



**Kern Council
of Governments**

ORIGINAL:
Copies:

Board Clerk
Executive Officer
Chair

November 24, 2008

Ms. Mary D. Nichols, Chair
California Air Resources Board
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

Re: Climate Change Scoping Plan

Dear Chairperson Nichols:

Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the October 2008 Climate Change Proposed Scoping Plan. I would like to first commend the Air Resources Board and the Climate Action Team for meeting the challenging schedule of AB 32 by producing a comprehensive plan to meet Legislative goals – a 30 percent reduction in business-as-usual emission levels projected by 2020, or about 15 percent from today's levels.

Kern COG is concerned with the potential erosion of local control of land use authority that could evolve as the Plan is implemented and judicial precedence is set. Local governments must be part of the decision making process for determining local greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets and they must have meaningful input on how progress will be tracked and reported.

Kern COG shares the concerns of others about the details of implementing SB 375 and setting additional greenhouse emission targets for passenger vehicles and light trucks by September 30, 2010. We strongly encourage widespread participation on the Regional Targets Advisory Committee (RTAC), including an opportunity for representation from any Metropolitan Planning Organization that desires to participate.

Kern COG is concerned about a variety of funding issues:

- The State needs to address the funding for expanded regional and local planning responsibilities, preferably in the Scoping Plan itself, and provide for regulatory relief from implementation schedules if State funding is not available.
- State transportation funding priorities must be adequately funded if sufficient progress is expected in improving public transportation and other measures for reducing GHG emissions in order to provide a viable alternative to increased vehicle use in the more rapidly growing areas of the state.

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- The State should make incentives and funding available to local governments to help pay for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that have longer term pay-back periods.
- We encourage the State to think creatively and reward "good behavior" as was done with Proposition 1C funding when smart infill growth projects were supported.
- The potential reductions from more efficient goods movement through the increased use of short-haul rail within the state may be understated. Trucks are the largest component of mobile source pollution. The reorganization of land use to position distribution centers near export intermodal facilities could have tremendous benefits for greenhouse gas reduction.
- In SB 375, CEQA offers an option for implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and the Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) in that an EIR could include the SCS and APS analysis. Addressing both SCS and APS in the RTP EIR may allow streamlining of the public review process. This should be presented as an option.
- RTP EIRs that address the SCS and APS should be exempted from assessing GHG emissions for transportation projects.

The State needs to think through the role of CEQA as it revises guidelines. As an example, there should be incentives to make infill development easier to build than low density Greenfield development. It is not productive for a CEQA document to call out a higher density, smart growth project as having significant impacts that can be mitigated by lowering density, as is often the case now.

State transportation funding priorities cannot abandon maintenance and preservation of the existing transportation network, especially local streets and roads that serve as the right-of-way for transit and bike lanes and are critical to an efficient multi-modal transportation system.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Climate Change Proposed Scoping Plan.

Sincerely,



Ronald E. Brummett
Executive Director