

INTRODUCTION

2020 Regional Transportation Plan & Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Regional Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) specifies the policies, projects, and programs necessary over a 20+ year period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation system. The Butte County 2020 RTP/SCS covers the 20-year period between 2020 and 2040. The RTP/SCS is required to be updated every four years. The RTP/SCS includes an Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination, as well as a Program Environmental Impact Report.

RTP/SCS Purpose

The RTP/SCS provides a foundation for transportation decisions by local, regional, and state officials. This foundation is based on a vision of an efficient and environmentally sound multi-modal system. The RTP/SCS also serves as the foundation for the development of the:

- Federal Transportation Improvement Program
- Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- Interregional Transportation Improvement Program for Butte County

2020 RTP/SCS Preparation

The RTP/SCS is prepared by the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG). BCAG is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the state designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Butte County. BCAG has a 10 member Board of Directors, including each of the five Butte County Supervisors and one council person from each of the five incorporated cities/town; the cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and the Town of Paradise. A current list of the Board members can be found here: <http://www.bcag.org/Meetings--Agendas/Board-of-Directors/index.html>.

BCAG held various RTP/SCS public workshops beginning in 2018 and spanning through 2020 in the cities of Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and the Town of Paradise. In 2020, as a result of COVID-19, much of the outreach was done via zoom after shelter-in-place recommendations by the Department of Public Health were made. Development of the 2020 RTP/SCS was made in consultation with its member jurisdictions, BCAG's advisory committees, local Tribal Governments, interested state and federal agencies, and the public.

Document Structure

The RTP/SCS is divided into four sections with thirteen specific chapters; the Air Quality Demonstration Requirements and the Environmental Impact Report. The four required sections include:

- **1. Policy Element** – Outlining the goals, policies, and objectives of the RTP
- **2. Action Element** – Identifying each mode of transportation with recommended improvements by short range and long range plans
- **3. Financial Element** – Identifying the funding strategy to implement the Action Element, including a set of recommended projects ensuring financial constraint
- **4. Sustainable Communities Strategy** – Addressing SB 375 / Global Greenhouse Gas emissions
- **Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination (Appendix 1)**
- **Environmental Impact Report (Separate Attachment)**

Context of 2020 RTP/SCS and Impacts of Paradise Camp Fire on November 8, 2018

On November 8, 2019 the Camp Fire destroyed Butte County's 2nd largest city, the Town of Paradise. Approximately 153,000 acres burned resulting in the tragic loss of 85 fatalities, 13,972 residences, 528 commercial buildings, 4,293 other buildings. It was the most devastating wildfire in modern history.

This disastrous event occurred after the initiation of the development of this 2020 RTP/SCS. BCAG, as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Butte County region, is responsible for developing long term regional growth forecasts and maintaining a regional travel demand model for the Butte County region. Both products assist in the preparation and analysis of regional transportation, housing, land use and air quality plans and the associated environmental documents. The forecasts and models are also used by local agencies in preparing and analyzing transportation and land use plans and projects.

Following the Camp Fire, the estimates of current population, housing, land use, and travel are unknown. In addition, the existing long-term forecasts of these planning elements are likely no longer applicable to the region. As a result, BCAG is preparing the "Post-Camp Fire Regional Population & Transportation Study" to analyze regional population, housing, employment, and traffic data for pre (2017/18), post (2019/20), and future time periods. The study will develop several scenarios for population and travel for the 2025, 2035 and 2045 period(s) based on existing research, empirical data, and existing policies available at the time of study development. In addition, an update of the region's transit and non-motorized transportation plan will be completed with the collected data. The Study will inform the 2024 RTP/SCS and various land use, transportation, and housing plans and projects beyond the "best available" data used in development of the 2020 RTP/SCS.

Planning Process & Consultation

The RTP/SCS is the result of a broad planning process. This process involves many government agencies, as well as private interests and the public. Early consultation workshops were held prior to development of the RTP/SCS document. BCAG first updated its Public Participation Plan prior to development the RTP/SCS. An early consultation outreach effort was made to Caltrans' suggested list of interested agencies, including various state and federal resource agencies, local Tribal Governments, interest groups, and BCAG's advisory committees. All public workshops were noticed in the local newspapers and held at various times during the day in order to give interested people various opportunities to be involved. In addition, the RTP/SCS was developed in consultation with its advisory committees, and presentations were made at the Board of Directors meetings which are open to the public. Appendix 3 documents the efforts made to engage the above listed groups.

All components of the Plan were distributed to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC includes representatives from each of the cities, the county, and the state, as well as representatives from the public, the air district, and the Native American communities. Various government-to-government participation attempts to the local Rancherias were initiated by BCAG. Documentation of BCAG's public involvement outreach is included as an appendix. BCAG also sent correspondence to the surrounding counties, including Tehama County, Glenn County, and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG).

The Interagency Consultation Review (ICR) Group is comprised of BCAG, the Butte County Air Quality Management District, Caltrans, FHWA, FTA, EPA, and the California Air Resources Board. The ICR was contacted via email to agree to the emissions analysis and conformity determination requirements applicable to the RTP/SCS. All pertinent material concerning air quality was reviewed with the ICR group.

Butte County is home to five local Native American Rancherias. These include Berry Creek Rancheria of Maidu Indians of California, Mechoopda India Tribe of the Chico Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria Estom Yumeka Maidu, Mooretown Rancheria and KonKow Valley Band of Maidu Indians. Each Rancheria is contacted concerning the development of the RTP/SCS. In addition, those Rancherias expressing an interest regarding BCAG's planning and programming activities receives an agenda to the BCAG TAC meetings, which include any RTP/SCS development material. BCAG has also extended several invitations to provide government-to-government at site workshops concerning the RTP, as well as any other transportation related workshops. Currently, two Rancheria representatives have attended the BCAG Transportation Advisory Committee meetings.

BCAG will continue to attempt to engage the resource agencies in BCAG's metropolitan planning process. BCAG has maintained a positive working relationship with all interested agencies and individuals. BCAG maintains an "email interest" distribution list for any individual, agency or private company wishing to be involved on its various

planning, programming and project development activities. The RTP/SCS is intended to be consistent with the California Transportation Plan (CTP) developed by Caltrans.

Sustainable Communities Strategy Requirements

In 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Change Act of 2008, was passed as the mechanism to implement passenger vehicle greenhouse gas reductions outlined in Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32).

Under SB 375, BCAG, as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), has been designated by the state to prepare the area's "Sustainable Communities Strategy" (SCS) as an additional component of the 2020 RTP. The SCS demonstrates the integration of land use, housing, and transportation for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles. In addition, SB 375 amends CEQA to provide incentives for residential and residential mixed use projects that help to implement the 2020 RTP/SCS.

The SCS has been prepared by BCAG as an integrated component of the RTP's Action Element, and is included within Chapter 4 – Sustainable Communities Strategy. Specific requirements of SB 375, and the locations in which these have been addressed within the 2020 RTP/SCS, is included as Appendix 7.

Regulatory Requirements

BCAG, as the RTPA, is required by State law to prepare the RTP/SCS and transmit it to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) every four years. The RTP/SCS is required to be developed as per State legislation, Government Code Section 65080 et seq. of Chapter 2.5, and Federal legislation, U.S. Code, Title 23, Sections 134 and 135, et seq.

The RTP/SCS is required to contain a Policy, Action, Financial Element, Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), and to reference environmental and air quality documents. The RTP/SCS is to be adopted by the BCAG Board of Directors, and then submitted to Caltrans and the CTC. State regulations require the SCS be distributed to the California Air Resources Board for approval, once adopted by the BCAG Board of Directors. Federal regulations issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also require the development and adoption of an RTP/SCS.

Air Quality Requirements

The purpose of this conformity determination is to ensure that BCAG's plans and programs "conform" to all applicable federal air quality requirements.

The Clean Air Act Section 176I (42 U.S.C. 7506 I) and EPA's transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR 93.104(b) and (c)) require that each new regional transportation plan (RTP) and transportation improvement plan (TIP) be demonstrated to conform to the State

Implementation Plan (SIP) before the RTP and FTIP are approved by the MPO or accepted by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). This ensures that federally supported highway and transit project activities will not cause new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). Conformity currently applies under EPA's rules to areas that are designated non-attainment, and those re-designated to attainment after 1990 ("maintenance areas").

The region's last conformity determination and emissions analysis was adopted by the BCAG Board of Directors on September 27th, 2018 as part of the approval for the 2019 FTIP. This action was then approved by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) and Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) on December 7th, 2018.

This transportation air quality conformity determination and emissions analysis shows that transportation projects programmed in the 2020 Butte County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and 2019 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) are consistent with the applicable SIP.

Butte County's Air Quality Status

Ozone

Effective July 20, 2012, Butte County was designated marginal nonattainment under EPA's federal 2008 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

Effective August 3, 2018, Butte County was designated marginal nonattainment under EPA's federal 2015 8-hour ozone NAAQS.

Because of these designations, transportation projects occurring within Butte County are subject to an air quality conformity determination for the ozone precursors Reactive Organic Gases (ROG) and Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x).

Previously, under EPA's 1-hour ozone rule, Butte County was designated "non-attainment – transitional" (Section 185A) and was not required to develop an attainment SIP with an emissions budget.

Since no emissions budget exists from a prior SIP submittal that has been found adequate by EPA, or was part of an approved SIP, an interim conformity test applies. In order to make a conformity determination under the 2008 federal 8-hour standard, future emissions of ROG and NO_x must be no greater than 2011 emissions levels, or the build/no-build test must be passed. Similarly, to make a conformity determination under the 2015 federal 8-hour standard, future emissions of ROG and NO_x must be no greater than 2017 emissions levels, or the build/no-build test must be passed.

Carbon Monoxide

As a result of a 1998 SIP revision approved by EPA, Butte County (Chico Urbanized area) was re-designated from non-attainment to attainment with a Maintenance SIP for carbon monoxide (CO). In 2007, the 1998 Maintenance SIP was updated by ARB and approved by

EPA for the second decade of the maintenance period. In the BCAG area, transportation conformity requirements for CO ended June 1, 2018.

Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5)

As a result of a 2018 SIP revision approved by EPA, Butte County (Chico Urbanized area) was re-designated from non-attainment to attainment with a Maintenance SIP for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) under the EPA 2006 24-hour PM2.5 NAAQS.

As part of EPA's final action, the determination was made that contributions from motor vehicle emissions in the non-attainment area are insignificant. As a result of this finding, BCAG is no longer required to perform regional emissions analyses for either directly emitted PM2.5 or nitrogen oxides as part of future PM2.5 conformity determinations for the 2006 24-hour PM2.5 NAAQS for the Chico area.

The complete Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination is included as Appendix 1.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

BCAG has determined that a supplemental program-level environmental impact report (SEIR) is required for the 2020 RTP/SCS pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. A program EIR is described as an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) geographically, (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, (3) in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar ways. A program-level analysis SEIR *will be* prepared in accordance with the Public Resources Code sections relevant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The SEIR informs the decision-makers, agencies, and the public of the broad environmental effects of the proposed 2020 RTP/SCS project and will be used to evaluate subsequent projects and activities under the 2020 RTP/SCS.

Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set a standard that authoritatively outlawed discrimination in the conduct of all federal activities. It reads as follows: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Although considerable progress has been made during the 1990's, individuals both inside and outside government are troubled by the high and adverse environmental impacts of private or governmental actions that fall disproportionately on populations protected by laws such as the civil rights act. The term "environmental justice" was created by people concerned that everyone within the United States deserves equal protection under the

county's laws. Executive Order 12898 issued in 1994, responded to this concern by organizing and explaining in detail the federal government's commitment to promote environmental justice. Each Federal agency was directed to review its procedures and to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

FHWA and FTA guidance on Environmental Justice (EJ) requires that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) ensure that traditionally underrepresented groups are engaged in the regional transportation planning process and demonstrate how their influence and feedback impacted development of the RTP/SCS. Further, the guidance also requires an evaluation of the adopted plan to ensure that there is no disparate negative impact borne by low-income or minority communities. FHWA and FTA have embraced the principles of environmental justice as a means toward improving the transportation decision-making process. There are three fundamental principles at the core of EJ:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Environmental Justice is applicable at the project level when project sponsors are proposing to build a new project in a local community and federal funds are involved. Unfortunately, neither Title VI nor Executive Order 12898 prescribes the specific methods and process for ensuring environmental justice in transportation planning.

PHYSICAL SETTING

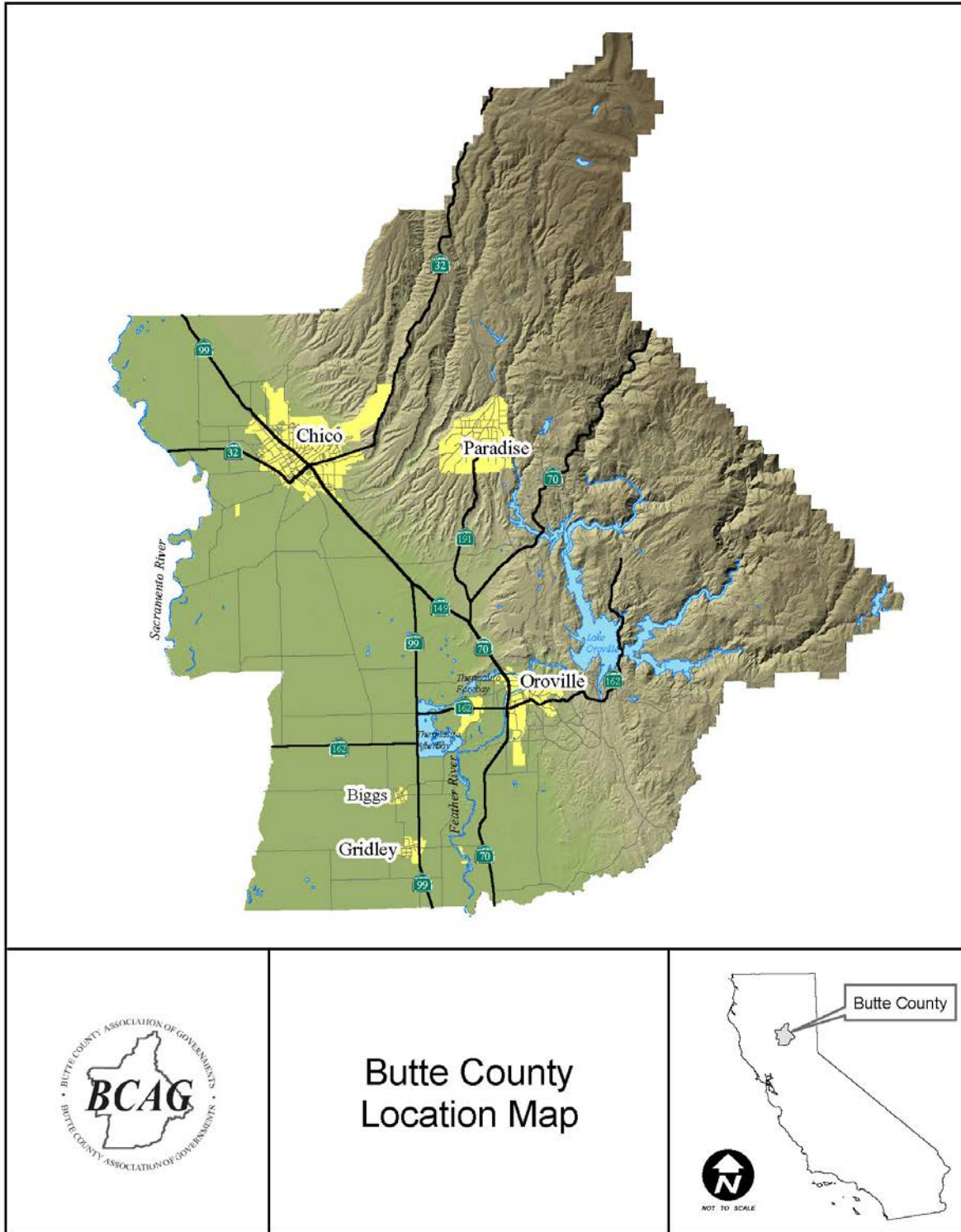
Butte County encompasses approximately 1,665 square miles in north central California (Figure 1-1). The western part of the county is located in the northern Sacramento Valley, while the eastern portion extends into the foothills of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountain Ranges. Elevations range from 50 feet above sea level at Butte Sink along the Sacramento River at the southwest portion of the county, to 7,087 feet above sea level at Humboldt Summit near the county's northeastern border.

Butte County has five incorporated cities which range from small farming communities to regional urban centers. The Cities of Biggs and Gridley are located about five miles apart in the valley area in the southwest portion of the county, while the City of Chico is located further north in the western valley area. The City of Oroville, the County seat, is located along the Feather River in the southern portion of the county, and the Town of Paradise is on a ridge in the foothills near the center of the county (Figure 1-2).

Numerous unincorporated communities also dot Butte County. Feather Falls, Berry Creek, and Brush Creek are in the foothills in the southeastern portion of the county, while Paradise Pines, Magalia, Stirling City, Forest Ranch, Cohasset, and Butte Meadows are in the foothills in the northeastern area. The western portion of the valley includes the communities of Dayton, Durham, Nelson, and Richvale, with Palermo, Honcut, Cherokee and Forbestown further to the east (Figure 1-2).

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**Figure 1-1
Butte County Location Map**



**Figure 1-2
Butte County Rancherias
Incorporated Cities & Unincorporated Communities**

