

**Sustainable Communities Strategy**  
**Progress Report**



***September 2019***

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## **Purpose**

The Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) has initiated the development of the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). To better inform the development of the 2020 RTP/SCS, BCAG has prepared an SCS Progress Report which looks at several indicators for objectives included in the SCS and the progress made to date. Once analyzed, the indicators provide planners and policy makers information regarding the implementation of the stated objectives and if adjustments or additional actions should be pursued. It is anticipated this report will be prepared on a 4-year cycle to coincide with each update of the RTP/SCS.

This effort follows a recent report published by the California Air Resources Board (ARB), as required under Senate Bill 150 (SB 150), which looks at all 18 Metropolitan Planning Agencies (MPOs) and the states progress under SB 375. More information regarding the report can found on ARB's website - <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/tracking-progress>

## **Background**

BCAG is responsible for preparing a long-range transportation plan for the Butte County region every four years. The RTP specifies the policies, projects, and programs necessary over the 20+ year planning period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation system.

In September 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, was enacted by the state of California. SB 375 prompts regions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles through the coordinated planning of long-range transportation plans. The legislation requires all 18 MPOs in California to develop a SCS, which meets regional passenger vehicle GHG emissions targets, as an additional element of their RTPs. BCAG's first SCS was adopted in 2012 with a minor update completed as part of the 2016 plan. BCAG's 2020 SCS will be the third developed for the region and reflect nearly 10 years of coordinated planning.

As described in SB 375, the SCS is an integrated transportation and land use plan which is intended to meet the regional GHG target for the years 2020 and 2035 while also accommodating the region's forecasted growth.

In 2011, ARB set GHG targets for the BCAG region from passenger vehicles as a 1% increase from 2005 emissions levels by 2020 and a 1% increase from 2005 emissions levels by 2035. These targets were revised by ARB in 2018 to reflect the achievements contained in BCAG's 2016 SCS. The targets apply to the BCAG region for passenger vehicle emissions, and not to individual cities or sub-regions.

BCAG's 2012 RTP/SCS achieved a 2% reduction in per capita GHG emissions for the years 2020 and 2035. In order to achieve these reductions, BCAG focused its 2012 efforts towards land use by bringing together the recently completed general plans and laying out a pattern of

development which balanced housing and employment growth within specified growth areas while protecting habitat and open space via consistency with the Butte Regional Conservation Plan.

This effort was followed by the 2016 RTP/SCS which expanded on the 2012 plan by incorporating a new Long-Range Transit and Non-Motorized Plan and regional growth forecasts. The 2016 plan achieved a 6% reduction in per capita GHG emissions for the year 2020 and a 7% reduction for 2035.

**Progress Report Indicators**

BCAG, in coordination with local partners through the Planning Director’s Group and Transportation Advisory Committee, has developed 10 indicators grouped into five categories to assist in tracking progress. The five categories include regional growth, land use, transportation investment, transportation mode choice, and resources areas and farmland. Each category includes an associated RTP/SCS objective. Table 1 includes a listing of indicators by category.

Table 1.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Progress Report Indicator</b>
Regional Growth	Annual Growth Rate of Population, Housing, and Jobs
Land Use	New Housing and Employment by Growth Area
	New Housing Mix (Multi-Family / Single Family)
	Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio
Transportation Investment	Investment by Category
Transportation Mode Choice	Travel Mode to Work
	Annual Transit Boarding’s Per Capita
	Miles of Class 1 & 2 Bike Facilities Per Capita
Resource Areas and Farmland	Rate of Important Farmland Conversion to Urban and Built-Up Land
	New Housing within BRCP Proposed UPA's

Indicators utilize publicly available data from federal, state, regional, and local agencies. In some instances, data has been disaggregated into regional growth areas (see Appendix A). It should be noted, some datasets are limited in terms of availability on an annual basis or delayed in their release, therefore, every attempt was made to utilize the most up-to-date information available. When data is presented for the year 2018, it is pre-Camp Fire.

Category	Objective
Regional Growth	Inform the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), Air Quality Conformity Determination, and Regional Housing Needs Plan and provide data support for BCAG’s regional Travel Demand Model.

**Indicator**

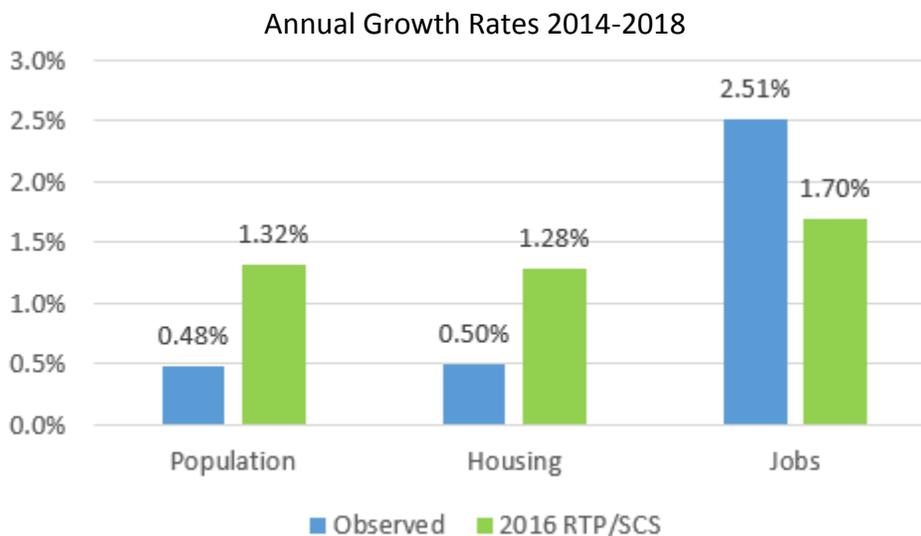
***Annual Growth Rate of Population, Housing, and Jobs***

Background

Population, housing, and job growth provides the framework for preparing the regional development pattern included in the RTP/SCS. The associated growth rates also factor into the degree to which local land use plans and their associated smart growth principles may be realized with on-the-ground development.

Trend

From 2014 to 2018, the Butte County region's population increased by 4,320 individuals, 1,974 housing units were built, and 7,925 new jobs were added. The growth in population and housing was slower than anticipated with an annual growth rate of 0.48% and 0.50%, respectively, compared to the 1.32% and 1.28% included in the 2016 RTP/SCS. However, jobs increased at a rate greater than anticipate, with annual growth rates of 2.51% compared to the 1.7% estimated in the RTP/SCS.



Source: BCAG, CA Dept. of Finance (DOF), and CA Employment Development Dept. (EDD)

Category	Objective
Land Use	Work towards a transportation system that leads to environmental sustainability and fosters efficient development patterns that optimizes travel, housing, and employment choices and encourages future growth away from rural areas and closer to existing and planned development.

**Indicator**

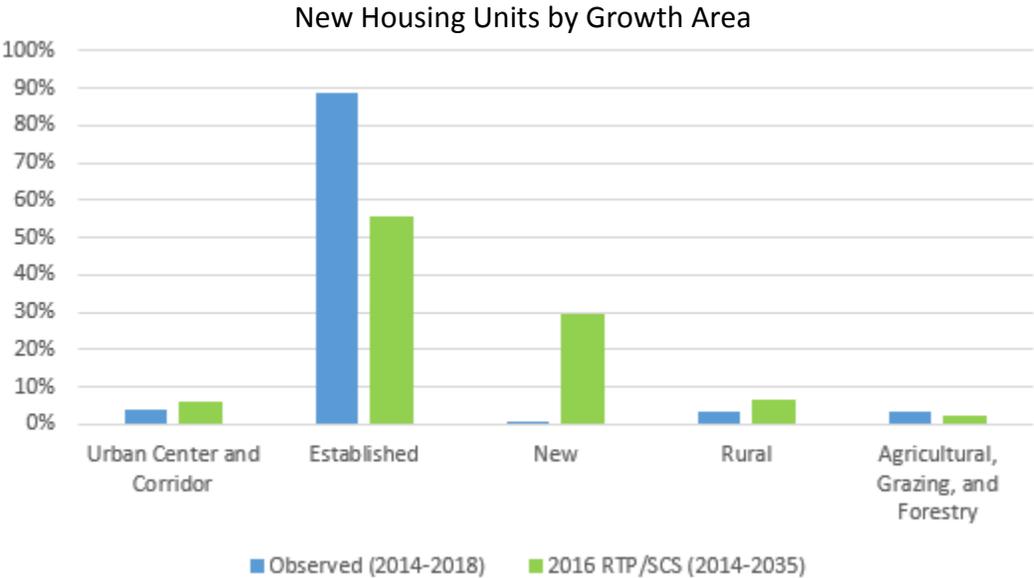
***New Housing and Employment by Growth Area***

Background

As indicated in the 2016 RTP/SCS, housing and employment growth occurring within the Urban Center and Corridor Growth Area provides the greatest opportunity for residents and employees to utilize alternative modes of transportation and existing infrastructure with shorter trip lengths. On the other end of the spectrum, residents of housing units built within the Rural or Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Growth Areas typically have the least transportation options, are reliant on passenger vehicles, and have the longest trip lengths.

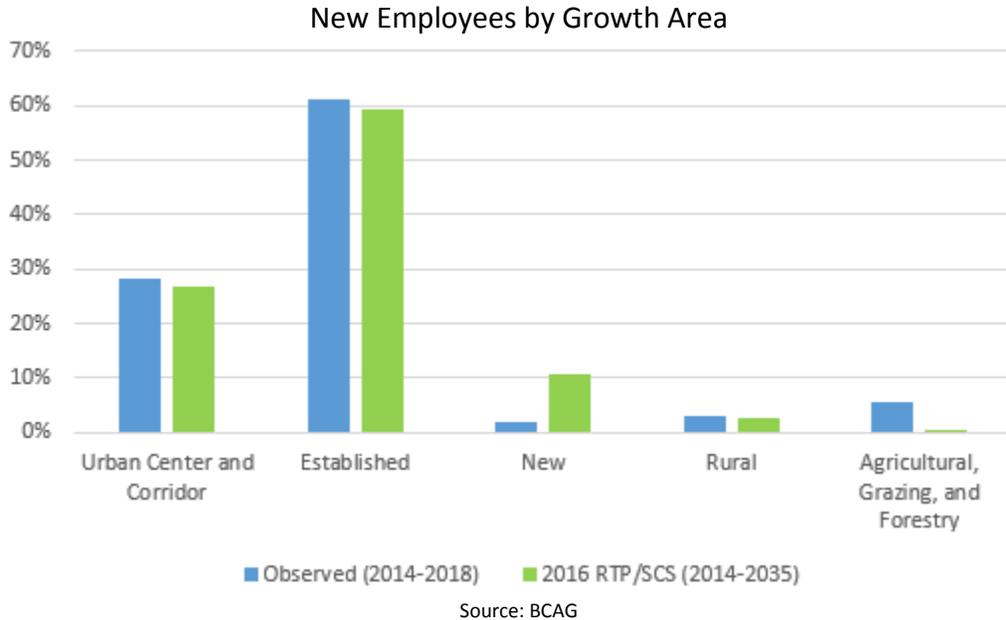
Trend

Between 2014 and 2018, new housing production was concentrated within the Established Growth Area at 89%, followed by Urban Center and Corridor Area and Rural Area at 4% each. Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Growth Areas produced 3% of the overall housing production with New Areas showing the least production at 0%. These numbers are in line with forecasts prepared for the 2016 RTP/SCS, as Established Areas are designated with the greatest growth and New Areas are anticipated to develop in the later years of the plan.



During this same period, new employment was concentrated within the Established Growth Area at 61% and the Urban Center and Corridor Area at 28%. The Agricultural, Grazing, and

Forestry Growth Area produced an estimated 6% of the new employment with the Rural Growth Area and New Growth Area showing the least new employment at 3% and 2% respectively. These numbers are in line with forecasts prepared for the 2016 RTP/SCS, as Established and Urban Center and Corridor Areas are designated with the greatest growth.



**Indicator**

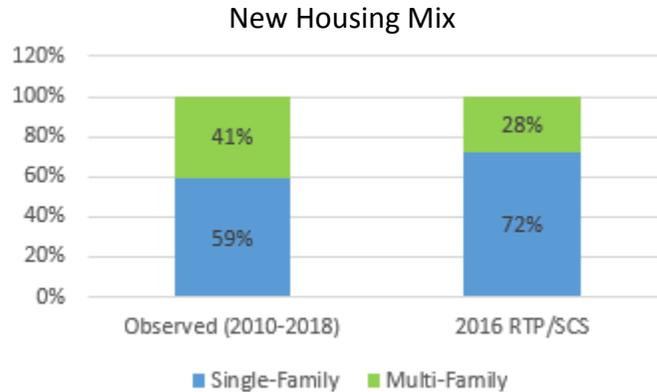
***New Housing Mix (Multi-Family / Single Family)***

**Background**

Providing a variety of housing types, including apartments, townhouses, condominiums, and single-family homes, creates opportunities for the variety of people living in the region. Multi-family housing typically generates fewer vehicle trips, as it is more likely located in higher density areas which support greater transit frequencies, closer access to daily needs, and are accessible to bike and pedestrian facilities.

**Trend**

Of the estimated 3,518 housing units constructed between 2010 and 2018 in the Butte County region, 41% of those units were multi-family and the remaining 59% single family. This greatly exceeds the forecasted development percentages included in the 2016 RTP/SCS at 28% multi-family and 72% single family. A similar trend is occurring across California and the rest of the nation.



Source: BCAG and CA Dept. of Finance (DOF)

### Data Notes

The Observed (2010-2018) data represents CA Department of Finance (DOF) estimates of housing and includes attached single family units with the multi-family classification. This is consistent with the 2016 RTP/SCS figures which utilize BCAG’s multi-family land use classification.

### Indicator

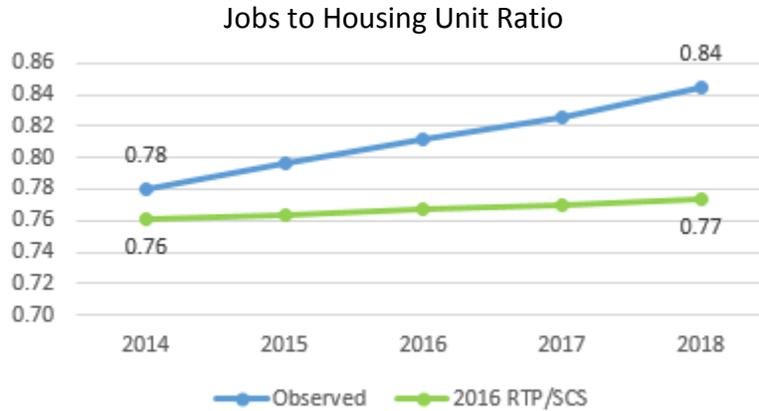
#### ***Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio***

### Background

The relationship between the amount of housing and jobs has long been used as an indicator of the potential for longer (or shorter) commutes. In areas with a very low number of jobs to housing, residents must commute out of the area to find work. The same is true with areas rich in jobs but short on housing, employees must find housing out of the area. For transportation planning purposes, an ideal ratio of jobs to housing is near 1.0, however, other factors such as housing affordability and scale of application can affect this target.

### Trend

Between 2014 and 2018, the Butte County region's Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio increased from 0.78 to 0.84. The 2016 RTP/SCS estimated a minimal increase of 0.76 to 0.77 for the same period. The realized increase in the ratio is reflective of the slower than anticipated population growth combined with the greater than expected increase in jobs. This is a positive trend, as the ratio is presently exceeding the 2018 target of 0.77, showing that additional jobs have been created in the region providing greater opportunity for reduced commutes outside the area.



Source: BCAG, CA Dept. of Finance (DOF), and CA Employment Development Dept. (EDD)

Category	Objective
Transportation Investment	Provide adequate funding resources for all transportation modes and strategies.

**Indicator**

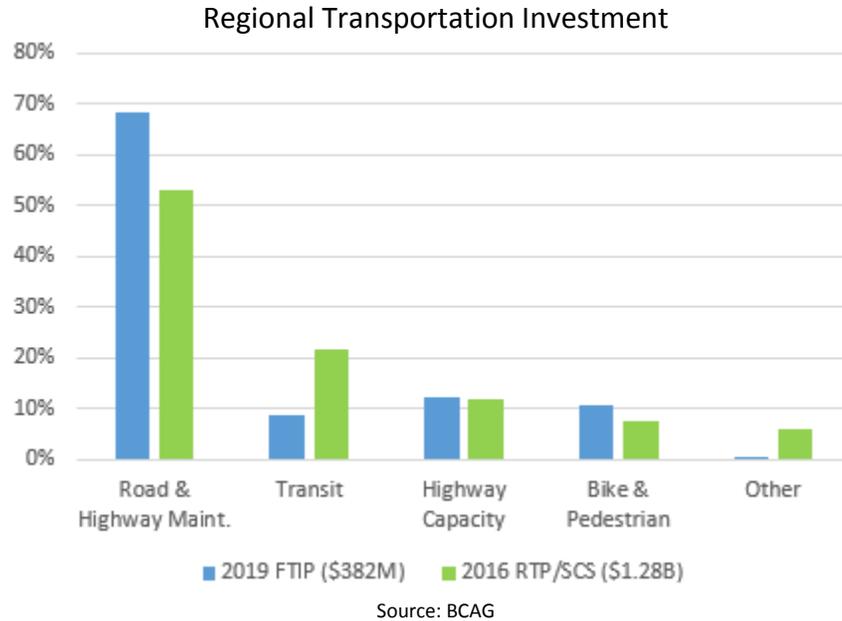
***Investment by Category***

Background

Multi-modal investments support transportation options which include walking, cycling, public transit, and automobile trips.

Trend

BCAG’s 2019 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) shows increased investments in Road & Highway Maintenance (+15%) and Bike & Pedestrian (+3%) funded projects over the planned programming included in the 2016 RTP/SCS. Transit projects (-13%) are down from the planned programming in the 2016 RTP/SCS, while Highway Capacity is unchanged at 12%. These figures are representative of additional maintenance funds introduced in the area (Senate Bill 1 and State Highway Operation and Protection Program), as well as increases in awarded grants in the Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) for bike and pedestrian related projects. Transit decreases reflect the completion of BCAG’s new Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility and fiscal year 16/17 and 17/18 bus replacements. New bus replacements are scheduled to be programmed in the 2021 FTIP. Transportation investments are on track with the 2016 RTP/SCS, providing the upcoming 2021 FTIP includes additional transit funds.



**Data Notes**

The 2019 FTIP is representative of projects programmed over the 4-year period from 2018/19-2021/22 and includes only those projects receiving federal funding or those that are determined to be regionally significant. The 2016 RTP/SCS covers the 24-year planning period from 2016-2040 and includes all programmed and planned projects from anticipated federal, state, and local funding sources.

Category	Objective
Transportation Mode Choice	Increase public transit, carpooling/vanpooling and bicycling/walking. Increase transit ridership that exceeds annual population growth rate for Butte County. Work with local agencies to develop and construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities including access to transit.

**Indicator**

***Travel Mode to Work***

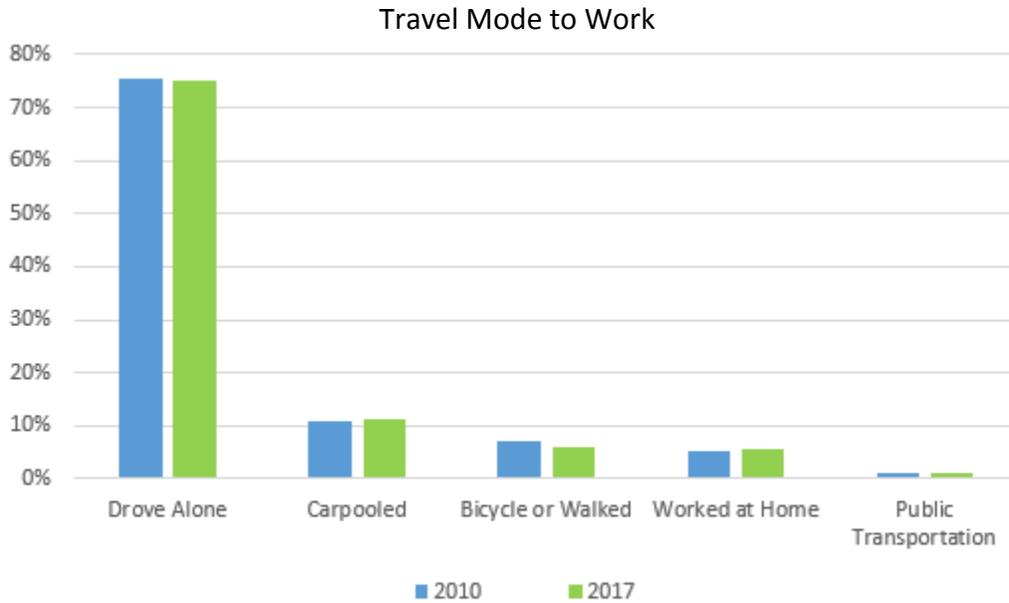
**Background**

Reducing single occupant vehicle trips (drive alone) by shifting to public transportation or active transportation modes (bike and pedestrian) improves the fitness and health of the region’s population while relieving congestion on local roadways.

**Trend**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, commuting travel modes have changed very little in the last eight years. Most residents of Butte County drive alone (75%) or carpool (11%) to work. Active transportation modes (biking and walking) had a slight decline between 2010 (7%) and 2017 (6%), while telecommuting (work at home) increased from 5% (2010) to 6% (2017) over this same period. The work at home trend is encouraging, as

this translates to less commute related vehicle trips. On the other hand, decreases in active transportation modes and a stationary drive alone mode is not consistent with long range expectations of the 2016 RTP/SCS.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey

**Indicator**

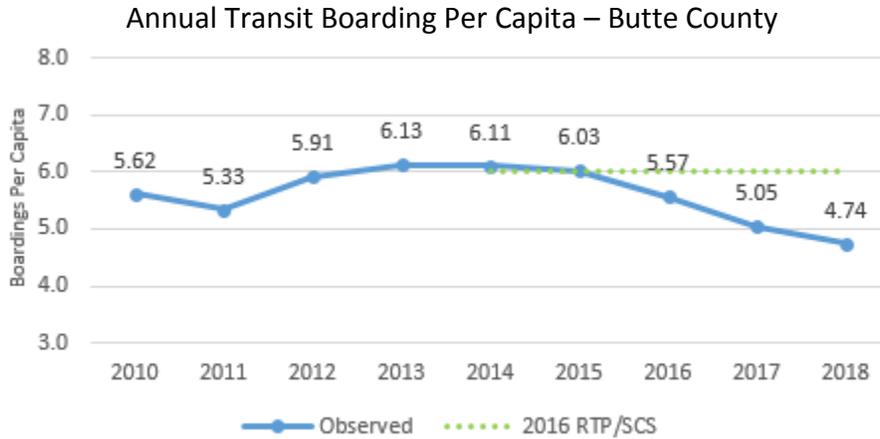
***Annual Transit Boarding Per Capita***

**Background**

The transit system in Butte County is a critical component to the region’s overall transportation network. The system serves commuters, low income families, disabled individuals, and students, as well as the elderly. The transit system improves the air quality by providing an alternative to the single occupant vehicle, improves congestion on local roads and highways, and provides for an alternative mode of travel.

**Trend**

Over the nine year span between 2010 and 2018, the annual transit boardings per capita in Butte County reached a peak of 6.13 in 2013 and low of 4.74 in 2018. A similar trend has been observed at the statewide and nation levels as well, with ridership declining in recent years. This is certainly a point of concern, as the 2016 RTP/SCS estimated an average rate of 6.0 transit boardings per capita based on BCAG's Long-Range Transit and Non-Motorized Plan.



Source: Butte Regional Transit, National Transit Database, and CA DOF

**Indicator**

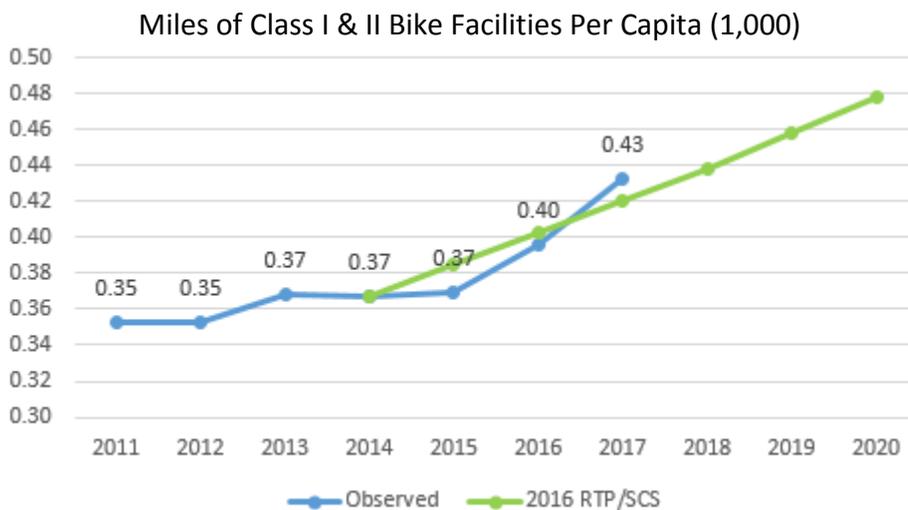
***Miles of Class 1 & 2 Bike Facilities Per Capita***

**Background**

The greater the use of bicycling and walking as an alternative to single occupant vehicles, the fewer vehicle emissions produced and cars on the road. In addition, these forms of transportation provide exercise and health benefits.

**Trend**

Miles of Class I & II bike facilities per capita have increased from 0.35 in 2011 to 0.43 in 2017. Presently, the region has 93 miles of Class I & II bike facilities. These figures demonstrate that the region is presently on track to obtain the approximately 159 miles of Class I & II facilities envisioned in the 2016 RTP/SCS, by year 2035.



Source: BCAG and CA DOF

Category	Objective
Resource Areas & Farmland	Preserve productive farmland and land that provides habitat for rare, endangered or threatened species.

**Indicator**

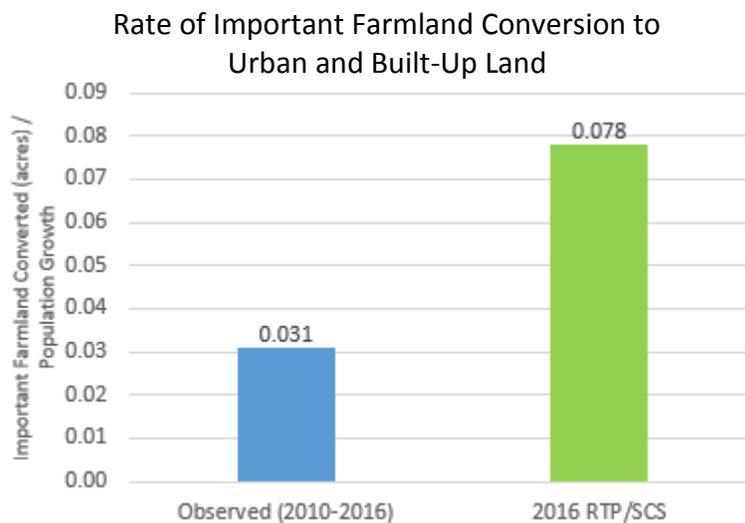
***Rate of Important Farmland Conversion to Urban and Built-Up Land***

**Background**

Farmlands provide an important contribution to the economy of Butte County as well as provide environmental benefits such as flood control and habitat.

**Trend**

Between 2010 and 2016, the CA Department of Conservation reported that 148 acres of Important Farmland was converted to Urban and Built-up Land. This translates to 0.031 acres converted for every person added (4,736 persons) to the County population total during that same period. The 2016 RTP/SCS forecasted that 0.078 acres of Important Farmland would be converted to Urban and Built-up Land for every additional person added (70,212 persons) to the region between 2014 and 2035. The 2010 to 2016 conversion rate of 0.031 acres is encouraging as it is less than half of that assumed in the 2016 RTP/SCS.



Source: BCAG, CA Dept. of Conservation, and CA DOF

**Indicator**

***New Housing within BRCP Proposed UPA's***

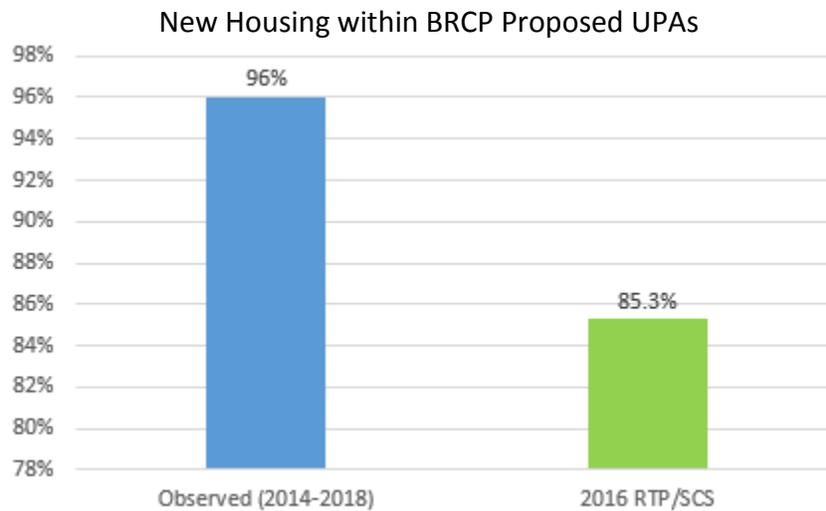
**Background**

The BRCP’s conservation strategy will provide a regional approach for the conservation of natural resources while allowing for development under county and city general plans and the

RTP/SCS. Urban Permit Areas (UPAs) developed under the BRCP are locations where impacts of future urban development are expected to be incurred based on the region’s local general plans and the RTP/SCS.

Trend

Between 2014 and 2018, 96% of all new housing units were built within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan's proposed Urban Permit Areas (UPAs). This is a positive trend, as the 2016 RTP/SCS estimated that 85.3% of all new housing would be developed within the UPAs.



Source: BCAG

## **Observations**

- Location related land use and development activities are on track or exceeding expectations with housing and job growth occurring in desired locations with less than anticipated impacts to resource areas and farmland. However, this may change as communities have yet to expand development into projected New growth areas.
- Transportation mode shifts have yet to respond to new development and infrastructure. This may be a result of other travel related factors (i.e. fuel prices, auto ownership rates, improved economy, etc.), including declining transit ridership. Also, a slower than anticipated growth rate in population and housing could be a factor, as the extent of new growth just isn't in place to have an influence.

## **Recommendations**

- Regional Growth: adjust population and housing forecasts to align with updated estimates from the California Department of Finance.
- Land Use: review potential for adjusting the ratio of multi-family to single-family unit growth and jobs-housing ratio, and; remain on track with housing and employment distribution by growth area.
- Transportation Investment: monitor transit investments with upcoming 2021 FTIP and new state funding sources.
- Transportation Mode Choice: monitor shifts in mode choice with upcoming 2020 Census; explore “work from home” mode and effects on passenger vehicle travel; investigate strategies for recovering ridership with update of Transit and Non-Motorized Plan, and; remain on track with bike infrastructure.
- Resource Areas and Farmland: review Important Farmland conversion rate and associated factors (i.e. increased density, ratio of multi-family to single family development, etc.) and determine if adjustment is needed, and; continue to monitor future development within BRCP UPAs.

## Appendix A

