

INTRODUCTION

2016 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 2016 RTP/SCS covers the 24-year period between 2016 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

2016 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 2014 and spanning through 2016 in the cities of Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and the Town of Paradise. Development of the 2016 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)**

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).

An 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, Mechoopda India Tribe of the Chico Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, 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 2016 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 2016 RTP/SCS.

The SCS has been prepared by BCAG as an integrated component of the RTP's Action Element, with the majority of the documentation being included within Chapter 4 – Sustainable Communities Strategy. Specific requirements of SB 375, and the locations in which these have been addressed within the 2016 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 the air quality conformity determination is to ensure that BCAG's plans and programs "conform" to all applicable federal air quality requirements. The last conformity determination was adopted by the BCAG Board of Directors on September 27th, 2016 as part of adoption to the 2013 FTIP and amendment to the 2008 RTP. This conformity determination relied on a previous regional emissions analysis.

Transportation conformity is required under Clean Air Act section 176(c) (42 U.S.C. 7506 (c)) to ensure that federally supported highway and transit project activities are consistent with ("conform to") the purpose of the State Implementation Plan (SIP). This ensures that transportation 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 transportation air quality conformity determination shows that transportation projects programmed in the 2017 Butte County Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) and 2016 RTP/SCS are consistent with the applicable SIP. Within 6 months after the adoption of the Plan, both the Plan and Program will be reviewed to ensure consistency between the two.

Butte County's Air Quality Status

Ozone

Butte County was previously designated "basic subpart 1 non-attainment" for ozone under EPA's 1997 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). However, the current classification for the Butte County federal nonattainment area for the 1997 ozone NAAQS is marginal nonattainment. Because of this designation, 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 (NOx).

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.

Also, effective July 20, 2016, Butte County is designated marginal nonattainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS. EPA has proposed to revoke the 1997 ozone standards one year after the effective date. Under this proposal, BCAG is required to prepare a new conformity determination by July 20, 2013 in order to demonstrate conformity for the 2008 ozone NAAQS.

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 federal 8-hour standard, future emissions of ROG and NOx must be no greater than 2002 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 redesignated 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. Conformity applies for CO through 2018. The current emission budget is for the second Maintenance SIP. As a maintenance area, BCAG continues to be required to demonstrate conformity for CO.

In order to show conformity for CO, BCAG must show that future emissions will be less than the CO emissions budget assigned to Butte County (budget test). Butte County's emissions budget of 80-tons per day is specified in the *2004 Revision to the California State Implementation Plan for Carbon Monoxide*. EPA published a direct final rulemaking approving the plan on November 20, 2005, effective January 30, 2006. Based on the designated maintenance status, Butte County needs to demonstrate that vehicular emissions forecasts will not exceed 80 tons/day and are consistent with the applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5)

Effective December 14, 2009, Butte County (partial) was designated as non-attainment for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) under the EPA 2006 24-hour PM2.5 NAAQS. Transportation conformity for the 2006 PM2.5 NAAQS applies one year after the effective date. Therefore, Butte County conformity applies December 14, 2010.

As a newly designated non-attainment area for PM2.5, no emissions budget currently exists from an approved SIP, therefore an interim conformity test applies. In order to make a conformity determination under the 2006 24-hour PM2.5 standard, future emissions of PM2.5 and NOx must be no greater than 2008 emissions levels, or the build/no-build test must be passed.

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

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

BCAG has determined that a program-level environmental impact report (EIR) is required for the 2016 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 EIR *will be* prepared in accordance with the Public Resources Code sections relevant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The EIR informs the decision-makers, agencies, and the public of the broad environmental effects of the proposed 2016 RTP/SCS project and will be used to evaluate subsequent projects and activities under the 2016 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 country’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

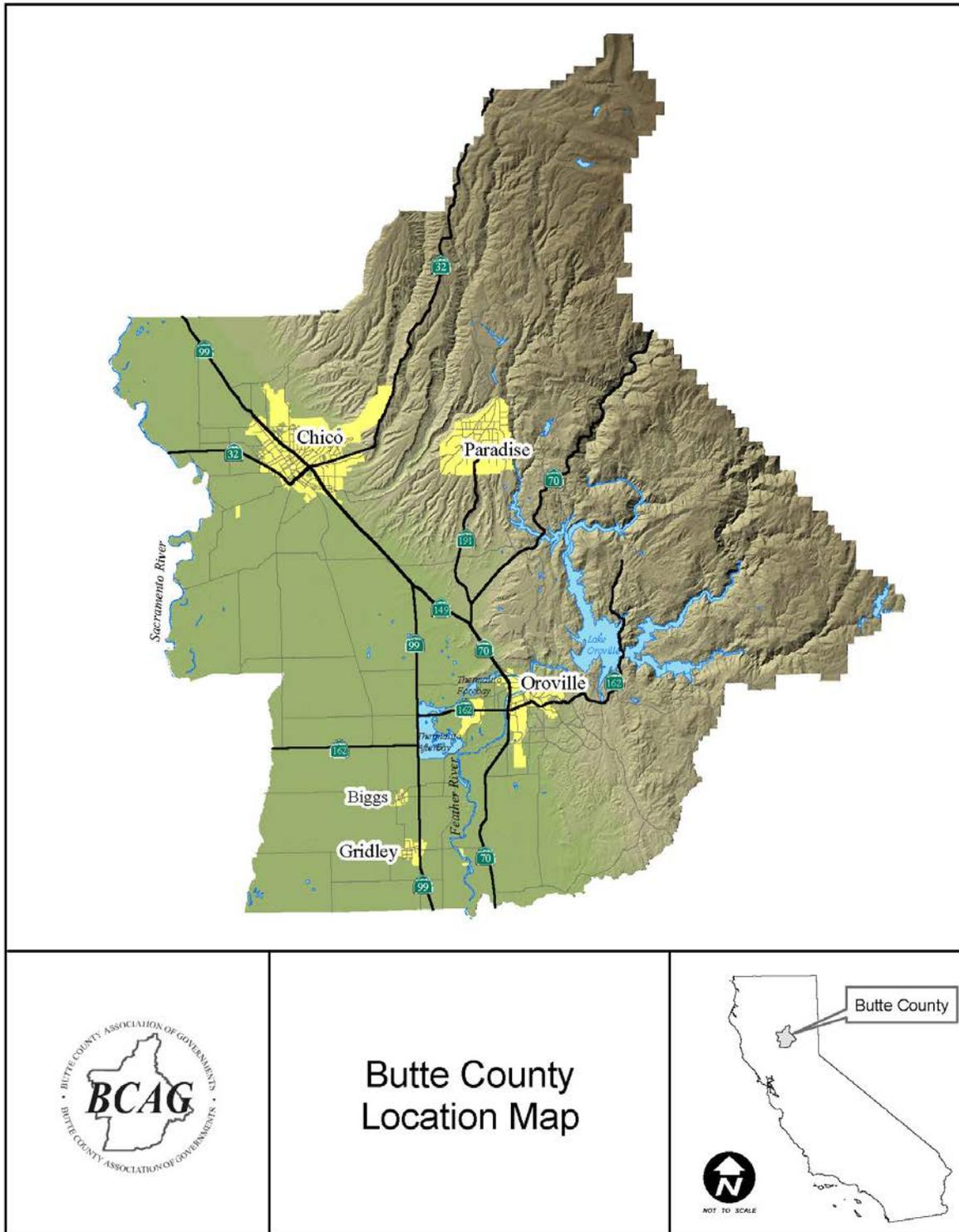
Butte County encompasses approximately 1,665 square miles in north central California (Figure 1-1). The western part of the county is located in the northern Sacramento Valley, while the eastern portion extends into the foothills of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountain Ranges. Elevations range from 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).

Butte County is home to five local Native American Rancherias. These include Berry Creek Rancheria, Mechoopda Indian Tribe of the Chico Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, Mooretown Rancheria and KonKow Valley band of Maidu Indians. The location of these Rancherias is also included as part of Figure 1-2.

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



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

