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The Fresno Region's first Sustainable Communities Strategy to reduce greenhouse gases unanimously approved by ARB

Fresno, CA – Today at their meeting in Sacramento, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) unanimously approved Fresno County's first sustainable communities strategy (SCS). ARB Board praised the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG), the metropolitan planning agency tasked with developing the SCS, for a "very good first step" in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our region. They thanked Fresno COG for working closely with the CARB staff and the communities. When implemented the SCS exceeds the greenhouse gas reduction targets of 5% by 2020 and 10% by 2035 required by the State of California.

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (Sustainable Communities Act, SB 375, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) supports the State's climate action goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through coordinated transportation and land use planning with the goal of building more sustainable communities. Under the Sustainable Communities Act, ARB sets regional targets for GHG emissions reductions from passenger vehicle use. In 2010, ARB established these targets for 2020 and 2035 for each region covered by one of the State's metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). ARB will periodically review and update the targets, as needed.

Each of California's MPOs must prepare an SCS as an integral part of its regional transportation plan (RTP). The SCS contains land use, housing, and transportation strategies that, if implemented, would allow the region to meet its GHG emission reduction targets. Once adopted by the MPO, the RTP/SCS guides the transportation policies and investments for the region. ARB must review the adopted SCS to confirm and accept the MPO's determination that the SCS, if implemented, would meet the regional GHG targets.

Fresno COG's Executive Director, Tony Boren, spoke before the ARB staff presented Fresno COG's SCS as the Board began. Afterwards he stated, "After three years of target setting work, two years of committee and technical work, multiple community workshops and meetings, and input from over 1,000 people in Fresno County, the Fresno COG Policy Board proudly adopted a Sustainable Communities Strategy in June 2014. We are the first planning agency in the San Joaquin Valley to have our SCS accepted by the ARB."

This brand new SCS changes the region's historic growth pattern. It focuses on inward growth paired with transit and active transportation investments, reducing the traditional development footprint. It encourages the cities and the county to focus on more compact infill development, more multi-family housing, and to place more emphasis on transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Together ARB and Fresno COG staff designed and ran five sensitivity tests on the model that was used to estimate the greenhouse gas reductions of the adopted SCS. These tests verified it will meet the region's per capita GHG reduction targets.

- Auto operating cost
- Transit frequency
- Residential density
- Proximity to transit
- Household income

Fresno COG has already begun implementing the SCS through the following steps:

1. Supporting Fresno COG's member agencies, the incorporated cities of Fresno County and the County of Fresno, as they implement their adopted General Plans.
2. Fresno COG is working to implement three community-based proposals as follows:
 - (1) Development of a Transportation Needs Assessment to help inform transportation investment decisions.
 - (2) Development of a Sustainable Planning and Infrastructure Grant Program to help jurisdictions implement the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy goals.
 - (3) Development of Natural and Working Lands Conservation Policies applicable to transportation projects.

For more information on the Sustainable Communities Strategy please contact Fresno COG staff members or visit these webpages:

SCS Implementation: <http://www.fresnocog.org/rtp-scs-implementation>

SCS document as part of the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan:

http://www.fresnocog.org/sites/default/files/publications/RTP/Final_RTP/2014_RTP_Chapter_Four_Final.pdf

SCS development and outreach: <http://www.fresnocog.org/sustainable-communities-strategy-development-and-outreach>

ARB's January 29, 2015 meeting agenda: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/board/ma/2015/ma012915.pdf>

Information about Fresno COG, our member agencies and our Board Members: <http://www.fresnocog.org/about-cog>