METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Agenda Item 6j

Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee DATE: April 7, 2017

FR: Executive Director W. I. 1131

RE: SB 150 (Allen): Regional Transportation Plans

Background
SB 150 adds a number of new provisions to the statute established by Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008) governing the development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), the state's general term for the long-range plan we are currently developing – Plan Bay Area 2040. The bill requires the Air Resources Board consider specific factors when updating the regional greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, including the extent to which the state's climate targets will "need to be met by reductions in vehicle miles traveled" (VMT). Notably, the bill adds a requirement that the SCS include an appendix that evaluates projects on the basis of their ability to reduce VMT, per capita GHG emissions, and the share of low-income and lower middle-income residents' household income consumed by transportation and housing, and to *increase* the amount of time spent walking or bicycling for transportation purposes. Additionally, SB 150 requires the ARB to monitor each metropolitan planning organization (MPO)'s SCS to determine whether it is on track to reduce VMT by 15 percent by 2050 and achieve the GHG targets set by the board.

Recommendation: Oppose Unless Amended

Discussion
SB 150 has the laudable goal of ensuring that the benefits set forth in the SB 375-mandated Sustainable Communities Strategies contribute meaningfully to the state's ability to reduce GHG emissions. MTC shares this goal and staff does not object to the bill's provision requiring ARB to review and provide a progress report on each SCS, starting 2018, so as to help provide a statewide view of the plans' anticipated benefits and progress with respect to GHG emissions.

However, we are very concerned about the addition of a VMT performance target, namely, reducing VMT by 15 percent by 2050. This target is stated in absolute terms, not "per capita." While no baseline year is provided, assuming the intent is 2018 and the target is a VMT net reduction, staff believes such a target is infeasible even assuming sluggish population and economic growth. For instance, a 0.5 percent population growth rate over 32 years represents a 17 percent growth overall. Yet the bill employs this 15 percent VMT drop by 2050 as the benchmark by which ARB will evaluate each SCS and as a criteria by which MPOs would be required to evaluate the projects in their SCS.

Staff also takes issue with the prescriptive approach to mandating specific performance measures and formatting for a new "appendix" to the plan. As you know, the SCS encompasses the Regional Transportation Plan and always includes detailed tables about the planned investments as an appendix already. The RTP, a federally required plan, is subject to numerous federal and state requirements as to content. In addition, the federally-required Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which spells out projects receiving federal funds or requiring federal action over the next four years, contains considerable project-level detail and is typically updated to follow on the heels of the SCS.

While we are flattered that the active transportation and affordability performance criteria proposed in SB 150 bear a striking resemblance to those adopted as part of Plan Bay Area, we do not support additional state-mandated performance targets, particularly in statute. The U.S. Department of Transportation has already adopted dozens of performance targets that MPOs will be required to adopt and track on a regular basis. In addition, the CTC has adopted its own performance targets relative to the RTP and the STIP Guidelines.

We are also concerned that the bill requires the appendix evaluate projects on the basis of at least four criteria and three co-benefits (public health, social equity and conservation) and "list them in the order of their ability to achieve these objectives." This provision ignores the fact that in many cases, performance measures may not be complementary and may in fact involve trade-offs, so that a neat "order ranking" is highly problematic.

Because it is overly prescriptive and mandates infeasible VMT reduction targets in statute, we recommend an "oppose unless amended" position on SB 150 in order to seek amendments that retain the ARB oversight/progress report provisions, but eliminate the more prescriptive aspects of the bill.

Known Positions

Support

Coalition for Clean Air
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
Public Advocates, Inc.
Sierra Club California
The Nature Conservancy
California League of Conservation Voters
National Parks Conservation Association
Center for Biological Diversity
Trust for Public Lands
California Bicycle Coalition
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
California Walks
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Bike San Gabriel Valley
Sunflower Alliance
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton
Center for Climate Change and Public Health
COAST

Oppose

None on file

Steve Heminger

SH:rl