



## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS, THE ORANGE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY AND THE ORANGE COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS.

### INTRODUCTION

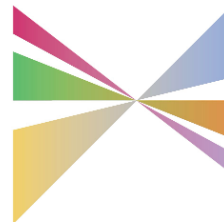
In a region as large as Southern California which has over 18 million people and spans 38,000 square miles, it is critical to coordinate transportation planning efforts across counties and with the participation of transportation agencies and jurisdictions. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) recently finished the latest iteration of its Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This issue of *Profiles* will provide an overview of what the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan is and how Orange County and its various agencies participate in regional transportation dialogue and planning.

Working with the authoring agencies, this issue contains excerpts from the hundreds of pages in SCAG's RTP and associated supplemental reports and the Orange County Transportation Authority's Long-Range Transportation Plan. This *Profiles* was created in collaboration with the following agencies to explain how these agencies work together and synthesize their individual work programs: SCAG (the agency responsible for producing the RTP), OCTA (Orange County's transportation authority), and the Orange County Council of Governments (the designated agency through which Orange County's local input and plans are transmitted to SCAG).

### REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

SCAG is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties. SCAG is mandated by the federal government to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) every four years to address the region's transportation needs. The 2008 RTP represents the collective vision of the six counties in the SCAG region and provides a framework for the future development of the regional transportation system through year 2035. The RTP consists of policies, programs, and a list of specific projects needed to meet

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long-range transportation needs. It addresses all modes of transportation within the region and has a planning horizon of at least 20 years. The transportation projects addressing these needs are identified in the RTP and become eligible for state and federal funding.

### SUBREGIONAL PARTICIPATION

Though SCAG is the organization responsible for coordinating and producing the RTP, it must be developed through a collaborative,

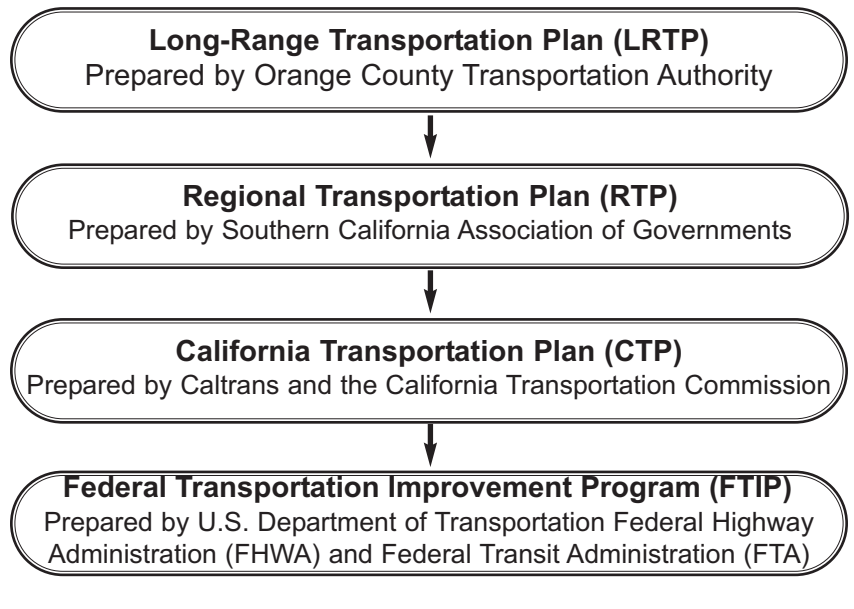
comprehensive and continuous process. Input and participation in the RTP process occurs in a variety of ways. Formal participation is coordinated through the 14 officially designated subregions that represent geographic areas in the SCAG region. In the case of Orange County, this is the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG), a joint powers authority of the County of Orange, Orange County cities, transportation agencies, and special districts that represent Orange County interests on SCAG planning activities such as the RTP. Orange County's 35 jurisdictions represent 19% of the 187 jurisdictions and participant members within the SCAG region. Elected officials from Orange County serve as representatives on SCAG policy committees and its governing board, the Regional Council, to participate in the regional dialogue at SCAG. Participation also occurs through committees, task forces, and public hearings, and coordinated efforts are made to solicit specific information and input from a number of local and regional agencies.

**LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS**

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) was created in 1991 with the consolidation of seven separate transportation agencies. OCTA is a multi-modal transportation agency serving Orange County that provides countywide bus, paratransit, and Metrolink commuter-rail services in Orange County. OCTA also manages the 91 Express Lanes toll facility, freeway, street and road improvement projects, and motorist aid services; and regulates taxi operations.

In addition to coordinating the above transportation efforts, OCTA works with SCAG and neighboring county transportation commissions (CTCs) to help produce the Regional Transportation Plan. Within the RTP process, the CTCs are responsible for the development and administration of their respective countywide Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). Some also choose to develop county-specific long-range transportation plans. SCAG must consider and coordinate such activities of the CTCs in

**Figure 1  
Flow of Transportation Plans**



developing and updating the RTP. OCTA prepares the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for Orange County, and leads the preparation of local projects for inclusion into regional, state, and federal transportation plans. The LRTP is the blueprint for transportation improvements in Orange County through 2030. Orange County's long-range plan feeds into the Regional Transportation Plan, the California Transportation Plan (CTP), and the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). (Figure 1)

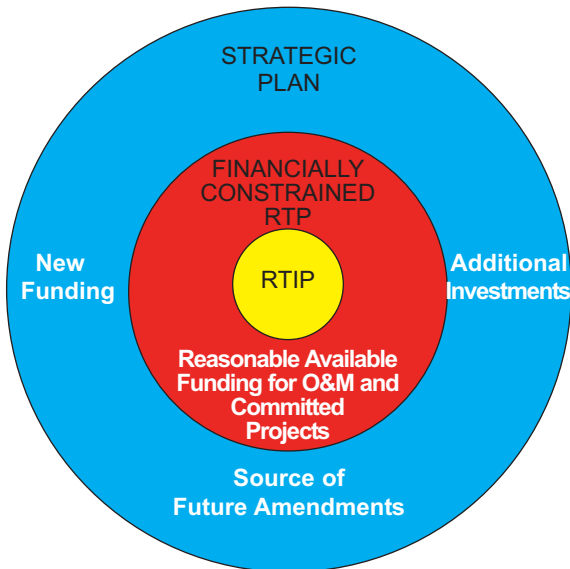
**RTP FRAMEWORK**

Every transportation project that seeks federal or state funding for implementation must be included in the RTP. The SCAG RTP includes two components, the Constrained Plan and the Strategic Plan. The Constrained Plan includes transportation projects and strategies that have committed, available, or reasonably available revenue sources (financially-constrained). The Strategic Plan represents projects of merit that currently do not have sufficient funding, regional commitment, or may require further study. Figure 2 on Page 3 depicts the framework for the 2008 RTP.

Projects can flow from the Strategic Plan into the Constrained Plan as funding and commitments for those projects materialize, and as they meet the performance criteria for the financially constrained portion of the RTP. Once a project meets these criteria, it can be moved into the Constrained Plan through an amendment, or during the development of a new RTP. Additional projects that are not included in the Constrained or Strategic Plans may also be amended into the RTP; however, it is much easier for projects already in the Strategic Plan to be amended into the Constrained Plan.

The Constrained Plan also includes the Regional Transportation

**Figure 2  
RTP Framework**



Source: 2008 Regional Transportation Plan, SCAG

Improvement Program (RTIP). The RTIP is the region's six-year capital programming document. It represents the first six years of transportation projects and programs in the RTP along with ongoing operations and maintenance commitments. The list of RTIP projects is developed in coordination and cooperation with transportation operators, transportation planning agencies, local agencies, and the public. The Constrained Plan is used to complete the transportation conformity process.

**RTP FUNDING**

Federal planning and conformity rules require that a conforming RTP be financially constrained. The RTP is updated every four years to ensure that it is financially constrained, as well as analyzed to conform to air quality regulations. It must demonstrate that all projects identified in the Constrained Plan have adequate funding from existing local, state, and federal sources, or with new funding sources that could be reasonably available over the time horizon of the RTP. To qualify for state funding, projects and programs must be consistent with, and included in, SCAG's adopted RTP and RTIP.

At the state level, the State Department of

Transportation (Caltrans) prepares the long-range California Transportation Plan (CTP) and the shorter-range programming document, the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which is a five-year capital outlay plan that includes the cost and schedule estimates for all transportation projects funded with any amount of State or federal funds and represents California's component of the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). Projects seeking state and/or federal funding must be included in the STIP.

The financial plan identifies how much money is available to support the region's surface transportation investments including transit, highways, local road improvements, system preservation and demand management goals. It also addresses the need for investment in goods movement infrastructure. The SCAG region's financially constrained plan includes a core revenue forecast of existing local, state, and federal sources along with new funding sources that could be reasonably available over the time horizon of the RTP.

**AIR QUALITY COMPONENT**

Local air districts are responsible for developing Air Quality Management Plans (AQMP) for their respective air districts, which feed into the State Implementation Plan (SIP) and establish allowable emission budgets for criteria pollutants. The RTP serves as the input to the development of the AQMPs, and the emission budgets identified by the SIP through this process, in turn, establish the thresholds with which subsequent conformity analyses must comply.

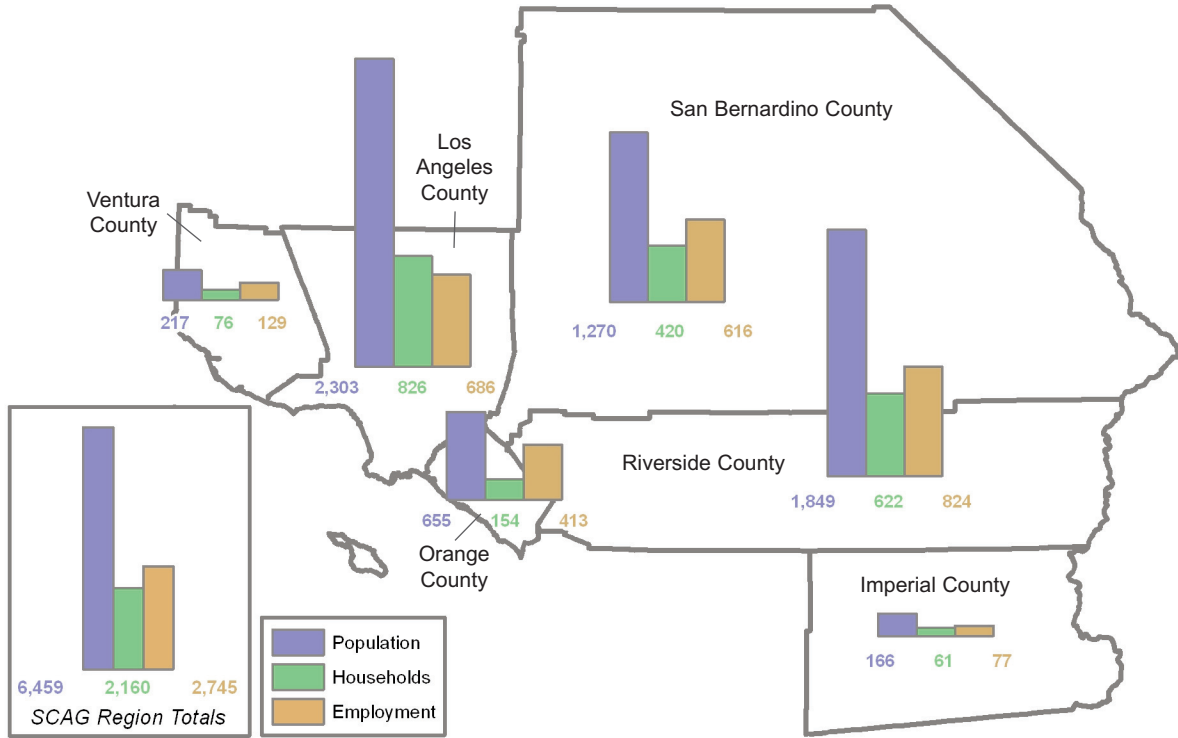
Transportation conformity is required under the federal Clean Air Act (CAA) to ensure that federally supported highway and transit project activities are consistent with, or "conform to", the purpose of the SIP. Conformity to the purpose of the SIP means that transportation activities will not cause new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

**PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: DEMOGRAPHICS**

Another key component of the 2008 RTP is the socio-economic forecast which contains projected growth for population, housing, and employment through its horizon year: 2035. The changing demographics fuel the need for updating the plan every four years. The forecast shows where growth will occur throughout the six-county region. Local transportation and various other agencies use this forecast to plan for future needs and demands.

For Orange County, agencies use the Orange County Projections (OCP) series. This forecast dataset was developed 30 years ago to provide Orange County agencies with a consistent set of projections of population, housing and employment for use in their operations and with their planning activities. Though initially developed by the County of Orange, since 1996 the function has been the responsibility of the Center for Demographic Research at Cal State Fullerton. The OCP was designed to be a "turnkey" dataset

**Figure 3**  
**2008 Regional Transportation Plan: Population, Household, and Job Growth Forecast, 2003-2035**



Growth totals are shown in thousands.  
 Source: Southern California Association of Governments

whereby the latest adopted OCP series would be fully integrated into the current RTP & LRTP. This latest iteration of the RTP was adopted in May 2008 using the 2006 Orange County Projections.

The OCP is developed through collaborative efforts of all jurisdictions within Orange County. These jurisdictions provide input to the OCP using General Plans, as well as approved and planned projects. Figure 3 shows the distribution of population, housing and job growth throughout the six-county region for the term of the 2008 RTP: Years 2003 through 2035. The SCAG region is expected to add over six million people, two million households and nearly three million jobs during this RTP planning period. Orange County is expected to grow by 655,000 people, 154,000 households, and 413,000 jobs.

For more information on the documents and items discussed within this *Profiles* please visit the following sites:

SCAG's 2008 Regional Transportation Plan  
<http://www.scag.ca.gov/rtp2008/>

OCTA's Long-Range Transportation Plan  
<http://www.octa.net/default.aspx?id=21790&terms=lrtpl>

Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/index.html>

FHWA's Guide to Federal and State Financial Planning Requirements  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/cadiv/pre/planningreq.pdf>

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THIS ISSUE WAS AUTHORED BY DEBORAH DIEP, CDR DIRECTOR IN COLLABORATION WITH SCAG, OCTA & OCCOG.  
 WE WELCOME COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS AND CAN BE REACHED AT (714)278-3009. [HTTP://WWW.FULLERTON.EDU/CDR](http://www.fullerton.edu/cdr)

