



2018 Regional Transportation Plan Public Outreach Strategy

*& Sustainable Communities Strategy
Public Participation Plan*



*A supplement to the 2016 MCAG Public Participation Plan
Adopted: September 22, 2016*

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CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Federal and State Requirements	2
	Public Participation Requirements for the Regional Transportation Plan	
	Additional Sustainable Communities Strategy Participation Requirements	
III.	Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Plan	4
	Notifications	
	Outreach	
	Public Agency Consultation	
	Public Workshops	
	Public Review and Comment Period	
	Informational Meetings	
	Public Hearings	
IV.	RTP Public Outreach Strategy	6
	Objectives	
	Key Messages	
	Visuals	
	Key Groups	
	Approach	
	Timeline	
V.	Performance Measures	12

I. INTRODUCTION

Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) is required by federal and state law to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and the RTP is required by state law (Senate Bill 375) to contain a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS).

The RTP is MCAG's long-range planning document that specifies the policies, projects, and programs needed over a 20-year period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation systems. The purpose of the RTP is to establish regional goals, identify present and future needs, deficiencies, and constraints, analyze potential solutions, estimate available funding and propose investments. The purpose of the SCS is to demonstrate how a feasible combination of future land use patterns and transportation investments may result in greenhouse gas emission reductions that meet targets set by the California Air Resources Board. If the targets cannot be met, an APS must be prepared. An APS does not need to meet the same feasibility standards required in the SCS.

This document, the 2018 RTP Public Outreach Strategy and SCS Public Participation Plan, outlines MCAG's approach to comprehensive public engagement throughout the development of the RTP/SCS. The goal of the public outreach effort is to ensure that stakeholders, elected officials and interested members of the community have ample opportunity to understand and provide meaningful input into the region's transportation planning process.

Finally, it is important to note that the SCS public participation plan included in this Public Outreach Strategy is complementary to, but distinct from, MCAG's federally required Public Participation Plan (PPP) which was updated in 2016. The following SCS public participation plan concerns the 2018 RTP/SCS cycle specifically, whereas MCAG's PPP details how MCAG meets federal and state requirements for public participation in all aspects of transportation planning.

For more information about MCAG's Public Participation Plan (September 2016), visit <http://www.mcagov.org/243/Public-Participation-Plan> or contact Stacie Dabbs at (209)723-3153 or stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org.

To summarize, this document includes two components:

1. Regional Transportation Plan Outreach Strategy
2. Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Plan

Numerous abbreviated names and acronyms are used throughout this document. The table to the right summarizes these abbreviations for quick reference.

Acronym	Full Name
APS	Alternative Planning Strategy
PPP	Public Participation Plan
SCS	Sustainable Communities Strategy
MCAG	Merced County Association of Governments
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
RTPA	Regional Transportation Planning Agency
RHNA	Regional Housing Needs Assessment

II. FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS

Public Participation Requirements for the Regional Transportation Plan

This RTP Public Outreach Strategy outlines MCAG's commitment to meeting and exceeding federal public participation requirements concerning participation and consultation as per Title 23 CFR Part 450.316.

- The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft RTP and as a result of the participation process or the interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis and report of the proposed comments shall be made as part of the final RTP.
- The public participation plan should be prepared prior to the development of the RTP. The opportunity for public input will be provided through a 45-day comment period before the MPO/RTPA board adopts the plan.

MCAG's Public Participation Plan was adopted September 22, 2016 following a 45-day public comment period— this RTP public outreach strategy and SCS public participation plan is a supplemental document to that plan.

- Visualization techniques should be used to describe the RTP. Such techniques range from a simple line drawing or hand written chart to web cast public meetings and GIS modeling and computer generated maps. The specific type of visualization technique is determined by the MPO/RTPA.
- The public participation plan and the draft and adopted RTP shall be posted on the MPO/RTPA's website to the maximum extent practicable and for the life of the RTP.

MCAG's public participation plan can be found at: <http://www.mcagov.org/243/Public-Participation-Plan>. All information related to the development of the current RTP/SCS, including the draft and final plan can (when available) be found at: <http://www.mcagov.org/216/RTP>.

- It is recommended MPOs/RTPAs place hard copies of the draft and adopted copies of RTPs in locations where the public would have access to these documents.

Hard copies of the draft and adopted RTP/SCS are available at MCAG, 369 W. 18th Street, Merced CA 95340.

- The MPO shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies.
- MPOs and RTPAs are also encouraged to involve the media, including ethnic media as appropriate, as a tool to promote public participation in the RTP development, review and commenting process.

Additional Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Requirements

California law, as per SB 375, requires that regional agencies provide opportunities for input by local officials and the public into the development of the sustainable communities strategy (SCS) and the alternative planning strategy (APS), if one is prepared.

The key public participation requirements for these processes include:

Sustainable Communities Strategy Public Participation Plan. Each MPO must adopt a public participation plan for the development of the sustainable communities strategy and, if applicable, the APS. Actions the regional agency intends to make to meet this requirement can be incorporated into the public outreach strategy for the RTP. The SCS public participation plan is not required to be reviewed or approved by any state agency.

The public participation plan for the sustainable communities strategy must include all of the following:

- Outreach to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups in the planning process, including but not limited to:
 - Affordable housing
 - Transportation
 - Neighborhood and community groups
 - Environmental advocates
 - Developers and Landowners
 - Broad-based business organizations
 - Commercial property interests
 - Homeowner associations
- Consultation with congestion management agencies, transportation agencies and transportation commissions.
- Workshops throughout the region to provide the public with the information and tools necessary to provide a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices. At least one (1) workshop in each county. At least three (3) workshops in counties with a population greater than 500,000. To the extent practicable, the workshops should include urban simulation computer modeling to create visual representations of the SCS and the APS, if applicable.
- Preparation and circulation of a draft SCS (and APS, if applicable) not less than 55 days before adoption of the final RTP.
- For a single county MPO, at least two (2) public hearings on the draft SCS (and APS, if applicable) shall be held. To the maximum extent feasible, the hearings shall be in different parts of the region to maximize the opportunity for participation.
- A process enabling the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information and updates.

City and County Informational Meetings. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(E), MPOs must conduct at least two (2) informational meetings in their respective regions for members of boards of supervisors and city councils. The purposes of the meeting are to present a draft of the SCS to council and board members and to solicit and consider their input and recommendations. An MPO may conduct only one (1) informational meeting if it is attended by representatives of the county board of supervisors and city council members representing a majority of the population of the incorporated areas of that county.

While local elected officials serve on regional agency boards, expanded consultation is required to provide outreach to all local elected officials and their member jurisdictions affected by the SCS.

Outreach to other key decision-makers. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(G), in preparing an SCS, the MPO shall consider spheres of influence that have been adopted by Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) within the region. MPOs should also consult with LAFCOs regarding special districts within the region that provide property-related services such as water or wastewater services, and should consult with these regional special districts, as appropriate, during the development of an SCS.

Additionally, MPOs should consider consultation with school districts within their region during the development of the RTP/SCS as school-related trips constitute a significant portion of all vehicle trips.

Interagency Coordination. Throughout the RTP/SCS development process, advanced and continuous coordination with all appropriate federal and state agencies is highly recommended. MPO development of the RTP/SCS should include interagency coordination with, but not limited to, the following entities:

- Federal agencies including:
 - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- State agencies including:
 - California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
 - California Air Resources Board (CARB)
 - California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Appropriate resource agencies
- Adjacent MPOs and RTPAs with which the MPO shares a significant amount of interregional travel.

MPOs are also encouraged to work with HCD to incorporate the appropriate Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) within their RTPs.

III. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The following section outlines MCAG's approach to meeting and exceeding the requirements described above related to engaging the general public and a broad range of stakeholders in the development of the region's 2018 Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Notifications

Any interested party may make a request to receive meeting notices, information and updates on the development of the RTP and SCS by contacting Stacie Dabbs at stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org or Anthony Zepeda at anthony.zepeda@mcagov.org, or by calling (209)723-3153. Requests can also be made in writing to MCAG, 369 W. 18th Street, Merced CA 95340. All meeting notifications will also be posted on the MCAG website at www.mcagov.org.

Outreach

As outlined in the following section related to RTP outreach and consistent with the agency's adopted federal Public Participation Plan (September 2016), MCAG is committed to a robust public engagement effort to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders in the RTP/SCS development process. See page 7 of this document for a list of specific key groups to be targeted throughout the development and adoption of the RTP/SCS.

Public Agency Consultation

MCAG will consult with transportation agencies, transportation commissions, and other public agencies as noted throughout this document and in the agency's full Public Participation Plan (September 2016).

Public Workshops

MCAG will hold a total of six (6) public workshops throughout the RTP/SCS development process. A workshop will be held in Merced, Los Banos and Livingston/Delhi during each of the two key phases of public outreach (Phase 1: Visioning and Education, and Phase 2: Transportation and Land Use/Scenarios). The purpose of the public workshops will be to educate audiences about key transportation planning concepts and greenhouse gas emission targets, to foster a better understanding of the RTP and SCS, and to build awareness of the importance of robust and meaningful public input in the development of the document. MCAG is committed to using visualization tools and techniques such to help participants develop a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices. Spanish translation services and materials will be provided.

Public Review and Comment Period

MCAG will prepare and circulate the draft RTP, including the draft SCS, at least 55 days before adopting the final RTP.

Informational Meeting(s)

MCAG will conduct an informational meeting on the draft RTP and SCS with members of the Merced County Board of Supervisors and the six City Councils to present key concepts, help foster a greater understanding of policy choices, and to solicit input and recommendations. A second informational meeting will be held if the first is not attended by representatives of the Board of Supervisors and City Council members representing a majority of the cities with a majority of the region's incorporated population. (Note: any combination of four cities that includes the City of Merced could satisfy this majority requirement). Notice of these informational meetings will be sent to the clerks of the seven (7) jurisdictions in Merced County: City of Merced, City of Atwater, City of Livingston, City of Gustine, City of Los Banos, City of Dos Palos and the County of Merced.

Public Hearings

MCAG will hold two (2) public hearings on the draft RTP and draft SCS. These hearings will be publicly noticed in local newspapers and will be held in the east and west sides of the county.

IV. RTP PUBLIC OUTREACH STRATEGY

The MCAG Public Participation Plan (September 2016) outlines the federal and state requirements for public participation and provides guidance on the types of tools and approaches that may be used throughout the various transportation planning processes. The following section of this document focuses on the specific strategy and themes that MCAG will use as it prepares the 2018 RTP/SCS.

Objectives

MCAG sought to satisfy several objectives when developing this RTP Public Outreach Strategy and SCS Public Participation Plan.

- Build awareness and understanding of the RTP and SCS
- Solicit meaningful input from a broad range of groups and individuals with an emphasis on engaging historically marginalized and/or under-represented populations
- Stimulate dialogue and enhance understanding about the transportation challenges facing the Merced County region
- Incorporate lessons learned from the previous RTP/SCS cycles
- Build support for and understanding of the transportation improvements outlined in the RTP/SCS

Key Messages

- Public participation and input matters.
- The RTP/SCS is not just about transportation.
- The RTP/SCS positions our communities for future economic development and funding opportunities.
- The RTP/SCS is the primary document that guides future transportation investment decisions.

Visuals

- Fact sheets that simplify complex issues
- Maps and charts
- Surveys – paper and electronic (mobile friendly)
- User-friendly RTP/SCS web page

Key Groups

Elected Officials/Public Agencies

- Merced County Board of Supervisors
- City Councils

- Municipal Advisory Committees
- LAFCO
- School Districts
- University of California, Merced
- Merced College
- San Joaquin Rail JPA
- High Speed Rail Authority

Private Sector and Industry

- Chambers of Commerce
- Farm Bureau
- Association of Realtors
- Building Industry Association
- Dignity Health

Community Based Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations and Service Clubs

- Rotary, Kiwanis, Soroptimist, etc
- Bicycle Coalition
- League of Women Voters
- Sierra Club
- Golden Valley Health Centers
- United Way / Building Healthy Communities

MCAG committees

- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Technical Review Board
- Technical Planning Committee
- Social Services Transportation Advisory Council
- 2014 APS/RTP Steering Committee

GENERAL PUBLIC	ELECTED OFFICIALS & PUBLIC AGENCIES	PRIVATE SECTOR	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS & INTEREST GROUPS	MCAG COMMITTEES
OBJECTIVES				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear information about public engagement opportunities • Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts • Engage in visioning efforts • Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario • Ensure participation of historically marginalized or under-represented groups • Collect input on draft RTP/SCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts • Engage in visioning efforts • Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario • Collect input on draft RTP/SCS • Build partnerships for ongoing engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts • Engage in visioning efforts • Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario • Collect input on draft RTP/SCS • Build partnerships for ongoing engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts • Engage in visioning efforts • Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario • Collect input on draft RTP/SCS • Ensure participation of historically marginalized or under-represented groups • Build partnerships for ongoing engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on key RTP/SCS concepts • Engage in visioning efforts • Collect meaningful input to determine the preferred scenario • Collect input on draft RTP/SCS
TOOLS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTP/SCS webpage • Electronic newsletter • Surveys • Community workshops • Community events/meetings • Public hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTP/SCS webpage • Electronic newsletters • Surveys • Presentations at existing meetings • Advisory committee or working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTP/SCS webpage • Electronic newsletter • Surveys • Speakers bureau • Advisory committee • Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTP/SCS webpage • Electronic newsletter • Surveys • Speakers bureau • Presentations at existing meetings • Advisory committee • Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTP/SCS webpage • Electronic newsletter • Surveys • Presentations at existing meetings • Advisory committee or working group

Approach

This RTP Public Outreach Strategy and SCS Public Participation Plan is structured around three main phases of public outreach during the RTP/SCS development process:

Phase 1: Visioning and education (Winter 2016-17)

- Education- What is the RTP and the SCS? Why are they important?
- Visioning - Gather input on:
 - community values, goals, concerns
 - transportation and housing preferences and goals

Phase 2: Transportation/land use scenario options (Summer 2017)

- Scenarios- Offer options with visualization tools
 - Interactive mapping of future land use
 - Sets of transportation investments
- Select preferred scenario – Use interactive tools
 - Clickers or other interactive process
 - Explore implications of those choices and trade-offs

Phase 3: Public Comment: Draft RTP/SCS and preferred transportation/land use scenario (Winter/Spring 2018)

MCAG will use several key strategies to implement the three phases of this RTP/SCS outreach effort. These strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

Stakeholder/Focus Groups

To consult and coordinate the development of the RTP and SCS with stakeholders interested or involved with plans or projects related to specific areas of industry, MCAG will work with existing organizations where possible. For specific industries that currently do not have existing organizations, MCAG will organize focus groups. Between these two approaches, MCAG intends to involve representatives from the following areas:

- Transportation
 - Non-Motorized Transportation: users and providers of bicycle and pedestrian facilities
 - Rail: providers and users of rail service and freight shipping
 - Aviation: Merced Regional Airport and Castle Airport
 - Transit: providers and users of public, private and school transit services (urban and rural) and public transportation employees, taxi company representatives, bus operators, vanpool companies, etc.
 - Trucking companies and associations
- Environment and Natural Resources
 - San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
 - Environmental resource agencies
 - Community groups with an environmental focus
- Business and Industry
 - Large employers
 - Chambers of commerce
 - Business organizations

- Developers
- Housing/Real Estate
- Social Equity and Community Health
 - Representatives of the disabled and elderly population including MCAG's Social Services Transportation Advisory Council
 - Community organizations with a social justice/social equity focus
 - United Way / Building Healthy Communities
 - local hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers
- Education
 - UC Merced
 - Merced College
 - Merced County Office of Education
 - School districts

Advisory Committee

MCAG will form a committee to support MCAG staff and standing committees in the development and preparation of the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy. This committee will be a key advisory committee as it will consider technical issues and policy choices, and provide recommendations via consensus to MCAG's standing committees throughout the development process to help inform and prepare the MCAG Governing Board for action on the final RTP/SCS.

The Advisory Committee will be comprised of no more than two representatives from each of the stakeholder/focus groups, as well as, at least one representative from the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Technical Planning Committee, the Technical Review Board and the Governing Board.

Surveys

MCAG may utilize a survey tool to solicit input from the general public, elected officials, private sector representatives, community organizations and others throughout the RTP/SCS development process. This tool can be used to assess whether the transportation priorities and community values identified in the 2014 RTP/SCS still hold true today, as well as, for specific input related to community development and growth preferences that can help inform the development of the SCS.

Electronic Newsletters

Regular updates regarding RTP/SCS development, including specific opportunities for public engagement, will be included in MCAG's monthly electronic newsletter. The e-newsletter is distributed broadly through email, social media and as a newflash on the MCAG website. The monthly edition is also included in the agenda packets for all of MCAG's standing committees and the Governing Board. To sign-up to receive the monthly newsletter, interested parties are asked to submit the request via email to stacie.dabbs@mcagov.org.

Social Media

Project updates, workshop and meeting announcements, press releases related to the RTP/SCS, public hearing notices and other key information related to the development of the RTP/SCS will be posted to the MCAG Facebook page and Twitter account (@MercedCAG).

Website

Several features of the MCAG website (www.mcagov.org) will be used to share information throughout the RTP/SCS development process. Dates and locations of workshops, meetings, public hearings and other events will be posted on the MCAG calendar. These postings are automatically linked and distributed by email to the distribution list populated by the 'Notify Me' feature on the website. They are also automatically posted to MCAG's social media accounts. In addition, the MCAG website will feature a 2018 RTP page where regular updates, schedules, agendas, presentations and other key information will be housed.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

The following lists of committees will be involved in the development of the RTP & SCS as outlined below:

MCAG's standing committees and board to be consulted/updated monthly:

- Citizens Advisory Committee – Meets at 8:30am the first Friday of the month at MCAG, 369 W. 18th Street, Merced
- Technical Review Board – Meets at 12:00pm the second Wednesday of the month at various locations throughout the county
- Governing Board – Meets at 3:00pm the third Thursday of the month at various locations throughout the county

Other MCAG committees to be consulted or coordinated with periodically:

- Social Service Transportation Advisory Council
- Technical Planning Committee

Valleywide committees and boards that will be consulted or coordinated with as needed:

- Model Coordinating Committee/Programming Coordination Group
- San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Agencies – Executive Directors Committee
- Valley Blueprint Planners Network

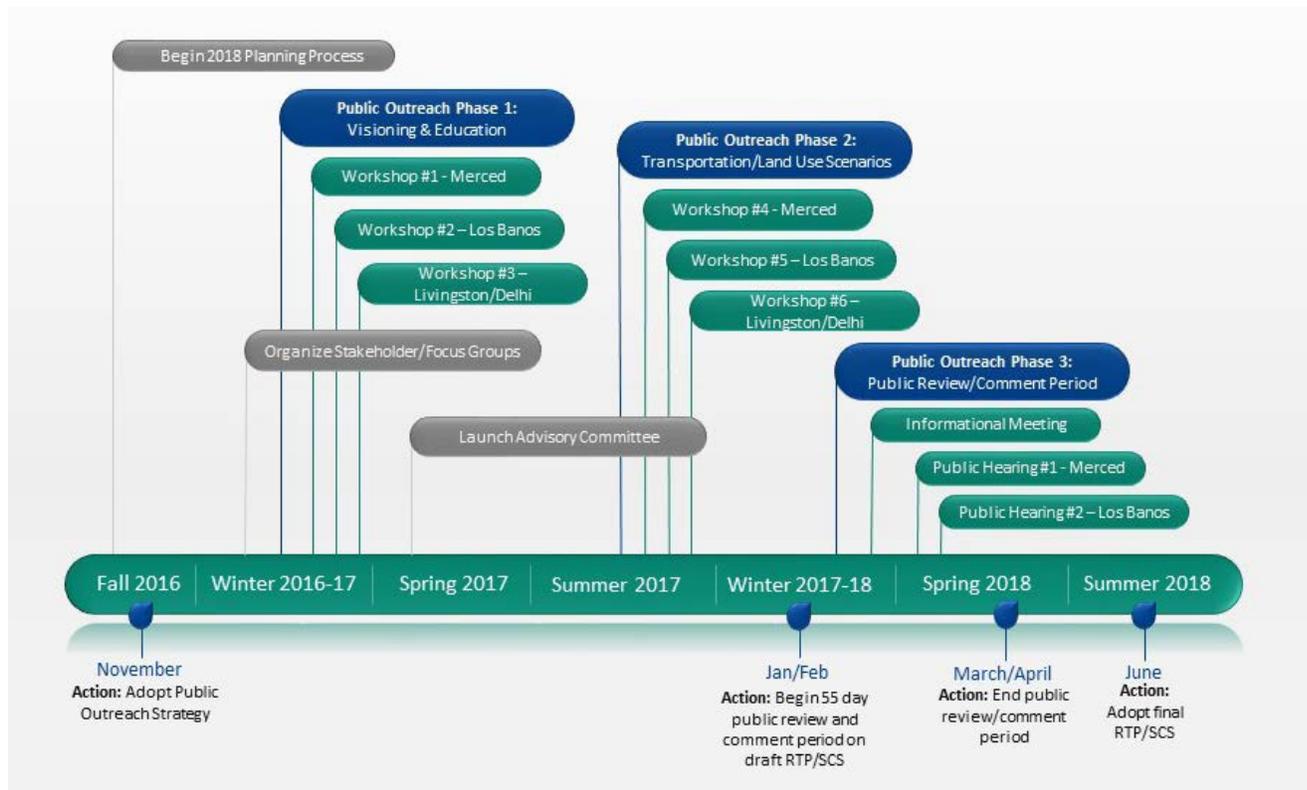
Community Meetings

MCAG staff will make presentations at existing meetings of community groups, service-clubs, organizations and associations throughout the various development stages of the RTP/SCS. The purpose of these presentations will be to educate, inform and solicit input from attendees.

Technical Working Group

MCAG staff will consult and coordinate with technical staff from the seven member agencies to develop/draft technical portions of the plans that require specific expertise.

Timeline



V. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Diversity – Participants must represent a range of socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural, geographic and user (mode) groups. They must also include a range of people with varying interests: social service, business, environment, social justice/equity, etc.

- Targeted groups include all those listed within the section titled “Public Outreach Strategy Requirements” related to both the RTP and SCS public participation requirements, as well as, additional MCAG partners and contacts.
- Participating citizens should represent a cross-section of people of various interest, places of residence and primary modes of travel, as reported on surveys and comments or other communications received throughout the RTP/SCS development process.

Reach – The outreach effort should make every effort to include the greatest number of people possible. Different levels of participation will make it more inviting for people with a range of involvement preferences to join the discussion. The success of the outreach program will be measured by the following:

- Number of comments received
- Number of individuals who actively participated in the outreach program, as measured by survey responses, focus group and workshop attendance, and comments received
- Number of presentations made to various audiences
- Number of visits of “views” to the MCAG RTP/SCS webpage and/or requests for information during active periods of the public outreach program
- Assessing active participation from residents or their representatives from urban and rural locations

Accessibility- Every effort should be made to ensure that anyone who wants to participate can do so. This goal can be met by taking the participation activities to where people already are located, whenever possible. It can also be met by providing ways to participate, regardless of an individual’s language or ability to attend a meeting, access the internet, etc.

- Meetings are held throughout the region and during existing meeting dates/times whenever possible.
- All meeting locations are accessible by transit where transit services are offered.
- Meetings are linguistically accessible to all participants, with 3 working days advance request for translation services. Meeting announcements will offer translation services with advance notice to participants speaking any language with available professional translation services in the immediate area.
- All meetings are accessible under the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Impact – The feedback received through this outreach and participation program should be analyzed and provided to the MCAG Governing Board wherever appropriate. Interested participants should be informed of the Board’s actions. Decisions to not incorporate recommendations should be noted, with a rationale provided and ready to be discussed.

- All written comments received are logged, analyzed, summarized and communicated in time for consideration by staff and the MCAG Governing Board.
- All written comments are acknowledged in the form received so that the person making them knows whether his or her comment is reflected in the outcome of a Governing Board action.

Education – This outreach program is an opportunity for MCAG to inform a wide range of stakeholders and the public about transportation issues in the Merced County region, as well as the link to climate change and sustainable growth, among other issues. Each step of the process should include an educational element, whether it is about Merced County area transportation in general, specific projects being considered for including in the long-range plan or background on the outreach results to date.

Participant Satisfaction – Members of the public who take the time and energy to participate in this process should feel it was worth their while to join in the discussion. The following targeted performance measures are associated with each of the goal topics aforementioned.

- Majority of participants rate the MCAG outreach program as *excellent* or *good* in regards to the following categories (or other specific features to be determined):
 - Accessibility (meeting locations, materials presented in appropriate languages for targeted audiences, etc)

- Adequate notice
 - Sufficient opportunity to comment
 - Clear understanding of items that are established policy versus those that are open to public input
 - Clear information at an appropriate level of detail
 - Educational value of presentations and materials
 - Responsiveness to comments received
 - Understanding of other perspectives and differing priorities
 - Quality of the discussion
-