



**CHAPTER 1 HIGHLIGHTS**

**Sonoma County Transportation**

Authority .....	1-1
Moving Forward 2040 .....	1-4
Public Outreach .....	1-5

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## SONOMA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) serves as the coordinating and advocacy agency for transportation funding for Sonoma County. Proposition 111, approved in California in 1990, resulted in changes to the way transportation projects are planned and funded and authorized the creation of Congestion Management Agencies. In November 1990, the SCTA was formed under the Local Transportation Authority and Improvement Act (Public Utilities Code Section 180000) and designated as the Congestion Management Agency (CMA) for Sonoma County. In 1997, the SCTA relinquished its position as the CMA under new state legislation that made this function optional but still carries out the general functions of a CMA.

### **SCTA Mission Statement**

*As a collaborative agency of the cities and County of Sonoma, we work together to maintain and improve our transportation network. We do so by prioritizing, coordinating, and maximizing the funding available to us and by providing comprehensive, countywide planning. Our deliberations and decisions recognize the diverse needs within our county and the environmental and economic aspects of transportation planning.*

The SCTA is governed by a twelve member Board of Directors. Nine of these members are chosen from the Councils of the nine incorporated cities or towns, the remaining three are chosen from the County Board of Supervisors. Officers are elected annually. The SCTA holds monthly public meetings of the Board of Directors.

The SCTA acts as the countywide planning and programming agency for transportation related issues. The SCTA plays a leading role in transportation by securing funds, providing project oversight, and initiating long term planning.

The SCTA has legal and administrative requirements to fulfill in the capacity of a countywide transportation agency — some of these requirements are derived from regional agencies such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), while others, come directly from the state, or federal government.

## **Regional Participation**

The SCTA plays an important role in the San Francisco Bay Region. Members of the SCTA serve in leadership positions on the governing boards of regional transportation and housing agencies, multi-county transit agencies, and agencies protecting air quality and the San Francisco Bay. Through these leadership positions, SCTA members are able to protect and advocate for Sonoma County needs and interests in the region.

Staff meets routinely with the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and multiple regional agencies. The routine updating of Plan Bay Area and the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy authored by MTC, ABAG, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) is ongoing, with work on the future plan and implementation beginning after each plan adoption. The scope of regional planning efforts continue to expand beyond transportation issues and now encompass diverse issues such as land use planning, growth management, environmental issues, and equity.

SCTA staff are also engaged in many other regional activities and participate with colleagues and transportation experts across the region to stay current on funding programs, technical analysis and data collection, and upcoming funding opportunities.

## **Local Coordination**

The following standing committees advise and give input on various issues and convey information to the SCTA:

- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CBPAC)
- Transit and Paratransit Coordinating Committee (TPCC)

The primary function of the TAC is to advise the SCTA on all technical matters. It is composed of public works directors, planning directors, and transit operators from each jurisdiction in Sonoma County. Representatives from Caltrans, BAAQMD, MTC, the North Coast Air Quality District, and the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway, and Transportation District also participate in the TAC and provide a regional voice on the committee.

Planning Directors and Transit Operators are also represented in TAC subcommittees. The Planning Advisory Committee and the Transit TAC meet on an ongoing basis to discuss specific issues and share information on local planning activities and transit.

The CAC is composed of community stakeholders and five members of the public at large, appointed from each supervisorial district. The primary function of the CAC is to oversee implementation of Measure M by reviewing projects, policy decisions, funding programs, and any other policy matter acted on by the SCTA. The CAC provides input and recommendations for SCTA's decision making process and has been active in promoting Countywide planning, including the development of this Comprehensive Transportation Plan document.

The CBPAC was formed in July 1993 in response to MTC Resolution No. 875. The CBPAC advises the SCTA on programming decisions for bicycle funds and aides in project coordination of bicycle and pedestrian projects. The CBPAC developed a Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that is available on line at [scta.ca.gov](http://scta.ca.gov).

The TPCC is composed of the following individuals: one potential transit user over 60 years of age, one disabled individual, one representative from the Hispanic community, two representatives from local social service providers for seniors, two representatives from social service providers for disabled persons, one representative from each fixed route public transit operator within the county, and one representative from a local transportation agency. Each City or Town Council may also appoint one representative to the committee. The TPCC advises the SCTA on funding decisions associated with paratransit and transit programs throughout the county. The TPCC is responsible for making recommendations for allocating funds to local transit operators.

## Project Delivery

The SCTA has delivered hundreds of projects totaling billions of dollars. For over a decade, the SCTA has been working toward completion of a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane on Highway 101 in each direction from Novato north to Windsor. In so doing, the freeway improvements have been divided into six major projects, with some of those projects being further divided into phases to expedite construction. Five of the six projects are now open to drivers and the sixth — the Marin/Sonoma Narrows — is underway with five out of thirteen phases left to complete.

Road maintenance continues to be a major priority in Sonoma County. The CTP estimates that it will cost \$2 billion to improve the condition of the 2,300 miles streets and roads in Sonoma County and to keep them maintained into the future.

Transportation improvement programs including the Safe Routes to Schools, Ride Share, Car Share, and Bike Share programs have been successfully completed or are ongoing projects.

## Ten Years of Measure M — Traffic Relief Act for Sonoma County

Passed by the voters in November 2004, the Traffic Relief Act for Sonoma County (Measure M) provides direct funding for multi-modal transportation throughout the county. Measure M assesses a ¼ cent sales tax which is used to maintain local streets, fix potholes, widen Highway 101, improve interchanges, enhance and improve transit service, and build safe bicycle and pedestrian routes. The funds are dedicated to the specific programs and projects that were identified in the Measure with further guidance from the Measure M Strategic Plan.

Measure M provides Sonoma County and its nine cities with a reliable fund source for on-going local street maintenance and public transit operations.

In the first ten years of the Measure, SCTA has implemented the Measure M Expenditure Plan and the traveling public is seeing the multi-modal improvements envisioned in the Traffic Relief Act for Sonoma County. Funding to Local Street Rehabilitation and Local Bus Transit programs has allowed for contributions to overall maintenance of our local roadways, as well as ensured quality bus transit. Measure M funding for road maintenance and bus service leveraged over \$3M in Proposition 1B, State and Local Partnership Program funding.

The Highway 101 Program has been a significant success for Measure M. Local funds have leveraged an estimated \$572M of other funding for Highway 101. Bonding was critical to the leveraging of funds and has allowed SCTA to advance projects during a positive construction bidding climate.

Measure M has also helped to deliver Bicycle and Pedestrian projects and has assisted in the delivery of Local Street Projects as well as the SMART train. The first ten years included completion of significant capital improvements such as Old Redwood Highway Interchange and Airport Blvd Interchange and bike and pedestrian projects such as Street Smart Sebastopol and Copeland Creek Trail. Measure M funding for the Local Street and Bike & Pedestrian programs leveraged over \$120M in other funds.

## MOVING FORWARD 2040

Moving Forward 2040 — the Comprehensive Transportation Plan tells the story of Sonoma County’s transportation system. The plan examines the current state of transportation in the county, and looks at future needs and goals and provides information on how these needs and goals can be met. The CTP is updated frequently enough to ensure that the plan is still relevant, useful, and represents the current transportation needs and goals of SCTA and Sonoma County Jurisdictions. The previous CTP was completed in 2009 and it is estimated that the CTP will be updated again in 2020.

The importance of maintaining an updated planning document is two-fold. First, MTC requires local Transportation Authorities such as the SCTA to establish transportation plans that can feed into the larger Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is a federally required, long range planning document that is now called Plan Bay Area. Second, the SCTA is responsible for programming,<sup>1</sup> or allocating, numerous state and federal funding sources to transportation projects. In order to meet these requirements, the SCTA needs a policy and planning document to help guide the programming process. If the SCTA does not meet these two requirements it is at risk of losing critical transportation dollars.

### New Initiatives

Since the last CTP update the SCTA has implemented major initiatives that bolster long range planning and foster project delivery.

### Enhanced Performance Analysis

In this CTP the SCTA measures progress made in reaching the Plan Goals. Transportation projects and programs, policies and broad land use scenarios were assessed. This is described in **Chapter 6**.

### Expanded Emphasis on the Transportation/Land Use Connection

This Plan provides a new emphasis on the connection between transportation and land use, and explores future transportation and housing needs of a growing and changing population. The Plan provides descriptions of local and regional policies that could help manage transportation facilities, and provide viable options to driving.

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

The SCTA completed a major update to the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan in 2014. This is an important document that represents a countywide process of identifying challenges and needs for non-motorized transportation. Primary findings from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan are incorporated into the Bicycle System section of **Chapter 3 (Transportation Projects)**.

### Climate Action 2020

The RCPA, sister agency to the SCTA, has taken on the task of developing a Climate Action Plan, Climate Action 2020, for every jurisdiction in the County. Climate Action 2020, provides guidance in 13 topic areas in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Transportation GHG reduction recommendations have been incorporated into the CTP and are included in the CTP GHG Reduction Goal.

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<sup>1</sup> Program verb, to assign funds to a project that has been approved by MTC, the state or other agency; From the Mineta Transportation Institute Glossary — <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/MTIportal/research/Glossary.html>

## Shift Sonoma County

SCTA and RCPA are currently engaged in a multi-year study of transportation options aimed at shifting travelers away from single occupant fossil fueled cars. Bike sharing, car sharing, and increased electric vehicle adoption are all being analyzed as potential options in Sonoma County.

## Other Activities

Since the 2009 CTP a number of other major transportation efforts that impact Sonoma County have been completed or are currently underway. MTC and ABAG produced Plan Bay Area, the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the San Francisco Bay Area. Several Sonoma County cities or jurisdictions have completed Station Area Plans and General Plan updates which analyze and guide future transportation and other improvements for Sonoma County cities, towns, and neighborhoods. The SCTA has been active in developing locally relevant definitions of Communities of Concern. Santa Rosa City Bus is in the midst of a major transit planning process which is intended to improve and modernize transit service in the City of Santa Rosa called “Reimagining CityBus.” The Sonoma Marin Rail Transit has made significant progress towards starting operations from the Airport Boulevard in Sonoma County to San Rafael in Marin County and is scheduled to begin service in late 2016.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

The CTP public outreach strategy has included two public workshops, an online poll, and two public hearings. The online poll was shared with community organizations along with a social media campaign that reached 11,550 local residents.

There were 339 responses to online survey questions covering transportation priorities, funding, alternatives and travel choices. Respondents were asked to prioritize a list of transportation system improvements. The highest priorities for all respondents were:

1. Maintain roads
2. Expand SMART
3. Expand bike facilities
4. Expand bus service
5. Road improvements
6. Highway 101

For more information on the public outreach please see the Public Outreach Report in **Appendix 1**.

## Identifying Plan Goals and Objectives

The CTP builds on the efforts of local elected officials and staff from the cities, town, and county government in Sonoma County. This update has been developed with the understanding that existing transportation funding is inadequate, that there is increasing pressure on the existing transportation system, and that transportation impacts on the environment, public health, and safety are growing.

Overall, the CTP is meant to refine the vision, goals, and objectives for improving mobility on Sonoma County’s streets, highways, and transit system and bicycle/pedestrian facilities, as well as to reduce transportation related impacts. To that end, it provides policy guidance and identifies transportation improvements for development over the next 25 years. This plan has tackled the important task of determining if our efforts are successful in helping us reach our goals, by including an enhanced performance evaluation. Measuring progress in achieving goals will help identify actions that are helping improve the Sonoma County transportation system and improve mobility for county residents.

## CTP Update Process

The CTP update has included the following phases:

- Develop and implementation of Public Engagement Strategy
- Review and presentation of Goals
- Review project list, update project objectives
- Release a call for projects
- Review and update performance targets. Evaluate if the performance targets are still relevant and still represent SCTA priorities.
- Summarize current conditions. Determine how close we currently are to meeting the performance targets.
- Estimate future conditions and set a future baseline. Provide an estimate of what future conditions could look like if we don't construct any projects or make improvements to the transportation system, and what impacts population, housing, and employment growth have on future travel conditions.
- Develop a list of transportation projects, policies, strategies, and technologies that could help SCTA meet goals and targets
- Test transportation project performance. Measure project success in achieving CTP goals and meeting performance targets. Determine which targets show impacts and which projects are most effective.
- Test transportation policy, strategy, and technology impacts. Determine which policies, strategies, and technology help SCTA achieve CTP goals and targets.
- Develop a strategy to achieve CTP goals and targets. Estimate what it will take to meet CTP goals and performance targets by assembling a future scenario in which promising transportation projects, policies, strategies, and technologies would be implemented.