



January 14, 2021

Fresno Council of Governments

Attn: Policy Advisory Committee

Attn: Transportation Technical Committee

RE: Agenda Item 2A: RTP/SCS Strategies

Dear Members of the Policy Advisory Committee and Transportation Technical Committee,

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability works alongside the most impacted communities to advocate for sound policy and eradicate injustice to secure equal access to opportunity regardless of wealth, race, income, and place. We work with community leaders throughout Fresno County—including rural unincorporated communities and neighborhoods throughout South Fresno—on various issues such as safe and affordable drinking water, essential transit services, affordable housing, and the right to live free from industrial pollution with infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the RTP/SCS Strategies and Staff's willingness to work with us through the Environmental Justice Subcommittee and the RTP Roundtable. However, the Environmental Justice Subcommittee has not reviewed or discussed the proposed RTP/SCS strategies. This committee must have an opportunity to review and provide feedback and direction to these strategies that will drive the development of the SCS. We respectfully request the Environmental Justice Subcommittee be provided with the opportunity to review and provide feedback before any further approval by the Transportation Technical Committee, the Policy Advisory Committee, and the Policy Board. Given the Environmental Justice Subcommittee's role in elevating the issues and priorities of disadvantaged communities, it is of the utmost importance to ensure these strategies align with these communities.

Prior to the RTP/SCS Strategies' approval, we firmly believe that for the Fresno region to meet RTP/SCS consistency with federal and state law regulations, the 2022 RTP/SCS strategies need to be revised before approval. We remind this committee of the requirements of SB 375, which focus on deep commitments to healthy and sustainable communities through integrated land-use and transportation planning. The strategies are also not consistent with the transportation, land-use, and housing priorities that community residents brought up during the 2022 RTP or in our years of advocacy and organizing efforts. In these conversations, community members have unequivocally elevated their priorities in seeing meaningful, community-driven solutions like safe routes to school and active transportation.



All stakeholders must recognize that our region must set ambitious strategies to ensure that we meet Fresno County communities' current and future needs. As the most populous region in the Central Valley with some of the worst socio-economic, environmental, and public health outcomes, all amplified by the current pandemic, we must go beyond the status quo and model for the rest of the region

We reiterate our ask not to approve the existing strategies and consider the following recommendations:

- “Limit Growth footprint” should instead read, “Invest in existing communities prioritizing disadvantaged neighborhoods.”
- “Provide a range of housing options across different income levels” should instead read, “Prioritize housing development to fulfill the highest RHNA needs.”
- “Improve transit and shared mobility” to “Improve transit and alternative modes of transportation for high-need low-income communities.”
- “Improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure” to “Improve pedestrian infrastructure in communities lacking active transportation options.”
- “Improve transportation equity” to “Improve transportation equity and prioritize community-driven solutions.”
- “Decrease congestion” to “Implement alternative transportation options to decrease congestion.”
- “Increase climate resiliency” to “Invest in climate resiliency infrastructure and planning in high-need low-income areas.”
- “Improve economic, environmental, and public health outcomes for disadvantaged communities” to “Improve and prioritize economic, environmental, and public health outcomes for disadvantaged communities.”
- “Expand Roadway Capacity for the purpose of safety and goods movement” should be eliminated from the strategies as it does not promote healthy and sustainable communities, considering the impacts to communities the goods movement disproportionately creates in disadvantaged communities.



In addition to the edits above, we ask that the board consider adding the following RTP/SCS strategies:

- “Equitably prioritize grid capacity and electrification projects.”
- “Support and incentivize projects consistent with climate, equity, and public health.”
- “Create affordable housing options in high opportunity areas.”

We must set the highest standards for our region and ensure we are meeting communities' needs, and that is why we ask the Board to hold off on adopting the proposed strategies. As aforementioned, the proposed strategies need to be revised and discussed before their Board's approval and evaluated by the Environmental Justice Subcommittee. These strategies need to be in line with RTP/SCS consistency of federal and state law and the needs the community has voiced for their transportation priorities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karla Martinez & Leslie Martinez
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability