



Transportation Corridor Agencies

February 13, 2012

Mr. Hasan Ikhata
Executive Director
Southern California Association of Governments
818 West Seventh Street, 12th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017-3435

RE: Comments on the Draft 2012 Regional Transportation Plan/
Sustainable Communities Strategy and Program Environmental Impact Report

Dear Mr. Ikhata:

The Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency and the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Agency (TCA) appreciate the opportunity to review and provide comments on the Draft 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and associated Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). TCA commends the SCAG staff for the tremendous amount of work and effort in putting these documents together. TCA also recognizes and supports the timely adoption of the RTP/SCS to enable the Southern California region to proceed with the planning and implementation of regionally significant transportation projects. Further, TCA recognizes that the SCS is particularly important for the region to meet its state mandated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets for 2020 and 2035.

Please find below TCA's specific comments on both the draft RTP/SCS and PEIR.

DRAFT 2012-2035 RTP/SCS

Page 23, Vision, Transportation Demand Management

Transportation pricing is not identified as part of the RTP/SCS "vision" either as a transportation demand management method or as a financing tool, even though it is clearly a component of the transportation plan and financial plan for implementation. The Orange County SCS includes a description of the current and planned priced transportation network that should be adapted to address the entire region.

Recommended Clarification:

Add information from the Orange County SCS (pages 126 and 127 of the Subregional Sustainable Community Strategies Technical Appendix) that describes the existing and

Thomas E. Margro, Chief Executive Officer

125 PACIFICA, SUITE 100, IRVINE, CA 92618-3304 • P.O. BOX 53770, IRVINE, CA 92619-3770 • 949/754-3400 FAX 949/754-3467

www.thetollroads.com

Members: Aliso Viejo • Anaheim • Costa Mesa • County of Orange • Dana Point • Irvine • Laguna Hills • Laguna Niguel • Laguna Woods • Lake Forest
Mission Viejo • Newport Beach • Orange • Rancho Santa Margarita • Santa Ana • San Clemente • San Juan Capistrano • Tustin • Yorba Linda

planned inter-operable priced transportation network in the region, including toll roads, express lanes and high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes. The text can be expanded to address HOT lanes, toll2 facilities, express lanes and tolled truck lanes in the region as a whole, and should include the following points:

- Tolled centerline miles in the region will increase from 61 in 2008, to 408 in 2035, including toll roads, express lanes, HOT lanes, and tolled truck lanes.
- Priced lanes provide flexibility and options as part of the congestion relief toolbox of measures designed to help meet sustainability and emission reduction goals related to SB 375 and other state and federal mandates.
- “Priced facilities are an especially important tool for providing intra-county, inter-county and interregional capacity.”
- “The existing priced transportation network serves the locations where major employment and housing growth are projected to occur.”
- “Toll roads and express lanes charge users a fee for travel, but typically offer less congested traffic lanes than nearby freeways and roadways. Reduced congestion provides improved and more efficient mobility with fewer air pollutants and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by congestion.”
- “The toll road system is designed to interrelate with transit service. The toll roads can accommodate Bus Rapid Transit and express bus service, and toll road medians are sized and reserved to provide the flexibility for future transit, if appropriate.”
- Priced facilities such as the Orange County toll roads are privately funded. This insures that these facilities can relieve congestion and associated air pollution and GHG emissions without further stressing limited state, federal and local transportation funding resources.

Page 42, Major Highway Completion Projects, Table 2.2

SR-241 (ORA052) is identified in Table 2.2 as a major highway completion project. However, the completion year is listed as 2020-2030. Although widening will occur in the 2020 to 2030 timeframe, the official project description identifies the completion date as 2030.

Recommended Clarification:

- In Table 2.2, we request that the completion date for SR 241 be clarified as 2030, consistent with the project description for ORA052.
- In the interest of establishing that some major highway projects in Table 2.2 provide emissions reduction benefits without burdening limited federal, state and local

funding resources, we request the following clarifying footnote: *SR 241 is a privately funded Transportation Control Measure.*

Page 56, Express/HOT Lane Network

This appears to be the only “priced transportation” discussion in the transportation investments chapter. It does not identify how many miles of priced lanes exist now, or how much that network will be expanded in the plan. Toll roads are included in the priced transportation network, along with express lanes, and HOT lanes, but are not included in the discussion. However, TCA’s Toll Roads are depicted in Exhibit 2.6, Regional HOT Lane Network. The terminology should be clarified.

Recommended Clarification:

- Retitle this section, “Express Lanes, HOT Lanes and Toll Roads: The Priced Transportation Network.”
- Table 2.6 should be retitled “Express Lanes, HOT Lanes and Toll Roads”
- The text should provide brief definitions of each type of facility that makes up the priced transportation network, as Express Lanes, Toll Roads and HOT Lanes each operate differently.
- The discussion should include that express lanes, HOT lanes and toll roads generate user fees that pay for construction and operation of their facilities.
- The text should discuss that all priced facilities in the SCAG region insure interoperability by using a common technology, FasTrak, to collect user fees.
- The text should establish the congestion reducing goal of priced transportation, and the associated criteria pollutants and GHG emissions benefits of providing free flow capacity that avoids emissions generated by idling. In addition, user fees provide an economic incentive for cost-sharing that promotes ridesharing, which is beneficial to reduced criteria pollutants and GHG emissions reductions.

Page 76, Conservation Planning Policy

The description of this policy requires clarification to express the intent of SCAG’s Energy and Environment Policy Committee and the coalition of more than 20 public, non-profit and private sector interests, including TCA that urged SCAG to include it.

Recommended Clarification:

Add a paragraph that explains why the conservation program benefits GHG emissions and other criteria pollutants reductions. Specifically, in addition to meeting Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requirements, the open space lands conservation program would use natural land acquisition to sequester (store) carbon, avoid GHG emissions, and reduce

vehicle miles traveled (VMT). This proposed program allows for early implementation and mitigation opportunities. Jurisdictions would have the option to invest early in this open space strategy which offers immediate GHG emissions avoidance benefits, while simultaneously proceeding with the longer term and planning intensive projects to build transportation centers near existing residential areas, or employment centers near transit stations, etc.

Suggested steps to develop a regional conservation planning policy should be expanded to include the following key points supported by SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee and the coalition that recommended this program:

- Build upon existing open space land acquisition and open space programs in the region, tailoring programs to each individual county in the region. These include, but are not limited to, OCTA's Measure M Mitigation Program, and TCA's open space mitigation program, which has protected 2,200 acres in perpetuity to date.
- Pursue open space conservation in a voluntary manner, working with willing private sector landowners.

Page 78, Greenhouse Gases

The draft document states that "The transportation sector, primarily, cars and trucks that move goods and people, is the largest contributor [to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions] with 36.5 percent of the State's total GHG emissions in 2008. On road emissions (from passenger vehicles and heavy duty trucks) constitute 93 percent of the transportation sector total." This statement covers only part of the transportation system's GHG emissions role. The text must recognize projects that reduce transportation network GHG emissions by relieving congestion and insuring free-flow conditions.

Because GHG emissions from vehicles increase in stop-and-go traffic, congestion relief projects that eliminate bottlenecks and maintain free-flow conditions actually reduce transportation network GHG emissions, much as Transportation Control Measures are transportation projects that reduce criteria pollutants. Further, the SB 375 Regional Targets Advisory Committee (RTAC) recommends tracking the performance of such strategies "to smooth extreme congestion to more carbon-friendly speeds" in its final report to the California Air Resources Board.

Recommended Clarification:

Insert the following statements on page 78:

- Congestion relief projects reduce transportation network GHG emissions, which otherwise result from idling.
- Consistent with the SB 375 RTAC's recommendation in its final report to the California Air Resources Board, the RTP/SCS includes projects and strategies designed "to smooth extreme congestion to more carbon-friendly speeds."

- A subset of projects included in the Draft RTP/SCS reduce GHG emissions by providing relief of existing and projected congestion. These include toll roads, express lanes, HOT lanes, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, and dedicated truck toll lanes.
- Congestion pricing is a powerful transportation demand management tool incorporated in the Draft RTP/SCS for reducing GHG emissions. SCAG has launched a two-year study of congestion pricing strategies that can provide needed transportation facilities while reducing the region's GHG emissions associated with vehicle trips.
- Orange County's toll road network is a prime example of priced congestion relief projects. The toll roads have variable pricing incentives that spread out vehicle use to limit peak-hour congestion that leads to increased GHG emissions.
- Other examples of projects that reduce GHG emissions on the regional transportation network include express lanes, HOT lanes, HOV lanes and dedicated truck toll lanes for goods movement.

Page 79, Air Quality

Transportation Control Measures (TCMs) are mentioned as mitigation measures, but are not defined or illustrated. The importance of TCMs needs to be clarified and expanded to clearly communicate their air quality role in the RTP.

Recommended Clarification:

- Provide a brief description of projects that qualify as TCMs.
- Explain the role of TCMs in reducing emissions.
- Provide a reference to the list of TCMs contained in the Conformity Technical Report.

Page 86, Financial Plan, Introduction

The draft document states that "We have successfully implemented toll systems in the past with the Transportation Corridor Agencies' network of toll roads and the SR-91 Express Lanes in Orange County. This kind of innovation in transportation continues as neighboring counties within our region consider a broader network of toll systems." However, the statement needs to clarify the financial planning importance of privately funded toll facilities.

Recommended Clarification:

Priced transportation facilities also provide the opportunity for financial innovation. The Orange County toll roads (SR 73, SR 133, SR 241, and SR 261) are privately funded. They provide congestion relief and associated air pollution and GHG emissions reduction without further stressing limited federal, state, and local transportation funding.

Page 92, Core Revenues, Regional Revenues

Table 3.6, Regional Revenues, identified federal, state and local sources of transportation funding for the plan. Nowhere in the document is the private sector funding contribution assumed for the plan described, although toll road widenings, expansions, and new tolled facilities that are privately funded are included in the plan and in the total cost of the plan.

Accurately describing the extent of private funding is an important public disclosure, and an important element of the financial plan that relieves the burden on limited federal, state and local transportation funding.

Recommended Clarification:

- Clarify in the text the percentage of total funding contributed by private sources. This sum should include the privately funded Orange County toll roads (SR 73, SR 133, SR 241, and SR 261).
- A companion pie-chart, similar to Table 3.6, showing the split between public and private funding would also clarify this point.

Page 103, Table 3.5 2012 RTP Revenues (in Nominal Dollars, Billions)

Until such time that the TCA Board reviews, considers, and/or approves a VMT-based user fee; TCA is not in a position to support an increase in fees as proposed in the draft Plan. Furthermore, the draft does not clarify how the cost of a proposed new VMT fee, increased gas tax fee, tolls and user fees would layer over each other. It appears that they would accumulate for individual drivers, with a potentially significant economic impact on drivers and households. Drivers paying to use toll roads, express lanes and HOT lanes would be paying twice for the same mileage.

Page 145, Exhibit 4.17, Land Use Pattern Orange County (2035)

The southerly portion of SR 241 (ORA052), from Oso Parkway to the San Diego County border, has been inadvertently left off this map.

Recommended Clarification:

- Please show the SR 241 alignment on Exhibit 4.17 consistent with the project modeling list and other transportation network maps in the Draft RTP/SCS.

Page 161, Performance Outcomes

This text should clearly state that performance measures and outcomes are not intended to apply to individual areas or projects, but rather to the region as a whole.

Recommended Clarification:

We recommend that the following clarification be inserted:

- Performance measures and expected outcomes will be used to monitor the RTP/SCS at the regional level; these measures and outcomes are not proposed for use at the subregional or project-specific level.

Page 207, Strategic Plan

SCAG assumes \$100 billion will be available from a future VMT fee starting in 2025, but funding for mileage-based user fee demonstration projects and implementation strategies are not included in the constrained RTP/SCS; they are listed in the unfunded Strategic Plan. The TCA Board has made no decision on the use of VMT fees and until such time is unable to support its use in the proposed in the draft Plan.

Highways and Arterials Technical Report

Page 15, Express/ High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lane Network.

As with the comment on page 57 of the main RTP/SCS document, the technical report should clearly include toll facilities in the description of projects included in this category. Orange County toll roads are not categorized as express or HOT lanes, but collect tolls as a means of insuring low-emission free-flow capacity and funding the construction and operation of the facility. Toll roads integrate with express lane and HOT lane facilities via the common FasTrak technology that allows inter-operability and convenience for drivers.

Recommended Clarification:

- Retitle this section, “Express Lanes, HOT Lanes and Toll Roads: The Priced Transportation Network.”
- Table 2.6 should be retitled “Express Lanes, HOT Lanes and Toll Roads”
- The text should provide brief definitions of each type of facility that makes up the priced transportation network, as express lanes, toll roads and HOT lanes each operate differently.
- The text should discuss that all priced facilities in the SCAG region ensure inter-operability by using a common technology, FasTrak, to collect user fees.
- The discussion should include that express lanes, HOT lanes and toll roads generate user fees that pay for construction and operation of their facilities.
- The text should establish the congestion reducing goal of priced transportation, and the associated criteria pollutants and GHG emissions benefits of providing free flow capacity that avoids emissions generated by idling. In addition, user fees provide an economic incentive for cost-sharing that promotes ridesharing which is beneficial to reduced criteria and GHG emissions reductions.

Performance Measures Technical Report

Page 2, discussion of types of performance measures.

As with the comment on page 160 of the main RTP/SCS document, the text must make clear that the performance indicators are intended to be applied to the RTP/SCS at the regional level and are not proposed for project-specific application.

Recommended Clarification:

We recommend that the following clarification be inserted:

- Performance measures and expected outcomes will be used to monitor the RTP/SCS at the regional level; these measures and outcomes are not proposed for use at the subregional or project-specific level.

SCS Background Documentation

Pages 36 and 37, Land Use Pattern Maps for 2020 and 2035.

Both of these maps are inconsistent with transportation network maps in the document and do not include SR 241 (ORA052), specifically called out in the RTP as a TCM and priced transportation project in southern Orange County.

Recommended Clarification:

Please show the SR 241 alignment on the Land Use Pattern Maps for 2020 and 2035 consistent with the project modeling list and other transportation network maps in the Draft RTP/SCS.

Page 54, Pricing and Vehicle Policy Assumptions.

This discussion only refers to a 2-cent per mile VMT fee; the Plan proposes a 5-cent per mile fee. This inconsistency should be eliminated.

Recommended Clarification:

- Amend the reference to a 2-cent VMT fee to a 5-cent per mile VMT fee starting in 2025, consistent with the RTP/SCS main document.

Add the following sentence:

- Toll roads, express lanes and HOT lanes charge varying tolls per mile for use of their facilities. Tolls are project-specific and typically vary by time of day and day of the week. Tolls collected for existing toll roads in Orange County are dedicated to operational expenses and retiring the bonds issued for construction.

Transportation Conformity Technical Report

Page 14, Toll Roads

The discussion of toll road assumptions specifically mentions express lanes and HOT lanes, but not tolled facilities such as existing toll roads SR 73, SR 241, SR 133 and SR 261 in Orange County.

Recommended Clarification:

- SR 241 should be added to Table 6 as a tolled facility and the effect of the toll charges on it should be incorporated into the highway assignment procedure.
- Table 6 should be retitled appropriately to include “Express Lane, HOT Lane and Toll Road Networks.” This change should also be made in the main RTP/SCS document.

Transportation Security Technical Report

General

This report addresses the need for the transportation system to enhance emergency preparedness, and transportation security and preparedness. Projects that enhance the region’s security are not identified.

Recommended Clarification:

Provide illustrations of transportation projects needed in the RTP/SCS to improve transportation security. For example, the southerly extension of SR 241 provides an alternative route connecting the SCAG and San Diego Association of Governments coastal regions, which have very high current and projected travel volumes. This route will ease future projected congestion to ensure critical capacity for access and evacuation in times of environmental or other emergencies, such as earthquakes, wildfires, traffic accidents, and potential nuclear threats at the San Onofre plant. The need for an alternative route was recently illustrated by the lack of evacuation capacity from the 2007 North San Diego County wildfires.

DRAFT PROGRAM EIR

General

The Draft PEIR sets forth 500 mitigation measures that SCAG states are “feasible” and reasonable to assume that they will be implemented. Further, it is difficult to sort through these voluminous mitigation measures to identify those that are mandatory vs. advisory and those that apply to transportation projects as opposed to other types of developments. This can be improved by reformatting and clarifying the proposed mitigation measures as follows:

Recommended Clarifications:

- Provide a clear statement to the following effect: All mitigation measure recommendations to project sponsors and agencies are advisory. Lead agencies are

responsible for identifying and addressing those measures they deem practical and feasible, or applicable to specific projects.

- Sort out mitigation measures so that those that are mandatory upon SCAG appear first in each category and can be easily distinguished from Best Management Practices or Best Available Control Measures that SCAG is recommending to project sponsors and other agencies.
- For mitigation measures that simply restate existing regulatory agency requirements or recommendations, e.g. California Department of Fish and Game survey protocols and mitigation requirements, reference the specific regulation and include in the description “or successor regulation or guideline” so that as time moves forward the measure does not recommend out of date regulations or guidance.

Page 3.6-15 and 17 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Transportation Network Improvements.

On page 3.6-15, the Draft PEIR states that the transportation sector is a major source of California’s greenhouse gases. Further, on page 3.6-18, the discussion cites information on the GHG emissions from new vehicle trips. However, in both places, the document does not clarify that certain transportation projects reduce greenhouse gases by virtue of their design, location and operation. Similar to the way that Transportation Control Measures reduce precursors to ozone, projects that reduce congestion and idling reduce GHG emissions from the regional transportation network. The PEIR must explain the relationship between GHG emissions and congestion relief, and the components of the RTP that provide congestion and idling relief on the regional network.

Recommended Clarification:

Consistent with our recommended clarification for page 78 of the Draft RTP/SCS document, the PEIR text should state the following on pages 3.6-15 and 3.6-18:

- Congestion relief projects reduce transportation network GHG emissions due to idling.
- Consistent with the SB 375 RTAC’s recommendation in its final report to the California Air Resources Board, the RTP/SCS includes projects and strategies designed “to smooth extreme congestion to more carbon-friendly speeds.”
- A subset of projects included in the Draft RTP/SCS reduce GHG emissions by providing relief of existing and projected congestion. These include toll roads, express lanes, HOT lanes, HOV lanes, and dedicated truck toll lanes.
- Congestion pricing is a powerful transportation demand management tool incorporated in the Draft RTP/SCS for reducing GHG emissions. SCAG has launched a two-year study of congestion pricing strategies that can provide needed

transportation facilities, while reducing the region's GHG emissions associated with vehicle trips.

- Orange County's toll road network is a prime example of priced congestion relief projects. The toll roads have variable pricing incentives that spread out vehicle use to limit peak-hour congestion that leads to increased GHG emissions.
- Other examples of projects that reduce GHG emissions on the regional transportation network include express lanes, HOT lanes, HOV lanes and dedicated truck toll lanes for goods movement.

Maps 2, Project Description

General, SR 241 Missing from 2035 Base Maps

Please ensure that all 2035 base maps include the southerly extension of SR 241. For example, Map 2.13, 2035 Grade Separation Projects, does not show SR 241, which will be completed by 2030, on the base map, while it is depicted on Map 2.6 and 2.8. Map 2.19, Land Use Pattern in Orange County, does not depict SR 241; this is accurate only if the map is intended to show 2008 land use; SR 241 should be included in all maps for 2020 and 2035.

Recommended Clarifications:

Consistent with the transportation modeling network and TCM timely implementation report, show SR 241 as part of the 2035 base map for all transportation maps in the PEIR. Specifically, add SR 241 to Map 2.13 and Map 2.19.

TCA thanks you in anticipation of your written responses to these comments. We look forward to the amendments in the final 2012-2035 RTP/SCS and PEIR to incorporate the recommended changes. Should you have any questions or require any clarification regarding these comments, please feel free to contact Ms. Valarie McFall, Director, Environmental Services at 949.754.3475 or via email: vmcfall@thetollroads.com.

Sincerely,



Scott Schoeffel, Chair
San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor
Agency



Bill Campbell, Chair
Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor
Agency

cc: Jacob Lieb, SCAG, Manager of Environmental and Assessment Services
TCA Board of Directors