CHAPTER TWO
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
SJCOG recognizes that public participation in the regional planning process is essential for creating plans that truly enhance quality of life for all residents in the San Joaquin region. Building upon the success of public outreach efforts from the region’s first RTP/SCS adopted in 2014, SJCOG took steps to enhance its program for the 2018 Plan update. By focusing on raising the visibility, inclusiveness, and accessibility of the agency and its planning activities, SJCOG yielded its most fruitful civic engagement effort in organizational history. This chapter describes the tremendous amount of work and effort invested in civic engagement throughout San Joaquin County to shape the Plan.

2018 Plan Civic Engagement Highlights

- 1 educational video in English and Spanish
- 2 public opinion surveys
- 20+ workshops and presentations
- 40+ community outreach events
- 4 door-to-door canvassing days
- 4,000+ residents engaged in regional planning
Public outreach started well before development of the plan. Initial efforts focused on helping residents understand their role in the regional planning process. Continuing from 2014, the RTP/SCS Implementation & Working Group, which serves as an advisory body, expanded to include members from public health, environmental justice, and active transportation. Outreach activities ranged from tabling at community events to public workshops, public opinion surveys, social media campaigns, and more. For the first time, SJCOG partnered with local groups to ensure the inclusion of historically underserved and underrepresented communities. SJCOG staff also provided consultation opportunities to its standing committees on a regular basis. Finally, in keeping with the intent of SB 375, the plan was developed in close coordination with planning and public works departments throughout the region. The result is a carefully coordinated set of demographic, economic, land use, and transportation investment assumptions that were clearly communicated through the public outreach process.

Getting Started

Soon after the 2014 Plan was adopted, SJCOG staff began laying the foundation for the 2018 Plan. Taking feedback from the general public and its stakeholders, SJCOG staff started with an evaluation of the 2014 public outreach program. Some of this work also involved gathering local knowledge and best practices for community engagement in the 2018 Plan.

The following list outlines some of the key enhancements proposed and incorporated into the 2016 Public Participation Plan, significantly shaping the 2018 Plan public participation program:

- A Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant Program to provide resources for small organizations and non-profits to assist with engagement among their memberships and communities.
- A “champions” strategy to disseminate information and calls to action with community leaders.
- A focus on online public engagement to reduce barriers to participate in public workshops.
- An updated Limited English Proficiency Plan, outlining the importance of providing information and materials in-language for Spanish-speaking residents.
- A guide and toolkit for ensuring the inclusion of underserved communities in public outreach and engagement activities.
Guiding the Way

The Public Participation Plan is SJCOG’s official policy for involving the public in the regional planning process. In December 2016, the SJCOG Policy Board approved the 2016 Public Participation Plan (PPP) a major update from the 2011 Plan. In accordance with SB 375, the document included a specific public outreach program for the RTP/SCS (see Appendix J).

The SJCOG Public Participation Plan

The 2016 PPP is built upon five guiding principles:

- Public participation is dynamic and requires teamwork at all levels of the organization.
- One size does not fit all—diverse perspectives are critical.
- Effective public outreach involves relationship building with local governments, with stakeholders and advisory groups, and with all members of the public.
- Engaging interested persons in countywide transportation issues is challenging, yet possible, by making it relevant, removing barriers to participation, and saying it simply.
- An open process empowers everyone to participate in processes that affect them on a personal level.

Five Strategies to Implement the Guiding Principles:

- Encourage involvement by conducting regular meetings.
- Provide varied opportunities for public input and review.
- Engage through partnerships in local communities.
- Communicate clearly, in a timely manner, and in-language when possible.
- Improvement through evaluation.
**Goals for 2018 RTP/SCS Public Outreach**

In keeping with the guiding principles of its 2016 PPP, SJCOG established the following broad goals for public outreach and engagement for the 2018 Plan.

1. Solicit participation from a broad range of groups and individuals in the RTP/SCS decision-making process

2. Raise awareness and offer opportunities for public input about the RTP/SCS

3. Stimulate dialogue about the transportation challenges facing the San Joaquin County region

4. Provide information to residents in the San Joaquin County region and other stakeholders

5. Develop and incorporate into the RTP/SCS update realistic solutions that address the diverse mobility needs of the region’s residents, visitors, and businesses

6. Build public support for, and understanding of, the transportation improvements outlined in the RTP/SCS

**Community Voices on Transportation Choices**

In 2017, SJCOG officially launched its enhanced civic engagement strategy made up of many different elements. A timeline of the Plan’s planning and outreach process is shown in Table 2.1. Public engagement activities were conducted with the intent to ensure the Plan was a regional plan shaped by local input. The various elements of the public outreach and civic engagement process are described in the following sections.
### Table 2.1
**RTP/SCS Public Engagement Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Public Engagement</th>
<th>RTP/SCS Milestones</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2016 | FALL    | Mini-Presentations | | 10/27: PPP presented to SJCOG Board  
|       |         |                   | 10/28: PPP released for public comment |
|       | WINTER  |                   | 12/15: PPP Adopted | SJCOG Board |
| 2017 | WINTER  |                   | 1/5: Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant RFP posted | SJCOG Board |
|       |         | Community Events  | 2/23: Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant Program Funding Recommendations |
|       | SPRING  | Mini-Grantee      | 3/30: Round 1 Public Input Survey Launched | |
|       |         | Outreach          | 6/3: Round 1 Public Input Survey Closed |
|       | SUMMER  | Public Input      | 8/24: Draft 2018 RTP/SCS Scenarios released for public review | SJCOG Board |
|       | FALL    | Survey            | 9/11: Round 2 Online Engagement Platform Launched | |
|       |         | Public Workshop   | 10/20: Round 2 Online Engagement Platform Closed | |
|       |         |                   | 10/26: Direction provided to staff on a Preferred Scenario | SJCOG Board |
| 2018 | WINTER  |                   | 2/22: Draft RTP/SCS presented to SJCOG Board | SJCOG Board |
|       |         | Community Events  | 3/2: Draft RTP/SCS released for public comment |
|       | SPRING  | Mini-presents     | 3/13: Draft EIR released for public comment |
|       |         | Public Workshops  | |
|       | SUMMER  | Public Input      | 6/28: RTP/SCS considered for adoption, EIR and Conformity Determination documents considered for certification | SJCOG Board |
RTP/SCS Implementation & Working Group

In mid-2016, SJCOG convened a group to inform the development of the Plan. Many of the group’s members also worked on the 2014 Plan, and thus were already familiar with SB 375 and its relationship to the RTP. The group represented diverse interests, including local agency planners, transit agencies, environmental groups, affordable housing advocates, real estate development, economic development, and civic engagement advocacy. Compared to 2014, the 2018 group represented wider representation from environmental justice, public health, and neighborhood revitalization organizations.

The working group began meeting in Summer 2016, meeting a total of 10 times between July 2016 and November 2017. This committee was the main advisory body for the technical work surrounding scenario development, as well as weighing in on the goals and objectives for the Plan and assisting in the development of performance indicators. The working group meetings were held in the SJCOG board room, and made open to the public and accessible via WebEx to participants or members of the public who could not attend in person.

The groups participating included the following:

- Bike Lodi
- Business Council, Inc. of San Joaquin County
- Building Industry Association
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton
- City of Escalon
- City of Lathrop
- City of Lodi
- City of Manteca
- City of Ripon
- City of Stockton
- City of Tracy
- Downtown Stockton Alliance
- San Joaquin County
- San Joaquin County Public Health Services
- San Joaquin Partnership
- San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission
- San Joaquin Regional Transit District
- Ten Space
- Third City Coalition
- Visionary Homebuilders
Community-Based Outreach

To hear a diversity of perspectives in the region, SJCOG expanded its public outreach activities by partnering with community-based organizations. Through a competitive bid process, SJCOG awarded grant funding to six local groups to conduct outreach in historically underrepresented and underserved communities (Table 2.2). These mini-grantees played an integral role in helping to elevate transportation needs in communities of concern. A summary of mini-grantee outreach activities is included in Appendix K.

Table 2.2
2018 Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grantees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENCY / ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>DEMOGRAPHIC FOCUS</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities</td>
<td>Low-income seniors and people living with disabilities</td>
<td>Stockton, Tracy, Thornton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers &amp; Families of San Joaquin</td>
<td>Communities of color, low-income individuals, English as a second language, formerly incarcerated</td>
<td>South and East Stockton neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP Stockton</td>
<td>African American youth and adults</td>
<td>Stockton, Manteca, Lathrop, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Community &amp; Economic Development at Fresno State</td>
<td>Rural residents with emphasis on low-income, senior, youth, veterans, and immigrants</td>
<td>Eastern rural areas of San Joaquin County, including Escalon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s Dining Room</td>
<td>Homeless and financially burdened families and individuals</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockton Shelter for the Homeless</td>
<td>Homeless families and individuals, transit-dependent individuals</td>
<td>Stockton, San Joaquin County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We want to hear from you – Public Input Survey

Billed as Round 1 in a series of public outreach and engagement efforts, SJCOG surveyed members of the public during the Spring of 2017 to gather input about current and future transportation needs. The survey was made available in English and Spanish and administered in-person, as well as online, and distributed via multiple channels:

- RTP/SCS Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant Program activities;
- RTP/SCS Implementation & Working Group and SJCOG standing committees;
- SJCOG community outreach at local events;
- Presentations at local organizations; and
- Via SJCOG social media, press release, and email lists.

At the close of the survey, a total of 1,222 residents volunteered to take the survey, providing critical insight for shaping the 2018 Plan. Residents shared opinions on the current transportation climate, as well as their transportation priorities, including infrastructure, public transit, active transportation, as well as their feelings around resource conservation and funding policy. SJCOG used the survey results, in concert with other outreach efforts, to shape the 2018 planning scenarios and to stimulate additional public policy discussions. See Appendix K for full survey analysis.
Spring 2017 Public Workshops

In addition to the public input survey, SJCOG staff also held two regional public workshops in Round 1. Notices for these public workshops were sent out to over 500 individual e-mail addresses including SJCOG’s outreach database, members of SJCOG standing committees, members of the SJCOG board, and those opting in to receive notifications. Flyers were posted in advance on social media and at various locations throughout the community. Information about the public workshops was also distributed to local media outlets.

With input from the RTP/SCS Implementation & Working Group, early workshops were designed to gauge public opinion on various elements making up the foundation for the Plan. After a short presentation providing an overview of the Plan, SB 375 and the regional planning process, the sessions included several interactive stations. Each station covered a different aspect of the Plan and gave participants the opportunity to interact directly with staff about the information presented and to provide their feedback on what they would like to see in their communities. All workshops were conducted in an open house format where participants were invited to attend at any time during the workshop; review displays; interact with staff; complete comment cards; and speak to a bilingual interpreter to have their comments recorded. To encourage participation, SJCOG offered light refreshments, as well as raffle prizes for participants.

### Table 2.3 Public Workshops – Spring 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 20, 2017</td>
<td>6 to 8 p.m.</td>
<td>SJCOG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1, 2017</td>
<td>6 to 8 p.m.</td>
<td>Manteca Transit Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Co-Host: City of Manteca</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Round 1 Public Workshop Highlights

- Many participants commented on investments to improve public transit, several of them focusing on transit connectivity within the region and to neighboring regions.
- Many participants also expressed the desire to live in communities of choice, where driving is not a necessity.
- Several participants commented on the need for development patterns that improve safety and encourage more walking and bicycling. They specifically called out the need for higher densities and mixed-use developments, and one participant even mentioned the concept of human-scaled urban design.
- A few participants commented on the need for more infrastructure for electric vehicles and wanted to see more charging stations in San Joaquin County.
- Concerns among participants included:
  - The lack of safety for bicyclists and pedestrians;
  - Too much traffic on streets during peak hours; and
  - The safety of residents on Lathrop Road.
Invests in congestion relief through significant expansion and improvements to state highways and regional roadways.
- Focus of flexible funding is roadway expansion and maintaining roads and streets.
- Investments in public transit are modest with an emphasis on maintaining existing service over service expansion.
- ACE expansion only assumed for Modesto/Merced and no expansion of ACE service on existing routes.
- Least bicycle/pedestrian and smart growth investments.
- Investments support land use patterns along highway corridors with less development in urban core areas.

**What are the Scenarios?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scenario 1: Assumes a quarter-cent sales tax starting in 2020 - creating over $1 billion of additional revenue in Measure K, resulting in more investments in all transportation modes, in accordance with the existing Measure K investment strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>Scenario 2A: Transportation investment strategies and land use assumptions mirror Scenario 2A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Scenario 2B: Transportation investment strategies and land use assumptions mirror Scenario 2B.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What are the assumptions about the future?**

- Low Impact
- Moderate Impact
- High Impact

**What is the difference in investment strategies? (2016 - 2042)**

- Scenario 1: Highway, Interchange, & Roadway Improvement / Expansion (Roads) 39.5%, Operations & Maintenance, Safety (Maintenance) 38.8%, Bus 19.5%, Rail 10.2%
- Scenario 2A: Highway, Interchange, & Roadway Improvement / Expansion (Roads) 27.2%, Operations & Maintenance, Safety (Maintenance) 38.8%, Bus 20.6%, Rail 10.6%
- Scenario 2B: Highway, Interchange, & Roadway Improvement / Expansion (Roads) 24.1%, Operations & Maintenance, Safety (Maintenance) 38.8%, Bus 19.9%, Rail 12.6%
- Scenario 3: Highway, Interchange, & Roadway Improvement / Expansion (Roads) 36.3%, Operations & Maintenance, Safety (Maintenance) 38.8%, Bus 23.8%, Rail 3.1%
Help shape the future of the region – Online Engagement Platform

In September 2017, SJCOG staff carried the input of the RTP/SCS working group forward, along with the feedback of more than one thousand participants in Round 1, in the form of four possible alternative scenarios for the future transportation system of San Joaquin County (see Figure 2.4). SJCOG staff launched Round 2 of public outreach and engagement, in which these four scenarios were presented to the community for further input on the type of future San Joaquin County residents would like to see.

To educate the public, SJCOG developed an interactive web-based public engagement tool (see Figure 2.5). The tool was made available in both English and Spanish. Through a series of five screens, the public engagement platform visually demonstrated how various mobility and environmental factors interact and affect each other in the four planning scenarios. As participants engaged with the platform, it prompted their input on their priorities, as well as their ratings on scenarios and various strategies to address regional issues such as congestion relief, environmental conservation, and social equity.

SJCOG used the results to supplement technical information for recommending the scenario that would become the basis for the Plan. The data collected can be found in Appendix K, along with an analysis of participant demographics, key findings, and discussion of the similarities and differences among the region’s diverse communities.

Online Engagement Platform Highlights

- The highest ranked priorities on average included repairing and maintaining roads, reducing congestion, and improving public transit.
- Overall, there was support for all planning scenarios; however, Scenario 2A received the highest average rating. This scenario focuses on increasing alternatives to driving a car, expanding public transit, and providing more funding to bike and pedestrian projects. This Scenario became the underlying framework for the 2018 Plan.
- Among the varied congestion relief strategies, new infrastructure and public transit outranked options such as active transportation and others.
- Participants favor addressing the jobs-housing balance as an environmental conservation strategy.
- Public support for public transit investment diverged based on income status. For example, low-income participants highly favored improvements for local and regional bus transit, while high-income participants highly favored improvements for regional rail.
- When it came to innovations in transportation, the public expressed high interest in studying pricing strategies to fund the region’s transportation system. The public shows uncertainty on the issue of planning and preparing for autonomous vehicles.
For a closer look, please visit live demonstration Link:
https://sjcog-demo.metroquest.com/
Fall 2017 Public Workshops

In addition to the online public engagement platform, SJCOG staff also used traditional methods of public outreach and engagement by holding two regional public workshops in Round 2.

A workshop in September 2017 consisted of a short presentation and interactive station areas. At the time of the workshop, the online engagement platform described under Help Shape the Future of the Region was a few days out from its public launch. Therefore, a station area was designed to mimic one of the exercises from the online tool. This station featured a poster board similar to Figure 2.4, which participants reviewed before being asked to rate them on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 meaning “worst” and 5 meaning “best”.

Following the close of the online engagement platform, SJCOG held an additional workshop in November 2017 to present results and to provide additional technical information about the scenarios on their performance on key metrics of community interest, including the debut of public health performance metrics looking at the Plan’s impact on total average walking and biking minutes, as well as average body mass index and general health.

Table 2.6 Public Workshops – Fall 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 7, 2017</td>
<td>6 – 8 p.m.</td>
<td>Cathedral of Annunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-Host: Catholic Charities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 9, 2017</td>
<td>6 – 8 p.m.</td>
<td>SJCOG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.7
Survey Participants by Zipcode

Sources: SJCOG Round 1 Survey, SJCOG Round 2 Online Engagement Tool
Summarizing Public Input for a Preferred Scenario

Residents from across the region provided their direct input throughout the regional planning process. Figure 2.7 is a map of collected zip codes provided by survey respondents throughout San Joaquin County. Residents were engaged in the process from all corners of the region, but especially in the urbanized areas of the county.

Emerging Themes from the Public

Major themes developed from the input provided by residents in San Joaquin County. These themes, which are displayed below, were communicated to the SJCOG Board in November 2017, prior to directing staff to move forward with a land use and transportation scenario consistent with Scenario 2A.

- The poor condition of roads and the need for repair and maintenance was strongly felt across the region.
- San Francisco Bay Area commuters are struggling with heavy congestion and long travel times. To address congestion, some residents favor adding new lanes and roads, while others would like to see improved bus and rail transit connectivity to Bay Area transit systems.
- Some residents noted the lack of good paying jobs nearby and the resulting need to commute outside the county for work. Many would like to see more jobs that pay livable wages brought to the region.
- Some residents commented on the lack of basic services nearby, such as groceries, gas stations, etc. While others noted concerns with blight and personal safety in their communities.
- Residents across the region would like to see improvement in alternative transportation modes, such as public transit, biking, and walking. A number of residents want to ensure mobility for low income residents, youth, seniors, and people living with disabilities.
- Some residents expressed support for providing more housing options that are affordable and safe. One commented on the lack of housing available for residents making the median family income for the region.
Public Input on the Draft 2018 Plan

Following the release of the Draft, SJCOG staff conducted a series of informational meetings, presentations, and an open house to provide information to members of the public and stakeholders in the community. In accordance with SB 375, SJCOG also held two public hearings during regularly scheduled meetings. Events were peppered throughout the public review period, which remained open from March 2 through April 30, 2018. The events were held in locations throughout the region and began at varying times and days of the week in order to maximize opportunities for public input. While some comments were received at events and public hearings, staff also encouraged members of the public to submit written comments by U.S. Post, or email. For a summary of public comments received, please see Appendix D – Response to Comments.

Table 2.8 Public Outreach Events – Spring 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 26, 2018</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Escalon Informational Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 12, 2018</td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>Lathrop City Council Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 13, 2018</td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>Manteca Planning Commission Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 20, 2018</td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>UOP Association of Students in Civil Engineering Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 22, 2018</td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>SJCOG Open House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 3, 2018</td>
<td>7 a.m.</td>
<td>Lodi City Council Shirtsleeve Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 3, 2018</td>
<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>Manteca City Council Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 4, 2018</td>
<td>12 p.m.</td>
<td>Public Hearing - Lathrop City Council Chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 26, 2018</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>Public Hearing – SJCOG Board Room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ongoing Public Outreach Activities

Throughout the development of the 2018 Plan, SJCOG staff employed a wide range of public outreach activities. The following list summarizes some of these activities:

- Consultation with member agencies and SJCOG standing committees;
- Educational videos about the 2018 RTP/SCS;
- Table outreach at community events;
- Mini-presentations with champions;
- Targeted flyering;
- Traditional media outreach;
- Stakeholder meetings; and
- Social media and website.

For further detail on these activities, please see Appendix K.

Retooling the Outreach Tools: Feedback on the Public Participation Process

For the 2018 Plan, civic engagement efforts resulted in over 4,000 residents engaged throughout the regional planning process. Aside from the overwhelming response from the public, SJCOG staff also received positive feedback on the interactive design of its workshops, as well as its visibility at local community events.

Although these activities represent the most extensive outreach plan by SJCOG to date, some RTP/SCS Implementation & Working Group members, as well as SJCOG Board members expressed concern at the potential for skewed results due to higher levels of input from urbanized areas of the region, as well as high income households, and long-distance commuters.

To address these concerns, SJCOG staff performed additional analyses on the collected data, drilling down to specific communities to understand the varied response on regional transportation issues. SJCOG staff also examined results by income and minority status to identify the specific needs and priorities of the most vulnerable residents in the region. The purpose of this was to help inform SJCOG Board members prior to directing staff on a preferred scenario for the 2018 Plan.

Additionally, participation from historically underrepresented and underserved communities, particularly communities of color, increased dramatically since the previous Plan. SJCOG’s goal is to continually increase participation from Hispanic and Latino communities to better reflect their composition in the regional population. To improve outreach in Hispanic and Latino communities for future updates of the Plan, SJCOG staff will enhance opportunities to provide information in-language. SJCOG will also forge new local partnerships to enhance community education and outreach to the specific communities.
CONCLUSION

More than two years after civic engagement began, public input has made a profound mark on the package of transportation investments laid out in the Plan. In 2014, the Plan represented a bold shift in transportation investments among the different modes of travel by directing more resources to maintenance and safety, active transportation, and public transit compared to previous Plans. In 2018, residents showed up in strong numbers to provide their input in one of the most visible, inclusive, and accessible civic engagement efforts led by SJCOG. Residents expressed great pride in the region with high hopes for its future. Ultimately, their direct input reinforced the bold direction charted in 2014 to ensure the continued implementation of ambitious sustainability goals in the San Joaquin region.