



Shared Services & New Initiatives:

General Plan Technical Support

SERVICE CONCEPT: General Planning Services

DESCRIPTION SACOG could provide data support and analysis services to agencies undertaking updates of General Plans (GP).

ORIGIN OF THE IDEA Over time, SACOG has developed expertise in land use data management, land use planning, infrastructure finance, public outreach, transportation planning, travel demand forecasting, and other technical disciplines needed for GP updates. Agencies generally contract out for many, or all, of these services when a GP is updated.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF INTEREST All counties and municipalities in the region are required to maintain and periodically update GPs so the need for this service does not vary by geography. Depending on the size of the agency, the complexity of the General Plan itself, and the availability of staff to manage or work on a GP update, varies widely. Many agencies have reduced the number of trained planners and engineers that are able to provide technical work and review for GP updates. Even when consultants are hired to do GP work, reduced budgets and staffing levels at many local agencies make it difficult to complete a comprehensive GP and provide effective project management of the contracted technical work.

CONCEPT SACOG could provide a wide range of technical, policy and project management services. The level of support could vary, depending on the needs of the agency and the extent of services provided through consultant contracts.

This proposal includes four types of support:

Technical Review & Project Management Support—assistance in reviewing the work scope and deliverables for GP work contracted by agencies. Support would also be available for more substantial project management of technical work contracted by agencies.

GP Data Support—assistance in developing land use, demographic, economic, transportation, or other data needed for GP updates.

GP Policy & Planning Support - assistance in developing future growth scenarios and associated investments and policies to implement the GP. Planning assistance can also be provided in ensuring the GP fulfills regulatory requirements, including CEQA compliance.

GP Public Participation Services— assistance in public opinion research, stakeholder identification, and outreach activities, such as focus groups and public workshops.

*Travel Demand Forecasting Services and Analysis**- Data, modeling and analysis for the Circulation Element of a GP.

*Cross-reference to “Travel Demand Forecasting” concept

SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS Delivery options would vary by the type of service provided, but would likely be provided on a fee-for-service basis.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Lower costs of completing GPs and GP Updates.
- Increased understanding of the local jurisdiction’s planning opportunities and challenges benefit regional and sub-regional economic development initiatives.
- Increased alignment of growth forecasts and transportation needs between local GPs and the regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).
- Clear and consistent documentation between the GP and MTP/SCS environmental documents may result in greater CEQA streamlining opportunities.

POTENTIAL RISKS

- GP updates are resource intensive efforts, and could result in workload issues if SACOG were committed to too many projects at once.

FINANCIAL

- *Potential savings* – By providing a line-item menu of data products and professional services by task, the GP services could reduce, or eliminate, the need to hire new, permanent staff or to let large contracts for data products and technical work. Savings could range from nominal to hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- *Potential costs* – Service cost varies by support service provided. A menu of services would provide costs by data product or specialized labor needed

INTERESTED PARTIES All local agencies and consultants who normally do GP technical studies and work.

ISSUES TO RESOLVE

- Cost-sharing structure, including the differentiation between one-time and ongoing service needs and level of support needs.
- Principles for coordination of application matching opportunity to local jurisdiction GP and regional MTP/SCS.
- Current practice allows local agencies to maintain their own land use and transportation network assumptions, largely without review by any outside agency. The shared service approach may require SACOG to maintain multiple land use and networks files, or work with agencies to develop an approach for maintaining consistent regional assumptions about growth and associated infrastructure.