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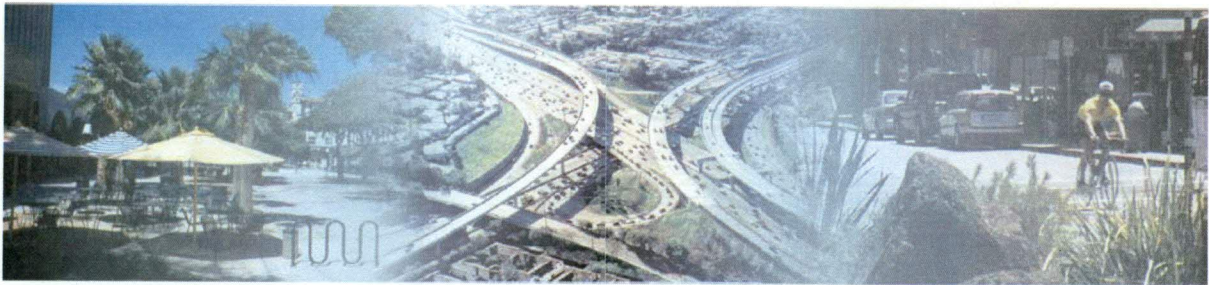
# **Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)**

*Prepared for*

**Orange County Transportation Authority  
Orange County Council of Governments**

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*Prepared by*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, California State Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) was enacted to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from automobiles and light trucks through integrated transportation, land use, housing and environmental planning. To achieve the goal of reduced GHG emissions, the legislation requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) throughout the state to include a new element in their Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) called a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the MPO encompassing the counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura. They prepare the RTP for the SCAG region, with input from each of the counties and county transportation commissions. SCAG is also responsible for developing the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the SCAG Region, known as the SCAG Regional SCS.

However, in the SCAG region, SB 375 also allows for a subregional council of governments and county transportation commission to work together to propose a subregional SCS. As one of these subregions, Orange County has availed itself of this opportunity to prepare its own *subregional* SCS (OC SCS). As long as the OC SCS follows the requirements of SB 375, SCAG will incorporate it into the SCAG Regional SCS.

The following document constitutes the OC SCS. It was prepared by the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) and the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), in collaboration with multiple Orange County stakeholders including cities, the County of Orange, County special districts, OCTA, the Center for Demographic Research (CDR), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Transportation Corridor Agencies, and many community organizations and the public.

The OC SCS begins with the setting of current population, housing, and employment in Orange County, and then describes projected long-term trends for these socio-economic variables. The resulting assessment is this: a majority of Orange County's projected growth of population, housing, and employment will occur near existing and future job centers, which will positively impact transportation patterns and therefore be beneficial to GHG emission reductions.

The projected growth in Orange County housing units will be sufficient to house the anticipated population growth in the subregion. Further, Orange County will create housing to accommodate employment growth during this period.





Because there is an indisputable interconnectedness between Orange County's population, housing and employment and the transportation systems that support them, the OC SCS also delineates the foundational transportation systems that currently exist in Orange County. Transportation systems described include freeways, arterial streets and local roads, rail and bus transit, bikeways, and demand responsive services and transportation demand management.

Central to the OC SCS are the strategies identified to reduce GHG emissions. These strategies illustrate that there is already a collective effort by many Orange County jurisdictions, agencies, and groups to link transportation and land uses through a variety of processes and an array of progressive measures. The strategies outlined in the OC SCS and summarized below are collectively called sustainability strategies, and include both land use-related strategies and transportation system improvements.

### Sustainability Strategies

✓ Support transit-oriented development.
✓ Support infill housing development and redevelopment.
✓ Support mixed-use development and thereby improve walkability of communities.
✓ Increase regional accessibility in order to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
✓ Improve jobs-to-housing ratio.
✓ Promote land use patterns that encourage the use of alternatives to single-occupant automobile use.
✓ Support retention and/or development of affordable housing.
✓ Support natural land restoration and conservation and/or protection offering significant carbon mitigation potential via both sequestration and avoidance of increased emissions due to land conversion.
✓ Eliminate bottlenecks and reduce delay on freeways, toll roads, and arterials.
✓ Apply Transportation System Management and Complete Street practices to arterials and freeways to maximize efficiency.
✓ Improve transit modes through enhanced service, frequency, convenience, and choices.
✓ Expand and enhance Transportation Demand Management practices to reduce barriers to alternative travel modes and attract commuters away from single occupant vehicle travel.
✓ Continue existing, and explore expansion of, highway pricing strategies.
✓ Implement near-term (Transportation Improvement Program and Measure M2 Capital Action Plan) and long-term (LRTP 2035 Preferred Plan) transportation improvements to provide mobility choices and sustainable transportation options.
✓ Acknowledge current sustainability strategies practiced by Orange County jurisdictions and continue to implement strategies that will result in or support the reduction of GHG emissions.



In summary, Orange County is engaged in a collective effort to link transportation and land uses. This effort includes a variety of progressive measures undertaken by Orange County jurisdictions, agencies, and groups that lead to changes in the use of automobiles and light duty trucks, resulting in reductions in GHG. The scope of current and planned strategies is broad and encompasses significant investment by both the public and private sectors to implement them. They include the following:

- Promoting a land use pattern that accommodates future employment and housing needs.
- Using land in ways that make developments more compact and improves linkages among jobs, housing and major activity centers.
- Protecting natural habitats and resource areas.
- Implementing a transportation network of public transit, managed lanes and highways, local streets, bikeways, and walkways built and maintained with available funds.
- Managing demands on the transportation system (TDM) in ways that reduce or eliminate traffic congestion during peak periods of demand.
- Managing the transportation system (TSM) through measures that maximize the efficiency of the transportation network.
- Utilizing innovative pricing policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled and traffic congestion during peak periods of demand.

These strategies and actions are Orange County's contribution to the region's efforts to achieve both 2020 and 2035 GHG thresholds established by CARB.





- Preferential parking for alternative fuel vehicles in Huntington Beach.
- Completion of sidewalk system in the Irvine Business Complex as part of developer fee program.
- Promotion of bicycle sharing project in Garden Grove.
- Development of bicycle facilities plan in Newport Beach.
- Review of Downtown Specific Plan for human scale activity in Fullerton.

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### **OC SCS Sustainability Strategy G:**

#### **Support retention and/or development of affordable housing.**

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Because available land is scarce in Orange County, housing will grow primarily in terms of increasing density. Increased housing density affords greater variety in housing type (i.e., multi-family, flat, apartment, condominium, high-rise, etc.) and increased supply contributes to housing affordability. Increasing the supply of affordable housing within Orange County may result in workers living closer to their jobs, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled and urban sprawl. The densification of housing is forecast to accommodate population growth and locate residents proximate to employment centers, shopping and recreation opportunities and major transportation routes, including the High Frequency Corridors and Metrolink stations.

One of the sustainability strategies identified for reducing GHG emissions is a land use strategy for local jurisdictions to provide affordable as well as market rate housing. Among the jurisdictions that responded to the survey of sustainability strategies, 12 indicated they have completed projects within Orange County employing this land use strategy, and 18 additional jurisdictions report ongoing projects. There are 14 planned future projects that provide affordable housing and 20 local jurisdictions report General Plan policies that promote this strategy.

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### **OC SCS Sustainability Strategy H:**

#### **Support natural land restoration and conservation and/or protection offering significant carbon mitigation potential via both sequestration and avoidance of increased emissions due to land conversion.**

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**Leverage existing regional conservation efforts that lead to reduced carbon emissions.** Superior resource management, restoration, and resource land protection are emerging means of emissions avoidance or reductions. This conservation or protection may occur through the purchase of natural resource lands. There are a multitude of



benefits and co-benefits for this strategy including decreased need for future infrastructure in less developed regions of the county; avoidance of construction, household, and infrastructure emissions; and avoidance of VMTs that would have been generated if the land was converted.

The OC SCS, by leveraging existing conservation efforts such as Renewed Measure M's Mitigation Program, can lead the way for strategic open space/resource protection as a means of reducing the County's carbon footprint and meeting the goals of SB 375. Through this strategy, local jurisdictions and other organizations may align their planning priorities and land use decisions together with funds necessary to purchase and preserve natural lands. Jurisdictions and organizations have the option to invest early in this open space strategy which offers both near-term and long-term GHG emissions avoidance benefits.

Another example of protected natural lands is the TCA's open space mitigation program described above, which includes the following protected natural lands:

- Cactus Wren Habitat Linkage and Restoration Project (Completed)
- Bonita Creek Mitigation Site (Completed)
- Chiquita Canyon Conservation Area (Partially Completed)
- Live Oak Preservation Area (Planned)

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### **OC SCS Sustainability Strategy I: Eliminate bottlenecks and reduce delay on freeways, toll roads, and arterials.**

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#### **Freeway Vision**

The freeway vision provides guidance for prioritizing freeway projects within the financially constrained Preferred Plan for the Orange County LRTP.

In order for the freeway vision to serve its intended purpose, and to make certain it contributes toward meeting the OC SCS goals and objectives, the following guiding elements are identified:

- Deliver committed projects, including M2
- Expand access for high-occupancy vehicles
- Improve freeway system operations
- Consider recent transportation studies
- Promote environmental sustainability
- Seek additional funding opportunities

