

AIA Los Angeles

*American Lung
Association in
California*

*Breathe California of
Los Angeles
County (Breathe
LA)*

*Central Coast Alliance
United for a
Sustainable
Economy (CAUSE)*

Clean Air Now

ClimatePlan

*Endangered Habitats
League*

Environment Now

*Environmental
Defense Center*

Global Green USA

Kennedy Commission

*Los Angeles Alliance
for a New Economy*

*Los Angeles County
Bicycle Coalition*

Move LA

*Orange County
Interfaith Coalition
for the Environment*

Public Law Center

*Safe Routes to
Schools National
Partnership*

*Southern California
Association of Non-
Profit Housing*

The Transit Coalition

June 23, 2010

Mary Nichols, Chairman
California Air Resources Board (CARB)
1001 "I" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Southern California Regional Targets

Dear Chairman Nichols:

Thank you for the extensive work that your agency has done to implement SB 375. We are grateful also to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), which has recently undertaken extensive efforts and met with each of the region's nearly 190 local governments.

As CARB and SCAG approach the final phase of the target-setting process, we are writing to express our support for an ambitious and forward-looking approach in Southern California. Although our region and the entire state faces challenges, we believe SB 375 presents a great opportunity and framework for making Southern California more prosperous and livable. We ask CARB to share our confidence and our resolve by setting ambitious targets which inspire the public, private and nonprofit sectors to act now.

Ambitious Targets Can Help Southern California

Southern California is a wonderfully diverse region with a large economy that attracts people from around the world. At the same time, traffic and smog, a high cost of housing, and the lack of transportation options threaten to undermine the region's economic competitiveness and quality of life.

Ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets will make a significant difference in the form and substance of the strategies we adopt to move forward. The following are ten ways an ambitious approach to SB 375 could reduce our adverse environmental footprint and set Southern California on the path to economic prosperity.

- 1. Create jobs.** A Congressional Committee found that recent federal stimulus spending on transit resulted in almost three times as many jobs for Californians at half the price of building roads and highways.¹ The 30-10 Plan for Los Angeles County, which would accelerate the next 30 years of transit improvements into 10 years, is a homegrown stimulus effort to create jobs now.
- 2. Keep money in families' wallets.** After housing, transportation is most people's largest expense. In neighborhoods without transportation options families spend on average \$14,000 annually, while families near public transportation spend only \$8,600.²
- 3. Reduce time & gas wasted in traffic.** Southern California residents waste an average of 70 hours each and collectively \$10 billion of fuel a year on traffic congestion. Investing in reliable public transportation, building homes closer to jobs, and making it easier and safer to travel by foot and bike would give more people alternatives to sitting in traffic.
- 4. Create more housing choices that fit family budgets.** High housing costs not only hurt workers and families, but they hurt the region's economic competitiveness and attractiveness to major employers. Compact land use provides more opportunities for developing housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income families—the best candidates for switching to public transit.
- 5. Keep money in the local economy.** Building affordable homes in sagging commercial areas near transit rather than in distant locations, will make it more convenient for people to go to local restaurants and stores leading to increased local business sales and local revenues.
- 6. Make Southern California more competitive for state and federal funds.** The state and federal governments are beginning to align their funding for transportation, housing, environmental and planning projects to communities that embrace the sustainable strategies laid out in SB 375.³
- 7. Reduce costs to local governments, leaving more for police, fire, and other services.** SB 375 will help cities save money by using energy, water and infrastructure more efficiently. Applying efficient smart growth principles can reduce infrastructure costs by 25%.⁴
- 8. Clean up the air and protect the health of millions of Californians.** More than 90% of Californians breathe unhealthy air. According to CARB, the unhealthy levels of ozone and particulate matter in California result in 19,000 premature deaths, 9,400 hospital admissions,

¹ Figures calculated from data provided by the states through October 31, 2009 and released by the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on December 10 2009 <http://transportation.house.gov/News/PRArticle.aspx?NewsID=1079>

² Windfall for All. 2009. TransForm. <http://transformca.org/windfall-for-all>.

³ California Strategic Growth Council & the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities between HUD, EPA and Dept. of Transportation.

⁴ Cost-Effective GHG Reductions through Smart Growth & Improved Transportation Choices, Center for Clean Air Policy.

and 22,000 cases of acute bronchitis annually. Additionally, a study by CARB found that 94% of the cancer risk created by air toxics is attributable to mobile sources. Building better planned, more sustainable communities can help reduce air pollution and improve our health.

9. **Increase safer routes to school, work, and shopping.** Twelve percent of all trips in the region are by walking and bicycling⁵, yet pedestrian and bicycling receive less than half a percent of regional transportation funds. Increasing investments into making our communities more inviting and safe for people of all ages and abilities to walk and bicycle for some of their trips is a low cost way to not only achieve regional goals but community goals as well. Forty percent of all trips are less than two miles – this represents excellent opportunities for people to shift from driving to walking or biking.
10. **Encourage active living.** Neighborhoods designed around transit, walking and biking allow people to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. Diseases such as cancer, asthma, lung and heart disease, obesity, diabetes are all affected by community design. Individuals who live in walkable neighborhoods have a 35% lower risk of obesity.⁶

Metrics that Matter

In the July forums that CARB is planning, the modeling scenarios presented should be compared on metrics that will reflect their real impacts on the lives of Southern California residents. Jobs, traffic, home prices, air quality, being able to walk or take the bus to work and vibrant neighborhoods – these are core issues to people’s everyday lives. The scenarios’ impacts need to be translated into indicators that show how they could impact what local residents and businesses care most about.

Give local communities the resources we need to succeed

Southern California communities need secure and adequate funding for public transit, local redevelopment, affordable apartment construction, planning and the flexibility to generate funds for infrastructure at the local and regional scales. Transit funding cuts, lower local government revenues, the state’s capture of local redevelopment funds, and the housing market downturn are all barriers to immediate success.

Chart a course for a better Southern California

The region faces many challenges. The 2020 targets need to take into account these current difficulties, but the 2035 targets should reflect our ability to change course in charting the future of our communities. Setting high targets *now* for 2035 can provide a good framework for our leadership to make critical decisions today that will lead to a better Southern California for our children and grandchildren.

⁵ Southern California Association of Government 2001 Regional household travel survey.

⁶ American Lung Association, http://www.lungusa.org/associations/states/california/assets/pdfs/sb-375_issue-brief_final.pdf

Thank you for CARB's leadership in the dialogue around ambitious and achievable targets.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Hasan Ikhata, SCAG