

Sustainable Communities Strategy
Progress Report



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Purpose

The Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) has initiated the development of the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). To better inform the development of the 2024 RTP/SCS, BCAG has prepared an SCS Progress Report which looks at several indicators included in the 2020 RTP/SCS, and the progress made to date. Once analyzed, the indicators provide planners and policy makers with information regarding the implementation of the SCS and if adjustments or additional actions should be pursued. This report is prepared to coincide with the 4-year update cycle of each new RTP/SCS and covers the period 2018-2022.

This effort follows a similar report published by the California Air Resources Board (ARB), as required under Senate Bill 150 (SB 150), which looks at all 18 Metropolitan Planning Agencies (MPOs) and the states progress under SB 375. More information regarding the report can be found on ARB's website - <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/tracking-progress>

Background

BCAG is responsible for preparing a long-range transportation plan for the Butte County region every four years. The RTP specifies the policies, projects, and programs necessary over the 20+ year planning period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation system.

In September 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, was enacted by the state of California. SB 375 prompts regions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from passenger vehicles through the coordinated planning of long-range transportation plans. The legislation requires all 18 MPOs in California to develop a SCS, which meets regional passenger vehicle GHG emissions targets, as an additional element of their RTPs. BCAG's first SCS was adopted in 2012 with a minor update completed as part of the 2016 plan. BCAG's 2020 SCS was the third developed for the region and included updates to account for impacts from the Camp Fire.

As described in SB 375, the SCS is an integrated transportation and land use plan which is intended to meet the regional GHG target for the years 2020 and 2035 while also accommodating the region's forecasted growth.

In 2011, ARB set GHG targets for the BCAG region from passenger vehicles as a 1% increase from 2005 emissions levels by 2020 and a 1% increase from 2005 emissions levels by 2035. These targets were revised by ARB in 2018 to reflect the achievements contained in BCAG's 2016 SCS. The targets apply to the BCAG region for passenger vehicle emissions, and not to individual cities or sub-regions.

BCAG's 2012 RTP/SCS achieved a 2% reduction in per capita GHG emissions for the years 2020 and 2035. To achieve these reductions, BCAG focused its 2012 efforts towards land use by bringing together the recently completed general plans and laying out a pattern of

development which balanced housing and employment growth within specified growth areas while protecting habitat and open space via consistency with the Butte Regional Conservation Plan.

This effort was followed by the 2016 RTP/SCS which expanded on the 2012 plan by incorporating a new Long-Range Transit and Non-Motorized Plan and regional growth forecasts. The 2016 plan estimated a 6% reduction in per capita GHG emissions for the year 2020 and a 7% reduction for 2035.

In 2020, BCAG adopted the current RTP/SCS that includes an update of the preferred “balanced” land use scenario, which considered the latest regional growth forecasts, recent regional trends in development and housing, and impacts of the Camp Fire.

Based on the latest available information included in ARB’s 2022 Progress Report, the BCAG region is not on track to achieve a 7% reduction by the year 2035 - despite local, regional, and state planning efforts. The same is true at the state level.

Progress Report Indicators

BCAG, in coordination with local partners through the Planning Director’s Group and Transportation Advisory Committee, has developed 12 indicators grouped into five categories to assist in tracking progress. The five categories include regional growth, land use, transportation investment, transportation mode choice, and resources areas and farmland. Table 1 includes a listing of indicators by category.

Table 1.

Category	Progress Report Indicator
Regional Growth	Annual Growth Rate of Population, Housing, and Jobs
Land Use	New Housing by Growth Area
	Housing Units Destroyed and Rebuilt by Growth Area
	New Housing Mix (Multi-Family / Single Family)
	New Housing within Transit Priority Project Areas
	Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio
Transportation Investment	Investment by Category
Transportation Mode Choice	Travel Mode to Work
	Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Per Capita
	Annual Transit Boarding’s Per Capita
	Miles of Class 1 & 2 Bike Facilities Per Capita
Resource Areas and Farmland	Rate of Important Farmland Conversion to Urban and Built-Up Land

Several new indicators have been introduced for the latest SCS Progress Report. These include Housing Units Destroyed and Rebuilt by Growth Area, New Housing within Transit Priority Projects Areas, and Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT) per Capita.

Indicators utilize publicly available data from federal, state, regional, and local agencies. In some instances, data has been disaggregated into regional growth areas (see Appendix A). It should be noted, some datasets are limited in terms of availability on an annual basis or delayed in their release, therefore, every attempt was made to utilize the most up-to-date information available. When data is presented for the year 2018, it is pre-Camp Fire.

Regional Growth

Indicator

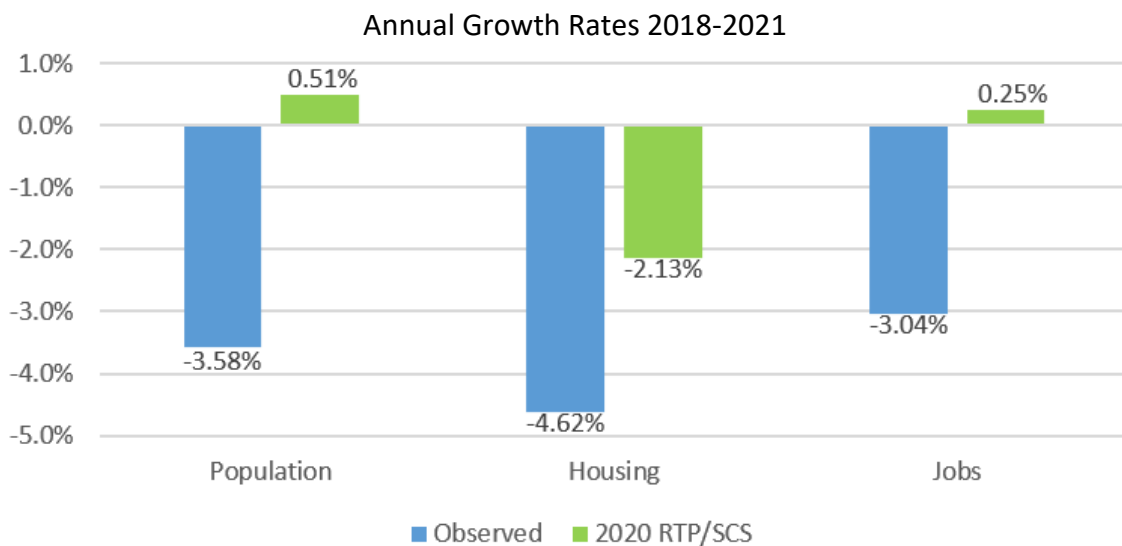
Annual Growth Rate of Population, Housing, and Jobs

Background

Population, housing, and job growth provide the framework for preparing the regional development pattern included in the RTP/SCS. The associated growth rates also factor into the degree to which local land use plans and their associated smart growth principles may be realized with on-the-ground development.

Trend

From 2018 to 2021, the Butte County region’s population decreased by approximately 23,400 individuals, housing realized a net loss of ~13,000 units, and employment was down by 7,300 jobs. The decrease in growth was greater than that anticipated in the 2020 RTP/SCS which assumed modest growth in population and jobs following the Camp Fire. The slower than anticipated regional recovery was likely hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic and North Complex Fire in 2020.



Source: BCAG, CA Dept. of Finance (DOF), and CA Employment Development Dept. (EDD)

Land Use

Indicator

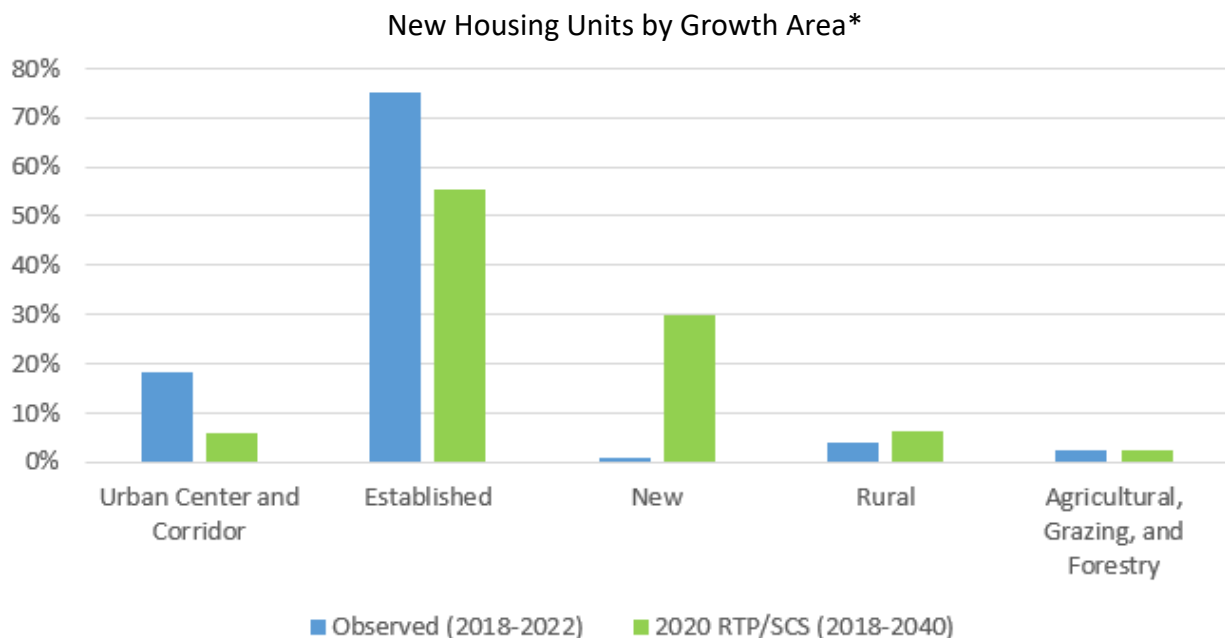
New Housing by Growth Area

Background

As indicated in the RTP/SCS, housing growth occurring within the Urban Center and Corridor Growth Area provides the greatest opportunity for residents to utilize alternative modes of transportation and existing infrastructure with shorter trip lengths. On the other end of the spectrum, residents of housing units built within the Rural or Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Growth Areas typically have the least transportation options, are reliant on passenger vehicles, and have the longest trip lengths.

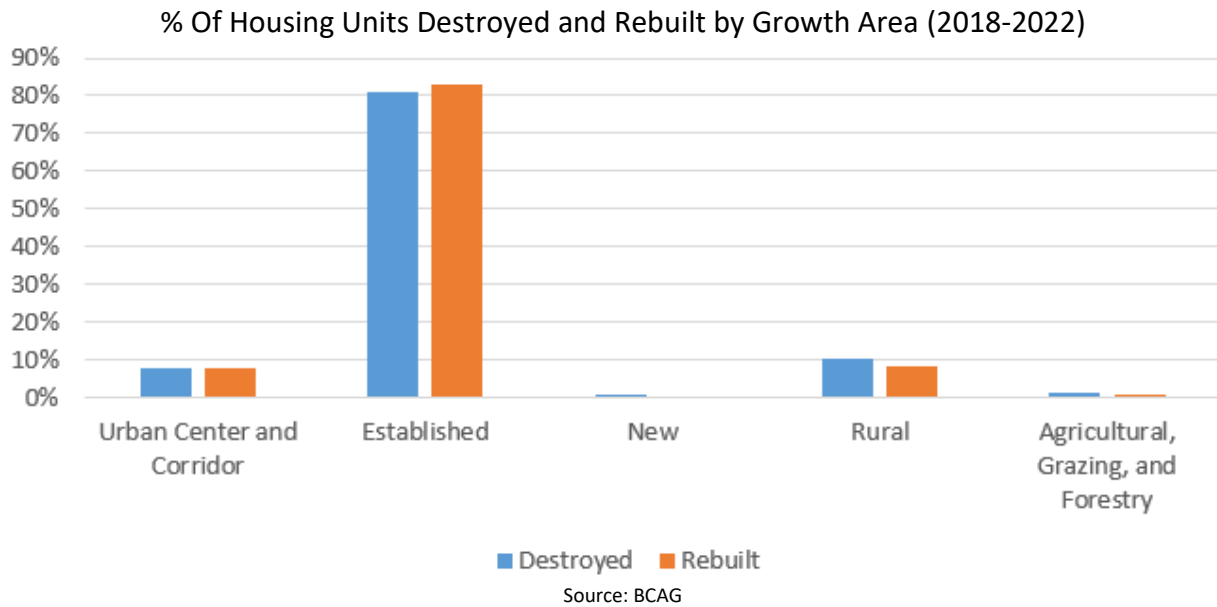
Trend

Between 2018 and 2022, new housing production (excludes rebuilds from Camp and North Complex fires) was concentrated within the Established Growth Area at 75%, followed by Urban Center and Corridor Area at 18%. The Rural Growth Areas produced 4% of the overall housing production with the New Areas and Agricultural, Grazing, and Forestry Areas showing the least production at 1% and 2.3%. These numbers show a more aggressive growth pattern in the Urban Center and Established Areas with slower than anticipated growth in the Rural Areas. The New Growth Area is anticipated to develop later in the 20-year planning period of the SCS.



*Excludes those units designated as rebuilds from the Camp and North Complex Fires
Source: BCAG and CA Dept. of Finance (DOF)

Of the ~16,000 housing units destroyed between the Camp Fire and North Complex Fire, ~1,850 units have been rebuilt as of January 2022. Rebuilding is occurring in proportion to loss by Growth Area.



Indicator

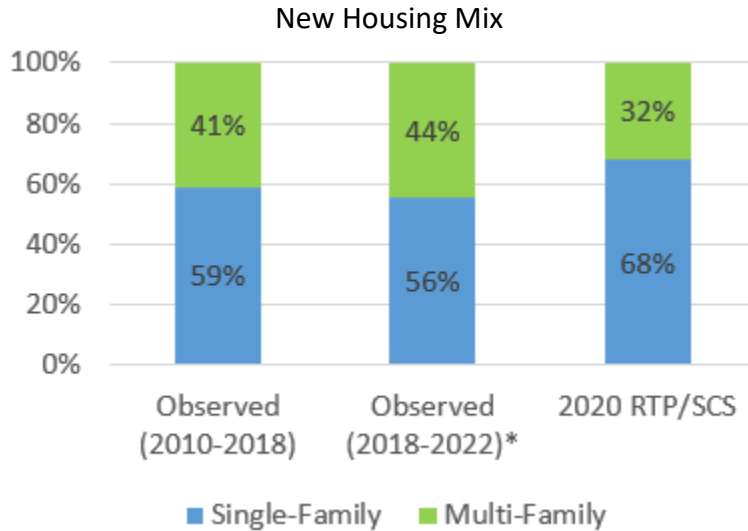
New Housing Mix (Multi-Family / Single Family)

Background

Providing a variety of housing types, including apartments, townhouses, condominiums, and single-family homes, creates opportunities for the variety of people living in the region. Multi-family housing typically generates fewer vehicle trips, as it is more likely located in higher density areas which support greater transit frequencies, closer access to daily needs, and are accessible to bike and pedestrian facilities.

Trend

Of the estimated 3,518 housing units constructed between 2010 and 2018 in the Butte County region, 41% of those units were multi-family and the remaining 59% single family. Between 2018 and the beginning of 2022, 5,877 housing units were constructed including rebuilds from the Camp and North Complex fires. 44% of the 5,877 units constructed during that time were multi-family. This greatly exceeds the forecasted development percentages included in the 2020 RTP/SCS at 32% multi-family and 68% single family. A similar trend is occurring across California and the rest of the nation.



*Includes those units designated as rebuilds from the Camp and North Complex Fires
Source: BCAG and CA Dept. of Finance (DOF)

Data Notes

The Observed (2010-2018) data represents CA Department of Finance (DOF) estimates of housing and includes attached single family units with the multi-family classification. This is consistent with the 2020 RTP/SCS figures which utilize BCAG’s multi-family land use classification.

Indicator

New Housing within Planned Transit Priority Project Areas

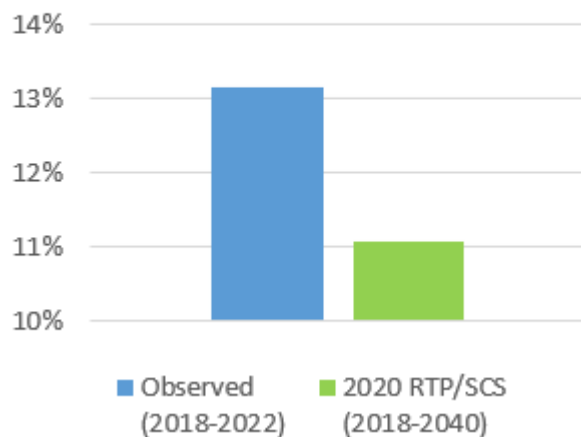
Background

Residents who live within proximity to high quality transit (fixed route bus intervals no longer than 15-minutes) tend to rely less on single occupant vehicle trips. Transit Priority Project (TPP) areas are defined as a location within one-half mile of a major transit stop or an existing or planned high-quality transit corridor included in the RTP/SCS. Certain development projects within a TPP area are eligible for CEQA streamlining benefits.

Trend

Between 2018 and 2022, 13% of all new housing units were built within the planned TPP areas included in the 2020 RTP/SCS. The 2020 RTP/SCS forecasted a lower rate of only

% of New Housing Units within TPP Areas



11% of new housing. This is likely due in part to the slower than anticipated growth within the Camp Fire burn area, which does not contain a planned TPP area.

Indicator

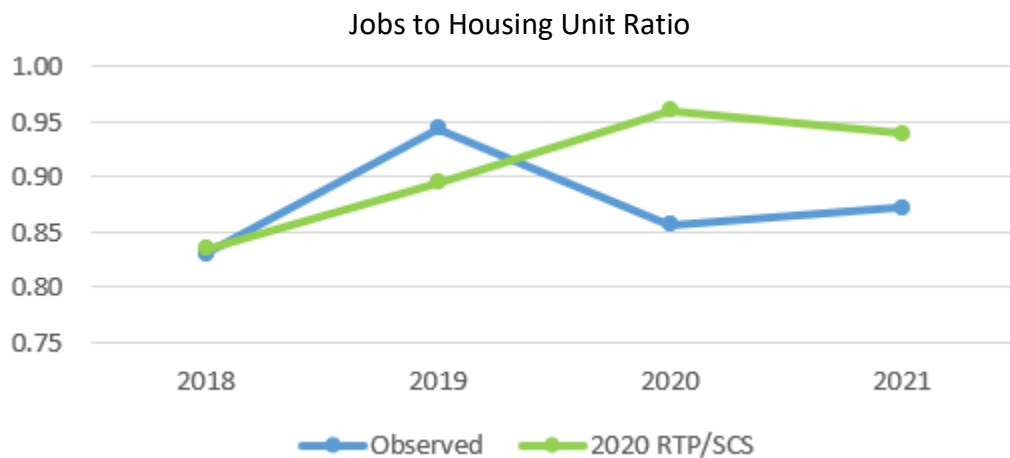
Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio

Background

The relationship between the amount of housing and jobs has long been used as an indicator of the potential for longer (or shorter) commutes. In areas with a very low number of jobs to housing, residents must commute out of the area to find work. The same is true with areas rich in jobs but short on housing, employees must find housing out of the area. For transportation planning purposes, an ideal ratio of jobs to housing is near 1.0, however, other factors such as housing affordability and scale of application can affect this target.

Trend

Between 2018 and 2021, the Butte County region's Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio increased from 0.83 to 0.87. The 2020 RTP/SCS estimated a greater increase of 0.83 to 0.94 for the same period. In reviewing the observed data, a significant decrease in the ratio occurs in 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and then begins to increase again in 2021.



Source: BCAG, CA Dept. of Finance (DOF), and CA Employment Development Dept. (EDD)

Transportation Investment

Indicator

Investment by Category

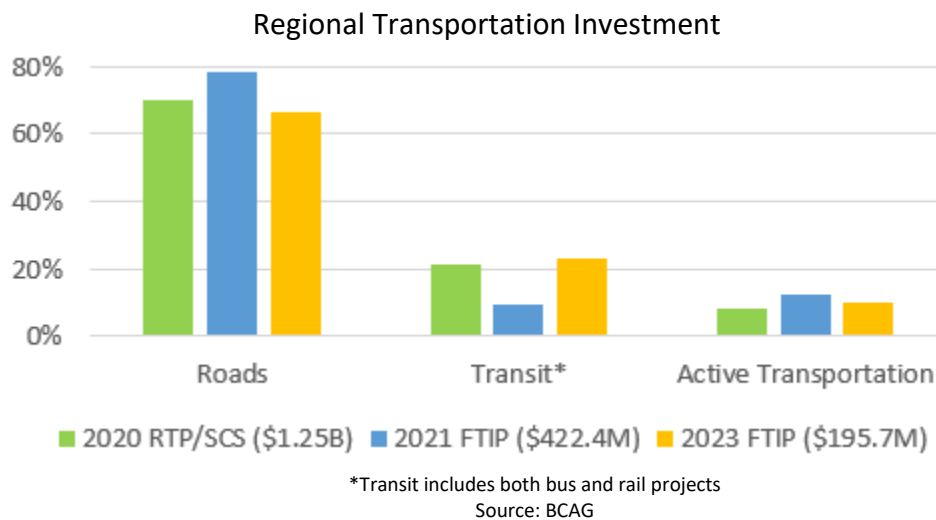
Background

Multi-modal investments support transportation options which include walking, cycling, public transit, and automobile trips.

Trend

BCAG’s 2021 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) showed increased investments in Road & Highway Maintenance (+8%) and Bike & Pedestrian (+4%) funded projects over the planned programming included in the 2020 RTP/SCS. This trend was reversed with the 2023 FTIP which showed a decreased investment in Road & Highway Maintenance (-3%) and marginal increases in Active Transportation (+2%) and Transit (+1%), bringing it more in line with the 2020 RTP/SCS investments.

The most significant reduction between the 2021 and 2023 FTIP was the completion of State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) projects along Highway 70 south of Oroville and Emergency Relief funded projects related to the Camp Fire. This resulted in a \$110M difference between the programmed SHOPP.



Data Notes

The 2021 FTIP is representative of projects programmed over the 4-year period from 2020/21-2023/24 and the 2023 FTIP covers the 2022/23 – 2025/26 period. The FTIP includes only those projects receiving federal funding or those that are determined to be regionally significant. The 2020 RTP/SCS covers the 20-year planning period from 2020-2040 and includes all programmed and planned regionally significant projects from anticipated federal, state, and local funding sources.

Transportation Mode Choice

Indicator

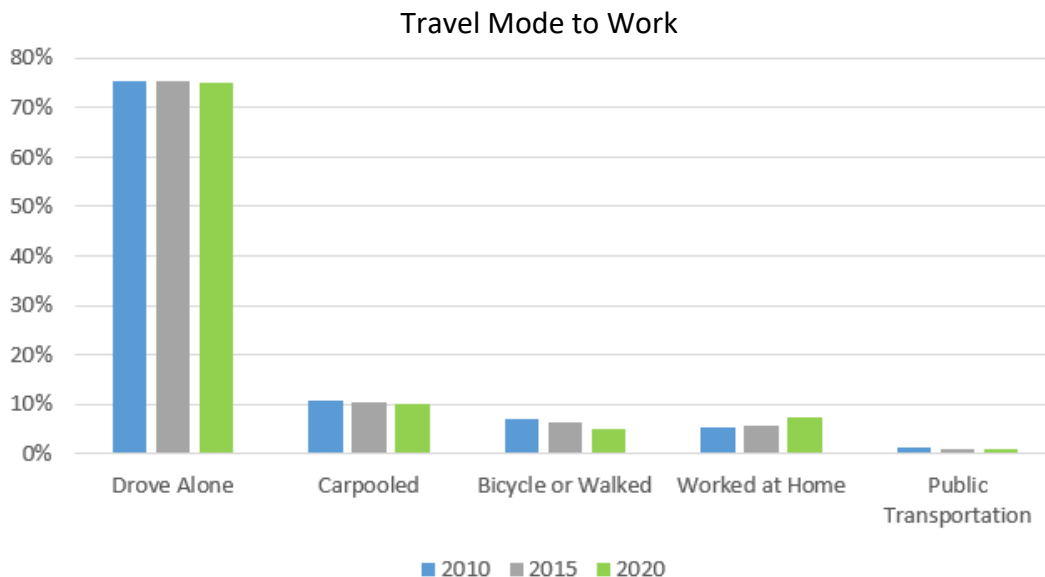
Travel Mode to Work

Background

Reducing single occupant vehicle trips (drive alone) by shifting to public transportation or active transportation modes (bike and pedestrian) improves the fitness and health of the region's population while relieving congestion on local roadways.

Trend

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, commuting travel modes have changed very little in the last ten years. Most residents of Butte County drive alone (75%) or carpool (10%) to work. Active transportation modes (biking and walking) had a slight decline between 2010 (7%) and 2020 (5%), while telecommuting (work at home) increased from 5% (2010) to 8% (2020) over this same period. The work at home trend is encouraging, as this translates to less commute related vehicle trips. On the other hand, decreases in active transportation modes and a stationary drive alone mode is not consistent with long range expectations of the 2020 RTP/SCS.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey (5-year data)

Indicator

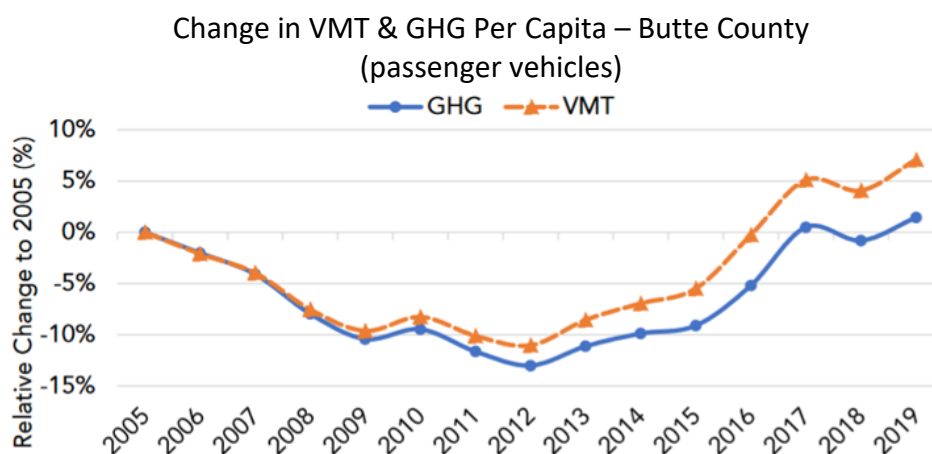
Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Per Capita

Background

Reducing annual VMT per capita can directly improve air quality and the overall health of the region, reduce road traffic injuries and fatalities, and assist the region with meeting its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals.

Trend

According to the California Air Resources Board 2022 Progress Report (June 2022), the BCAG region had a steady decline in both VMT and GHG per capita from 2005-2012. This trend shifted in 2013 and began to exceed 2005 levels by the year 2017. A drop in VMT and GHG is observed in 2018, likely associated with the Camp Fire, and then begins to rise again in 2019 with fire recovery efforts.



Source: California Air Resources Board June 2022 - Draft 2022 Progress Report

Indicator

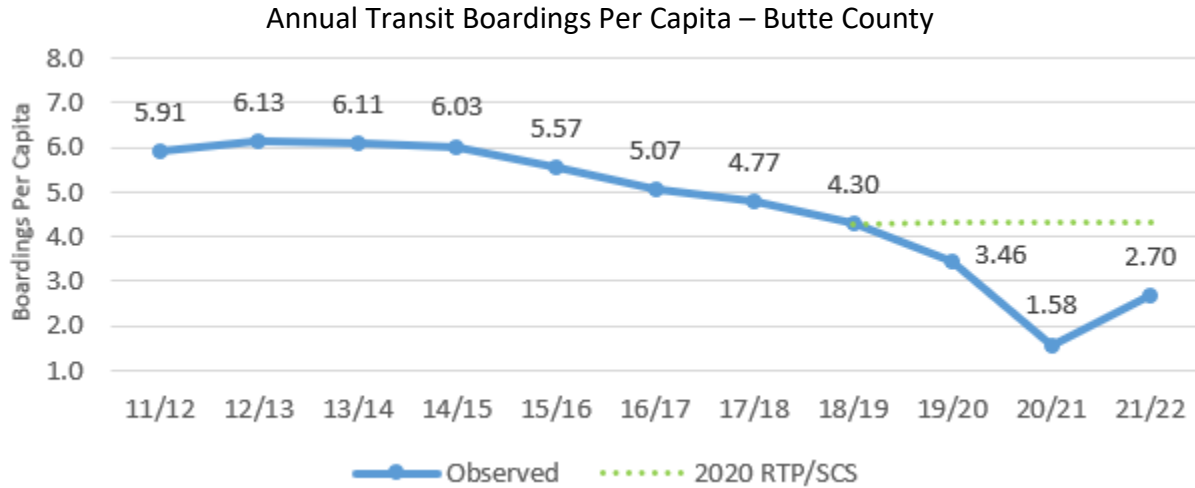
Annual Transit Boarding Per Capita

Background

The transit system in Butte County is a critical component to the region’s overall transportation network. The system serves commuters, low-income families, disabled individuals, and students, as well as the elderly. The transit system improves the air quality by providing an alternative to the single occupant vehicle, improves congestion on local roads and highways, and provides for an alternative mode of travel.

Trend

Over the eleven year span between 2011/12 and 2021/22, the annual transit boardings per capita in Butte County reached a peak of 6.13 in 2012/13 and a low of 1.58 in 2020/21. A similar trend has been observed at the statewide and nation levels as well, with ridership declining over the past decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened this decline, evident in the 2021/22 ridership numbers. This is certainly a point of concern, as the 2020 RTP/SCS estimated an average rate of 4.3 transit boardings per capita based on BCAG's Long-Range Transit and Non-Motorized Plan.



Source: Butte Regional Transit, National Transit Database, and CA DOF

Indicator

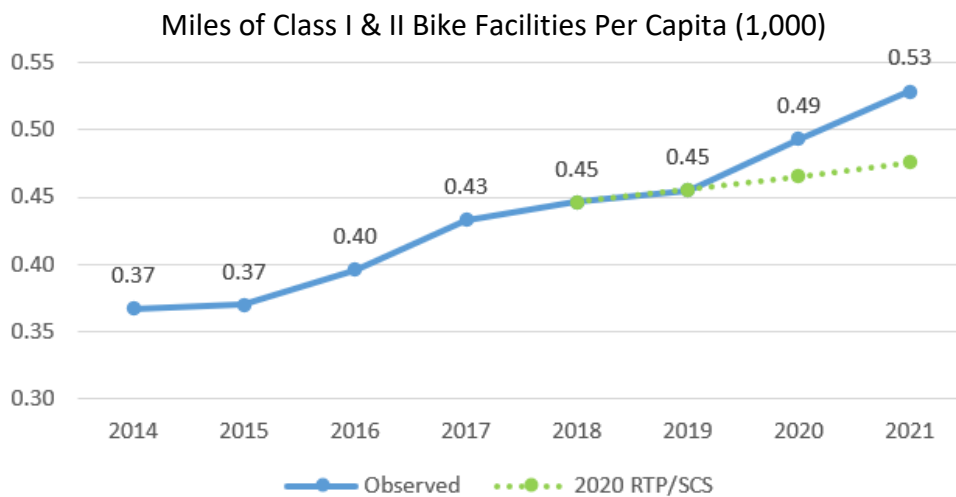
Miles of Class 1 & 2 Bike Facilities Per Capita

Background

The greater the use of bicycling and walking as an alternative to single occupant vehicles, the fewer vehicle emissions produced and cars on the road. In addition, these forms of transportation provide exercise and health benefits.

Trend

Miles of Class I & II bike facilities per capita have increased from 0.37 in 2014 to 0.53 in 2021. Presently, the region has 109 miles of Class I & II bike facilities. These figures demonstrate that the region is presently on track to obtain the approximately 165 miles of Class I & II facilities envisioned in the 2020 RTP/SCS, by year 2035.



Source: BCAG and CA DOF

Resource Areas & Farmland

Indicator

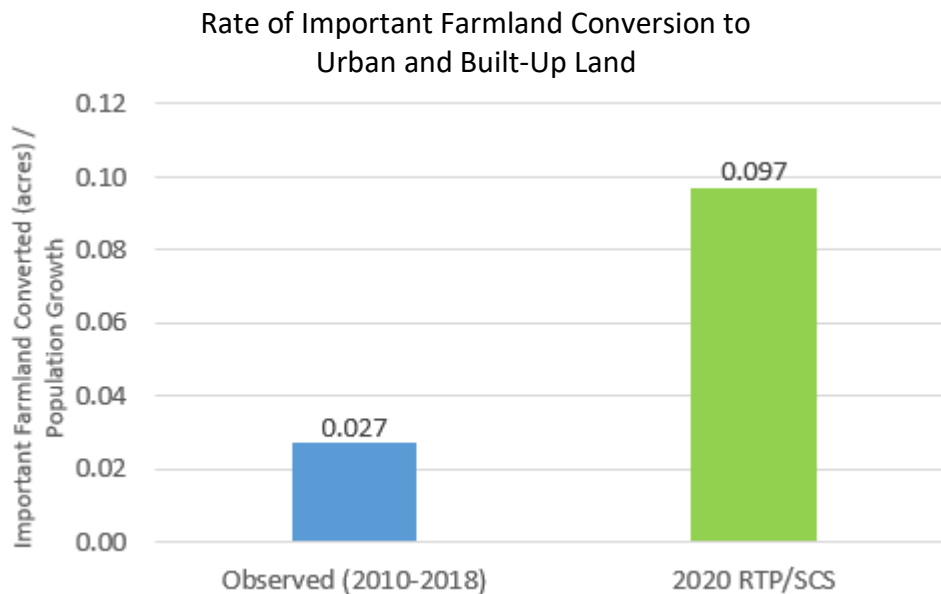
Rate of Important Farmland Conversion to Urban and Built-Up Land

Background

Farmland provides an important contribution to the economy of Butte County as well as providing environmental benefits such as flood control and habitat.

Trend

Between 2010 and 2018, the CA Department of Conservation reported that 184 acres of Important Farmland was converted to Urban and Built-up Land. This translates to 0.027 acres converted for every person added (6,848 persons) to the County population total during that same period. The 2020 RTP/SCS forecasted that 0.097 acres of Important Farmland would be converted to Urban and Built-up Land for every additional person added (38,068 persons) to the region between 2018 and 2040. The 2010 to 2018 conversion rate of 0.027 acres is encouraging as it is a third of that assumed in the 2020 RTP/SCS.



Source: BCAG, CA Dept. of Conservation, and CA DOF

Observations

- As identified in BCAG’s 2019 SCS Progress Report, location related land use and development indicators are on track or exceeding expectations with housing growth occurring in desired locations with less than anticipated impacts to resource areas and farmland. However, the region is not achieving the overall growth rates anticipated in the RTP/SCS. Recently, this has been exacerbated by destructive wildfires in the region and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Transportation mode shifts have yet to respond to new development and active transportation (bike & pedestrian) infrastructure, regional VMT per capita is continuing to increase. Other travel-related factors (i.e., fuel prices, auto ownership rates, improved economy, etc.), including declining transit ridership are likely contributing.

Recommendations

- Regional Growth: adjust population, housing, and jobs forecasts to align with BCAG’s Post Camp Fire Study and updated estimates from the California Department of Finance. Include impacts from the North Complex Fire and COVID-19, based on available information. *Note – this was recently completed in March 2023.*
- Land Use: incorporate latest available information from local housing elements, planned projects, and review potential for adjusting the ratio of multi-family to single-family unit growth. Explore adjusting the ratio of development by Growth Areas based on updated land use plans, regional growth forecasts, and recent trends in development.
- Transportation Investment: continue to monitor transit and active mode investments as additional state and federal funding sources become available.
- Transportation Mode Choice: continue to monitor shifts in mode choice with upcoming Census data releases; explore “work from home” mode and effects on passenger vehicle travel; incorporate strategies for recovering ridership from the updated Transit and Non-Motorized Plan and B-Line Routing Study; continue to pursue additional funding and projects to enhance pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Resource Areas and Farmland: review Important Farmland conversion rate and associated factors (i.e., increased density, ratio of multi-family to single family development, etc.) and determine if adjustment is needed.

