

2026

Regional Transportation
Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

Public Participation Plan

Adopted May 21, 2025



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Introduction

The 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) serves to prioritize and guide the region's transportation development through the year 2049. The RTP/SCS is the comprehensive blueprint for transportation investment (transit, highway, local roads, bicycle, pedestrian, and aviation projects) and establishes the financial foundation for how the region invests in its surface transportation system by identifying how much funding is available to address critical transportation needs and setting the policy on how projected revenues are to be spent. The RTP/SCS provides the earliest and the best opportunity to shape regional policy and investment priorities for the transportation network.

At a minimum, developing the RTP/SCS requires a technical analysis of the interplay between potential transportation investments and land uses considering projected population growth and economic development. However, developing a vibrant and effective RTP/SCS requires much more than technical analysis. During preparation of each RTP/SCS update and the associated EIR, StanCOG actively engages the public on the critical aspects of the plan, seeking input from a wide variety of stakeholders and soliciting their feedback at critical junctures of the planning effort. The public outreach component of the RTP/SCS update brings the Stanislaus County community into the transportation planning process. StanCOG is using an engagement approach that ensures the development of equitable plans that are fully informed by the ideas, insights, and the diversity of perspectives of those active on the ground. Only through an open, transparent planning process and extensive public involvement can the RTP/SCS reflect the shared values and priorities of the region.

With the COVID-19 pandemic upended traditional public involvement processes, a hybrid outreach process was developed for the 2022 RTP/SCS to address the social and technological changes. This process included a greater emphasis on equity in decision making, as well as an increase in online access and improved online tools for participation. A hybrid approach that includes both in-person and online outreach opportunities allows for the widest diversity of input from the public. This approach will be applied in the outreach approach for the development of the 2026 RTP/SCS, but online/remote participation options may be needed to a lesser extent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This 2026 RTP/SCS Public Participate Plan (PPP) outlines how the public will be engaged throughout RTP/SCS development and identifies the specific outreach public engagement activities. The RTP/SCS PPP is consistent with StanCOG's agency-wide Public Participation Plan (adopted in 2020) and fulfills the requirements of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (Senate Bill 375).

The PPP for the 2026 RTP/SCS update includes the following activities:

- Broad range of outreach activities to engage a diverse range of stakeholders in the planning process;
- Informational meetings with elected officials;
- Consultation with local, state, and federal agencies and planning partners, including tribal governments and appropriate resource agencies;

- Two rounds of five community workshops held at central locations in jurisdictions across the region to inform and empower public input on key policy decisions;
- A project website that will contain an input form that will enable members of the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information, and updates on the project;
- Presentations tailored to communities and relevant stakeholder groups; and
- Circulation of the draft Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) not less than 55 days before final plan adoption.

Relevant State and Federal Requirements

Regional agencies are required by state and federal regulations to adopt and implement a public participation plan specifically for the development of the RTP/SCS.

The key public engagement related requirements identified in the Federal Code of Regulations, SB 375, and California Government Code are identified below.

Federal Requirements

The following list identifies federal codes of regulations that are directly relevant to StanCOG's agency-wide Public Participation Plan, and which are called out in the California Transportation Commission's (CTC's) 2024 RTP/SCS Guidance¹.

1. Title 23 CFR Part 450.316 requires that the MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment and be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
2. Title 23, CFR 450.316(a)(3) states that a minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by an MPO. It also identifies that copies of the approved participation plan are to be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.
3. Title 23 CFR Part 450.316(c) requires MPOs to involve the federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments in the development of the RTP and FTIP.
4. Per Title 23 CFR part 450.316(a)(1), the participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes. The requirement of including interested parties in the development of the participation plan and the RTP would include federally recognized or non-federally recognized tribes.
5. Title 23 CFR 450.316(d) requires that when the metropolitan planning area includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal Land Management Agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.
6. Federal regulations require private sector involvement as a component of the regional transportation planning process. Title 23 U.S.C. Part 134 (g)(4), Title 23 U.S.C. Section 135(e), and Title 23 CFR Part 450.316(a) require the transportation planning process to include input from the goods movement industry and other transportation organizations.

¹ 2024 *Regional Transportation Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations*. California Transportation Commission. 2024.

7. Title 23 CFR part 450.324(g) states that MPOs shall consult, as appropriate, with state and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation during the development of their RTP.
8. Title 23 CFR Part 450.324(j) provides the list of interested parties that shall be provided with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the RTP using the Public Participation Plan developed under 450.316(a).
9. The MPO shall provide the following interested parties with reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed RTP.
 - a. Individuals
 - b. Affected public agencies
 - c. Representatives of public transportation employees
 - d. Public ports
 - e. Freight shippers
 - f. Private providers of transportation
 - g. Representatives of users of public transportation
 - h. Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation
 - i. facilities
 - j. Representatives of people with disabilities
 - k. Providers of freight transportation services
 - l. Other interested parties

State Requirements - Senate Bill 375

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, known as Senate Bill 375 (also referred to as SB 375) identifies requirements specific to public engagement outreach associated with the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).

1. According to SB 375, prior to starting the public participation process, the MPO shall submit a description to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) of the technical methodology it intends to use to estimate the greenhouse gas emissions from its Sustainable Communities Strategy.
2. The MPO shall conduct at least two informational meetings in each county within the region for members of the board of supervisors and city councils on the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
3. The MPO may conduct only one informational meeting if it is attended by representatives of the county Board of Supervisors and city council members representing a majority of the cities representing a majority of the population in the incorporated areas of that county.
4. Notice of the meeting shall be sent to the clerk of the board of supervisors and to each city clerk. The purpose of the meeting shall be to present a draft of the Sustainable Communities Strategy to the members of the board of supervisors and the city council members in that county and to solicit and consider their input and recommendations.
5. Each MPO shall adopt a public participation plan, for development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy, that includes workshops throughout the region to provide the public with the information and tools necessary to provide a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices. At least one workshop shall be held in each county in the region. For counties with a population greater than 500,000, at least three workshops shall be held.

6. Preparation and circulation of a draft Sustainable Communities Strategy and an alternative planning strategy, if one is prepared, not less than 55 days before adoption of a final Regional Transportation Plan.
7. A process for enabling members of the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information, and updates.

California Government Code PPP Related Requirements

1. Consistent with California Government Code (GC) Section 65080(b)(2)(D), the MPO shall adopt a Public Participation Plan in advance of developing an SCS and/or APS to also include consultation with congestion management agencies, transportation agencies, and transportation commissions.
2. GC Section 65080.5 states that prior to adoption of the RTP, a public hearing shall be held after publishing notice of the hearing. One copy of the RTP should be sent to the CTC and two copies should be submitted to the appropriate Caltrans district office. The Caltrans district office will send one copy of the RTP to the headquarters of the Division of Transportation Planning.
3. Pursuant to GC Section 65080(b)(2)(E) and (F), consultation is required to provide outreach to all local elected officials and their member jurisdictions affected by the SCS.

StanCOG's agency-wide PPP and the 2026 RTP/SCS PPP address the above state and federal requirements. The state and federal requirements are also reflected in the goals and objectives of the 2026 RTP/SCS and serve as the foundation for an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative planning process (see below).

Goals and Objectives for the 2026 RTP/SCS

Goal 1. Mobility & Accessibility
Improve the ability of people and goods to move between desired locations and provide a variety of modal and mobility options.
Goal 2. Social Equity
Promote equitable access to opportunities by ensuring all populations share in the benefits of transportation improvements and are provided a range of transportation and housing choices.
Goal 3. Economic and Community Vitality
Foster job creation, business attraction, retention, and expansion by improving quality of life. Facilitate economic development and opportunities through infrastructure investments that support goods movement within and through the region, including but not limited to the county's strategic freight corridors.
Goal 4. Sustainable Development Pattern
Provide a mix of land uses and compact development patterns and encourage infill development to preserve agricultural land and natural resources.
Goal 5. Environmental Quality
Consider environmental impacts when making transportation investments and minimize impacts on clean air and natural resources. Support infrastructure investments that facilitate vehicle electrification and the provision of electrification infrastructure in public and private parking facilities and structures.
Goal 6. Safety & Health
Operate and maintain the transportation system to ensure public safety and security; and improve the health of residents by improving air quality and providing more transportation options.
Goal 7. System Preservation
Maintain transportation system in a state of good repair; and protect investment by maximizing use of existing transportation facilities.

Goal 8. Smart Infrastructure
Coordinate, monitor, and integrate planning and programming for intelligent transportation system (ITS), smart infrastructure, demand-responsive transportation, and automated vehicles.
Goal 9. Resiliency and Reliability
Harden infrastructure to resist, absorb, recover from, or successfully adapt to adversity or a change in conditions including climate change.
Goal 10. Congestion Management
Maintain or reduce congestion as compared to current levels.
Goal 11. Project Delivery
Efficiently use available transportation funding to expedite project delivery of transportation improvements within the region for the benefit of residents of Stanislaus County and the traveling public in general.

Outreach Approach

In accordance with Senate Bill (SB) 375, the RTP/SCS outreach effort is designed to encourage the active participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups in the planning process. As with the 2022 StanCOG RTP/SCS, this update has the following two high-level outreach goals:

- Engage a broad cross section of Stanislaus County residents, businesses and transportation providers in planning for our future transportation needs.
- Make the planning process accessible, interactive and engaging.

In developing the 2026 RTP/SCS, StanCOG will engage audiences that include residents that use the roads, public transportation systems, alternative mode facilities (bicycle and pedestrian facilities) in Stanislaus County, organizations advocating or representing underserved communities, business and economic development interests that operate in the region, elected and appointed officials from across the county, and local news media.

After defining the overall outreach goals for the RTP/SCS development process, the target audiences, and the key messages, StanCOG will employ a multi-pronged communications strategy to reach regional stakeholders. The communications strategy will employ a branded website (www.valleyvision2049.com), development and maintenance of a stakeholder database through the project lifecycle, and the sharing of information through stakeholder networks, social media, and traditional media channels.

For the 2026 RTP/SCS, StanCOG will use a diverse engagement approach and tools to reach and engage the widest section of the community as possible, especially underrepresented community members. This ensured feedback reflects the unique community characteristics of the region. With research showing high broadband (96% coverage) and computer (85%) access in Stanislaus County and typical access rates for underserved communities including Hispanic (95% internet; 85% smartphone) and rural residents (90% use internet), StanCOG will initiate a hybrid outreach approach with in-person and online engagement options. Dial-in options will be available for outreach events that include a virtual option (hybrid and virtual-only outreach events) to reach those with limited to no internet access.

Accessibility and Limited English Proficiency

StanCOG will employ the following outreach approach to support community members with limited English proficiency:

- Provide a certified bilingual (Spanish/English) interpreter for all public meetings;
- Spanish translation of the 2026 RTP/SCS Executive Summary, Public Meeting Presentation Boards, Flyers, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), as well as other select materials;
- Advertising/noticing in Spanish and English; and
- A Spanish-language version of the project website.

Project Collateral, Content and Platforms

Project information, project goals and objectives, participation opportunities (e.g., surveys), and digital platforms (e.g., website, Facebook) will go through three cycles of development and update to:

- Introduce purpose and need, existing conditions and needs, and collect input related to scenario development and the RTP/SCS goals, objectives and indicators (metrics),
- Present information on scenario performance and collect input on scenario preferences and
- Present environmental impact report findings and the draft RTP/SCS.

Each round will introduce the current process and purpose and share how public input has influenced the RTP/SCS to date. The 1st and 2nd updates will include surveys and comment forms.

Website

StanCOG is developing a project website, www.valleyvision2049.com, and will update it regularly to post relevant information, including the features identified below. The project website will host all of the project's collaborative and interactive online features and is available in English and Spanish. Features that will be hosted on the project website include:

- Project information, overview and purpose of the RTP and SCS, including webinars and short presentations;
- Meetings notices and agendas;
- Presentations (including both presentation recordings and slide decks) and materials produced for public meetings and workshops;
- Goals and objectives of the RTP and SCS; and
- RTP/SCS documents for public review and comment.

Public Input and Contact

SB 375 requires a process for enabling members of the public to provide a single request to receive notices, information, and updates. StanCOG will provide an input form on the project website, which was launched in January 2025, for members of the public to provide direct input on the project. In addition, StanCOG will provide a way for the public to stay updated on upcoming meetings and obtain updated project information. Interested persons will be able to complete a short online form and provide their name, email address, and ZIP Code to be directly contacted regarding meetings and project information.

Promotional Approach

StanCOG will regularly distribute news releases on the RTP/SCS development process, milestones and workshops using both social medial channels and traditional media channels. Information regarding the RTP/SCS and public hearing notices will be disseminated via media outlets in both English and Spanish languages.

Print Media

Press releases for public meetings, hearings or workshops will be issued to the following local daily and weekly papers for public notices and reviews: Ceres Courier, Hughson Chronicle, Modesto Bee, Oakdale Leader, Patterson Irrigator, Riverbank News, Turlock Journal, Waterford News, and the Westside Index (Newman).

Translated public notices in Spanish will be published in the above newspapers to elicit the participation of the Spanish-speaking population of the Stanislaus region.

Social Media

Over the course of the project, StanCOG will use Facebook in multiple ways. StanCOG will promote upcoming public meetings such as project workshops, opportunities for online information and participation (such as webinars and topic-specific surveys), and provide information regarding the RTP/SCS process such as the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). StanCOG will work with partner agencies and stakeholders to share project information and participation opportunities to their own social media channels.

Agency Consultation

Valley Vision Stanislaus Steering Committee

The Valley Vision Stanislaus (VVS) Steering Committee is a StanCOG Standing Committees formed in 2011 to collaboratively address the requirements of SB 375, which calls on StanCOG to prepare an integrated land use and transportation plan as part of all future RTP updates. The integrated plan sets a development pattern for the region, which when combined with transportation policies, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from vehicles. Members of the VVS include a representative from each of StanCOG's local member agencies (the Planning and Development Directors or their designees), a representative from the Policy Board, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and other representatives (one building industry representative, one environmental justice representative, and one representative from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)).

The role of the VVS Committee is to advise and make recommendations to StanCOG staff and the Policy Board on matters related to the development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) in development of the 2026 SCS.

The VVS Steering Committee meetings are open to the public, and there is an opportunity on every agenda for the public to offer comments.

StanCOG Policy Board

StanCOG is governed by a decision-making body called the Policy Board. It is comprised of sixteen elected officials from StanCOG's member agencies. This includes five representatives from the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, three representatives from the Modesto City Council, and one representative from each of the other eight City Councils in Stanislaus County. There is a designated Public Transportation Provider representative from among the members that operate public transit. Additionally, a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) representative serves as an "ex-officio" member on the Policy Board.

The Policy Board is responsible for approval of the 2026 RTP/SCS and the certification of the accompanying Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

StanCOG Advisory Committees

Another avenue for outreach to interested stakeholders and the public is through the following StanCOG standing committees.

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC),
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC),
- Executive Committee,
- Management and Finance Committee (MFC),
- Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), and
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

City Council/Board of Supervisors Presentations

StanCOG will request time to present either in person or virtually to each of StanCOG's member agency's City Councils and the County Board of Supervisors. StanCOG will use these opportunities to promote the 2026 RTP/SCS and collect stakeholder and public feedback. The list of local member agencies and their typical meeting times are listed below.

1. City of Ceres – 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 6:00 PM
2. City of Oakdale – 1st and 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00 PM
3. City of Waterford – 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM
4. City of Hughson – 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 6:00 PM
5. City of Turlock – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM
6. City of Riverbank – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM
7. City of Newman – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM
8. City of Modesto – 1st, 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 5:30 PM
9. City of Patterson – 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM
10. Stanislaus County – 1st, 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 9:00 AM; 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM

Federal Land Management Agencies and Tribal Organizations

Pursuant to federal and state law, Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to consult federally recognized Native American Tribal governments and must appropriately involve federal land management agencies in the development of its RTP/SCS and FTIP. Under federal law, Tribal government concerns should be considered in developing planning documents pursuant to U.S.

Code Title 23, Section 135, paragraphs e and f. Specifically, the applicable provisions concerning such process is set forth in U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT's) joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Agency (FTA) planning regulations, 23 CFR Section 450.316 b-e.

Additionally, California State Assembly Bill (AB) 52 (also known as Chapter 532, Statutes of 2014) (AB 52), which became effective July 1, 2015, amended CEQA to establish a formal consultation process for California Tribes. AB 52 requires that public agencies, including Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), consult with California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with a project area and analyze the impacts to Native American cultural resources during the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process.

While there are no federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments located in Stanislaus County, StanCOG has coordinated with the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for the 2026 RTP/SCS update to identify recognized tribal governments with ancestral ties to the Stanislaus region, as listed below:

1. Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
2. Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the SF Bay Area
3. Northern Valley Yokut / Ohlone Tribe
4. Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation
5. Tule River Indian Tribe
6. Wilton Rancheria
7. Wuksachi Indian Tribe / Eshom Valley Band

StanCOG will contact the tribal organizations in accordance with AB 52 and CEQA requirements and best practices, about whether they would like to undertake a formal consultation regarding the 2026 RTP/SCS and, in accordance with the Federal requirements, will appropriately contact the Federal Land Management Agencies.

Community Outreach

Community Workshops

In order to comply with SB 375 requirements and provide ample opportunity for participation in the regional planning process, StanCOG has designed a community outreach approach that is built around community workshops. StanCOG will schedule and oversee community workshops broken into two rounds of five in-person workshops. Workshop materials will be available on the project website on or before the day of the workshop for those unable to attend.

For these in-person workshops, StanCOG will develop a wide range of collateral materials for the 2026 RTP/SCS for distribution at public meetings and online. These materials may include a PowerPoint presentation on the RTP/SCS process, a Project Overview document, exhibits and displays. The workshops will employ interactive activities to engage the public.

Every workshop will include a certified Spanish translator. If additional workshops are conducted virtually, using Zoom or other video conferencing platforms, attendees will be able to switch audio to Spanish to hear live certified interpretation of the presentation in real-time. Recordings of virtual workshops will be uploaded to the project website once the workshops are completed.

Round 1

The first round of workshops will be held at five of StanCOG's nine member agencies. The dates and locations for the first round of workshops will be advertised on social media and in local news outlets, as well as placed on the project website and emailed to interested parties. These workshops are intended to provide an overview of the RTP/SCS update process and provide region-wide information, as well as information specific to each community. Residents living in Unincorporated Stanislaus County will be encouraged to attend the meeting in the city nearest to them. The five agencies selected for the first round of workshops include:

- City of Modesto
- City of Oakdale
- City of Patterson
- City of Turlock
- City of Waterford

Round 2

The second round of community workshops will be held at the four remaining incorporated cities in Stanislaus County, and again in the City of Modesto, the County's largest incorporated City. As with the first round of workshops, residents living in Unincorporated Stanislaus County will be encouraged to attend the meeting in the city nearest to them.

The second round of workshops will also be advertised with their dates and locations on social media and in local news outlets, as well as placed on the project website and emailed to interested parties.

- City of Ceres
- City of Hughson
- City of Newman
- City of Riverbank
- City of Modesto

Community Outreach Presentations

In addition to the two rounds of workshops, community outreach presentations will be held during the course of the development of the 2026 RTP/SCS. These outreach presentations will be targeted at businesses, advocacy groups, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) throughout Stanislaus County. To try and achieve the highest amount of participation in each of these presentations, individual businesses, advocacy groups, and CBOs will be contacted by phone and email to schedule the presentations to ensure they are available to attend. Follow-up calls will also be made to those businesses, advocacy groups, and CBOs that did not respond to the first round of contact.

Draft Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

SB 375 requires the preparation and circulation of a draft SCS not less than 55 days before adoption of a final Regional Transportation Plan. StanCOG will provide a public notice stating it will release the Draft 2026 RTP/SCS for a 55-day public review and comment period in enough time to ensure it meets the SB 375 requirements. The notice will specify that:

- The 2026 RTP/SCS will be the region's long-range transportation plan through 2049 for the Stanislaus County metropolitan region;

- The 2026 RTP/SCS will be the long-term coordinated transportation/land use strategy and provides a framework for transportation investment out to the year 2049;
- StanCOG will host the SCS and EIR public hearings together.

Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR)

All public noticing and public review periods will be adhered to as required by CEQA, including the publishing of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and release of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) for public review. The DPEIR will provide a programmatic analysis of environmental impacts related to the implementation of the 2026 RTP/SCS, as listed in the CEQA Guidelines' Appendix G, the Environmental Checklist Form. The DPEIR will disclose any significant effects on the resource categories listed in the Environmental Checklist Form including aesthetics, agriculture, air quality, biology, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use, population/housing.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) will be distributed per CEQA Guidelines for a 30-day public comment period seeking public, tribal, and agency input on environmental issues to be studied in the EIR. The NOP will be uploaded to the State Clearinghouse via CEQA Submit for distribution to identified State agencies, and to other agencies via certified mail. StanCOG will post a copy of the NOP to the 2026 RTP/SCS project website and the StanCOG website. Tribes will also be notified via the AB 52 letters described previously. A notice will be provided to the Stanislaus County Clerk's office as well.

The DPEIR will be released for a minimum 45-day review period ahead of a hearing to certify the PEIR. The release of the DPEIR will be coordinated with the public release of the SCS for public review. A Notice of Availability will be provided to the Stanislaus County Clerk's office and to a local paper of circulation noticing the 45-day public review period for the DPEIR.

A Final PEIR will be prepared that includes all the comments received, a response to all comments received on the DPEIR, and any minor changes and corrections to address public and agency comments.