actions to be taken throughout project implementation. The project implementing agencies that would be undertaking future environmental review for projects in the MTP would include the six counties and twenty-cities within the MTP Plan Area, as follows:

Table 1 – 1. Project Implementing Agencies Undertaking Future Environmental Review

El Dorado County
City of Placerville
Placer County
City of Auburn
City of Colfax
City of Lincoln
Town of Loomis
City of Rocklin
City of Roseville
Sacramento County
City of Citrus Heights
City of Elk Grove
City of Folsom
City of Galt
City of Isleton
City of Rancho Cordova
City of Sacramento
Sutter County
City of Live Oak
City of Yuba City

Yolo County

City of Davis
City of West Sacramento
City of Winters
City of Woodland

Yuba County

City of Marysville
City of Wheatland

Other project implementing agencies may include public transit providers, other public agencies such as air districts, colleges and university transportation providers, transportation management associations, among others.

All of these types of agencies, as well as the SACOG member agencies, would be able to prepare subsequent environmental documents would that could incorporate by reference the appropriate information from this program EIR regarding secondary effects, cumulative impacts, broad alternatives, and other relevant factors. Subsequent environmental documents would focus solely on site-specific issues that have not been considered in this program EIR. If activity were later found to have effects that were not examined in this program EIR, additional CEQA review would be required. If SACOG finds that implementation of a later activity would have no new effects and that no new mitigation measures would be required, that activity would require no additional CEQA review.

SCOPE OF THIS EIR

This EIR analyzes the proposed MTP for 2035 project. The MTP components are analyzed at a program level. This EIR concentrates on the long-term environmental impacts of the MTP components and provides the basis for further project-level CEQA (and National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]) compliance for implementation of future transportation projects.

Each chapter of this draft EIR provides an introduction, a regulatory and environmental setting, an explanation of the methodology and assumptions for the analysis, the criteria for determining significance of impacts, and the impacts and proposed mitigation measures. The following topics are analyzed in this EIR:

- aesthetics;
- agricultural resources;
- air quality;
- biological resources;
- cultural resources;
- energy and global climate change;
- geology, soils and seismicity;
- hazards and hazardous materials;

- hydrology and water quality;
- land use and planning;
- noise;
- population and housing;
- public services;
- noise;
- public services;
- recreation;
- transportation;
- utilities and service systems;
- cumulative impacts;
- and growth-related impacts.

TERMINOLOGY USED TO DESCRIBE IMPACTS

This report establishes thresholds of significance based on State CEQA Guidelines, and identifies the following types of impacts:

- a *less-than-significant* impact is considered to cause no substantial adverse change in the environment and requires no mitigation measures,
- a *significant* impact is considered to cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment but can be reduced to a less-than-significant level by implementing mitigation measures,
- a *significant unavoidable* impact is considered to cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment for which feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level, and
- a *beneficial* impact is considered to cause a positive change in the environment.

CEQA also requires that each public agency mitigate or avoid, wherever feasible, the significant environmental effects of project it approves or implements. This EIR also recommends mitigation measures to reduce impacts of the project. The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15370) define mitigation as:

- a. avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or part of an action;
- b. minimizing the impact by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- c. rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or improvements to the environment.

REPORT ORGANIZATION AND TERMINOLOGY

Organization

The content and format of this EIR are designed to meet the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. The report is organized into the following chapters so that the reader can easily obtain information about the MTP:

- The “Executive Summary” presents a summary of the proposed MTP and alternatives; a summary of the impacts and mitigation measures; and impact conclusions regarding cumulative impacts, growth inducement, and irreversible environmental changes. The environmentally superior alternative is also identified.
- Chapter 1, “Introduction,” provides background information on the MTP and an overview of the EIR.
- Chapter 2, “Purpose and Need”, describes what the MTP is intended to do and why the MTP is necessary.
- Chapter 3, “Project Description,” describes the MTP objectives, and the proposed project, the MTP for 2035.
- Chapters 4–19 are each devoted to an environmental resource area, describing the existing conditions or setting; specific impacts that would result from implementation of the MTP; and mitigation measures, if available, that would eliminate or reduce significant impacts.
- Chapter 20, “Cumulative Impacts”, includes a discussion of cumulative impacts.
- Chapter 21, “Growth Related Impacts”, provides a discussion of population and employment growth relative to the proposed project.
- Chapter 22, “Alternatives and CEQA Conclusions,” describes the alternatives development process, and alternatives to the proposed project. This chapter also includes a discussion of significant and unavoidable impacts, and the Environmentally Superior Alternative.
- Chapter 23, “Report Preparation,” lists the individuals involved in preparing this draft EIR.
- Chapter 24, “References Cited,” identifies the documents used (printed references) and individuals consulted (personal communications) during preparation of this EIR.
- Chapter 25, “Glossary of Terms and Acronyms” provides definitions of terminology and acronyms commonly used throughout this document.

Technical appendices are included at the end of the report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Relationship to Other EIRs

As a Program EIR, the preparation of this document does not relieve the sponsors of the projects listed in the MTP for 2035 from the responsibility of complying with the requirements of CEQA. As previously mentioned, individual projects are required to prepare a more precise, project-level analysis to fulfill CEQA requirements. The lead agency responsible for reviewing these projects shall determine the level of CEQA review needed. The level of analysis needed and the scope of that analysis will depend on the specifics of the particular project.

Schedule of the Environmental Review Process For MTP 2035

- Notice of Preparation distributed - January 11, 2007
- Draft EIR prepared January - September, 2007
- Draft EIR distributed for 45-day public review - November 5, 2007
- Public Hearing on the Draft EIR - November 29, 2007
- Public review period for Draft EIR ends - December 20, 2007
- Final EIR prepared and distributed – January - February 2008
- SACOG Board of Directors requested to certify EIR - February 21, 2008

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

SACOG is committed to effectively involving the public in its transportation planning and programming activities. SACOG seeks public involvement throughout transportation decision-making, from the earliest planning stages, including the identification of the purpose and need, through the development of the range of potential solutions, up to and including the decision to implement specific solutions.

In accordance with the Public Participation Plan approved by the Board of Directors in July 2007, SACOG has provided, and will provide, opportunities for the public to participate in the development of the MTP. Additionally, Section 15201 of the State CEQA Guidelines require that “Each public agency should include provisions in its CEQA procedures for wide public involvement, formal and informal, consistent with its existing activities and procedures, in order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues related to the agency's activities.” (State CEQA Guidelines, 2007)

Proposed MTP

Public involvement is a major component of the regional transportation planning process. In accordance with the requirements of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU), SACOG has provided opportunities for citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning processing with the development of the MTP for 2035. The public must be given information, notified in a timely manner of participation opportunities and requirements, and provided with access to submit their input. Low-income persons, minority households, and Native American Indian tribal governments must be given explicit consideration.

During the development of this MTP, SACOG has provided extensive opportunities for community participation. Nearly 1,800 residents from around the region gave input on the MTP at community workshops during early 2006. In the fall of 2006, 1,225 citizens participated in simultaneous workshops at eight locations throughout the SACOG region. An electronic TV “town hall” style meeting was broadcast throughout the region on a local television station in early January 2007. In addition, a telephone public opinion survey of 1050 residents of the SACOG six county area, and an online survey of 353 SACOG area residents was also conducted. Also, three focus group discussions were also conducted. During the summer of 2007, a draft MTP project list was provided to the public during a 45-day comment period.

Program EIR

Public participation is also an important component of the environmental review process. SACOG distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR on January 11, 2007, to identify issues of concern regarding the MTP and to incorporate comments into the analysis for the draft program EIR. The NOP and comment letters are provided in Appendix B.

Because the MTP is considered a project of statewide, regional, or areawide significance (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15206), the draft EIR has been released for a 45-day public review period. At the conclusion of the public review period, the SACOG Board of Directors will select the preferred alternative for the MTP and certify the final EIR. SACOG will hold a public hearing on November 29, 2007 before certifying the final EIR. The purpose of this hearing will be to present the results of the draft program EIR, and provide agencies and the public with opportunities to provide comments on the issues addressed in that document. These comments will be addressed in the final EIR.

Notices will be distributed to all interested agencies and persons in advance of the public hearing and for the SACOG Board meeting, at which the final EIR is scheduled to be certified. Comments on this draft EIR are due to SACOG no later than 5:00 p.m., December 20, 2007 and can be forwarded by any of the following methods:

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