

CHAPTER 2

Civic Engagement



TWO

Public participation in the regional planning process is essential for creating strategies that truly enhance the quality of life for all San Joaquin County residents. Building on the success of public outreach efforts for the region's prior RTP/SCS adopted in 2018, SJCOG took steps to enhance its engagement program for the 2022 plan. In-person outreach was halted because of COVID-19 and SJCOG quickly moved to virtual engagement. SJCOG involved and engaged with the community throughout its virtual-only RTP/SCS process by focusing on extending its reach to residents with enhanced visualizations, accessibility, and inclusiveness. This chapter describes the extent of work and effort invested in civic engagement throughout San Joaquin County to shape the plan.



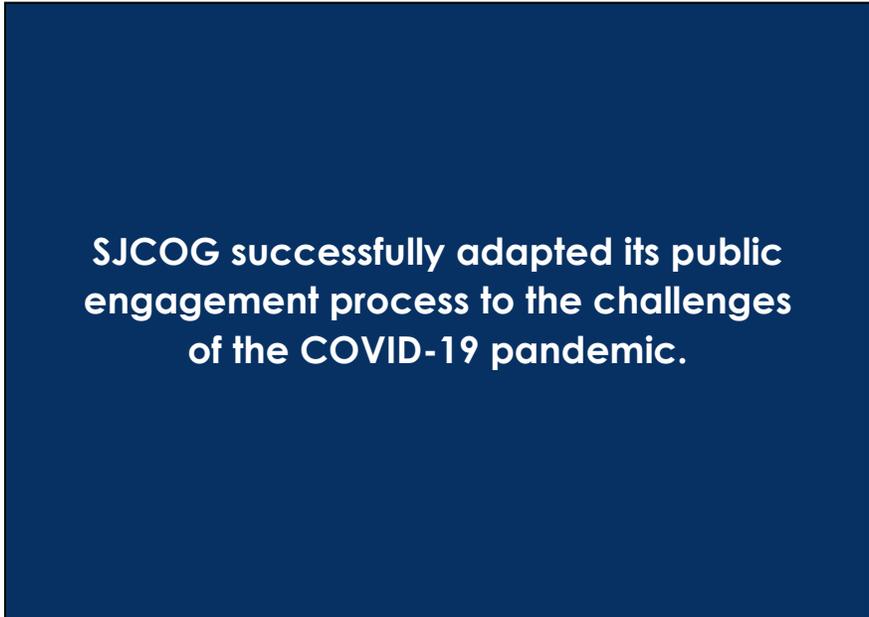
Getting Started

Public outreach started well before development of the 2022 RTP/SCS. Initial efforts focused on helping residents understand their role in the regional planning process and the importance of the RTP/SCS document. The RTP/SCS Implementation and Working Group was expanded over the 2018 advisory group to include members from public health, environmental justice, and active transportation. Outreach activities ranged from virtual workshops and webinars, public opinion surveys, social media campaigns, and more.

SJCOG partnered with local groups to ensure the inclusion of historically underserved and underrepresented communities, an engagement strategy that was continued and expanded from the 2018 plan. SJCOG staff also consulted with 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.

SJCOG staff began laying the foundation for the 2022 plan soon after the 2018 plan was adopted. Taking feedback from the public and stakeholders, SJCOG staff started with an evaluation of the 2018 public outreach program. Staff continued to gather local knowledge and best practices for community outreach for the 2022 plan. The COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States in early 2020 and prevented SJCOG staff from following some of the best practices that were implemented during the development of the 2018 plan. These included setting up information booths at multiple community events and providing in-person presentations. Despite limitations created by the pandemic, staff was able to use other methods to successfully reach the public and gather feedback for the 2022 plan. The diagram on the next pages describes some of these methods.



SJCOG successfully adapted its public engagement process to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

With the onset of COVID-19, SJCOG had to revamp its engagement strategies in order to involve the community. The engagement team used the following methods to ensure equitable and meaningful participation during a pandemic.



WEBINARS

Webinars allowed SJCOG staff to inform our stakeholders and the public on the RTP/SCS process.

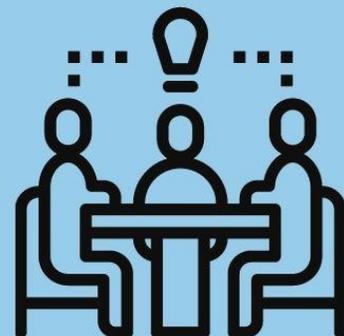
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Posts were included on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn platforms, and SJCOG.ORG.



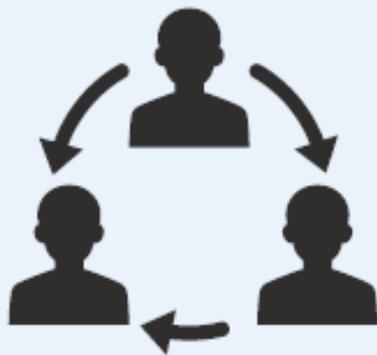
MINI-PRESENTATIONS

Staff gave virtual mini-presentations to groups and organizations related to RTP/SCS development.



RTP/SCS WORKING GROUP

A monthly working group met in order to discuss the plan development and to obtain input.



ZOOM

We utilized ZOOM to hold meetings in the digital space. This application allowed the public and stakeholders to join our meetings anywhere.



FACE THE FUTURES APP

We created an app to gain feedback during our scenario development planning process.

METROQUEST SURVEYS

We had two surveys in order to receive input from the public related to policies and strategies.



FOCUS GROUPS

Convened harder-to-reach community members to discuss key community priorities and concerns.

Guiding the Way

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is SJCOG's official policy for involving the public in the regional planning process. In December 2016, the SJCOG Board of Directors approved the 2016 PPP, a major update of the 2011 plan. In accordance with SB 375, the document included a specific public outreach program for the RTP/SCS (see Appendix J). The PPP is built on five guiding principles, which are listed on the right. Reviewed before development of the 2022 RTP/SCS, the 2016 PPP was found to meet current outreach requirements and objectives.

The following outlines some of the key enhancements incorporated in the 2016 PPP, significantly shaping the public participation program for the 2022 plan:

- A Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant Program to provide resources for small organizations and nonprofits to help with engagement with 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 due to COVID-19.
- An updated Limited English Proficiency Plan, outlining the importance of providing information and materials in Spanish for Spanish-speaking residents.
- A guide and toolkit for ensuring the inclusion of underserved communities in public outreach and engagement activities.

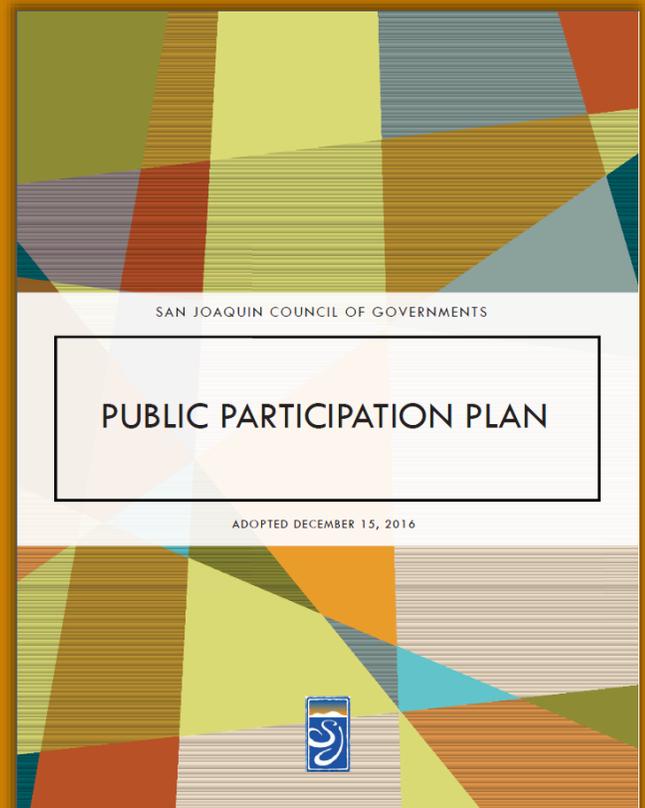
Goals for 2022 RTP/SCS Public Outreach

In keeping with the guiding principles of its 2016 PPP, SJCOG established the following broad goals for public outreach and engagement for the 2022 Plan.

- Solicit participation from a broad range of groups and individuals in the RTP/SCS decision-making process.
- Raise awareness and offer opportunities for public input about the RTP/SCS.

The 2016 Public Participation Plan is built on five guiding principles:

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



- Provide information to residents in the San Joaquin County region and other stakeholders.
- Develop and incorporate into the RTP/SCS update realistic solutions that address the diverse mobility needs of the region's residents, visitors, and businesses.
- Build public support for and understanding of the transportation improvements outlined in the RTP/SCS.

Community Voices on Transportation Choices

In 2019, SJCOG officially launched its comprehensive civic engagement strategy made up of many different elements. A timeline of the RTP/SCS' planning and outreach process is shown in Table 2.1. Public engagement activities were conducted with the intent to ensure the regional plan was shaped by local input. The various elements of the public outreach and civic engagement process are described in the following sections.

RTP/SCS Implementation & Working Group

SJCOG convened a group in early 2020 to help shape the plan. Many of the group's members also worked on the 2018 plan and were already familiar with SB 375 and its relationship to the RTP. The group represented diverse interests, including local planning, transit, environmental issues, affordable housing, real estate development, economic development, and civic engagement advocacy. The 2022 working group was made up of similar stakeholders to those on the 2018 working group, but had a wider representation from environmental justice, public health, and neighborhood revitalization organizations.

The working group met several times between February 2020 and November 2021. This ad hoc committee was the main advisory body for the technical work on scenario development. Committee members also weighed in on the goals and objectives for the plan and helped in developing performance indicators. Scenarios are strategy bundles that work together to meet transportation and land use objectives.



Table 2.1 – Timeline of RTP/SCS Planning and Outreach Process

	 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	 RTP/SCS MILESTONES	 ACTIONS
2020		5/8: Round 1 Public Survey on Strategy Pillars Launched	
	SPRING	Public Webinars	5/28 Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant Program Funding Recommendations SJCOG Board
	SUMMER		7/2: Round 1 Public Survey on Strategy Pillars Closed
	FALL		12/11: Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant RFP posted
2021	WINTER	RTP/SCS Working Group Charettes	
	SPRING		
	SUMMER	Mini-Grantee Outreach Focus Groups Mini-Presentations Community Event	6/30: "Face the Future" Survey Launched 8/31: "Face the Future" Survey Closed
	FALL	Public Workshops	10/28: Direction provided to staff on policy and investment strategies
2022	SPRING/ SUMMER	Public Hearings	6/2: Draft RTP/SCS released for public comment 6/12: Draft EIR released for public comment SJCOG Board
	SUMMER	Community Events Mini-Presentations Public Workshops Public Hearings	6/23: Draft RTP/SCS presented to SJCOG Board 8/25: RTP/SCS considered for adoption, EIR and Conformity Determination documents considered for certification SJCOG Board



Photo Credit: Little Manila Rising

Initially, the working group meetings were held in the SJCOG board room. They were open to the public and accessible via WebEx for those who could not attend in person. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency switched to virtual-only meetings and used Zoom to connect stakeholders and staff.

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
- Third City Coalition
- Visionary Homebuilders

Community-Based Outreach

SJCOG partnered with community-based organizations to expand its public outreach to hear a wider range of perspectives in the region. Through a competitive bid process, SJCOG awarded grant funding to four local groups to conduct outreach in historically underrepresented and underserved communities (Table 2.2). These mini-grantees played an integral role in gathering information on transportation needs in communities of concern. A summary of mini-grantee outreach activities is included in Appendix K.

Table 2.2 - 2021 Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grantees

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	DEMOGRAPHIC FOCUS	GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS
Little Manila Rising	African American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian youth and adults	South Stockton neighborhoods
New Genesis Housing Development	African American and Latino residents	Stockton, Lodi, Manteca, and Tracy
Public Health Advocates	African American residents	Stockton
Stockton Baptist Church	Seniors (65+), youth, immigrants/refugees, Hispanic and Asian residents	Stockton, Manteca, Lodi, Lathrop, including unincorporated San Joaquin County near these cities

Round 1 Public Outreach

Public Survey on Selected Issues (Strategy Pillars)

Round 1 of public outreach engagement efforts included a survey during spring and summer 2020. Staff left the survey open for a longer-than-normal duration because it was being conducted during California’s first COVID-19-related shelter-in-place order. Surveys were made available in English and Spanish, administered online, and distributed via:

- RTP/SCS Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant Program activities.
- RTP/SCS Implementation and Working Group and SJCOG standing committees.
- SJCOG social media, press release, and email lists.

At the close of the survey, a total of 128 residents had taken the survey, providing critical insight for shaping the 2022 plan. Residents shared opinions on the current transportation climate, their transportation priorities, and their feelings on housing, climate adaption, vibrant neighborhoods, and transportation technology. These represent the issues, or strategy pillars, to be addressed by the plan’s proposed strategies (Figure 2.1). SJCOG used the survey results in concert with other outreach efforts to shape the plan strategies and to stimulate additional public policy discussions. See Appendix K for full survey analysis.

Figure 2.1 - Strategy Pillars



Charrettes

Charrettes are an intense planning technique in which stakeholders – planners, the public and others – are engaged and involved in the design and implementation of a project. SJCOG conducted three charrettes with the RTP/SCS Working Group from November 2020 to January 2021 to identify and discuss the development of scenarios and strategies. The purpose of Charrette No. 1 was to identify and discuss the most important external forces to plan for in the future. The outcome was used to confirm and clarify areas of focus for subsequent strategy development and provide useful details of key concerns and issues that San Joaquin County will face in the future. From this meeting came a draft Futures Framework, or a set of emerging trends leading to three possible, conceptual futures for San Joaquin County.

The purpose of Charrette No. 2 was to generate and discuss strategies that relate to SJCOG strategy pillars. Working Group members were asked to share insights on strategy impacts to consider during the modeling process. After a brief presentation reviewing the 2022 RTP/SCS pillars, meeting participants self-sorted into breakout room discussions to generate and discuss strategies and guide strategy development and discussion.

The outcome of the breakout room discussion was a set of strategies that was added to a working bank of strategies assembled by the consultant team (sourced from recent SB1 studies and other research).

The purpose of Charrette No. 3 was to facilitate a discussion to generate more details for how the Futures Framework narrative could be explained in a more compelling and public-friendly manner. The goal of this charrette was to take the draft Futures Framework that developed from Charrette No. 1 and add engaging and personal details to the descriptions. After a brief presentation reviewing the scenario planning process and the role of RTP/SCS pillars, strategies, and potential futures, meeting participants self-sorted into breakout room discussions to generate content and details for creating vignette-style narratives to explain the three conceptual futures.

The responses and feedback from the breakout group discussions helped develop first-person perspectives that would assist in framing the Futures Framework narratives into a public-friendly package. This vignette-style approach provided a more compelling, engaging, and personal way to make these hypothetical futures more tangible to participants in a future MetroQuest survey.

Figure 2.2: Breakout Room Groups and Pillar Topics

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
Transportation (In & Out Commutes)	Climate Impacts	Jobs & Economy	Technology & AV Adoption	Housing Production	Vibrant Neighborhoods
Maintain and Optimize the Existing System	Reduce Risks from Hazards	Improve Economic Mobility	Build IT Infrastructure	Spur Housing Production	Make Equitable Investments
Create Healthy and Safe Streets	Expand Access to Parks and Open Space	Shift Location of Jobs	Attract New Industries	Retain and Expand Affordable Housing	Promote Infill Development
Build a Next Generation Transit Network	Reduce Climate Emissions	Support and Grow Existing Industries	Manage AV Adoption	Shift Location of Housing	Improve Accessibility

Source: Cascadia Partners

Round 2 Public Outreach

Focus Groups

Round 2 of public engagement for the 2022 plan started with focus groups. From April 26 to May 15, 2021, project consultant Cascadia Partners and Third City Coalition, and other partnering community-based organizations hosted five, hour-and-a-half virtual community meetings with focus groups comprised of San Joaquin County residents.

The purpose of these meetings was to:

1. Inform community members about the purpose and goals of the RTP/SCS processes.
2. Provide context and hear feedback from participants on the status of San Joaquin County.
3. Explain three emerging trends that the region is facing and gather feedback on what pathways for responding to those external forces are of the highest priority for the region.
4. Demonstrate how participants can complete the proposed MetroQuest survey (Face the Future Challenge app).

Focus group discussions were facilitated as an interactive presentation showcasing information. Participants were then asked to reflect and discuss

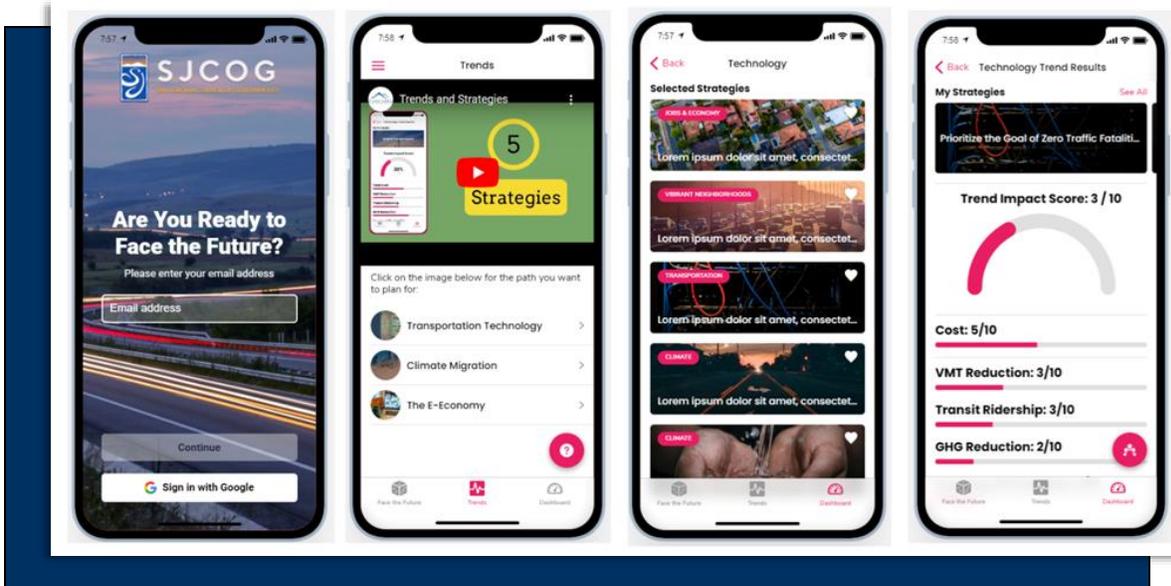
More than 400 people participated in the Face the Future Survey.

their perspectives or experiences. The key takeaways listed in the following page are a summary of the themes, concerns, and priorities from this open discussion.

Face the Future Challenge Survey

The public was questioned a second time through MetroQuest survey, which focused on strategies and policies that helped form the scenarios. The survey was an interactive web-based public engagement tool titled “Face the Future Challenge” and made available through the internet and an app in English and Spanish. Through a series of screens, the public engagement platform visually demonstrated how various strategies and policies interact and affect each other in the four planning scenarios. The platform prompted input by participants on their priorities and ratings on scenarios and various strategies to address regional issues such as climate adaptation, housing, or transportation technology. Figure 2.3 is an illustration of the app interface.

Figure 2.3 - “Face the Future Challenge” Survey App



FOCUS GROUPS KEY THEMES, PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS



Cost of living, both on the spending and income side. There are not enough opportunities for living-wage jobs and household expenses, including housing, continue to rise.

Gentrification and lack of affordable housing options.

Public transportation and its decline as a realistic option for those who don't have a car.

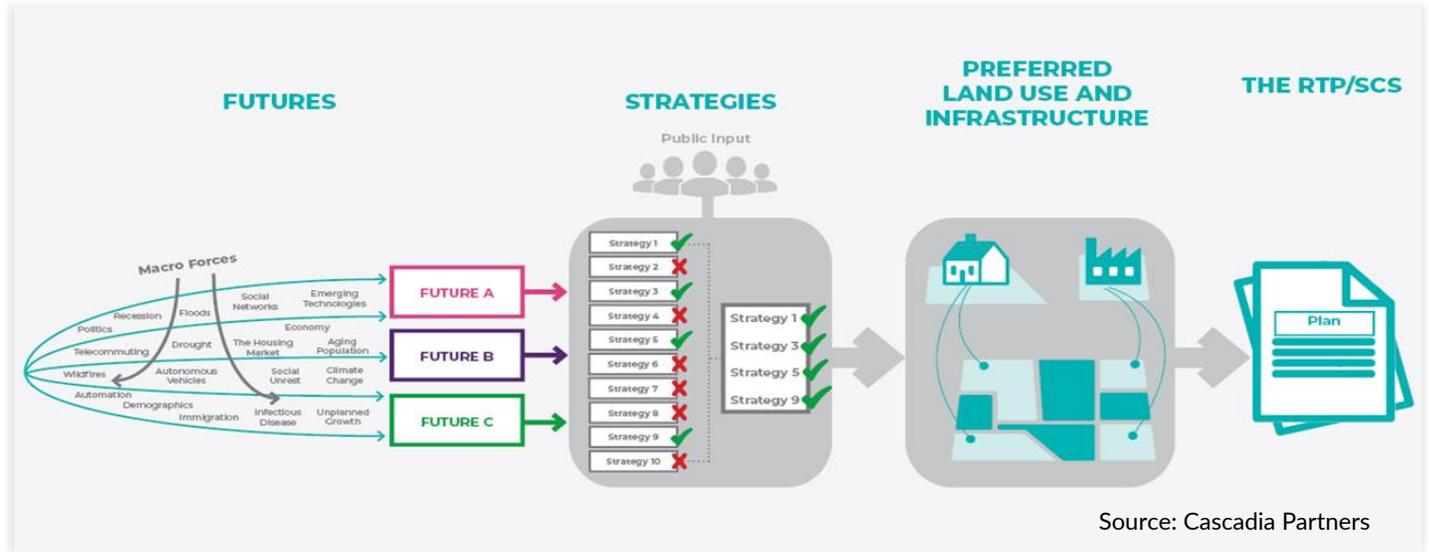
Fear/concern/skepticism that advances in transportation technology will only increase economic and social divides.

Implications of creating efficiencies/automation and how that will impact working-class jobs.

People who lose jobs from efficiencies should be provided options and assistance in transitioning to new living-wage jobs.

Supporting small businesses to adapt to e-commerce.

Figure 2.4 - Selection of Strategies



SJCOG used the results of the Face the Future Challenge survey to supplement technical information for recommending the strategies that would become the basis for the plan. The data collected is in Appendix K, along with an analysis of participant demographics and key findings.

Figure 2.4 illustrates the Round 2 outreach in which the public, stakeholders and, ultimately, the SJCOG Board of Directors selected the strategies for the San Joaquin County region.

Mini-Presentations

Staff conducted nine mini-presentations on the RTP/SCS development, specifically the scenario planning process. Staff created personalized presentations for the organizations listed below in Table 2.3.

Fall 2021 Public Workshops

In addition to the online public engagement platform, SJCOG staff also used traditional methods of public outreach and engagement by holding two public workshops in October 2021. The first public workshop presented proposed strategies, policies and had interactive sessions on what was proposed. Later, a workshop with the RTP/SCS Working Group presented results of the MetroQuest survey and provided additional technical information about scenario performance on key metrics of community interest. This included the debut of housing affordability performance metrics measuring the plan’s impact on housing affordability, supply, and demand.

Table 2.3 - 2021 Mini-Presentation Schedule

Date	Organization
June 2, 2021	Greater Chamber of Commerce of Stockton
June 4, 2021	Catholic Charities of Stockton
June 7, 2021	South Stockton Promise Zone Monthly Meeting
June 15, 2021	Healthy Neighborhood Collaborative Monthly Meeting
June 21, 2021	Escalon City Council
June 28, 2021	Bike Lodi
July 15, 2021	Public Health Advocates
August 11, 2021	Business Council of San Joaquin County
August 23, 2021	Sierra Club

Summarizing Public Input for a Preferred Scenario

Residents from all corners of the region were engaged in the process, but especially from urbanized areas. Figure 2.5 shows the four scenarios that were crafted from the input received from the public and San Joaquin County region stakeholders.

Input on the Draft 2022 Plan

Following the release of the draft, SJCOG staff provided informational presentations and operated event booths 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. Presentations on the draft RTP/SCS to public agencies and non-profit groups were held throughout the public review period, which remained open from June through July 2022. The presentations were both in-person and virtual events and began at varying times and days of the week to maximize opportunities for public input. While some comments were received at presentations 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.

COME JOIN US!
SJCOG IS HOSTING A
RTP/SCS
PUBLIC
WORKSHOP
 October 5th from Noon-1PM

FOLLOW THIS LINK TO JOIN
<https://sjcog.zoom.us/j/83264272271>

For questions, please contact Tim Kohaya, Senior Regional Planner, at 209-235-0389 or at kohaya@sjcog.org



Figure 2.5 - Alternative Scenarios

STRATEGY COMPARISON			
A STAY THE COURSE	B REMAKE CENTERS & CORRIDORS	C 20-MINUTE NEIGHBORHOODS	D COMMUTER VILLAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize Projects that Make More Efficient Use of the Existing Road Network • Prioritize Large Employer Recruitment • Improve access to safe and convenient walking and biking options • Prioritize Projects that Improve and Expand Access to Public Transit • Prioritize Expanding the Roadway Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage infill development • Promote a Broader Range of Housing Types • Develop a regional trust fund dedicated to addressing housing issues. • Prioritize "complete streets" projects throughout the region • Prioritize Projects that Improve and Expand Access to Public Transit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional trust fund dedicated to addressing housing issues. • Invest in High Speed Internet Infrastructure • Promote adoption of electric vehicles • Improve access to safe and convenient walking and biking options • Prioritize "complete streets" projects throughout the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize Projects that Improve and Expand Access to Public Transit • Manage the Adoption of Private Connected and Autonomous Vehicles • Promote Autonomous Technologies for Public Transit • Encourage development near transit • Promote adoption of electric vehicles



Ongoing Public Outreach Activities

Throughout the development of the 2022 RTP/SCS Plan, SJCOG staff employed a wide range of public outreach activities, including:

- Consultation with member agencies and SJCOG standing committees.
- Table outreach at community events.
- Mini-presentations to public agencies and nonprofit organizations.
- Targeted flyers.
- Traditional media outreach.
- Stakeholder meetings.
- Social media and website.

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

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. In 2022, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the public was able to participate in the public engagement process and provide key direction on which strategies should be included in the 2022 plan. Ultimately, their direct input reinforced the bold direction charted in 2014 and continued through the development of the 2022 plan to ensure implementation of ambitious sustainability goals in the San Joaquin region.