



Chapter 7: Public Participation and Consultation

This chapter describes the public involvement process and role that interagency coordination and public participation plays in the transportation decision-making of this Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

Providing opportunities for public participation in the Regional Transportation Plan is important to the Council of San Benito County Governments (COG). Early and frequent public involvement is essential to ensuring that the community gains a clear understanding of COG's role as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for San Benito County. Furthermore, public involvement helps the COG policymakers, staff, and partner agencies



Figure 7-1: Workshop at Hollister Community Center

Source: Council of Governments

to better understand the needs and concerns of the community, leading to more meaningful planning efforts, projects, programs, and activities.

Identifying Needs and Priorities Through Community Engagement

The San Benito Regional Transportation Plan's (RTPs) public outreach efforts consist of early and continuous public involvement opportunities that provide timely information about transportation issues and decision-making processes to, affected public agencies, private providers of transportation (including bus operators), users of public transportation, users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities.

TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

As part of the public involvement process and in compliance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, COG sought out and considered the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as



“No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance.”

—Civil Rights Act of 1964

low-income and minority households. This effort led to the identification of transportation system improvements that will provide a fair share of benefits to all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level.

Title VI is a law set a standard that authoritatively outlawed discrimination in the conduct of all federal activities. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has set policies for integrating environmental justice principles into existing operations to address disproportionate, adverse effects on low-income and minority populations.

During the San Benito Regional Transportation Plan development process, the Council of Governments complied with its locally adopted 2015 Title VI Program and Language Assistance Plan (LAP) for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Individuals Plan. The Council of Governments also utilized the Monterey Bay Area Public Participation Plan to develop the Regional Transportation Plan, which provides direction for public participation activities. It outlines the processes and strategies the Council of Governments uses to reach out to a broad range of stakeholders to gain their input.

The Monterey Bay Area Public Participation Plan acknowledges that in order to develop an effective public outreach process that is specific to the needs of San Benito County residents, it is important to acknowledge the community’s demographics. To help inform the public of opportunities for input on the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan, the Council of Governments developed a comprehensive public outreach strategy, which is discussed in the following next section.

In San Benito County approximately 56 percent of the residents are Latino; however, Spanish is not always the primary language spoken in these households. According to the U.S. Census, approximately 38 percent of San Benito County residents speak a language other than English at home. As such, the majority of Regional Transportation Plan announcements, surveys, and general information were provided in both English and Spanish. Bilingual staff also attended all public and project meetings. The Council of Governments (COG) has strived to ensure that the public have the opportunity to voice their thoughts and concerns during the development of the Regional Transportation Plan.

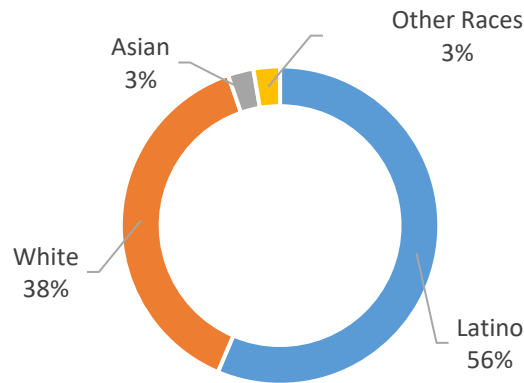


Figure 7-2 Race in San Benito County

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

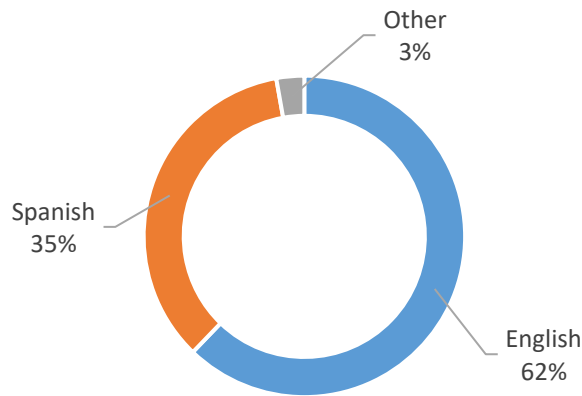


Figure 7-2: Languages Spoken in San Benito County

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Public Participation Activities

For this Regional Transportation Plan, the Council of Governments sought public participation through various forms. Public input helped provide direction on regional priorities for the Regional Transportation Plan’s policy element and influenced the list of projects. The public participation findings helped COG identify issues that require more study outside the Regional Transportation Plan and as projects move forward.

The Regional transportation plan also emphasizes the importance of working on capitalizing on opportunities and partnering with the private sector and capitalize on opportunities to work with the private sector around new mobility and technological innovation. Input from the private sector is an important component of the plan and the COG engaged San Benito interested parties.

The Council of Governments conducted the following bilingual outreach activities prior to the adoption of the 2020-2045 San Benito Regional Transportation Plan.

Setting RTP Goals Survey

Outreach and engagement for the RTP consisted of a countywide poll conducted in the early development of the plan.

1. Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy And Regional Transportation Plan Public Open House

Location: Zoom

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) invited San Benito residents to a virtual open house to learn about new tools to help shape the future in a collaborative way. COG also provided information on the development of the San Benito Regional Transportation and project schedule. Spanish language translation was made available at meetings.



The poster features a header with three icons: a house for 'HOUSING', a bar chart for 'ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT', and a bus for 'TRANSPORTATION'. Below the header, the main title reads 'Public Workshop and Hearing on the Draft 2045 MTP/SCS and Draft EIR'. A 'SCHEDULE' section lists four events: Wednesday, January 12 (AMBAG Board of Directors, 6:00 p.m.); Wednesday, January 19 (6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.); Monday, January 24 (6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.); and Thursday, January 27 (6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.). A QR code is provided for registration. Text at the bottom explains that attendees can't attend the virtual workshop should send comments by email or mail, and that copies of the Draft Plan and EIR are available for download at www.ambag.org. The logo 'Moving Forward' is at the bottom right.

Public Workshop and Hearing on the Draft 2045 MTP/SCS and Draft EIR

SCHEDULE

- Wednesday, January 12
AMBAG Board of Directors
6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 19
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
- Monday, January 24
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, January 27
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Attend a virtual workshop and public hearing on AMBAG's Draft 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) and Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Plan and EIR will occur during the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Can't attend the virtual workshop? Send comments by email, info@ambag.org, or by mail, 74580 Silver Cloud Ct, Monterey, CA 93940. The public comment period closes on January 31, 2022.

Copies of the Draft Plan and EIR are available for download at www.ambag.org

To register for one of the workshops, visit www.ambag.org

Moving Forward

2. Meeting with Congressman Jimmy Panetta Staff Members

Date: August 4, 2021

Meeting Location: COG Office

Council of Governments staff met with Congressman Jimmy Panetta, Transportation Director to discuss the transportation priorities of San Benito County as they relate to the Regional Transportation Plan. A copy of the Draft Regional Transportation Plan was provided to Congressional staff.



3. Central Coast Coalition

Council of Governments COG Directors and staff provided San Benito regional transportation priorities to elected officials including members of Congress, Senators, Assemblymembers, Office of the Governor, and government officials through the Central Coast Coalition partnership.



4. San Benito County Association of Realtors

Date: October 28, 2021

Meeting Location: Zoom

Council of Governments staff provided an regular update to the San Benito County Relator’s Association during their monthly membership meeting on matters related to transportation projects and the Regional Transportation Plan.

5. Safe Kids Coalition Of San Benito County

Meeting Location: Zoom

Council of Governments staff provided information on the Draft 2045 San Benito Regional Transportation Plan to the Safe Kids Coalition of San Benito County. The mission of the Coalition is to prevent unintentional childhood injuries through the collaborative efforts of community agencies to provide education and public awareness of the leading causes of injuries, which includes bicycle and pedestrian safety. Coalition partner agencies include: CHP, City of Hollister Recreation, City of Hollister Fire Department, City of Hollister Police Department, Council of San Benito County Governments, County of San Benito Health & Human Services Agency, First Five San Benito County, Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital, Off the Chain Bikes, San Benito County Public Health Department, and the Youth Alliance.

6. Public Hearing On The Draft Regional Transportation Plan

Date: Thursday, January 20, 2022

Meeting Location: Zoom

The Council of Governments will conduct a public hearing on the Draft San Benito Regional Transportation Plan. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to obtain information from the public on transportation issues, policies, programs, plans, and/or projects. Bilingual staff will be available at the public hearing.

As part of release of the Draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) conducted a community workshop in Hollister, CA. The purpose of the workshop is to present the draft 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy to San Benito residents and interested parties. The Council of Governments also provided information on the Draft 2020-2045 San Benito Regional Transportation Plan. Bilingual staff will be available at the public meeting.

Public Hearing on the Draft San Benito Regional Transportation Plan

San Juan Bautista - Hollister - County of San Benito



Audiencia Pública Sobre el Plan Regional de Transporte

San Juan Bautista - Hollister - Condado de San Benito



January 20, 2022 | 4 PM
Zoom (Webinar ID: 834 0589 4856)

What is the Regional Transportation Plan?

The Council of San Benito County Governments (COG) prepares a county-wide Regional Transportation Plan every four years. The Plan is a blueprint that guides investments for all forms of travel – vehicle, transit, bicycle, and walking. The Plan also identifies current and future transportation investments needed to improve the overall quality of life of San Benito County residents.

Written comments can be emailed by February 2, 2022
Veronica Lezama, RTP Project Manager
veronica@sanbenitocog.org



Download Plan @ SanBenitoCOG.org



Facebook.com/SanBenitoCOG

20 de Enero del 2022 | 4 PM
Zoom (Webinar ID: 834 0589 4856)

¿Qué es el Plan Regional de Transporte?

El Consejo de Gobiernos del Condado de San Benito (COG) prepara un Plan de Transporte Regional para todo el Condado de San Benito cada cuatro años. El Plan guía las inversiones para todas las formas de viaje: vehículo, tránsito, bicicleta y caminar. El Plan también identifica las inversiones en transporte actuales y futuras necesarias para mejorar la calidad de vida de los residentes del Condado.

Los comentarios escritos se pueden enviar por correo electrónico antes del 2 de febrero del 2022
Veronica Lezama, Gerente de Proyecto RTP
veronica@sanbenitocog.org



Descargar en Plan aquí: SanBenitoCOG.org



Facebook.com/SanBenitoCOG

7. Community Mailer

The Council of Governments prepared a bilingual mailer that was widely distributed to San Benito County residents. The purpose of the mailer was to inform the public about Regional Transportation Plan public comment opportunities.

8. Meetings with Stakeholders and Community Engagement



COG joined the City of San Juan Bautista on a community-wide discussion on mobility and transportation.



CHP joined COG in a discussion about community safety on the regional highway system.



COG presents to local labor camp residents about public transportation consistent with the Human Services Transportation Plan.



COG participation in the annual Kids at the Park event by conducting helmet fittings.



COG as the San Benito Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) attended the opening of the City of Hollister Municipal Airport's first through-the-fence access project.

Coordination With Advisory Committees

The Council of San Benito County Governments' advisory committees advise and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors on a variety of regional transportation issues. Those Committees consist of the following:

1. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC):

This committee advises the Council of Governments on matters related to transportation planning. The Council of Committee consisted with the TAC on the development of the Regional Transportation Plan. TAC members include:

- Mary Gilbert, COG Executive Director
- Brent Miller, City Manager, City of Hollister
- Henry Gonzales, Engineer, City of Hollister Engineering Department
- Don Reynolds, City Manager, City of San Juan Bautista
- Mike Chambless, Interim Director, San Benito County Resource Management Agency
- Steve Loupe, Assistant Director, Engineering and Public Works County Engineer
- Phil Cooper, Officer, California Highway Patrol
- Jill Morales, Regional Planner, Caltrans
- Heather Adamson, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments

2. Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) –

The Council of Governments presented the Regional Transportation to SSTAC. SSTAC members are appointed by the Council of Governments and are recruited from social service agencies and transit providers representing the elderly, persons with disabilities and persons of limited means, in accordance with the Public Utilities Code (Article 3, Section 99238). SSTAC members include:

- Leona L. Medearis-Peacher, General Manager, MV Transportation, Chair
- Vacant, Transit User
- Pauline Valdivia, Executive Director, Jovenes de Antaño
- Esther Alva, Community Services and Workforce Development
- Clay Kempf, Executive Director, Area Agency on Aging
- Vacant, Member of the Public
- Vacant, Transit User
- Regina Valentine, Consolidated Transportation Services Agency

Draft San Benito Regional Transportation Plan Public Copies

The Draft San Benito Regional Transportation Plan will be made available for public review at the following locations:

- Gavilan College, 365 4th St, Hollister, CA 95023
- San Benito Free Library, 470 5th St, Hollister, CA 95023
- San Juan Bautista Free Library, 801 2nd St, San Juan Bautista, CA
- Council of Governments Office, 330 Tres Pinos Road, Hollister, CA
- San Benito COG Website: www.SanBenitoCog.org
- San Benito COG Facebook: www.facebook.com/SanBenitoCOG/
- San Benito County Express Facebook: www.facebook.com/SanBenitoCountyExpress/
- San Benito Rideshare Facebook: www.facebook.com/SanBenitoRideshare/

Coordination With Partner Agencies

The Council of San Benito County Governments distributed the Draft Regional Transportation Plan to various public and private community organizations to gather input on transportation needs facing San Benito County. These organizations were also notified of the Public Hearing for the Draft Environmental Impact Report. A list of these agencies are included in Appendix C.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) conducted an extensive environmental review process, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which also includes public review period and a public hearing.

AMBAG established a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of San Benito County Governments (COG), Transportation Agency for Monterey County, and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission to prepare one Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which included each Regional Transportation Plan collectively in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

The decision to participate in a joint Environmental Impact Report was at the discretion of the board of directors for each agency. The completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Report included an extensive 55-day public review period, in which the Association, as the lead agency, responded to written public comments. The COG Board of Directors will consider a resolution certifying the Environmental Impact Report at its meeting on June 16, 2022.