



Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report

2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy and 2050 Regional Transportation Plans for San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties

Notice is hereby given that the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) will be the lead agency in partnership with the Council of San Benito County Governments (SBtCOG), the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), and the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), who are responsible agencies, for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS). SBtCOG, SCCRTC, and TAMC are the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) for San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties, respectively. Each RTPA prepares a county-level long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that is consistent with the AMBAG 2050 MTP/SCS.

Pursuant to Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, AMBAG is soliciting your views on the scope and contents of the 2050 MTP/SCS EIR. The Draft EIR will be a Program EIR. A Program EIR is an EIR prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and acts as the first tier of environmental review. The EIR will serve as the Program EIR for the AMBAG 2050 MTP/SCS and as the Program EIR for the RTPs prepared by the RTPAs for San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties.

The project description, location, environmental review requirements, and probable environmental effects to be addressed in the EIR are discussed below. An Initial Study is not attached and is not required, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d).

The 2050 MTP/SCS will guide the development of the Regional and Federal Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIP and FTIP) as well as other transportation programming documents and plans throughout San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties through the year 2050. The 2050 MTP/SCS outlines the region's goals and policies for meeting current and future mobility needs through 2050 and identifies programs, actions, and a plan of projects intended to address these needs consistent with adopted goals and policies. The RTPs for the counties of San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey are developed for each county to provide a sound basis for the allocation of state and federal transportation funds to transportation projects within each county for a long-range timeframe. The RTPs address major forms of transportation, and include the priorities and actions embodied in the plans prepared by each of the county's cities and unincorporated areas.

The SCS component of the MTP/SCS is required by California Senate Bill 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375). SB 375 mandates regional greenhouse gas reduction targets for passenger vehicles and light trucks and, pursuant to that law, the California Air Resources Board has established 2035 greenhouse gas reduction targets for each

region covered by one of the state’s metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). AMBAG is required to prepare an SCS that demonstrates how its greenhouse gas reduction targets could feasibly be met through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning.

To ensure full consideration of environmental issues with potential significant adverse impacts when preparing the Draft EIR, **all written comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) must be received within the required public review and comment period, which begins Friday, January 26, 2024, and ends Friday, March 1, 2024 at 5:00 PM (PST)**. Mail comments on the EIR scope and contents to Heather Adamson at AMBAG, **24580 Silver Cloud Court, Monterey, California 93940**, or e-mail comments to hadamson@ambag.org no later than 5:00 p.m. (PST) on Friday, March 1, 2024.

For more information, visit www.ambag.org or call (831) 883-3750.

AMBAG will host two virtual EIR scoping meetings/public workshops, each providing the same information. The purpose of the meetings is to inform the public of the 2050 MTP/SCS EIR and solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental analysis and alternatives. The date, time, and login information for the virtual meetings are as follows:

- **Wednesday, February 21, 2024 from 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.**
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_zBizO6gxS5WJztQINUQb7Q
Webinar ID: 890 1881 8507
- **Thursday, February 22, 2024 from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.**
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6DzIGH3AQ1SPuhJzO9fGgw
Webinar ID: 861 8365 3590

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Project Title

AMBAG 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, SBtCOG 2050 Regional Transportation Plan, SCCRTC 2050 Regional Transportation Plan, and TAMC 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

Project Location

The geographical extent of the proposed 2050 MTP/SCS includes San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties, and all incorporated cities and unincorporated areas contained therein. The geographical extent for each RTPA's RTP is the boundary for each respective county, including its incorporated and unincorporated areas. See location map at the end of this NOP.

Project Description

As the MPO for the tri-county region of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties, AMBAG is charged with developing a 2050 MTP/SCS. The 2050 MTP/SCS is both a metropolitan long-range

transportation plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy for Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. SBtCOG, SCCRTC, and TAMC are the state-designated RTPAs for San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties, respectively. Each RTPA prepares a county-level long-range RTP, which will be evaluated in this EIR. The 2050 MTP/SCS is used to guide the development of the Regional and Federal Transportation Improvement Programs, as well as other transportation programming documents and plans. The MTP outlines the region's goals and policies for meeting current and future mobility needs, providing a foundation for transportation decisions by local, regional, and state officials that are ultimately aimed at achieving a coordinated and balanced transportation system. The 2050 MTP/SCS sets forth actions, programs, and projects to address these needs consistent with adopted policies and goals. The 2050 MTP/SCS also documents the financial resources needed to implement the plan. Additionally, pursuant to SB 375, AMBAG (as the regional MPO) must prepare an SCS that demonstrates how the region will meet its greenhouse gas reduction target (6% reduction by 2035) through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning.

AMBAG is currently preparing the 2050 MTP/SCS for the region. The 2050 MTP/SCS EIR will analyze the plan's impacts on the physical environment, identify measures to avoid or mitigate significant environmental effects, and a reasonable range of alternatives that would avoid or substantially lessen any significant impacts. It also will be an informational document intended to inform public decisionmakers, responsible or interested agencies, and the general public of the potential environmental effects of a project.

If the targets established by the California Air Resources Board cannot be feasibly met, an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) would be prepared by AMBAG to show how the targets would be achieved through alternative development patterns, infrastructure, or additional transportation measures or policies.

The transportation component of the MTP/SCS will include road and transit networks, non-motorized transportation, and transportation strategies and policies. Furthermore, SB 375 requires that the SCS identify general land uses, residential densities, and building intensities as well as areas to house future residents, including housing to accommodate the eight-year Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) (see California Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(B) for the full list of SB 375 requirements for the MTP/SCS). The SCS must be consistent with RHNA.

The RTPs for the counties of San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey are developed for each of the counties to provide a sound basis for the allocation of state and federal transportation funds to transportation projects within each county over a long-range timeframe through 2050. The RTPs address all forms of transportation and include the priorities and actions embodied in the plans prepared by each of the county's cities and unincorporated areas. The RTPs follow guidelines established by the State of California's Transportation Commission to describe the transportation issues and needs facing each county; identify goals and policies for how each county will meet its needs; identify the amount of money that will be available for needed projects; and include a list

of prioritized transportation projects to serve each county's long-term needs within the projected "budget" of transportation revenues with consideration towards environmental impacts, land use, and special transportation needs.

Impacts to Be Addressed in the EIR

AMBAG, with input from our transportation partners, local jurisdictions, stakeholders, and members of the public will develop SCS scenarios to assess how future land use and transportation changes could achieve a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles and light trucks to meet the regional reduction targets set by CARB. Following public review and input, the AMBAG Board of Directors will select a preferred SCS scenario to become the project description for purposes of the EIR. The EIR will evaluate the environmental effects of the preferred SCS scenario in detail, as well as alternatives.

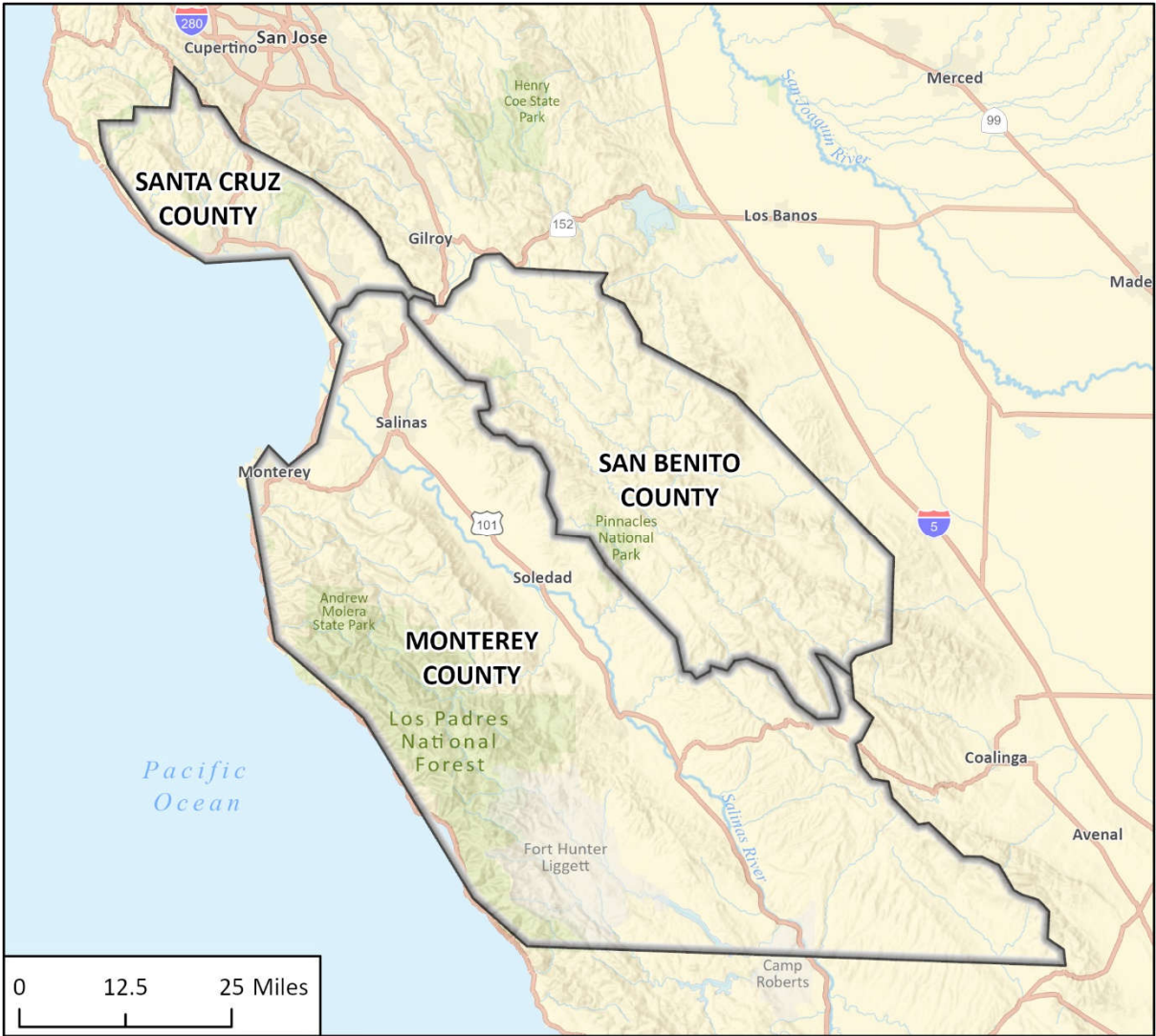
The 2050 MTP/SCS EIR has the potential to affect the following resource topics, which will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality and Health Impacts/Risks
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gases/Climate Change
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

The EIR will also address cumulative impacts and growth inducing impacts.

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to the 2050 MTP/SCS that would feasibly attain most of the Project's basic goals and objectives, while avoiding or substantially lessening any of the Project's significant effects on the environment, as well as a No Project alternative. The EIR will also identify other alternatives that were initially considered, but rejected for reasons including, but not limited to, infeasibility due to economic, legal or other considerations, inability to meet most of the Project's basic goals and objectives or failure to avoid or substantially lessen any of the Project's significant environmental impacts. AMBAG is seeking input on alternatives as part of the Notice of Preparation process.

Project Location Figure



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Fig 1 Regional Location

Project Location
(County Boundaries)

