



Notice of Preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) is the lead agency for the preparation and review of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). Pursuant to Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), BCAG is soliciting views from your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. BCAG will accept written comments concerning the scope and content of the SEIR from interested persons and organizations concerned with the project. State and federal law require that the RTP-SCS be updated every four years and the proposed 2024 RTP-SCS is an update of the current 2020 RTP-SCS. The 2020 RTP-SCS and SEIR were approved by the BCAG Board of Directors following a public hearing on December 10, 2020.

The SEIR for the 2024 RTP-SCS will be a supplement to the 2016 RTP-SCS Program EIR and 2020 RTP-SCS SEIR (State Clearinghouse # 2015092038). This is the appropriate level of environmental documentation for the 2024 RTP-SCS because changes to existing conditions (including regulatory updates), the transportation project list, and land use scenario evaluated in the 2024 RTP-SCS are expected to be minor relative to the 2016 RTP-SCS and 2020 RTP-SCS and would not substantially increase the severity of impacts previously identified. As stated in the *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15163(b), the supplement to the EIR need only contain information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project, as revised. In addition, a more detailed or project-level environmental review (if required) of the projects included in the RTP-SCS will be conducted by the responsible agencies, including Caltrans, Butte County, and the cities within the County, before each project is approved for construction and implementation.

BCAG will host one EIR Scoping Meeting for the 2024 RTP-SCS. The purpose of the Scoping meeting is to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental analysis that will be included in the Draft SEIR for the 2024 RTP-SCS. The Scoping Meeting will be made virtual for those unable to attend in-person. The date, time and location of the meeting is as follows:

November 16, 2024 from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.
326 Huss Drive, BCAG Conference Room Suite 150
Chico, CA 95928

Zoom (<https://zoom.us/join>)
Meeting ID: 819 6179 6722
Passcode: 376593

Future public workshops will be held to discuss development of the draft 2024 RTP-SCS.

Because of the time-sensitive nature of the regional transportation planning process, we request your response at the earliest possible date. Please mail comments to Iván García at **BCAG, 326 Huss Drive, Chico, CA 95928** or e-mail comments to **igarcia@bcag.org** no later than **5:00 p.m. on December 11, 2023**. Please identify the name, phone number, and email address of a contact person at your agency. Comments from the public must also include name, phone number, and email or postal address.

For more information, visit <http://www.bcag.org/Planning/RTP--SCS/2024-RTPSCS-Update/index.html> or call 530-809-4616.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Project Title

Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) 2024 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP-SCS)

Project Location

The geographical extent of the proposed 2024 RTP-SCS includes the area within the limits of Butte County, California, including the incorporated cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and Paradise, and all unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of the County of Butte. The attached figure shows the RTP-SCS plan area.

Project Description

Regional Transportation Plan

The proposed project is the Butte County 2024 RTP-SCS, which updates BCAG's previous 2020 RTP adopted in December 2020. BCAG, as both the federally-designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and the State-designated regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for Butte County, is required by both federal and State law to prepare a long-range (at least 20-year) transportation planning document known as a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is an action-oriented document used to achieve a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system. California Government Code Section 65080 et seq. and Title 23 United States Code (USC) Section 134 require RTPAs and MPOs to prepare long-range transportation plans to: 1) establish regional goals, 2) identify present and future needs, deficiencies and constraints, 3) analyze potential solutions, 4) estimate available funding, and 5) propose investments. State Statutes require that the RTP serve as the foundation for the short-range transportation planning documents: the Regional and Federal Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIP and FTIP).

Sustainable Communities Strategy

BCAG has the responsibility to prepare a SCS as part of the RTP, pursuant to the requirements of California Senate Bill 375 as adopted in 2008. The SCS sets forth a forecasted development pattern for the region, which, when integrated with the transportation network and other transportation measures and policies, is intended to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles and light trucks to achieve the regional GHG reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board (ARB). In 2010, the California ARB set GHG reduction targets for the BCAG region from on-road light-duty trucks and passenger vehicles as a 1% increase from 2005 emissions levels by 2020 and a 1% increase from 2005 emissions levels by 2035. The reduction targets were re-evaluated and approved by the California ARB in 2018. In 2018, ARB updated the BCAG targets as a 6% decrease from 2005 emissions levels by 2020 and 7% decrease from 2005 emissions levels by 2035. BCAG's 2020 RTP-SCS demonstrated a 14% reduction in per capita GHG emissions for the year 2020 and an 8% reduction for 2035. These targets apply to the BCAG region as a whole for all on-road light-duty trucks and passenger vehicles emissions, and not to individual cities or sub-regions. BCAG is required to prepare a SCS that demonstrates how GHG reduction targets will be met through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning. Thus, the RTP-SCS will address both the transportation component of the RTP, as well as the land use component of the SCS.

SB 375 specifically states that local governments retain their autonomy to plan local General Plan policies and land uses. The RTP-SCS rather is intended to provide a regional policy foundation that local governments may build upon, if they so choose. The RTP-SCS does not propose to change any land use and zoning designations; rather, the land use scenario envisioned by the RTP-SCS is based on and would be consistent with the existing local General Plan policies and land use designations as specified by the local agencies. As such, the RTP-SCS includes and accommodates the quantitative growth projections for the region based on the buildout of the local General Plans. SB 375 also requires that the RTP-SCS's forecasted development pattern for the region be consistent with the eight-year regional housing needs as

allocated to member jurisdictions through the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process under State housing law.

CEQA Streamlining

In addition, the RTP-SCS SEIR lays the groundwork for the streamlined review of qualifying development projects within Transit Priority Areas. Qualifying projects that meet statutory criteria and are consistent with the RTP-SCS are eligible for streamlined environmental review pursuant to CEQA. Certain types of development projects (i.e., transit priority projects or residential/mixed use residential projects, as defined by the statute) may qualify for CEQA streamlining if the requisite criteria are met. Generally, this means that the proposed project seeking to utilize the CEQA incentives is determined to be consistent with an approved SCS. Consistency will be determined by the local jurisdiction that is the lead agency for each project to be streamlined. BCAG's primary role is to include appropriate information in the SCS that will allow a jurisdiction to make a consistency determination with respect to appropriate streamlining options on a project by project basis. The programs and projects to be included in the 2024 RTP-SCS will be addressed programmatically in the SEIR. This will allow BCAG to analyze the regional or general impacts of the program and projects. A more detailed or project level environmental assessment, if required, will be provided by the various responsible agencies, including Caltrans, Butte County, and the cities within the County, for the various projects included in the RTP, before the projects are approved for construction.

2024 RTP-SCS Update

Under both federal and State law, BCAG must update its RTP every four years. The 2024 RTP-SCS is the long-range planning, policy, action, and financial document for the Butte County Region. The RTP-SCS covers a 20-year period from 2024 to 2045 and is an update of the 2020 RTP-SCS. The RTP-SCS identifies the region's transportation needs and issues and sets forth actions, programs, and projects to address those needs and issues. The RTP-SCS adopts policies, sets goals, and identifies financial resources to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of a regional intermodal transportation system that would serve the mobility needs of goods and people. As described above, BCAG does not propose any land use changes, but rather the land use patterns envisioned by the RTP-SCS are based on the General Plan land use and zoning designations of the local agencies (the five incorporated cities and the county). The RTP-SCS would be consistent with the land use and zoning designations in the incorporated and unincorporated areas.

The 2024 RTP-SCS reflects changes in legislative requirements, local land use policies, and resource constraints since the most recent RTP was adopted on December 10, 2020. The 2024 update to the RTP-SCS is focused on implementation of the 2016 RTP, with minor updates to ensure consistency with federal, state and local planning requirements. The most notable changes that impact this RTP update include:

- Update to the Regional Transportation Guidelines for MPOs by the California Transportation Commission.
- Consistency with the goals of the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) built from the Governor's Executive Orders (EO) EO N-19-19 and N-79-20.
- California's adoption of federal performance measures and targets as required under the FAST Act transportation bill and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).
- Guidelines from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research for SB 743 (Steinberg, 2013);
- New funding for transportation projects through California's recently approved Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (SB 1) for the next ten years;
- Minor updates to transportation projects and land use development (specifically focused on growth that has taken place since the last RTP); and
- Addition of components to the RTP to address freight and alternative fuel vehicles, including electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles.
- Increase in funding from the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program

Issues to Be Addressed in the SEIR

The impact categories listed below have been preliminarily identified for analysis in the 2024 RTP-SCS SEIR as these issue areas were evaluated in the 2020 RTP/SCS SEIR and are anticipated to have potentially different impacts compared to the 2016 RTP-SCS EIR or were not included in the 2016 RTP-SCS EIR.

- Agricultural resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Energy
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Transportation
- Wildfire

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

Through the NOP, BCAG is seeking input on further categories of analysis or areas of focus within the specified categories above. Time limits required by State law mandate your response be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Public Review and Public Scoping Meetings

The 30-day public review and comment period will commence on November 9, 2023 and conclude December 11, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. Public comments may be submitted in writing by 5:00 p.m. on December 11, 2023 to Iván García at the address below.

Contact Person: Iván García, Programming Director
Butte County Association of Governments
326 Huss Drive, Suite 150
Chico, CA 95928
igarcia@bcag.org

BCAG will hold one public information/EIR scoping meeting on November 16, 2023 in the Butte County Association of Governments Conference Room located at 2580 Sierra Sunrise Terrace, Suite 150, Chico, CA 95928, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The scoping meeting will be made virtual via Zoom (<https://zoom.us/join>) using Meeting ID: 819 6179 6722 and Passcode: 376593. The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental analysis that will be included in the SEIR.

