

ACTION ELEMENT - ANALYSIS

The second major component required in the RTP/SCS is the “Action Element”. The Action Element of the RTP/SCS consists of short-term and long-term activities that address regional transportation issues and needs. All transportation modes are addressed.

The Action Element is divided into two sections. The first section includes a discussion of regional issues, mandated transportation services, air quality, forecasting, regionally significant roads, alternatives, social impacts, and RTP/SCS analysis. The concluding section involves a discussion of each mode of transportation.

REGIONAL ISSUES

Transportation Funding

The BCAG region finds itself in a challenging position with the broad impacts associated with the Camp Fire. As a result, a comprehensive post Camp Fire study is necessary and will be completed to serve as the foundation of base data for the 2024 RTP/SCS. The Camp Fire compounded with the COVID 19 economic impacts further complicate the certainty of financial projections. For this reason, the RTP/SCS is a living document that can be amended at any time by the BCAG Board of Directors and is also updated every 4 years. While the timing of the Camp Fire and COVID 19 has complicated the 2020 RTP/SCS, this document soundly documents a balanced, financially constrained long-range plan.

The Camp Fire amplified that existing funding mechanisms are not sufficient to address existing emergency access needs. In addition, BCAG as the owner operator of Butte Regional Transit has a mandate to electrify its transit fleet by (insert year). With the cost of an electric bus approximately double from a traditional clean diesel bus, the Butte Region is further challenged -to meet these capital and infrastructure requirements associated with the electrification of the transit fleet. Projects identified in the RTP/SCS primarily address existing operational and safety issues. The lack of stable revenue stream funding for transportation results in a continued backlog of transportation projects, many which are included in the RTP/SCS as unfunded needs.

BCAG’s primary funding for major infrastructure improvement is the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). As part of the 2016 STIP cycle the STIP estimate was negative \$754 million resulting in BCAG deleting a regional project in 2018. As part of the 2020 STIP, the economy improved and with the passage of California’s gas tax SB 1 passed on November 1, 2017, transportation funding stabilized and afforded the ability of the California Transportation Commission to approve the programming of the State Route 70 Corridor from 2 lanes to 4 lanes.

The current federal authorizing transportation bill, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), or Public Law (P.L.) 114-94 signed into law on December

4, 2015 is set to expire on September 30, 2020. The FAST Act is the first federal law in over ten years to provide long-term funding certainty for surface transportation.

State Highway Responsibility

At the local level, funding for a continuous four lane facility to Chico is Butte County's top priority. The focus for the region is the completion of the SR 70 Corridor south of Oroville. BCAG has worked with Caltrans and the CTC to fully fund the corridor from Oroville to Marysville. While the corridor is funded and programmed, the downturn of the economy as a result of COVID 19 and decreased gas tax revenues associated with public health recommendations of shelter in place, BCAG is reserving future STIP programming capacity of the RTP/SCS should revenues in the STIP not materialize.

As a result of SB 45, regional agencies were given control of 75% of the STIP for regional improvements on the state highway system. The remaining 25% of the STIP is provided to Caltrans to address the interregional system. As such, BCAG is responsible for addressing improvements to the state highway system in Butte County.

Local Roads

A backlog of local roadway rehabilitation improvements continues to be a major concern in Butte County. The cities and county will continue to be required to make the most of other resources available such as the Regional Surface Transportation Program, the Transportation Enhancement Activity Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, gas tax revenues, as well as other funds, in order to address the rehabilitation needs of the county for operations and maintenance. The rural areas are also in need of adequate emergency access. The Camp Fire of 2018 and the Oroville Dam crisis of 2017 highlighted the limitations of the local road system.

Transit

The period between the 2008 and 2016 RTPs gas prices were relatively high which resulted with in increased demand for transit. From 2016 to 2020 with a strong economy and lower gas prices, demand for transit dropped. This trend was consistent nationally. In addition, with COVID 19 transit ridership decreased over 70%, also consistent with national levels. The Camp Fire also displaced over 20,000 residents from the Town of Paradise, many of which relocated to Chico and surrounding communities. Due to the various impacts to the region with the Camp Fire, BCAG secured Caltrans planning grant funds to complete the Post Camp Fire Study which will serve as the foundation for the development of the 2024 RTP/SCS.

MANDATED TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is civil rights legislation requiring, among other things, that persons with disabilities have equal access to transportation services. In terms of transit, this means that all fixed route transit services must provide complementary paratransit services for those within a ¾ mile radius of a fixed route stop.

In addition, transit providers must have wheelchair accessible vehicles, provide schedules and other information in accessible formats for people with hearing and sight impairments, allow attendants and companions, and meet specific requirements for comparability of fares.

Paratransit services, such as those mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act, are significantly more expensive to provide than fixed route transit services. The Act does not provide any funding for these required service improvements. Since the 2016 RTP/SCS BCAG has implemented “premium” service as requested by the public. Paratransit services have expanded to a greater area above and beyond that which is required. All routes are posted online at: <http://www.blinetransit.com/Paratransit/Paratransit-Service-Area/index.html>. Potential customers have indicated they are willing to pay a little extra for paratransit service, so long as they are able to make their required trips. Details of the expanded service are discussed in the Transit chapter.

During the period of this RTP/SCS, BCAG will continue to work to address transit planning and funding issues relative to meeting ADA requirements. Butte Regional Transit (B-Line) is currently in full compliance with the existing ADA requirements and has previously developed a Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan for Butte County. BCAG will continue to monitor the regulations as applicable to Butte County. For the purposes of the 2020 RTP/SCS the transit impacts to COVID are assumed temporary.

AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY

With each update and amendment of the RTP/SCS, BCAG is required to demonstrate transportation air quality conformity under the Federal Clean Air Act (section 176(c) (42 U.S.C. 7506 (c))). The purpose of this demonstration is to ensure that BCAG’s plans and programs “conform” to all applicable federal air quality requirements and that the projects contained within the RTP do not cause new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS).

Air Quality Conformity Determination

The results from the 2019 FTIP and 2020 RTP emissions analysis show that current and future emissions of the ozone precursors ROG and NOx will be no greater than the 2011 and 2017 base year emissions levels. Thus, Butte County, in accordance with the Transportation Conformity Rule requirements applicable to Butte County (§51.464 and §51.436 – 51.440), has satisfied the “no-greater-than-2011” test for the 2008 8-hour federal ozone NAAQS and the “no-greater-than-2017” test for the 2015 8-hour federal ozone NAAQS. **Based on this analysis, the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and 2019 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) conforms to the applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP) and all applicable sections of the EPA’s Transportation Conformity Rule.**

The complete Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination is included as Appendix 1. The 2020 RTP has successfully demonstrated conformity for each of the required designations.

REGIONAL MODELING

In each RTP/SCS update cycle, BCAG is required under federal and state regulations to utilize the latest available estimates and assumptions of population, housing, employment, land use, and travel. BCAG utilizes both a regional travel demand forecasting model and regional land use model, in conjunction with regional growth forecasts, to meet these requirements.

Regional Travel Demand Forecasting (TDF) Model

BCAG maintains the regional TDF model to support long-range transportation planning efforts and to provide a mechanism for evaluating the potential effects of future land development and transportation improvement projects. In 2010, the model received extensive updates to support the development of the new sustainable communities strategy required under Senate Bill 375. For development and analysis of the 2020 RTP/SCS, BCAG's TDF model was updated with the latest available data and several new features were added for the purpose of increasing its sensitivity to changes in land use and transportation changes.

Appendix 6-6B includes the complete documentation for the regional TDF model.

Regional Land Use Model

In 2010 BCAG worked with California State University, Chico and the University of California Davis to develop a regional land use allocation model to assist in preparing the 2012 RTP/SCS. The model is rule based, and allocates future residential and employment growth while considering the region's existing land use plans, growth forecasts, and development attractions (e.g. transportation and infrastructure) and discouragements (e.g. resource areas, farmland, and floodplains). Outputs of the model are used to inform the regional travel demand forecasting model.

The 2016 RTP/SCS update of the land use allocation model included the addition of five (5) new job categories, new K-12 school enrollment forecasts, an occupancy adjustment of residential and non-residential land uses, and a process of normalizing the data to state sources.

In preparing the 2020 RTP/SCS, the land use allocation model has been used to generate the base year (2018) and update the preferred land use scenarios developed as part of the 2016 RTP/SCS for the forecast years 2020, 2035, and 2040. The model has been updated to include the latest regional growth forecasts, local general plan information, and planned projects. In addition, the model includes an adjustment to account for the loss and rebuilding of housing units and non-residential structures associated with the Camp Fire.

All future year allocations were developed in coordination with local jurisdictions planning staff and are based on land use information from the areas local land use plans, planned development projects, reasonable assumptions regarding infill and redevelopment, regional growth forecasts, and a review of development attractions (i.e., motorized and non-motorized transportation networks, existing development, service areas, etc.) and discouragements (i.e., resource areas and farmland, public lands, areas exceeding 25% slope, etc.). The general plan and specific plan development activities occurring in the county by the local jurisdictions are reflected in the future year land use assumptions, which are generally representative of the best available information as of January 1st, 2019.

Appendix 6-6A includes the complete documentation for the regional land use allocation model and associated forecasted land uses by analysis year.

REGIONAL ROAD NETWORK

One of the most important components of the overall transportation system in Butte County is the network of roadways that facilitates the movement of people and goods in and through the county.

Appendix 7 identifies specific roadways in Butte County that are of regional significance. Regionally significant roadways include the entire state highway system and all roads designated as either arterial or collector as classified by each local jurisdiction. In addition, roadways which meet one or more of the following criteria have been added and identified as other roads of regional significance:

- Principal roadways connecting Butte County with other regions or counties
- Principal roadways connecting urban areas
- Roadways which provide access to significant recreational, commercial, industrial, or institutional activities
- Roadways which are primary emergency evacuation routes for urban areas

The regionally significant roads in the RTP/SCS are evaluated within the regional traffic model. These roadways are analyzed based on current and future travel demand, and provide a basis to identify potential impacts of growth on the regional transportation system.

REGIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures are used to evaluate and analyze the performance and effectiveness of the transportation system, government policies, programs, and strategies presented in the Regional Transportation Plan. Recent legislation such as the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and SB 375 have placed greater emphasis on performance-based planning. In addition, federal code 23 CFR 450.324 (f)(4) is a new requirement for MPOs to prepare a System Performance Report with each update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) / Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which evaluates the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets mandated in MAP-21.

Appendix 8 includes the performance report for the 2020 RTP/SCS.

ALTERNATIVES

Transportation improvement alternatives are developed from the data analysis for each project that is ultimately funded. The location of sensitive environmental resources and the requirement to consider projects and strategies that protect and enhance the environment are factored into the analysis.

A requirement to the identification of projects in the RTP/SCS is that they be specifically identified or be consistent with the goals, policies and objectives of their respective jurisdiction's general plan. As part of the project development process, each project is required to undergo its own environmental clearance. Through the environmental process, each project must stand on its own and satisfy applicable requirements for NEPA and/or CEQA, as well as be consistent with adjacent and or overall environmental goals.

BCAG's top "regional" priority is the SR 70 Corridor to bring a continuous four lane facility reaching Chico. The remaining gap to accomplish this is approximately 17 miles between Palermo and Marysville.

In addition, as part of the RTP SEIR process, three alternatives have been considered including:

1. No Project Alternative (2016 RTP/SCS)
2. Financially Constrained Alternative
3. Transit Investment Plus (+)

Title VI & Environmental Justice

The RTP is required to seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.

BCAG has determined that the transportation and land use changes identified in the RTP do not result in disparate impacts to minority communities and populations or adverse human health or environmental effects as a result of the projects, programs or policies. In addition, BCAG complies with Title VI requirements and Environmental Justice requirements. The EJ determination is determined because the RTP/SCS does not result in a disproportionately high and adverse effect on human health and environment.

On the contrary, much of BCAG's success in the Active Transportation Program was the direct result of low income and minority community involvement in the grant application process. This has resulted in over \$40 million in ATP projects. Per capita, Butte County has one of the highest success rates for securing these funds. The SR 99 Corridor Bikeway Project in Chico, the South Oroville Safe Routes to Schools Project are two examples of the region attempting to revitalize and improve access to the community. Outreach to minority communities is conducted as well as occasional facebook live interviews on Radio Mexican con Juan Villagrana which targets the Hispanic communities including all of Butte County.

Appendix 9 discusses the definition and analysis to capture investments made in Title VI and Environmental Justice areas. A map superimposes low income boundaries to be able to see what investments are being done, or not done, in order to make improved and informed planning and programming decisions.

In addition, other socio economic data is considered in this RTP via the BCAG traffic model. The BCAG traffic model incorporates population, housing, and employment growth. BCAG can model the location of transportation improvement projects, bus routes with environmental justice boundaries. This RTP/SCS includes a new Appendix 9 which illustrates the investments made by location. The university mapping project is an effective tool to assist in the programming decision making process by the BCAG Board.

BCAG attempts to engage underserved communities in the RTP/SCS development process by going out to specific neighborhoods and posting outreach material and talking with local residents, social medial live interview in Spanish and opportunities to participate via zoom to avoid traveling. Notices are placed in English, Spanish and Hmong on the entire transit fleet and low income neighborhoods informing the community of the RTP/SCS workshop and availability of translators if needed. BCAG staff is bi-lingual.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

BCAG recognizes the importance of addressing environmental issues early in the planning process. As a result, BCAG embarked on developing the Sustainable Communities Strategy planning effort as described in Chapter 4.

In addition, each project is required to undergo its own environmental review and clearance process as part of the project development process and prior to the allocation of any right-of-way or construction dollars. A supplemental program level EIR is included with the 2020 RTP/SCS as well.

With regard to air quality, based on the analysis provided in the air quality conformity section of the RTP/SCS, Butte County continues to demonstrate conformity. Non-exempt projects are required to demonstrate conformity twice, once in the RTP/SCS and again once the project is programmed in the FTIP. Each project essentially demonstrates conformity twice, once for the RTP/SCS and once for the FTIP. In addition, once programming occurs, each project is required to comply with NEPA and CEQA as appropriate. This process ensures that the transportation projects moving forward have been adequately analyzed.