

# Sacramento Region's Pilot Program to Boost Infill Housing, Stimulate Covid-19 Recovery, and Grow Sustainably



## Greenhouse Gas Reductions and Economic Development

“Green Means Go” is a multi-year pilot program proposed by SACOG to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the six-county Sacramento region by accelerating infill development through infrastructure investments and reducing and electrifying vehicle trips. It would allocate a proportional share of existing state grant funding to public works infrastructure investments that will create more infill housing opportunities and greater mobility, while also achieving emission reductions. Green Means Go, when adequately supported, will also stimulate recovery from the economic effects of Covid-19 and improve quality of life in the region by improving local economic development, increasing housing availability, and decreasing traffic congestion.

## Why Green Means Go

When the California Air Resources Board (CARB) established SACOG's 19 percent GHG reduction target, SACOG was the only region in the state to have its target conditioned on successful implementation of a pilot program. The pilot nature of Green Means Go allows it to be a model for other regions on how to effectively grow their communities while at the same time reducing GHG emissions.

Green Means Go is a key component of SACOG's recently approved 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), which sets the goal to have one third of all homes and half of all jobs in a transit priority area. SACOG jurisdictions have gone through an extensive process to develop “Green Zones” that meet the program criteria, but also face significant barriers to their development, especially infrastructure costs.

## Green Zones

In anticipation of Green Means Go funding, 23 of the SACOG region's 28 local jurisdictions have nominated

“Green Zones,” and developed local policies and/or plans to support and promote infill development and new transportation options. Green Zones are key areas that must have infill capacity, be in an area planned for infill development, and be in a center, corridor, or established community, as identified in SACOG's SCS. Green Zones will be the laboratories for economic development projects that promote strategies to increase transportation options for shorter, cleaner, and fewer vehicle trips; increase housing near expanded travel options and other amenities; and make it easier for the Sacramento region to access electric vehicles for cleaner transportation.

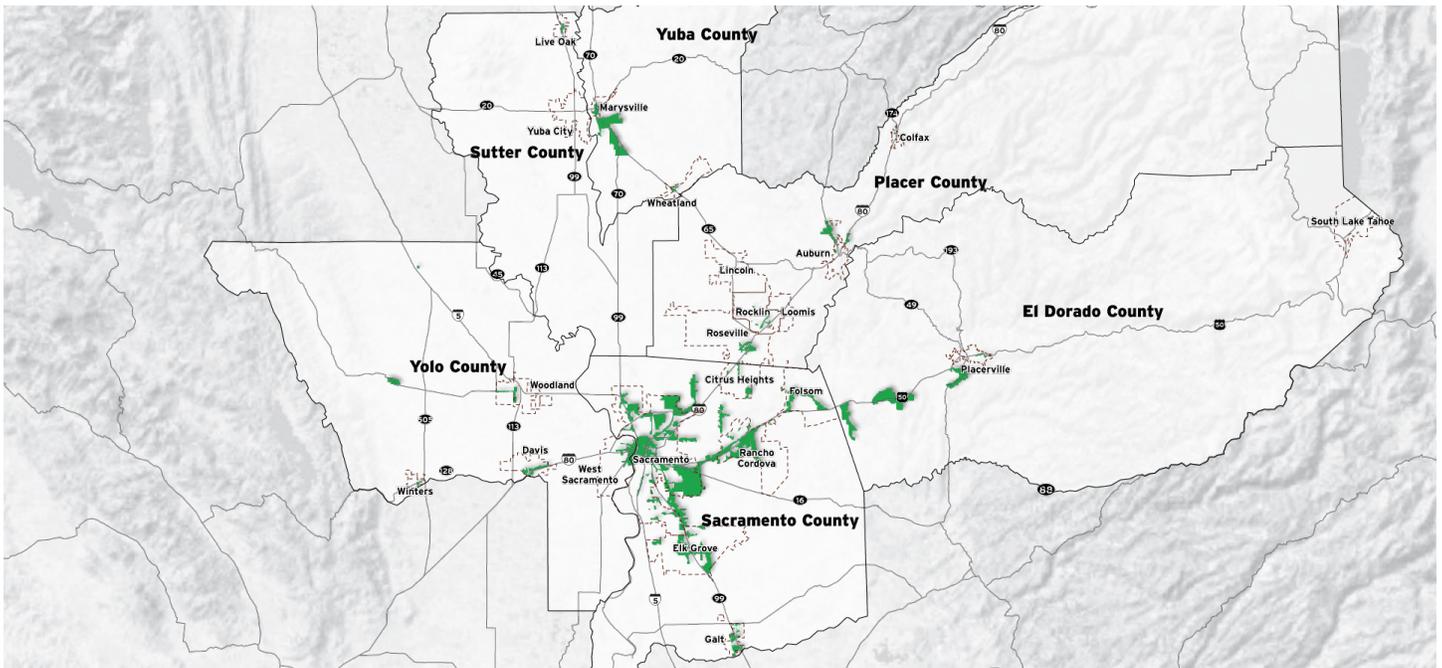
These highlighted areas show not only the excitement in the region for Green Means Go, but that the benefits go far beyond GHG reductions. Green Means Go is the Sacramento region's commitment and solution to California's housing, climate, and transportation problems. Green Zones recognize there is a necessary connection between land use, housing, economic and workforce development, transportation investments, and travel choices.

## Regional support for Green Means Go

In addition to the 23 jurisdictions that have identified Green Zones, all 28 jurisdictions support the program. The program also has regional support from local stakeholders, including labor, housing developers, local economic organizations, realtors, and more.

## Regional Growing Pains:

SACOG forecasts its six-county region needs 11,000 more housing units per year to meet projected demand, with 7,000 of those units needed in infill areas to meet the region's ambitious GHG reduction targets. Infill development is costly, and our region is behind coastal and metropolitan areas in creating it. The region's current infrastructure was built to support old commercial corridors; it simply does not support high-density housing, nor do its



**Infrastructure projects in the Green Zones above could result if Green Means Go is funded**

cities and counties have the resources to upgrade sewer, water, drainage, and other infrastructure needs.

By the year 2040, through Green Means Go and with the necessary investment in Green Zones, the region is primed for promising outcomes:

- Green Zones have 32 percent of planned housing growth, creating about 84,000 new homes
- Green Zones will see about 40 percent of planned employment growth, creating about 525,000 new jobs
- Green Zones see a 16% reduction of VMT per capita, double the regional reduction per capita at 8%

On top of general impacts on housing, our infill strategy will help reduce the number of homes in high and very high fire risk areas by 10,000 units over 20 years based on historical development and on the share of homes of existing housing stock in wildfire prone areas.

**Existing Programs Aren't Enough:**

Existing grants and funding streams are not enough to meet this ambitious goal. Without significant funding assistance from the State, the greater Sacramento region's 19 percent emission reduction goal will be unachievable. Regionalizing certain state grant programs will help provide the financial support the Sacramento region needs to reduce GHG emissions by spurring catalyst infill projects that pair housing and transportation investments, while using existing state resources. Current state funding programs are typically focused on individual projects already planned by a developer. However, in infill areas in the Sacramento region, and many other established communities in the state, corridor-level challenges with existing infrastructure

create immediate barriers to potential development and those individual housing projects never even materialize. There are currently no state funding programs to assist these communities where significant, corridor-level change is needed to stimulate demand and create more certainty for future housing developers.

**Stimulating our Covid-19 Affected Economy**

Allocating a regional-based share of existing state funding programs to Green Means Go effectively transforms project-based funding into regionally targeted stimulus funding. Green Means Go would deliver economic stimulus to well-targeted, ready-to-go infill construction and infrastructure projects that have already been recognized as priorities by their own communities. We recognize now is the time to do more with fewer state resources. The Green Means Go program is an example of how the state can help all regions rise out of the economic downturn, while also accelerating the transportation and housing investments needed to meet our state's urgent challenges. Being smarter in how we use our limited resources will lead the way out of our current crisis to a brighter future.

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