



2001 Howard Road, Suite 201
Madera, California 93637

Office: 559-675-0721 Facsimile: 559-675-9328
Website: www.maderactc.org

Notice of Preparation

Date: March 1, 2021

To: Reference List of Recipients

From: Dylan Stone, Principal Regional Planner
Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) – Lead Agency
dylan@maderactc.org

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the MCTC 2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS)

The Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the 2022 RTP/SCS. MCTC is requesting input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to your agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project title, location, environmental review requirements, agency background and overview, project description, and probable environmental issues to be addressed in the PEIR are attached. An Initial Study is not attached and is not required pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines section 15060(d).

Your response is requested at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice or **by April 1, 2021**. Please send your response to Mr. Dylan Stone, Regional Planning Supervisor, at the email (preferred) address, office address, or facsimile number shown below. Please identify the name, phone number, and email address of a contact person at your agency.

By E-Mail	By Mail	By Facsimile
dylan@maderactc.org	2001 Howard Road, Ste. 201 Madera, CA 93637	(559) 675-9328

The project is of regional significance; therefore, in addition to your written comments provided, your verbal comments regarding preparation of the PEIR are also requested. A scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, March 18, 2021 beginning at 10:30 AM via the Zoom Platform at Join Zoom Meeting at: <https://zoom.us/j/98561833748>, Meeting ID: 985 6183 3748, One tap mobile - +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose) to provide your verbal comments.

MCTC looks forward to receipt of your comments regarding this important project for our region.

Attachment – Notice of Preparation (NOP)

Notice of Preparation
Program Environmental Impact Report
Project Overview and Scope of Environmental Analysis
2022 Regional Transportation Plan &
Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS)
March 1, 2021

Project Title

Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Madera County Transportation Commission 2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS).

Location

Within the corporate limits of Madera County, California, including the two (2) incorporated cities (Chowchilla and Madera) and all unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of the County of Madera (reference the attached map of Madera County identifying the area to be addressed by the PEIR and the RTP/SCS). Madera County is the 4th largest county in the San Joaquin Valley region of the State of California encompassing approximately 2,200 square miles. The estimated population in 2020 is 157,772. The City of Chowchilla has a population of about 19,053 and the City of Madera has a population of approximately 66,700. The estimated population of the County Unincorporated Area is 72,019.

CEQA Requirements

The RTP/SCS PEIR will be prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State CEQA Guidelines. CEQA requires public agencies, such as MCTC, to consider the potential environmental impacts of the proposed 2022 RTP/SCS. The objectives of CEQA are to:

- ✓ Disclose to the MCTC Board and the public the potential environmental impacts of the proposed RTP/SCS
- ✓ Propose feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that avoid, eliminate, or reduce project-related environmental effects
- ✓ Describe the analytical process, which leads to MCTC’s decision on the project
- ✓ Promote interagency coordination
- ✓ Provide a mechanism for increasing public participation in the planning process

The environmental document will be prepared as a “Programmatic” or “Program” EIR (PEIR), which is a type of first-tier document as defined in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15152 (Tiering) and 15168 (Program EIR). A Program EIR is prepared for an agency program or series of actions that can be characterized as one large project. Typically, such a project involves actions that are closely related geographically and are logical parts of a chain of contemplated events, rules, regulations, or plans that govern the conduct of a continuing program with generally similar environmental effects and mitigation measures. The RTP/SCS would be such a project.

For purposes of this effort, a PEIR will be prepared to reflect impacts and mitigation measures, which will result from the 2022 RTP/SCS including certain environmental issue areas such as air quality, climate change, transportation, and others noted on Page 7.

It is noted that additional environmental analysis by local jurisdictions or other agencies of individual projects contained in the 2022 RTP/SCS may be required. The tiering concept is a multi-level approach to streamlining subsequent environmental reviews. This first-tier RTP/SCS PEIR will include an analysis of general matters (i.e., broad policies, the planned regional multi-modal transportation system and related impacts, and program-wide mitigation measures). Subsequent tiers prepared by local jurisdictions or other agencies (later EIRs and Negative Declaration) will include an analysis of narrower, subsequent projects by “incorporating by reference” the general discussions from the broader first-tier RTP/SCS PEIR. Second-tier environmental reviews will focus on the impacts of individual improvement projects that implement the RTP/SCS, related programs, and/or policy(ies).

Regional Planning Background and Overview

MCTC is a voluntary association of local governments that was created in 1973 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement composed of elected officials of Madera County and its two (2) incorporated cities. In addition, MCTC is the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which qualifies it for Federal transportation funding as identified in Title 23 U.S.C. Section 134 and Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450.300. MPOs are federally designated while the State designated RTPAs are described under California Government Code Section 29532 et seq.

As part of the regional transportation planning process, MCTC studies potential transportation improvements, forecasts future conditions and needs, and pools the planning resources and expertise of its member agencies to facilitate development of a shared strategic vision for transportation and development in the region. These responsibilities enable MCTC to fulfill federal and State planning requirements and maintain the eligibility of the Madera region for federal and State funding for transportation planning and improvements.

According to the 2017 California Regional Transportation Planning Guidelines, prepared by the California Transportation Commission (CTC), MCTC is required to adopt and submit an updated RTP to the CTC and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) every four years. The Guidelines state that “Regional transportation improvement projects proposed to be funded, in whole or in part, in the state Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) must be included in an adopted RTP.”

The 2022 RTP is a planning document to be developed by MCTC in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Caltrans and other stakeholders, including transportation system users. Following the passage of *Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) – The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006*, which specifies that by the year 2020, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the State must be at 1990 levels, *Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) – The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008* was signed into law as the framework for achieving greenhouse gas emissions reductions from land use and transportation planning.

SB 375 includes four primary findings related to the RTP/SCS development process:

- ✓ That the California Air Resource Board (ARB) develop regional GHG emission reduction targets for cars and light trucks for each of the 18 MPOs in California, including MCTC
- ✓ That MCTC, during the next RTP update, is required to prepare an SCS that specifies how the GHG emissions reduction target set by ARB will be achieved. If the target cannot be met through the SCS, then an Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) shall be prepared by MCTC
- ✓ Streamlines CEQA requirements for specific residential and mixed-use developments that are consistent with the Madera County SCS or APS (as determined by ARB) to achieve the regional GHG emissions reduction target
- ✓ Requires that MCTC conduct the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) process consistent with the RTP/SCS process and that the RHNA allocations be consistent with the development pattern in the SCS

Project Description

The project, as defined pursuant to Public Resources Code, Section 21065, is the preparation of the 2022 RTP/SCS. MCTC is in the process of preparing the RTP/SCS as required by Section 65080 et seq., of Chapter 2.5 of the California Government Code, federal guidelines pursuant to new requirements established in the federal surface transportation reauthorization, “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21) and the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Acts, Transportation Conformity for the Air Quality Attainment Plan per 40 CFR Part 51 and 40 CFR Part 93, and requirements set forth in *Assembly Bill 32, The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, and Senate Bill 375 The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008*. Finally, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) has prepared guidelines (most recently adopted by the CTC on January 18, 2017) to assist in the preparation of the RTP/SCS.

The last comprehensive EIR on the RTP was completed in September 2018, which addressed transportation improvement projects, programs, and funding reflected in the 2018 RTP/SCS including funding from the approved ½ Cent Sales Tax Measure Extension (Measure “T”).

The 2022 RTP/SCS will address all transportation modes including motor vehicles, transit (commuter and local), rail (commuter and interregional), goods movement (rail freight and trucking), bicycle and pedestrian facilities, aviation systems, and transportation systems management (TSM) programs and projects considering the horizon year of 2046. In addition, the 2022 RTP/SCS will:

- ✓ Identify the region’s transportation goals, objectives, and policies
- ✓ Include the SCS, which demonstrates how the region will meet its GHG reduction target through integrated land use, and housing and transportation planning. *Once adopted by MCTC, the SCS becomes an integral part of the RTP*
- ✓ Set forth an action plan of projects and programs to address the needs consistent with the Policy Element
- ✓ Integrate results reflected in the Congestion Management Program (CMP)
- ✓ Document the financial resources needed to implement the plan
- ✓ Reflect results of the Transportation Conformity Analysis
- ✓ Highlight the 2022 RTP/SCS EIR process and results

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MCTC 2022 RTP/SCS PEIR

- ✓ Detail the RTP/SCS public outreach process
- ✓ Include the Environmental Justice analysis process

Specifically, the RTP/SCS will include the following sections, which may be reorganized or modified as a result of staff and consultant review:

Chapter 1	The 2022 RTP and SCS – A Summary
Chapter 2	Requirements, Trends & Content
Chapter 3	The Madera Region: Past, Present, & Future
Chapter 4	A Shared Vision
Chapter 5	Delivering the Plan for Change
Chapter 6	Creating a Sustainable Future
Chapter 7	Investing in Change
Chapter 8	Public Involvement for Change
Chapter 9	System Performance
Chapter 10	Addressing Environmental Justice
Appendices	

Preliminary 2022 RTP Project Alternatives & SCS Alternative Scenarios

The following preliminary 2022 RTP/SCS project alternatives may be addressed in the PEIR:

- ✓ No Project
- ✓ Preferred SCS Scenario
- ✓ Other Alternative SCS Scenarios potentially including the Low Change Scenario and the Moderate Change Scenario

CEQA Streamlining (SB 375 and SB 226)

SB 375 and SB 226 provide “exemptions” for certain types of projects from CEQA review or projects may qualify for streamlined review if they conform to the regional SCS or the APS (if applicable). Projects qualify for streamlined CEQA review even if they conflict with local plans following adoption of the SCS.

Environmental Issues to be Addressed in the PEIR

The programs and projects to be included in the 2022 RTP/SCS will be analyzed through development of the PEIR. This will allow MCTC to analyze the regional or general impacts of the programs and projects. A more detailed or project level environmental assessment (if required) of the various projects included in the RTP/SCS will be conducted by the various responsible agencies including Caltrans, Madera County, and the cities within the County before the projects are approved for construction and implementation.

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Potential environmental impacts that could result from the Project include project impacts to:

- ✓ Aesthetics
- ✓ Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- ✓ Air Quality
- ✓ Biological Resources
- ✓ Climate Change
- ✓ Cultural Resources & Tribal Cultural Resources
- ✓ Energy and Energy Conservation
- ✓ Geology/Soils/Mineral Resources
- ✓ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ✓ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ✓ Land Use, Planning, and Recreation
- ✓ Noise and Vibration
- ✓ Population, Housing, and Employment
- ✓ Public Utilities, Other Utilities, and Services Systems
- ✓ Social and Economic Effects
- ✓ Transportation/Traffic
- ✓ Alternatives (noted above), Cumulative Effects, Growth Inducing Impacts, and Other Issues required by CEQA
- ✓ Mandatory Findings of Significance

Prepared by: Georgiena M. Vivian, President
VRPA Technologies, Inc.
March 1, 2021

Date: March 1, 2021

Signature: 
Patricia Taylor

Title: Executive Director

Phone: (559) 675-0721 Ext. 13