

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: February 6, 2012
Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Staff Presentation on the “Sustainable Communities Strategy” Regional Planning Initiative

REPORT BY: Jeff Bond, Community Development Director

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

For information and provide feedback and direction to staff.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, the State of California has adopted several major legislative efforts to address climate change. In particular, AB 32 established statewide goals to reduce greenhouse gas production to 1990 levels by 2020. In addition, SB 375 was passed in 2008, which established a new framework for regional land use planning and transportation funding.

As a part of SB 375, regional planning agencies such as Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) are required to prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) in all metropolitan regions in California. The SCS initiative is an effort to integrate demographic & economic projections with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and affordable housing mandates. The end product will be a regional plan that identifies where housing and employment growth should occur to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets, and insures that investments in transportation are targeted to these areas.

DISCUSSION

The regional planning agencies have asked City staff to make periodic presentations to our local communities. In May 2011, staff presented the City Council a summary of the “Initial Vision Scenario” (IVS), which was the first work product of the SCS that provided information at a city-by-city level of detail. For Albany, for the period 2010 to 2025, the Initial Vision scenario showed an increase by 2,440 households. In addition, employment was projected to increase by more than 500 jobs.

The Initial Vision Scenario was based on strong employment growth, and unprecedented funding to support housing affordability and transportation upgrades. One of the

overarching comments received by ABAG/MTC was that the Initial Vision Scenario anticipated growth rates far higher than recent growth. As a result of this feedback, four new alternative scenarios have been prepared.

- Core Concentration – This scenario assumes a strong economic growth with a high concentration of employment in the three primary central business districts (Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose) and a concentration of households within the 45 min commute from these employment centers. This alternative is based on the current approved “T3035” regional transportation plan.
- Focused Growth – Assumes slower, more realistic growth, with an emphasis on planned development areas and major transit corridors. This alternative assumes a change in the regional transportation plan that emphasizes “Core Capacity” transit investments instead of road network expansions.
- Constrained Core Concentration – Similar to the Focused Growth, but with an emphasis on growth in priority development areas that are closer to the core of the Bay Area. This alternative assumes a change in the regional transportation plan that emphasizes “Core Capacity” transit investments instead of road network expansions.
- Outward Growth – Continues recent trends of growth in the outer portions of the Bay Area. Uses current approved regional transportation plan.

For Albany, under the alternative scenarios, anticipated household growth is reduced, from more than 2,440 households in the Initial Vision Scenario to a range between 955 to 1,341 households. Berkeley and El Cerrito also have a substantial decreases in household growth. The household growth projections are summarized in the attached Attachment 1.

In the alternative scenarios, the number of jobs in Albany increase from 520 in the Initial Vision Scenario to a range of 955 to 1,432 jobs. Berkeley also sees an increase in employment growth, but El Cerrito is projected to have a reduction in employment growth under the alternative scenarios. The job growth projections are summarized in the attached Attachment 2.

Implications on Greenhouse Gas Production

The State of California has established targets for GHG reduction of 7% reduction per capita by 2020 and 15% reduction per capita by 2035. The SCS analysis forecasts a change in per capita GHG between 7.2% reduction to 8.1% reduction, which meets the 2020 target. The modeling predicts little improvement will be made, however, between 2020 and 2035, with GHG reductions improving slightly to a range of 7.9% reduction to 9.4% reduction by 2035, far short of the 15% reduction target. The GHG projections are summarized in Attachment 3.

The implication for this is that additional policy initiatives are required to achieve the state targets. Several of these policies are underway in the City of Albany, including implementation of the Active Transportation Plan and the Safe Routes to Schools program. A summary of the policy initiatives is summarized in Attachment 4.

Albany Development Densities Relative to Other Communities

The data recently released by ABAG/MTC allows staff to analyze Albany's density relative to other communities. Although not specifically relevant to any particular policy issue, Attachment 5 lists highest density cities and shows Albany in 2010 with the fifth highest residential density in the Bay Area. Corresponding calculations in Attachment 6 for employment density shows Albany with the 19th highest employment density. The various alternative scenarios do not change Albany's relative position.

Equity Considerations

As part of the SCS, ABAG/MTC staff have tracked the implications of the various alternatives on a range of policy issues. The analysis is summarized in Attachment 7. One of the key findings of the SCS process has been potential impact on low-income households. The SCS analysis forecasts that low-income households could face increase in transportation costs and increase in housing costs compared to national averages. This information is useful for refining the City's land use and transportation policies to be sensitive to cost implications on residents and local employers.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Successful implementation of the SCS will lead to reduction in greenhouse gas production in the Bay Area, and will compliment local policy initiatives established in the City's Climate Action Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff is actively participating in regional planning efforts. No direct expenses are anticipated as part of the SCS process.

Attachments:

1. Summary Table Household Growth in Albany and Nearby Communities
2. Summary Table Job Growth in Albany and Nearby Communities
3. Greenhouse Gas Reductions
4. Policy Initiatives
5. Summary Table Housing Density
6. Summary Table Employment Density
7. Scenario Analysis