

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

P.O. Box 151439 San Rafael, CA 94915 415-331-1982

February 23, 2018
By E-Mail to
heather.king
@arb.ca.gov

Heather King
Air Resources Board

Re: SB 375 Regional Targets

Dear Heather:

Here are my key points:

The only reason there is a gap between the 25% reduction needed, and the results from the staff-proposed targets is that the targets are too low. This is not an insufficiency in SB 375. The problem is the unwillingness to comply with the clear direction set by SB 375.

When per capita targets are numerically lower than the projected rate of population growth, this is a tacit acceptance of an increase in regional GHG emissions, something that TRANSDEF has repeatedly indicated as being prohibited by SB 375.

As to the question of "What should the state do?" the answer is simple. First, stop funding highway expansion, including covert expansion masquerading as "safety improvements." Next, adopt more stringent regional targets than have been proposed by staff. Finally, fill in the gaps between state climate policy and local decisions on transportation and land use. See the attached paper, identifying the missing Institutional Links.

The only reason MPOs have no power to influence local land use decisions is that MPOs have been unwilling to use their financial leverage to incentivize compliance. e.g., If multi-county MPOs required counties to adopt countywide transportation plans that were consistent with the SCS and with MPO-adopted Guidelines, Bingo, the compliance issue is well along the path to solution.

Transportation Project selection is inherently political, as practiced in the U.S. It's not that way in other countries. Technical analysis leading to optimizing the eventual results is not even a serious factor here. Politicians use transportation funding as a vehicle for

favor-trading. It is only strong targets that have the legal weight to break this dysfunctional pattern, in which public funds often go to the projects with the lowest public benefits.

I believe the workshop had a slide showing VMT/capita going up. This is the direct result of a failure of policy on all levels to prioritize mode shift.

At this time, the only leverage that the public has with entrenched agency resistance to achieving GHG emissions reductions is the regional targets. This is why it is critical that the targets force MPOs out of their comfort zone. Their comfort zone is producing ever-increasing VMT and ever-increasing GHG emissions.

In short, we are very uncomfortable with the direction heard in the workshop that seems to be more pilots, more studies, etc. We see no need to start analyzing why VMT is increasing. Much of this material has been obvious since I started working on it in 1999. What's been missing is the will to actually get VMT reductions. ARB can make a big difference in turning the tide in this admittedly tremendous cultural change.

Thank you, Heather,

Sincerely,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn,
President

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

P.O. Box 151439 San Rafael, CA 94915 415-331-1982

Institutional Links Needed to Achieve Significant GHG Emissions Reductions in the Transportation Sector

The following represent a profound cultural change that requires strong leadership:

Policy Declarations/Laws: Increasing VMT is Contrary to State Policy

- California formally abandons the pursuit of congestion relief, acknowledging instead that congestion is the inevitable consequence of suburban development.
- Amend CEQA to make an increase in VMT a significant impact. Require an especially compelling reason in a Statement of Overriding Consideration for approving a project that increases VMT.
- Encourage Air Districts to adopt Indirect Source Mitigation Fees as economic disincentives for projects that increase VMT.
- Direct Caltrans to cease widening highways.
- As of a date certain, remove roadway expansion projects that are not under construction from RTPs by operation of law. Discourage game-playing.
- Eliminate the Congestion Management function from CMAs, and rename these agencies as County Transportation Agencies. Require counties to plan consistent with the goals of their respective SCS.
- Transportation funding is redirected to making travel to major urban destinations convenient by transit.
- Adopt regional per capita emissions reduction targets greater than the population growth rate. With current ARB-approved targets, total GHGs are increasing.
- Clarify that SB 375 targets are to be met by VMT reductions and not ZEVs.
- Enact legislation to overturn the 710 Freeway decision, which allows counties to avoid the environmental review of transportation sales tax expenditure plans. The only way to get an adequate multimodal alternatives analysis is with CEQA.
- Enforce the consistent environmental review of countywide transportation plans.
- Require CTP 2040 to comply with SB 391, specifically its mandate that Caltrans recommend the policies needed achieve an 80% reduction in GHG emissions.

Funding

- Provide State guidance for the drafting of local transportation sales taxes, which now bias transportation funding towards projects that increase VMT.
- GGRF should build and operate cost-effective new transit systems--but not boondoggles like HSR & BART-SJ
- Toughen the eligibility for GGRF to prevent its use as a slush fund.
- To deter GGRF application fraud, create a process to bar consultants from submitting reports to state agencies, if they are found to have abused their professional licenses by misrepresentation.
- Shift to a carbon tax rather than cap and trade, eliminating Wall Street and the host of highly paid professionals needed to run it.

Regulation

- ARB issues a guidance on how to use EMFAC for making EIR GHG projections: When evaluating the impact of a project over existing conditions, state GHG emissions reduction measures must not be included. This is consistent with the intent of SB 375. The inclusion of state measures in these projections means that VMT and regional GHG emissions are able to increase, without the finding of a significant impact, thereby short-circuiting the purpose of CEQA.