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November 14, 2016

File Number 3102000

TO: Interested Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals
 FROM: SANDAG Staff
 SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report for San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan

MEMBER AGENCIES

- Cities of*
- Carlsbad*
- Chula Vista*
- Coronado*
- Del Mar*
- El Cajon*
- Encinitas*
- Escondido*
- Imperial Beach*
- La Mesa*
- Lemon Grove*
- National City*
- Oceanside*
- Poway*
- San Diego*
- San Marcos*
- Santee*
- Solana Beach*
- Vista*
- and*
- County of San Diego*

ADVISORY MEMBERS

- Imperial County*
- California Department of Transportation*
- Metropolitan Transit System*
- North County Transit District*
- United States Department of Defense*
- San Diego Unified Port District*
- San Diego County Water Authority*
- Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association*
- Mexico*

Notice of Preparation

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), as Lead Agency, will prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan (Regional Plan). Responsible and trustee agencies, and other interested agencies, organizations, and individuals are invited to provide written comments on the scope and content of the EIR. An overview of the Regional Plan, its probable environmental effects, and related information is attached. An initial study was not prepared.

Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, December 8, 2016, at 12 noon (immediately preceding the Regional Planning Technical Working Group meeting). The meeting will be held at SANDAG, 401 B Street, Suite 800, San Diego, CA 92101. Attendees will have the opportunity to provide verbal and written comments to SANDAG at the scoping meeting.

Submitting Comments

Comments also can be provided in writing to SANDAG. State law requires that responsible and trustee agencies provide comments no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. For all other parties, SANDAG is providing a 60-day comment period. As such, comments from all other parties must be received by January 13, 2017. Please include a name and contact information, if appropriate.

Contact Information

Please send written comments via mail or email to:

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 San Diego, CA 92101
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Lead Agency: San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)

Project Title: Program Environmental Impact Report for San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan

Project Location: The 18 cities and unincorporated areas of San Diego County

Prepared By:



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Date

AMA/hbr

Attachment: 1. Plan Information and Scope of Environmental Analysis

Attachment 1. Plan Information and Scope of Environmental Analysis

Background and Plan Overview

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), will prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for an update to San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan (Regional Plan). The Regional Plan will consist of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that identify the San Diego region's future transportation investments and growth through 2050.

In accordance with state and federal guidelines, the RTP and SCS are updated every four years. On October 9, 2015, the SANDAG Board of Directors adopted the current version of the Regional Plan and certified its EIR. The Regional Plan is scheduled for consideration by the SANDAG Board of Directors in 2019. A new EIR will be prepared for the Regional Plan to evaluate its significant effects on the environment, identify alternatives to the Regional Plan, and indicate the manner in which significant effects can be mitigated or avoided.

Plan Location

The Regional Plan location includes all of San Diego County, including all 18 cities and all unincorporated areas. The Regional Plan considers cross-border and interregional travel patterns with neighboring counties and Mexico.

Senate Bill 375

Senate Bill 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) (SB 375) provides for a planning process to coordinate land use planning and RTPs to help California meet the greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions established in Assembly Bill 32 (Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006). SB 375 requires RTPs prepared by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), including SANDAG, to incorporate an SCS in their RTPs that demonstrates how the region would achieve GHG emission reduction targets for passenger vehicles set by the Air Resources Board (ARB).

In September 2010, the ARB adopted GHG targets for major MPOs, including SANDAG. The current SANDAG targets are per capita carbon dioxide emission reductions from passenger vehicles of 7 percent by 2020 and 13 percent by 2035, relative to 2005 levels. However, the ARB is expected to adopt a new 2035 target for SANDAG sometime in 2017. SANDAG anticipates that the new 2035 target will be in effect for the Regional Plan.

SB 375 has three major components:

1. Using the regional transportation planning process to achieve reductions in GHG emissions from passenger vehicles;
2. Offering incentives under CEQA to encourage projects that are consistent with an SCS that achieves GHG emission reductions; and
3. Coordinating the regional housing need allocation process with the regional transportation planning process while maintaining local authority over land use decisions.

If an SCS is unable to achieve the GHG emission reduction targets set by the ARB, an Alternative Planning Strategy must be developed to demonstrate how the targets could be achieved.

Resource Topics Addressed in the EIR

The EIR will analyze the Regional Plan's significant environmental effects for the following 16 resource topics:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Energy
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- GHG Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Utilities
- Transportation
- Water Supply

In addition, the EIR will address cumulative impacts, growth inducing impacts, and other considerations required by CEQA.

Alternatives Analyzed in the EIR

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the Regional Plan that would feasibly attain most of the Regional Plan's basic objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the Regional Plan's significant effects, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. In addition, the EIR will identify other alternatives that were initially considered, but rejected for reasons including, but not limited to, infeasibility due to economic, legal, or other considerations; inability to meet most of the basic project objectives; or failure to avoid or substantially lessen any of the Regional Plan's significant environmental impacts. SANDAG is seeking input on alternatives as part of the Notice of Preparation process.