

About SB 375

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, SB 375 (Steinberg) passed in 2008 thanks to an unprecedented coalition of developers, environmentalists, affordable housing advocates, and local government leaders.

The law requires local governments and transportation agencies to come together to create regional strategies, to address the transportation, housing, and environmental challenges that no single city can tackle alone.

How it Works

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) adopted [targets for greenhouse gas reductions](#) for each region in the state. These targets are periodically updated; the last update was in 2018.

CARB Targets for SJCOG	2018 Targets	2022 Targets
2020	5%	12%
2035	10%	16%

Each region must work with its local government partners and stakeholders to create a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The SCS is an element of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); it shows where growth and development will occur, supported by the region’s transportation system, in a way that reduces greenhouse gas pollution.

Why it Matters

By supporting sustainable growth, SB 375 can help Californians reap many benefits:

- **Cleaner air, lower health and medical costs:** Air pollution-related illnesses cause thousands of hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and premature deaths every year in California. Better planning would tackle a root cause of California’s worst-in-the-nation air pollution and help stop the rise of chronic illnesses.
- **New construction, job creation, and economic investment:** Construction and home building were hit particularly hard in the last economic downturn, and far-flung suburbs were the last to recover from the foreclosure crisis. Through SB 375, developers can take advantage of a streamlined environmental review process – saving thousands of dollars per project – by building projects in walkable communities with public transit access. These projects are also more likely to hold their value over time.
- **Better, safer streets for walking and biking:** Thirty percent of all traffic fatalities for children ages 0-14 occur when children are walking and bicycling. Having safer routes for pedestrians and bicyclists will reduce traffic, support the independence of seniors and teenagers, and make it more pleasant to go out for a stroll.



Source: Bay Area Council

San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG): State of the RTP/SCS

2014: Moving in the Right Direction

In 2014, the SJCOG board adopted one of the most ambitious RTP/SCS plans in the San Joaquin Valley. SJCOG pivoted away from business-as-usual and made a number of significant changes to its RTP/SCS, including:

- 23.8% GHG reduction by 2040 (far exceeds 10% CARB target)
- \$3.52 billion in transit investments, a 28.1% increase over the previous plan
- 4833 full-time equivalent jobs created annually by RTP/SCS projects
- 45,000 fewer auto trips daily
- 10,707 less acres of farmland converted to development

2018: Missing the Mark

In June 2018, SJCOG released the final RTP/SCS. This plan continued (rather than built upon) the landmark 2014 RTP/SCS. There are definite positives in the plan. Unfortunately, there are a number of areas where there are minimal improvements or setbacks compared to the 2014 SCS:

- Minimal increase (\$5 million) in funding for transit
- Decrease in the amount of farmland protected from development (-1007 acres)
- And, most importantly, very little change in both GHG emissions reductions and vehicle miles traveled.

2018 plan backslides on GHG reductions

While the draft plan showed strong greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions (at 17%), the final plan backslides to 15.7% for GHG reductions in 2035. While this may not seem bad, it's only 0.4% better than the business-as-usual scenario (which has more roads and highways).

How to improve the 2018 RTP/SCS

The SJCOG 2018 RTP/SCS can be strengthened in the following ways:

1. **Staff should pursue strategies that reduce vehicle miles traveled** – including investment in existing communities through infill, protecting farmland, spending less on highway expansion, and spending more on transit and active transportation – to reduce GHG emissions beyond the 15.7% by 2035 proposed in the final plan. That number is essentially business-as-usual (15.2%) and must be improved.
2. **Staff should revisit housing density projections and bring them back up to (or exceed) 2014 SCS levels.** Also, staff should take steps to ensure diverse housing options are available in all neighborhoods.
3. **Staff should develop strategies to encourage infill in existing communities.** Infill protects farmland, a critical piece of the economy, it encourages economic growth in towns and cities, and protects taxpayers from expensive infrastructure extensions to new developments.

A strong SCS sends a signal that the region is prioritizing land use and transportation sustainability – a signal to local jurisdictions as well as state and federal agencies that fund so many infrastructure projects.