



Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

Item #13-8-8 Information

July 25, 2013

Regional Food Desert Mapping Study

Issue: Staff is working on mapping and methodology to assess the six-county region for food deserts.

Recommendation: None. This item is for information only.

Discussion: The Regional Food Desert Mapping Study was funded through a grant from the California Strategic Growth Council as part of the work of the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS). The project considers the locations of various food outlets and overlays access via walking, bicycling, transit and personal vehicle. Supporting the RUCS objective to enhance economic viability in rural areas, the study highlights potential market opportunities for local growers to supply local food in underserved markets.

The study included 308 grocery stores, farmers markets and locally serving farms with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or U-Pick programs and includes information on income and auto ownership. The maps include Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, as defined in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS). EJ Communities are census tracts with low-income, minority, compromised access to a vehicle, single parent households, elder population, and low educational attainment characteristics. Consistent with MTP/SCS, the study considers access from a multi-modal transportation network—including walking, bicycling, public transit, and driving. Relevant policies and strategies are included in Attachment A. If residents can reach a grocery store within 15 minutes via walking, bicycling, transit and/or personal vehicle, they are considered to have “good access”. Communities that cannot reach a food outlet within 15 minutes are considered to have “poor access” and can be considered a food desert by the methodology used. Attachments B and C provide examples of this mapping analysis and Attachment D shows communities with low automobile ownership.

There are significant differences in level of access when restricting access to all modes of transportation including driving versus only active modes (i.e., walking, bicycling and public transit). SACOG’s analysis also found that there are more food access challenges in rural, often unincorporated areas throughout the region because the small populations of rural communities typically do not generate enough sales to recruit grocery stores.

The Food Desert Study examines food access—an inherently local issue—from a regional level. Some venues are absent from the research, including small ethnic markets, convenience stores with fresh food, pharmacies, dollar stores, farm stands, etc., which may be responsible for an underestimation of food outlets throughout the region. The methodology is very flexible and can be adjusted to analyze access at a more local level. Staff is available to work with member jurisdictions to further refine the methodology to better reflect local conditions. The regional maps are informational and make no recommendations on alleviating food deserts; however, the methodology is available to support efforts to improve food access, particularly via local sources of food. A briefing on the methodology is in Attachment E.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
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Attachments

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Attachment A

MTP/SCS Policies and Supportive Strategies

2.1. Strategy: Provide computer software, training and technical assistance to local governments.

2.5. Strategy: Continue to develop and apply health and social equity analysis methods and performance measures to help inform MTP/SCS updates and local discussions on development patterns, including transportation performance measures and opportunities related to accessibility, equity, public health and youth.

2.6. Strategy: Assist with mapping and coordination between SACOG, transit, and health and human service providers on transit planning and siting of lifeline services needing transit access. Develop educational materials and life-cycle methodology on public facility planning that incorporates the costs of extending transit service to locations outside existing transit corridors.

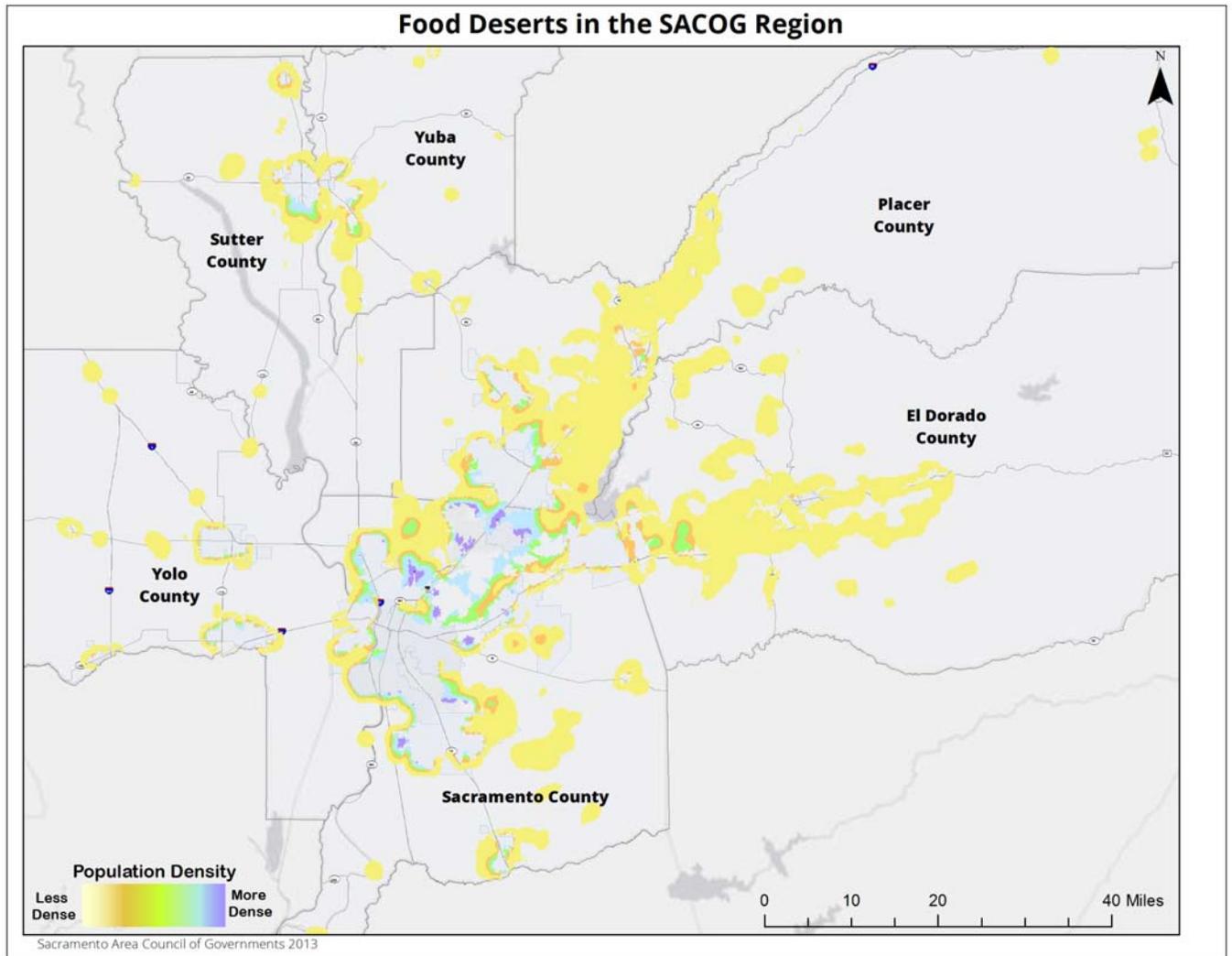
7. Policy: Implement the Rural-Urban Connection Strategy (RUCS) which ensures good rural-urban connections and promotes the economic viability of rural lands while also protecting open space resources to expand and support the implementation of the Blueprint growth strategy and the MTP/SCS.

7.3. Strategy: Ensure that the RUCS is coordinated with the Blueprint and MTP/SCS to support each of these planning efforts individually, as well as collectively.

24. Policy: Ensure community outreach to low income and minority communities whose needs and concerns otherwise might be overlooked.

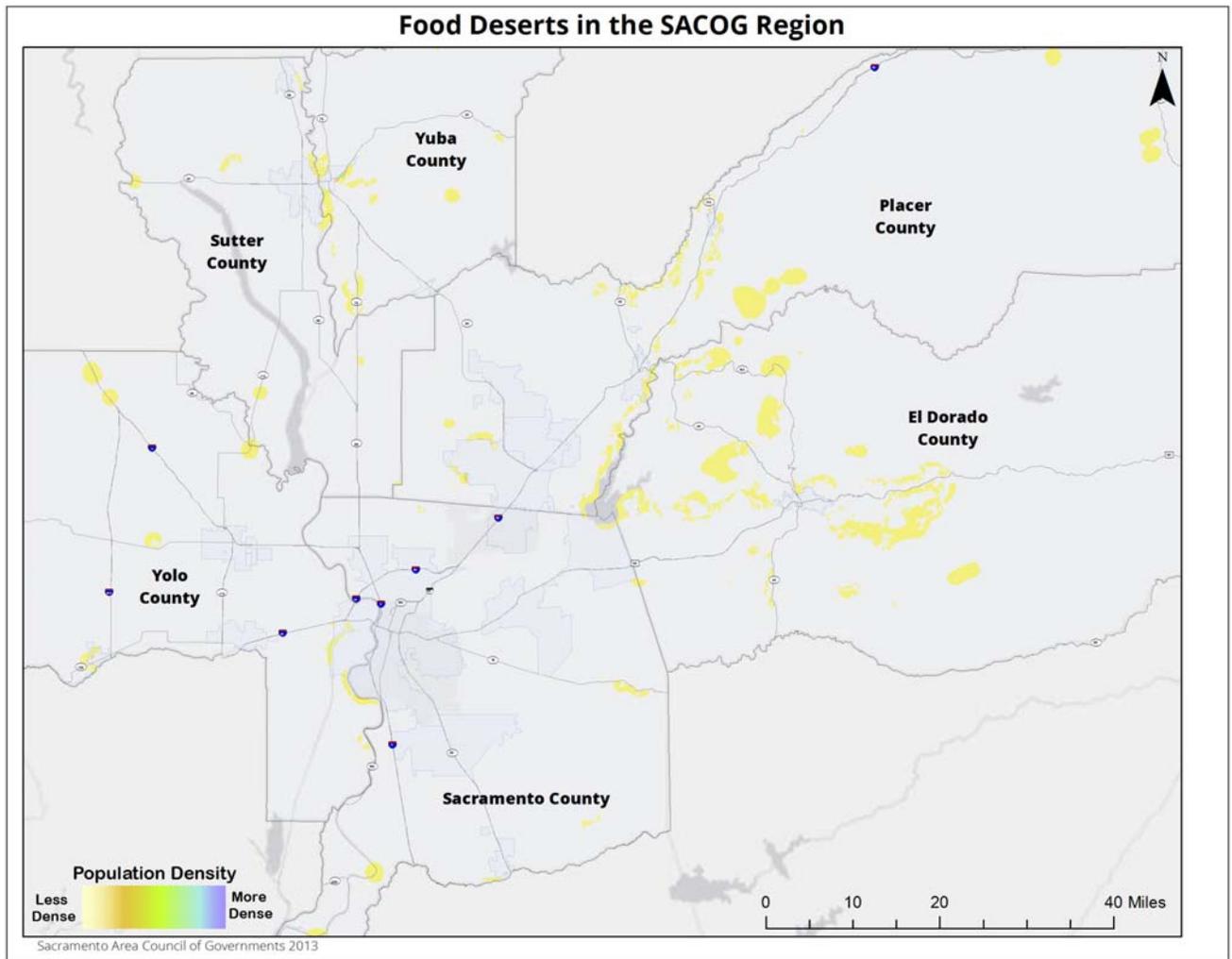
Attachment B

Food Deserts in the SACOG Region— when access includes walking, bicycling and public transit.



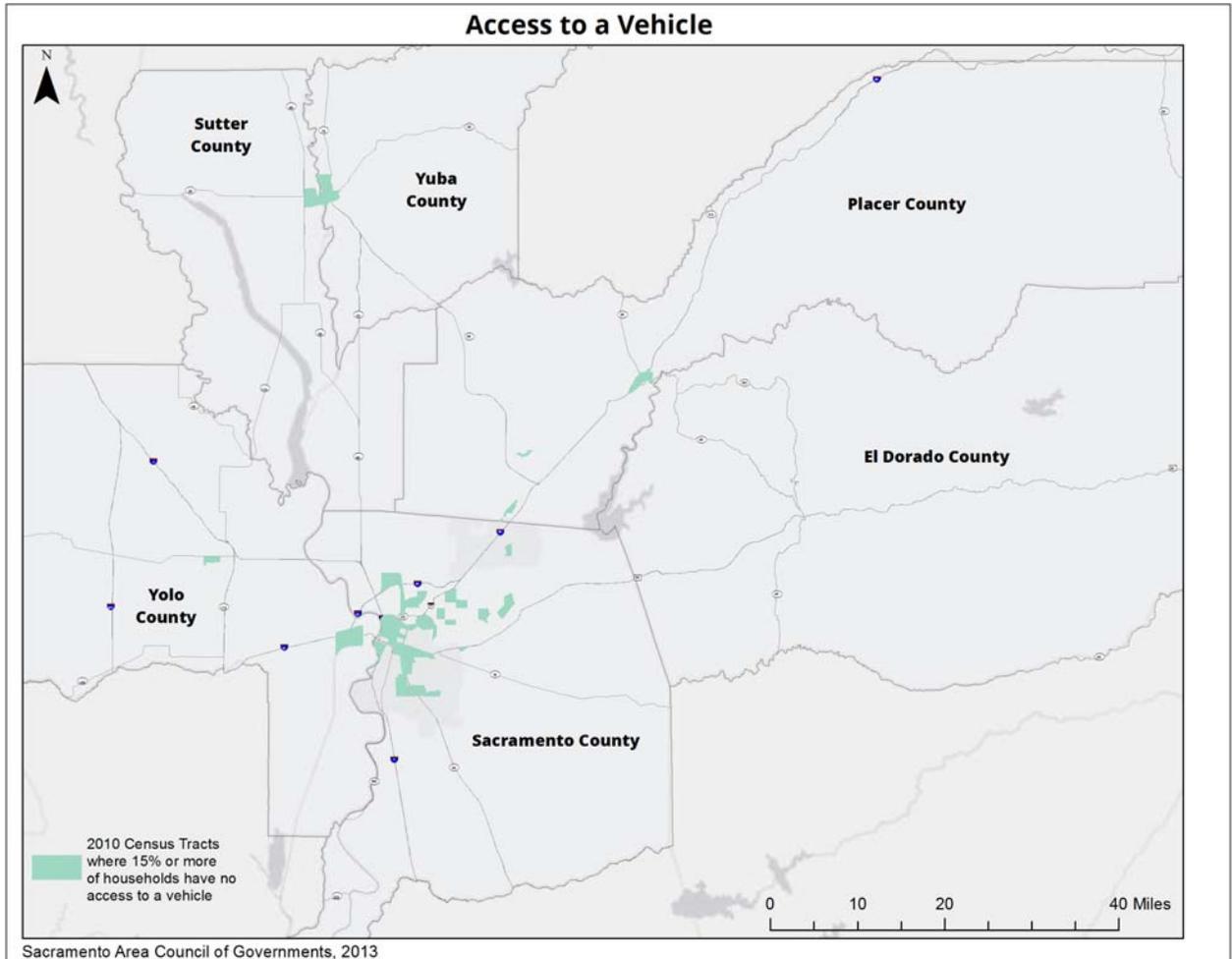
Attachment C

Food Deserts in the SACOG Region— when access includes walking, bicycling, public transit, and driving.



Attachment D

Communities with Poor Access to a Vehicle



Attachment E

Methodology Brief

The regional food desert mapping study builds off a 2009 report to Congress by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and their subsequent online Food Mapping Tool. It uses similar methodologies to identify food deserts, but has certain modifications to fit the SACOG region—primarily an extended dataset to include local food and more transportation options to access a food outlet. Access is defined in this report as the ability to travel to a food outlet in 15 minutes or less.

The study looks at 308 grocery stores, farmers markets, and locally serving farms with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or U-Pick programs in the region. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the analysis determines whether communities can or cannot access a food outlet in 15 minutes via walking, bicycling or public transit. These three modes of travel create a mobility boundary. Communities that are within the 15 minute mobility boundary are considered to have “good access” to food. Communities that are not within the mobility buffer are considered to have “poor access” to food. A separate driving analysis is included in the series of maps.

Travel assumptions for the various modes of transportation are as follows:

- 3 mph walking speed on roads with sidewalks
- 10 mph bicycling speed on Class I and II bike lanes
- 45 mph driving speed on major roads and 25 mph on local roads
- Transit routes are only considered if they have 15 minute headways (or better)

The study also includes a socio-economic component, which focuses on underserved communities in the region. Low income communities are Census tracts where 45% or more of the population earns 200% of less of the federal poverty level, based on 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) data. Minority communities are Census block groups where 70% or more of the population is Asian Pacific Islander, African American, Native American or other Non-White ethnic group, based on 2010 Census data. Communities with poor access to a vehicle are Census tracts where greater than 15% of households do not own a vehicle.