6 Public Participation
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Introduction

AMBAG values public participation in the development of the 2040 MTP/SCS. Public involvement is essential to ensure that stakeholders gain a clear understanding of AMBAG, its role as a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), critical elements of the 2040 MTP/SCS, and its development process. Furthermore, public involvement helps AMBAG policymakers and staff better understand the needs and concerns of stakeholders, leading to more meaningful planning.

A critical component in preparing the 2040 MTP/SCS was to provide guidance in the structuring of regional transportation planning processes to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, interagency consultation and public participation were an integral and continuing part of the regional transportation decision making process. The participation policies and procedures were structured to enable all participants the ability to express their values and interests in the shaping and implementation of regional policies and decisions regarding the transportation system.

Development of the 2040 MTP/SCS has been a multi-year effort that began in 2015. A comprehensive program of public involvement activities was a key part of the process. Extensive outreach with local government officials was conducted, as well as numerous community workshops and meetings, in addition to telephone and online surveys. A detailed description of the outreach activities is included in Appendix D.

Public Participation Plan

In compliance with federal and state requirements and to guide effective public involvement, AMBAG utilizes its Public Participation Plan. The Public Participation Plan provides direction for public participation activities, outlining the processes and strategies AMBAG uses to reach out to a broad range of stakeholders to gain input. AMBAG’s Public Participation Plan was updated to incorporate requirements of SB 375. Detailed documentation of the public outreach conducted for the 2040 MTP/SCS is included in Appendix D.

Engaging the Community

AMBAG engaged the community throughout the development of the 2040 MTP/SCS. These activities include:

- Seven community workshops
- A project website (www.ambag.org)
- Preparation of handout materials, flyers, information sheets, frequently asked questions (FAQs), etc.
Each of these activities is described in further detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Workshops
Two series of workshops each were held throughout the tri-county region at key milestones. The workshops were designed in an open house format with a variety of stations to provide one-on-one discussion and to create a more comfortable and meaningful environment for participants.

Materials were provided in both English and Spanish and translation services were available at most of the workshops. Each workshop had a series of interactive stations where participants were asked to engage with planners by drawing on maps, asking questions and stating preferences.

The first workshop series was held in January 2016 and designed to inform participants of regional issues, explain the purpose of this project, and to solicit input on their preferences and priorities, which would help shape the initial set of scenarios. The second workshop series was held in April 2017 and was set up to explain the purpose of the 2040 MTP/SCS and to solicit input on the initial SCS.

Digital Media
In addition to print media AMBAG provided information in a few different digital formats. Data that was collected for the purposes of this project was compiled in the AMBAG LiveMaps system.

AMBAG LiveMaps
AMBAG has collected GIS data from the various jurisdictions over the years and has stored the data on an internal server. As part of this project and to better foster regional coordination, the data was organized into a central database and hosted on a public website and branded as AMBAG LiveMaps.

This interactive tool is available to anyone with an internet connection. It is the intent that the data will be regularly updated and new features will be added to enhance the user experience and address comments from jurisdiction staff and other users.

The AMBAG LiveMaps tool is organized by Land Use and Planning (city limits, airports, land use, etc.), Natural Features (fault lines, fire hazards, waterbodies, etc.), and Transportation (bus routes, bikeways, trails, etc.). These categories will be expanded and new data added as it is made available and organized.

Project Website
The project website (www.ambag.org) is the central portal for information about the project and upcoming events. The website address was provided on all outreach materials and has been updated regularly to maintain current content.

From the homepage, visitors of the website could access upcoming events, recent news, email sign-up and the AMBAG Facebook page.

Engaging Local Jurisdictions
A variety of committees and boards were consulted throughout the planning process and at key milestones to solicit feedback, provide project updates, and relay community input from the workshops and surveys. These committees and boards are made up of elected officials, staff from local jurisdictions and agencies, local leaders and organizers, and members of the general public.

AMBAG Board of Directors
The AMBAG Board of Directors consists of local elected officials that have been appointed by their respective city council or board of supervisors. Each member city has one representative on the AMBAG Board and each member county has two. There are seven ex-officio members representing each of the three Regional Transportation Planning Agencies, Monterey-Salinas Transit, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District and the Monterey Bay Air Resources District.

The AMBAG Board meets monthly and sets policy. Day-to-day oversight is provided by the Executive Director, who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board of Directors.

The AMBAG Board met once a month throughout
Providing public access to and participation in the planning processes of the Monterey Bay region is a responsibility shared between Caltrans, AMBAG, the Council of San Benito County Governments, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, Monterey-Salinas Transit, San Benito County Local Transportation Authority, and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District.

Each partner agency solicits public input from its planning, policy, and programming processes. Various methods are used to engage stakeholders, and provide affected agencies and interested parties with timely information and opportunities to participate in the transportation planning process.

Each federally funded transportation program or project conducted by a partner agency must have a specified public participation process that defines the avenues for reasonable involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process. AMBAG’s process is outlined in the 2015 Public Participation Plan.

The Monterey Bay Area Public Participation Plan was adopted in 2011 and updated in 2015. The passage of Senate Bill 375 in 2008 resulted in changes in Government Code §65080, which required an update to the Monterey Bay Area Public Participation Plan. The 2015 update is responsive to the Senate Bill 375 requirement.

The Planning Directors Forum consists of planning directors and staff from the 18 cities, three counties, three regional transportation planning agencies, and AMBAG. The Planning Directors Forum meets regularly to address regional land use and transportation planning issues. The Planning Directors Forum met ten times throughout the planning process and at key milestones to identify priorities, review growth projections, help establish initial scenario development, review draft workshop materials, and to receive project updates.

The Technical Advisory Committees for each county are made up of staff from local jurisdictions and agencies, including local transit service providers and are managed by staff from the RTPAs. The Technical Advisory Committees review and provide technical guidance and advice on transportation projects and programs within each county, and makes recommendations to the RTPA Boards of Directors. AMBAG staff met with the Technical Advisory Committees frequently, particularly at key milestones throughout the planning process to confirm transportation priorities, projects, and funding sources.

In addition to coordinating workshops and large meetings to discuss and inform the planning process, AMBAG held more than 100 one-on-one meetings with senior staff from local jurisdictions. Many of these meetings were to discuss the Regional Growth Forecast. However, these meetings were critical to engaging local planners in the overall 2040 MTP/SCS development process as well as for incorporating ongoing local infill development strategies and other land use plans into the regional planning process.
Coordinating with Partner Agencies

The Regional Transportation Planning Agencies - the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission and the San Benito County Council of Governments - are important partners in the planning process for the 2040 MTP/SCS. Each RTPA develops a separate Regional Transportation Plan for each county in the region that has county specific details for transportation projects. AMBAG works with the RTPAs to develop project lists, financial assumptions and revenue constrained scenarios during the planning process. AMBAG staff met with the three RTPAs’ staff twice a month as part of a working group in order to coordinate development of each of the Regional Transportation Plans with the 2040 MTP/SCS.

AMBAG worked very closely with the RTPAs in the planning process. The RTPAs held hundreds of meetings beginning in 2015 to obtain input on transportation projects and local community priorities which feed into the development of the 2040 MTP/SCS.

These meetings included presentations to a broad range of community groups, business organizations, chambers of commerce’s, city councils, school superintendents, service clubs, trade & professional organizations, educational & medical institutions, taxpayer associations, etc. Additionally, the RTPAs sought public input via surveys, comments, focus groups, stakeholders interviews, websites and social media.

Consultation with Interested Parties

Consultation and Coordination with Resource Agencies

MAP-21 requires that the MTP/SCS environmental mitigation program be developed in consultation with federal, state and tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies (Title 23 CFR
Part 450.322(f)(7)), as well as with state and local agencies responsible for land use, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation (Title 23 CFR Part 450.322(g)). Further, in accordance with Title 23 CFR Part 450.322, the MTP/SCS must provide a discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities and areas, including those mitigation activities that might maintain or restore the environment that is being affected by the plan. This mitigation discussion must happen in consultation with federal, state and tribal land management, wildlife and regulatory agencies. During the development of the Plan, AMBAG consulted with various land management agencies to refine potential approaches to support the conservation of natural lands and farmlands consistent with State conservation planning initiatives. This consultation ensured policies when combined with land use strategies and transportation investments included in the 2040 MTP/SCS, enable the region to work toward consistency with State conservation planning initiatives. AMBAG’s compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) serves as another opportunity to consult with federal, state and local resource agencies and sovereign tribal nations responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation in the development of the MTP/SCS. This consultation includes other agencies and officials responsible for planning activities in the AMBAG region that are affected by transportation.

As required by CEQA, the Notice of Preparation (NOP) stating that AMBAG as the lead agency would prepare a program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2040 MTP/SCS was the first step in the environmental review process. The NOP gave federal, state and local agencies and the public an early opportunity to identify areas of concern to be addressed in the EIR and to submit them in writing to AMBAG. AMBAG held public scoping workshops in January 2016 to explain the environmental review process and solicit early input on areas of concern. While the MTP is not subject to the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), AMBAG consulted with federal agencies as appropriate during the preparation of the CEQA environmental document.

Consultation with Native American and Tribal Governments

State and federal regulations require AMBAG to conduct government-to-government consultation regarding MTC’s planning and programming activities with tribal governments of federally-recognized Native American tribes. Additionally, effective July 1, 2015, Assembly Bill 52 (Gatto, 2014) began requiring that state and local agencies analyze the impacts to Native American cultural resources under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The law introduced new state requirements for consultation with Native American tribal governments. As such, lead agencies under CEQA must work with tribal governments to avoid or mitigate the impacts to cultural resources. AMBAG submitted formal notification of a project and consultation opportunity under AB 52 (Gatto, 2014), pursuant to Public Resources Code § 21080.3.1 to all interested parties in the AMBAG region. The AMBAG region does not have any tribal nations or tribal owned land, however, there are tribal cultural sites in the region.