

San Joaquin Valley Regional Agencies' Directors' Committee



Meeting Agenda

Thursday, February 5, 2026
10:00 am

Location:

Join Zoom Meeting

Via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86205728219?pwd=3gwpXZtBh5aNTRaXEgnIFlaxTl7XC6.1>

Meeting ID: 862 0572 8219

Passcode: 542010

One tap mobile, Phone: 1 (669) 444-9171

Yes	No	Director Agency	Yes	No	Director Agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stacie Guzman Chair MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Patricia Taylor MCTC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Phipps Vice Chair Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kate Miller StanCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jay Schlosser Kern COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Nguyen SJCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Terri King KCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Samir Sheikh SJVAPCD
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ted Smalley TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ahdel Ahmed SJJPA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Enclosure

- 1. January 8, 2026, Directors' Meeting

Chair Guzman

DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

- 2. RTP/SCS Updates and Air Quality Issues

Ted Smalley, Ryan Niblock & Alex Marcucci

- a. **SB 375 – 2026 GHG Reduction Targets**

Ryan Niblock

- b. **Clean Air Act Waiver Rescission – Lockdown/Endangerment Finding Update**

Alex Marcucci

- c. **State Implementation Plan Update**

Samir Sheikh

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3. Legislative Updates

a. State

1) *State Legislative Update* Gus Khouri

2) *Valley Voice Sacramento*

a) *Event Status* Gus Khouri & Georgiena Vivian

b) *Legislative Platform – Discuss CHSRA Business Plan Approach* Chair Guzman

b. Federal

Jen Covino

4. Continued Review: Preliminary Draft 2026/27 SJV OWP

Georgiena Vivian

5. Recommend Washington D.C Valley Voice Travel/Session Dates

Georgiena Vivian

6. Discussion: April 2026 Policy Council and Directors' Retreat

Georgiena Vivian

7. Committee Updates

a. VLAC

Chair Guzman

b. SJV Swap Meet

Kayley Clay

c. Housing and Land Use

Kim Anderson

d. Travel Modelers Group

Rob Ball

INFORMATION ITEMS

The following items are for informational purposes and require no action or vote. The individuals listed will provide a brief verbal update at the meeting.

8. Caltrans Directors' Report

Michael Navarro, D6 & Grace Magsayo, D10

9. California High-Speed Rail

Augie Blancas, CHSRA

10. San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority – Passenger Rail

Ahdel Ahmed

11. San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Mark Montelongo

12. Miocar Car Sharing

Michael Sigala

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OTHER ITEMS

13. Future Meetings and Agenda Items:

- a. **Executive Committee – February 13, 2026**
- b. **Policy Council – February 27, 2026**
- c. **Directors' Committee – March 5, 2026**
- d. **Directors' Committee – April 2, 2026**
- e. **Policy Council – April 24, 2026**
- f. **Directors' Committee – May 7, 2026**
- g. **Executive Committee – May 22, 2026**
- h. **Directors' Committee – June 4, 2026**
- i. **Policy Council – June 26, 2026**

Georgiena Vivian

14. Director Items

15. Public presentations for items not on the agenda.

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons wishing to address the Committee on items within its jurisdiction but NOT on this agenda. Unscheduled comments may be limited to three minutes. The public may comment on listed agenda items as they are considered.

16. Directors' Only Session – **Scheduled****ADJOURN MEETING**

Next Directors' Meeting: Thursday, March 5, 2026.

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Other Meeting Participants

Yes	No	Director Agency	Yes	No	Director Agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephan Sanchez Kern COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gus Khouri Khouri Consulting
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rob Ball Kern COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mitch Weiss Khouri Consulting
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kayley Clay KCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jen Covino Covino, Smith & Simon
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Kimball TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	David Gellman Covino, Smith & Simon
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steven Ingoldsby TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aly Hernandez Covino, Smith & Simon
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Roberto Brady TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alex Marcucci Trinity Consultants
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Giuliani TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Samer Shaath, CHSRA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aime Kane TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Augie Blancas, CHSRA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paul Herman Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Navarro Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ofelia Abundez Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Braden Duran Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Simran Jhutti Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Harpreet Binning Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brenda Thomas Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alec Kimmel Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dylan Stone MCTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nabeelah Abi-Rached Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jeff Findley MCTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grace Magsayo Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evelyn Espinosa MCTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caleb Brock Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nav Bagri MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eric Mather Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elizabeth Forte MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tom Dumas Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meg Prince MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Duper Tong Caltrans, D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Jackson MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gurwinder Sekhon Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jose Luis Caceres StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gregoria Ponce Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monica Streeter StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gabbie Sefranek Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nick St. Cook StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natalia Castillo Deleon Caltrans
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shannon Silva StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill Higgins CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Josephine Oshana StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sabrina Bradbury CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jean Foletta StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gregory McAteer CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cindy Malekos StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vincenzo Caporale CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ryan Niblock SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Sigala Sigala, Inc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kim Anderson SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rene Gutierrez ACE Rail
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yvette Davis SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peter Whippy CHSRA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christine Corrales SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shane Gunn Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Montelongo SJVAPCD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Dunford SJCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dan Leavitt SJJPA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kristine Kai LSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Hanebutt SJJPA			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Georgiena Vivian SJV Coordinator VRPA Technologies			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carolina Ilic VRPA Technologies			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dena Graham VRPA Technologies			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ryan Vivian VRPA Technologies			

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AGENDA ITEM 1

January 8, 2025 Directors' Committee

Meeting Minutes

San Joaquin Valley Regional Agencies' Directors' Committee



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 8, 2026
10:00 am

Location:

Join Zoom Meeting

Via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88912035039?pwd=9qCJskwLlBhVhpBoBUXnULYlRlRlG7.1>

Meeting ID: 889 1203 5039

Passcode: 675213

One tap mobile, Phone: 1 (669) 444-9171

Yes	No	Director Agency	Yes	No	Director Agency
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stacie Guzman Chair MCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Patricia Taylor MCTC (<i>J. Finley</i>)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Phipps Vice Chair Fresno COG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kate Miller StanCOG
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jay Schlosser Kern COG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Nguyen SJCOG
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Terri King KCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Samir Sheikh SJVAPCD (<i>M. Montelongo</i>)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ted Smalley TCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ahdel Ahmed SJJPA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Enclosure

- December 4, 2025, Directors' Meeting

Chair Guzman

Chair Guzman called for approval of December 8, 2025, minutes. The motion was made by Vice Chair Phipps, Fresno COG, and seconded by Member Nguyen, SJCOG. The motion passed.

DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

- RTP/SCS Updates and Air Quality Issues
 - SB 375 – 2026 GHG Reduction Targets
 - Clean Air Act Waiver Recission – Lockdown/Endangerment Finding Update

Ryan Niblock

Alex Marcucci

Ted Smalley & Ryan Niblock

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Ryan Niblock, SACOG, explained that staff had continued meeting with a breakout group of Directors to discuss ongoing air quality challenges affecting the region and to evaluate the extent to which these issues should be elevated to the policy board level. Through these discussions, staff had been preparing for upcoming conversations with senior leadership at the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The purpose of these discussions was to highlight long-standing, system-level challenges experienced in the San Joaquin Valley. To support this effort, staff had been compiling the issues into a concise, easy-to-understand one-page summary intended to inform and structure those higher-level discussions, noting that the timing was appropriate given the participation of additional leadership at the meeting.

Ryan then provided an update on current technical work underway as agencies across the Valley advanced their 2026 Regional Transportation Plans and Sustainable Communities Strategies (RTP/SCSs). He noted that updated EMFAC modeling inputs had been received, reflecting adjustments associated with the rescission of California's waiver. As a result, agencies were now working with updated or adjusted EMFAC outputs. Over the previous month, travel modelers throughout the Valley had been actively testing software and models to ensure their results were defensible and clearly understood. He referenced a recent, lengthy modeling coordination meeting held the day prior, during which agencies checked in on progress and continued refining their modeling work to fully understand the implications of the updated inputs on plan results.

In addition, Ryan emphasized that agencies were still observing significant impacts from revised population estimates when comparing plans over time. He explained that anticipated population growth across much of the San Joaquin Valley was now lower than in previous plans, and that some jurisdictions were even projecting population declines in the outer years. This demographic shift had a substantial effect on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) projections and, in turn, on Sustainable Communities Strategies' ability to meet state-mandated greenhouse gas reduction targets. Ryan reiterated that the SCS framework relied heavily on managing growth through smarter land-use and transportation planning, and that reduced or negative growth limited the effectiveness of those strategies. He noted that these trends raised ongoing concerns about how future targets would be set and stressed that any future targets should account for the unique demographic and growth realities currently being observed in the San Joaquin Valley.

Bill Higgins, CalCOG, initiated the discussion by emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the impacts of the EMFAC (mobile-source emissions factor) adjustments and broader policy conversations related to SB 375 reform. He suggested segmenting these topics to ensure technical modeling issues were clearly understood and not conflated with legislative or policy changes.

Ryan responded by explaining that, at the time of the meeting, the San Joaquin Valley did not yet have definitive information on how the MFAC adjustments were affecting individual regions. He stated that regional modelers were actively testing updated assumptions and recalibrating models, noting that multiple variables—including recent modeling changes and evolving assumptions were being examined simultaneously. As a result, there was no consistent or complete dataset across all eight Valley MPOs showing the specific EMFAC impacts, though staff expected clearer results in the coming weeks.

Bill sought clarification on whether EMFAC impacts could vary by region, potentially leading some MPOs to meet conformity requirements while others did not. Ryan confirmed this possibility, explaining that conformity outcomes would be evaluated on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis rather than as an all-or-nothing regional determination. He further noted that another major uncertainty was the State Implementation Plan (SIP) budgets, which remained in flux and would play a critical role in future conformity determinations.

Ryan added that staff were working expeditiously to develop sufficient technical information to share with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), so that EMFAC impacts could be appropriately considered as SIP budgets continued to evolve. Bill acknowledged the complexity of conformity requirements and the interrelationships among regional modeling, SIP development, and air district processes, noting that SIP development was driven by local air quality districts.

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The discussion then broadened to the larger challenges associated with SB 375 implementation. Ryan observed that the current SB 375 cycle posed significantly greater difficulties for Valley MPOs than prior cycles, citing increased technical, demographic, and policy constraints. Bill characterized this as a natural transition point to discuss systemic concerns, particularly the lack of transparency in how CARB sets greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Bill articulated a core concern shared by MPOs: that CARB must provide clearer explanations and documentation of how targets are established, including how SIP requirements, population growth assumptions, changes in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and modeling methodologies are incorporated. He described the current process as a “black box” and argued that CARB should be required to “show its work,” using consistent datasets across conformity and SB 375 analyses. Bill noted that it was particularly difficult for local elected officials to understand why different assumptions or impacts were used for conformity purposes versus for SB 375 target setting, and emphasized that aligning these processes was a long-standing, unresolved issue.

Bill stated that transparency in target setting was a foundational principle around which there appeared to be a broad consensus, not only among MPOs of varying sizes but also among environmental stakeholders. While he acknowledged that more complex issues, such as VMT reduction strategies or capacity-related environmental concerns, might generate differing levels of agreement across the state’s MPOs, he emphasized that transparency and methodological clarity represented a strong and common starting point.

He then outlined the current statewide process underway among California’s largest MPOs. Bill explained that the four largest MPOs had retained former Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg to facilitate a series of convenings to address SB 375-related concerns. Two large meetings had already occurred, allowing MPOs to provide input, and the largest MPOs were now engaged in internal discussions to determine next steps. Bill described three main areas of focus in these discussions: improving interagency coordination with CARB and Caltrans; addressing VMT and greenhouse gas reduction expectations; and resolving environmental concerns related to roadway capacity and system performance.

Bill explained that the likely next phase would involve developing a basic framework, either for a comprehensive, negotiated “grand bargain” or, alternatively, for more limited statutory reforms focused on data transparency and process improvements. He noted that while a broader deal was possible, there appeared to be less resistance to narrower reforms addressing transparency and methodological consistency, which could proceed independently if broader consensus proved unattainable. He also suggested there remained some opportunity to address VMT-related issues, depending on how discussions evolved.

Looking ahead, Bill indicated that a more detailed briefing for member agencies was being planned, potentially in early February. He emphasized that both he and Sabrina were actively participating in statewide discussions and consistently reminding larger MPOs that any reformed SB 375 framework must account for agency size and capacity, as the California Transportation Commission’s modeling guidelines do. Bill linked this concern directly to issues raised in the Santa Barbara MPO memo, stating that while the proposed solution might evolve, the underlying problem it identified—resource and capacity disparities among MPOs was valid and needed to be addressed explicitly.

Bill concluded by turning the discussion to James for additional perspective on how larger MPO partners were viewing the evolving negotiations and reform concepts.

James Corless, Executive Director of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), viewed the challenges facing California, and the San Joaquin Valley in particular, as both significant and timely.

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James explained that SACOG's heightened engagement on SB 375 reform emerged during the development of its most recently adopted Long Range Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which was approved by the board in November. He noted that, even several years ago, it became clear that SACOG was facing increasing difficulty meeting greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets. While the Sacramento region remains one of the state's faster-growing regions, he observed that growth is expected to slow substantially, compounding the challenge of achieving future reductions. James emphasized that the prospect of being cut off from critical state funding if targets are not met was a major catalyst for action, likening the situation to withholding funding from a struggling school rather than providing additional resources to help it improve. He stated that this dynamic led SACOG's board to conclude that SB 375 required modernization and reform, particularly as the 2035 target year is rapidly approaching and future plan cycles will allow very little time to achieve required reductions.

James reported that SACOG's board took unanimous action directing staff to work broadly with partners across the state to pursue updates to SB 375. He explained that former Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg was retained to help facilitate discussions, citing Steinberg's authorship of SB 375 and SB 743, his deep institutional knowledge, and his credibility across stakeholder groups. James emphasized that Steinberg's first recommendation was to "set a larger table" by engaging a wide array of interests, including environmental advocates, housing organizations, transportation and construction interests, and industry representatives, to avoid narrow or fragmented reform efforts.

James then outlined SACOG's core priorities for SB 375 modernization. First, he emphasized process and transparency, noting that MPOs spend extraordinary amounts of time and money navigating CARB review processes, often hiring consultants to validate the work of other consultants and internal staff. He suggested that the current structure lacks clarity and efficiency and questioned whether CARB should retain responsibility for all aspects of target review and implementation. He proposed exploring a clearer division of roles, potentially shifting more implementation-related responsibilities to the California Transportation Commission (CTC), which already develops RTP guidelines, while improving transparency and predictability in target setting and review timelines.

Second, James discussed alignment and timing, proposing that MPOs continue to prepare federally required RTPs every four years but reduce the frequency of full SCS and GHG target updates to every eight years. In interim cycles, he suggested replacing full SCS updates with implementation-focused reports that would highlight progress and clearly identify where state partnership and resources are needed. He emphasized that MPOs would prefer to devote more effort to implementing adopted plans rather than repeatedly re-planning, especially given limited staff capacity and increasing technical complexity.

Third, James underscored the importance of funding and state partnership. He argued that regions should not be penalized or cut off from funding when they struggle to meet targets, particularly when many of the tools needed to achieve reductions, such as major investments or regulatory changes, are under the state's control. He expressed interest in exploring whether additional state resources could be devolved to regions through a "REAP-like" approach to strengthen local implementation capacity, while acknowledging the current constraints on the state budget.

Following James's remarks, Chair Guzman echoed the concerns, particularly for smaller COGs, noting the extensive consultant costs and staff burdens associated with prolonged CARB review processes. Ryan added that eligibility risks tied to SB 1 funding were especially problematic given that many SB 1 programs have already been CAPTI-vetted to support climate goals, making potential funding lockouts particularly counterproductive.

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A detailed exchange followed regarding uncertainty during extended SCS/SES review periods, with Chair Guzman, MCAG, noting that MPOs can remain in limbo for years after submitting documents, without clear guidance on continued funding eligibility. James agreed, emphasizing that uncertainty undermines MPOs' ability to provide clear answers to local elected officials. Bill Higgins added that CalCOG had previously urged CARB to adopt a "deemed approved" concept, similar to the housing element law, if review timelines are not met, and described potential reforms that would impose firm decision deadlines, possibly administered through the CTC.

The discussion expanded to performance reporting and messaging. James acknowledged that while many MPOs, including SACOG, technically met earlier GHG targets (in some cases influenced by COVID-era travel reductions), future targets are increasingly difficult to achieve due to slowing growth and constrained baselines. He expressed concern that statewide narratives, such as SB 150 reporting, often emphasize failure rather than progress, obscuring the substantial successes of SB 375 in reshaping plans, investment strategies, and regional coordination. Rob Ball and others reinforced this point, arguing that MPOs have delivered significant policy and planning reforms that deserve recognition.

James concluded by stressing the need for MPOs and regional agencies to tell a clearer, more proactive success story. He noted that Steinberg had offered similar feedback, encouraging regions to highlight achievements under SB 375, SB 1, REAP, and related programs as a foundation for reform discussions. James emphasized that 2025 represents a critical opportunity, the second year of the legislative session, to advance meaningful SB 375 updates and urged coordination around upcoming advocacy efforts, including the Valley's March Sacramento visit. He offered SACOG's continued partnership and participation, including through the CalSTA task force, and suggested that any resulting products should emphasize the positive outcomes achieved under SB 375 while making the case for modernization and continued investment.

3. Legislative Updates

a. *State*

Gus Khouri



Gus Khouri, Khouri Consulting, State Legislative Advocate, provided an update on the current state of the California Legislature, noting that it reconvened on Monday, January 5. He highlighted the swearing-in of Senator Monique Limón as the new Senate President Pro Tempore, emphasizing the historic nature of the appointment as she became the first Latina to hold the position. He also noted that the Governor's State of the State Address was underway at the time of the meeting and that the Governor's proposed budget was scheduled to be released the following day.

Gus explained that early budget indications suggested an approximately \$18 billion General Fund deficit, based on information from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO). He cautioned that the Governor often characterizes the deficit as slightly smaller in January in order to preserve flexibility ahead of the May Revision, when updated revenue information becomes available. He added that, despite the projected deficit, state revenues were actually running about \$11 billion above projections. However, significant cost pressures were being driven by ongoing obligations to education funding, as well as the need to backfill or absorb up to \$6 billion in costs resulting from reductions in federal funding, which together were straining the General Fund.

Turning to climate and transportation funding, Gus discussed challenges with the cap-and-trade (cap-and-invest) program, noting that recent auction revenues had fallen short of expectations. He explained that additional CAL FIRE funding had been incorporated into the program, further constraining available resources. While the new cap-and-invest program would not take effect until July 1, he expressed concern about the state's ability to maintain its commitments to SB 125, as well as the potential implications for TERSIP Competitive and the Local Capital Outlay Program (LCAP/LC TOP) moving forward. He assured the group that more detailed information would be available once the budget proposal was released and that updates would be provided as additional clarity emerged.

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Gus also provided a brief legislative update on bills still moving through the process, particularly two-year bills remaining in their houses of origin. He referenced SB 667; a bill related to railroad safety that would impose additional equipment requirements beyond Positive Train Control (PTC). He characterized the bill as an unfunded mandate and said it was scheduled to be heard by the Senate Transportation Committee. Based on his experience, he suggested that the bill might be stalled or effectively defeated during the committee process, noting that ACE was closely monitoring the legislation.

Finally, Gus discussed upcoming advocacy efforts, confirming that the Valley Voice trip to Sacramento was scheduled for March 4. He stated that preparatory work was underway, including adopting the state legislative platform, while acknowledging that adjustments might be necessary as developments unfold in the Governor's budget proposal. He noted that staff would proceed with standard preparation activities, such as developing talking points and identifying speakers, and he offered to coordinate with staff, including Chair Guzman, before engaging Policy Council members to finalize participation and messaging.

b. **Federal**

Jen Covino



Jen Covino, Covino, Smith, and Simon, Federal Legislative Advocate, provided a comprehensive update on federal appropriations, surface transportation reauthorization, and recent developments in federal transportation funding. She began by explaining that Congress had introduced a second "minibus" appropriations package, which was expected to be considered later in the week. This package included the Interior and Environment, Energy and Water, and Commerce, Science, and Justice spending bills. She noted, however, that the package did not include the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (T-HUD) bill, which many stakeholders had anticipated. Instead, the Appropriations Committees indicated that two additional minibus packages would be introduced over the following three weeks, prior to the expiration of the current continuing resolution on January 30. Jen expressed cautious optimism that T-HUD would be included in a subsequent package and adopted as a full-year resolution, addressing pending community project funding and congressionally directed spending (earmark) requests. She highlighted that the initial minibus package did include earmarks across the included bills, which she viewed as a positive signal.

Jen encouraged participants to begin thinking proactively about potential earmark requests for their members of Congress. She explained that once Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 appropriations were finalized, potentially by the end of the month, lawmakers were expected to pivot quickly to opening portals for FFY 2027 earmark requests. She also advised attendees to be mindful of redistricting and political shifts following the passage of Proposition 50 and ahead of the midterm elections. In particular, she recommended focusing on projects that would remain within a member's current district boundaries as well as any potential future districts, should incumbents decide to run in reconfigured districts.

Shifting to surface transportation reauthorization, Jen shared a more pessimistic outlook. She noted that Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, the ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, had expressed strong opposition to recent administrative actions terminating offshore wind lease processes, including a project off the coast of Rhode Island. As a result, Senator Whitehouse announced his intention to hold up both the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and the surface transportation reauthorization, which fall under the EPW Committee's jurisdiction. Jen emphasized that Senator Whitehouse's position could significantly delay progress in the Senate, particularly given the 60-vote threshold required to advance legislation under normal order.

Jen further explained that challenges were emerging in the House of Representatives as well. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Sam Graves had previously proposed new vehicle registration fees, including fees on electric vehicles, as part of the 2025 budget reconciliation process, but had withdrawn the proposed \$20 fee on standard vehicles following pushback from fellow Republicans. More recently, Representative Rick Crawford, the committee's second-ranking Republican, had advocated for a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) or road-use-charge model as a fuel-agnostic revenue solution. Jen characterized this divergence in views between committee leadership as problematic, particularly given the committee's broad jurisdiction over surface transportation legislation. She added that, while the House T&I

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Committee holds primary jurisdiction, it ultimately relies on the Ways and Means Committee for revenue provisions, and that the Senate process was even more complex, involving four committees of jurisdiction.

Jen noted that Chair Graves intended to introduce House legislation in the first quarter, while Senate EPW Chair Shelley Moore Capito aimed to release a draft in March. However, she cautioned that competing national and international issues could consume congressional bandwidth, potentially delaying the release of draft bills. She stated that earlier hopes of seeing draft legislation in January or February were unlikely to be realized and expressed concern about the lack of goodwill necessary to resolve intra-party, bicameral, and bipartisan disagreements in a timely manner.

In closing, Jen highlighted several recent developments in federal transportation funding. She congratulated recipients of Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grants, including the Fresno Council of Governments and the City of Fresno, and noted that another SS4A solicitation was expected in late winter or early spring. She encouraged unsuccessful applicants to request debriefings. She also reminded participants that BUILD grant applications were due in approximately six weeks. Finally, she reported that U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Duffy had announced the withholding of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration funding from California due to the state's failure to meet a January 5 deadline related to resolving issues with non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses, characterizing this development as negative news for the state.

4. Discussion: Metropolitan Planning (PL) Funding Issues

Chair Guzman



Stacie Guzman, Directors' Committee Chair, MCAG, introduced item by explaining that the discussion stemmed from earlier conversations among staff and directors regarding declining or stagnant PL (Metropolitan Planning) funding relative to the growing scope of federal and state planning mandates. She noted that the question posed to Jen Covino about opportunities to engage in the federal surface transportation reauthorization process was directly tied to concerns that planning requirements were far outpacing the growth of planning resources. Stacie explained that informal discussions between herself and Jay Schlosser, Kern COG, had focused on identifying key issues and potential talking points to frame a more strategic advocacy approach, and she opened the topic for broader group discussion.

Gus Khouri, Khouri Consulting, State Legislative Advocate, provided background, recalling that the issue arose during development of the group's legislative platform, particularly in discussions around the cap-and-invest program. He noted that during the Valley Voice trip earlier in the year, there had been optimism that stabilized auction revenues might generate excess funds to support planning activities. However, he cautioned that recent auction performance had been weaker than anticipated, making such funding less certain, while still acknowledging that it remained an item of interest should revenues improve.

Bill Higgins, CalCOG, added that increasing PL funding was already a core component of national advocacy efforts. He noted that the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and the LOTS Coalition, which includes organizations such as the National League of Cities (NLC), the National Association of Counties (NACo), and NATO, had formally included a substantial increase to PL funding in their reauthorization platforms. Bill referenced discussions at the AMPO National Conference in October, where there was informal optimism that congressional staff understood the need to strengthen PL funding, even while acknowledging that reauthorization outcomes remained uncertain. He suggested that the message around PL funding would resonate well in Washington, D.C., particularly when framed as a structural need rather than a discretionary request.

Stacie acknowledged Bill's comments and confirmed that the Valley Voice delegation had already gone on record requesting increases to PL funding as part of its federal advocacy efforts. She emphasized that the current discussion was intended to deepen and refine that advocacy rather than introduce a new issue, and thanked participants for reinforcing the message's consistency.

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Jay then elaborated on the timing and specificity of the issue. He explained that AMPO had reached out to him directly due to the involvement of Congressman Vince Fong, whose office would likely play a role in reauthorization discussions. Jay emphasized that the challenge was not simply asking for “more money,” but clearly articulating how PL funding should be structured to better support MPO operations. He suggested exploring alternatives to a strictly percentage-based allocation model, noting that fluctuations in PL funding created instability for agencies that rely on these funds to support permanent staff positions. Jay indicated that he had begun outreach to congressional staff to better understand the drafting timeline and that he and Stacie had exchanged draft language outlining more specific policy ideas. He offered to continue refining these concepts and sharing them with the group if there was interest.

Jen Covino, Covino, Smith, and Simon, Federal Legislative Advocate, provided additional federal context, explaining that over the past several years, advocacy for increased PL funding has been driven by the dramatic expansion of discretionary grant programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. She noted that many MPOs lacked internal capacity to apply for these grants, despite their eligibility, undermining the effectiveness of federal investments. Jen emphasized that messaging around PL funding needed to evolve in light of Republican majorities in Congress and the broader push to return funding to formula-based programs. She explained that PL funding was well-positioned to direct additional formula resources to MPOs and noted that the program had grown modestly, from approximately \$438 million annually in 2022 to about \$474 million by FFY 2026. Jen observed that, relative to other federal programs, PL remained small, and that even a significant increase, such as doubling the program, would be consequential while still modest in the context of the overall federal transportation program. She noted that doubling PL funding had been discussed in Washington as an aspirational benchmark for the next reauthorization.

Bill concluded by reinforcing that PL funding could be effectively framed as a local control issue. He explained that PL dollars support the technical expertise and staff capacity needed to translate federal and state funds into local projects, ensuring that investments are delivered efficiently and aligned with community priorities. Bill noted that this framing had been well received in discussions with congressional staff and that he planned to raise the issue in upcoming conversations with national rural advocacy organizations. Stacie closed the discussion by suggesting that future messaging align with forthcoming AMPO and NARC language and remain consistent with Valley Voice's advocacy positions, underscoring the importance of coordinated, unified communication.

5. Discussion: Valley Legislative Affairs Committee (VLAC) Issues Chair Guzman

Stacie Guzman, Chair, MCAG, introduced the discussion on the Valley Legislative Affairs Committee (VLAC), explaining that the committee had been dormant for some time despite having played a meaningful role in the past. She provided historical context, noting that during its most active period, VLAC served as a staff-driven forum that included deputies, legislative leads, and advocacy partners, and functioned as a space where complex legislative topics could be explored in greater depth and advanced between formal executive and policy-level discussions. Stacie explained that the committee's inactivity stemmed largely from the absence of a chair, emphasizing that chairing VLAC required significant coordination, sustained momentum, and staff capacity. She shared that Merced County Association of Governments' Principal Planner, Meg Prince, had expressed willingness and capacity to serve as chair should the group decide to reactivate the committee, and she proposed that resuming VLAC could provide a useful venue to advance emerging legislative topics.

Jay Schlosser, Kern COG, expressed interest in reengaging with VLAC but noted that staff transitions within his agency made immediate participation uncertain. He suggested sending a follow-up email to each agency to identify potential staff participants who might be well-positioned to engage, offering to explore interest internally and to nominate appropriate staff to participate.

Robert Phipps, Fresno COG, speaking as the most recent VLAC chair, clarified that the committee had been dormant for approximately four to five months. He described his experience chairing VLAC for several years following a regional retreat that reestablished multiple interagency staff committees. Robert explained that while VLAC had value, its effectiveness diminished when it failed to provide clear “value-added” contributions beyond the regular legislative updates already provided to directors and policy councils. He observed that the committee had originally been intended as a staff-level

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incubator for legislative ideas, allowing concepts to emerge organically from frontline staff rather than being driven solely by executive or elected leadership. In practice, however, he felt that many legislative priorities were flowing top-down, limiting VLAC's ability to fulfill its original purpose. He encouraged that, if revived, VLAC should explicitly emphasize creativity, grassroots issue identification, and policy development that supplemented, rather than duplicated, existing advocacy direction. Robert stated his willingness to participate or assign staff but stressed the importance of ensuring the committee delivered meaningful, distinct value.

Stacie responded by acknowledging Robert's contributions and reaffirming that VLAC had historically played a central role in developing the Valley's legislative platform. She recognized that circumstances had evolved and suggested that VLAC's future role might be better aligned with serving as a think tank or coordination body, particularly on complex, cross-cutting issues such as SB 375 reform, air quality challenges, and broader planning and legislative intersections. She proposed an exploratory phase to determine whether a reimagined VLAC could effectively complement existing executive, advocacy, and policy structures, rather than simply adding another layer of meetings.

Gus Khouri, Khouri Consulting, State Legislative Advocate, supported the discussion and emphasized the value of staff-level input in strengthening regional advocacy efforts. He noted that planning staff often encountered emerging issues earlier through their participation in technical and programmatic meetings, such as RTPA or California Transportation Commission forums. Gus suggested that VLAC could serve as a venue for coordinating regional messaging on upcoming policy issues, conducting deeper legislative analysis, and enabling more nimble responses than were possible through less frequent executive-level meetings. He expressed support for refining the committee's purpose and affirmed that advocates would welcome the opportunity to engage in a more structured, informed collaboration.

Jay further elaborated on the potential utility of VLAC, noting the difficulty executive directors face in reviewing lengthy legislative platforms and materials amid competing demands. He suggested that VLAC could function as a conduit, enabling designated staff to vet issues, synthesize key questions, and elevate concise options to executive leadership for direction. This approach, he argued, would improve efficiency, facilitate quicker consensus-building, and help advocates develop unified regional messages before issues reach policy boards.

Stacie concluded the discussion by proposing an initial outreach to gauge interest in a "VLAC 2.0" framework. She suggested convening a coalition of willing participants to explore the committee's purpose, scope, communication protocols, and coordination role. She emphasized that the committee would not be reestablished for its own sake and that continuation would depend on whether participants identified clear benefits and practical value. Robert added final historical context, noting that VLAC had traditionally included staff involved in FTIP development, project delivery, RTPA coordination, and public information roles, reflecting the committee's close connection to policy development and external engagement. Stacie acknowledged the input and noted that further discussion would continue as time allowed.

6. Discussion: April/May 2026 Policy Council and Directors' Retreat Georgiana Vivian

- a. Venue Availability
- b. Preliminary Draft Retreat Program/Schedule

Georgiana Vivian, VRPA Technologies, SJV Coordinator, provided an update on planning efforts for the Policy Council and the Directors' Retreat, explaining that identifying a date that accommodated participants' schedules had been challenging. She noted that an email had been distributed requesting availability, offering approximately 15 different date options. The retreat was being planned for either a Wednesday to Thursday or Thursday to Friday format. Georgiana outlined a preliminary two-day agenda: Day One begins at 1:00 p.m. and concludes with an evening reception at approximately 6:00 p.m., and Day Two consists of a full day of sessions ending between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m. She stated that a draft program had been developed and shared preliminarily with Stacie Guzman, Chair and Robert Phipps, Vice Chair, and that it would be distributed more broadly once initial feedback was incorporated.

Georgiana explained that the draft agenda was designed to incorporate as many topics as possible from the adopted Overall Work Program (OWP), recognizing that it might need to be refined or condensed to fit within the available time.

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She emphasized that the current draft provided substantive content intended to facilitate meaningful discussion and that session durations or topics could be adjusted as needed. She indicated that, following review and approval from Stacie and Robert, the draft agenda would be shared with the full group for further input.

Regarding timing and logistics, Georgiena stated that potential retreat dates were being explored for April, May, and June. She reported that she had contacted approximately ten venues previously discussed by the group and confirmed that all were available within the proposed date ranges. She encouraged participants to review the availability email and respond promptly so that dates and venues could be narrowed and confirmed.

Stacie Guzman acknowledged receipt of the materials and committed to reviewing the agenda in more detail. Drawing on her experience organizing board retreats, she suggested prioritizing the Executive Committee's availability and then selecting dates that accommodate a critical mass of remaining participants.

Robert Phipps commented on the proposed agenda, noting that he had reviewed it and found it to be ambitious and comprehensive. While he did not object to the topics included, he observed that the agenda covered substantial material and suggested that it might not be feasible to address every item in depth during the retreat. Georgiena mentioned that she had already pared down the program and would send it out for review once approved by Stacie and Robert.

7. Discussion: FY 2026/27 Overall Work Program (OWP) – Preliminary Review Georgiena Vivian

Georgiena Vivian, VRPA Technologies, SJV Coordinator, reported that she had completed a full review of the current fiscal year's Overall Work Program (OWP) and had made all necessary updates and revisions. She explained that the revised OWP would first be transmitted to Stacie Guzman, Chair, and Robert Phipps, Vice Chair, for initial review before being distributed to the full group. Georgiena noted that while the updated OWP largely remained consistent with the prior year's document, certain sections, particularly the air quality component, might warrant additional attention to ensure that recent work activities and highlights were fully and accurately reflected.

She stated that, following incorporation of any final revisions, the OWP would proceed through the standard approval process, beginning with review by the Executive Committee and subsequently advancing to the Policy Council for consideration and approval. Georgiena emphasized the importance of documenting all ongoing and anticipated activities in the OWP prior to these formal review stages.

Georgiena further reported that a draft budget for the upcoming fiscal year had already been prepared in conjunction with the OWP. She explained that the budget included contractually authorized increases in pay and contract amounts, as well as anticipated costs associated with major activities planned for the year. These included expenses related to Valley Voice advocacy trips to Sacramento and Washington, D.C., as well as costs associated with the planned retreat. She clarified that these anticipated expenditures had been incorporated proactively into the draft budget.

In addition, Georgiena explained that a preliminary meeting schedule for Fiscal Years 2026–27 had been developed and incorporated into the materials. She noted that she had consulted with Jen Covino regarding the timing of the Valley Voice trip to Washington, D.C., and learned that members of Congress were expected to return to Washington during the third, fourth, or fifth full week of September. Based on that information, one potential travel window under consideration included flying in on September 13, holding meetings on September 15 and 16, and departing on September 17. She indicated that alternative weeks were also viable and that final determination of dates would be guided by direction from the Executive Committee and the Policy Council.

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Georgiana added that the remaining dates in the draft schedule were structured to ensure that Executive Committee meetings occurred before Policy Council meetings and that all Director meetings were reflected accordingly. She concluded her presentation by inviting questions from the group.

Stacie Guzman, Chair, MCAG, sought clarification regarding the budget increases included in the draft, asking whether those amounts reflected increases already within existing contracts or represented additional funding beyond contractual obligations. Georgiana clarified that the increases were consistent with provisions already contained in the contracts and did not represent new or unanticipated increases. She further explained that the miscellaneous cost line for Valley Voice and retreat activities had been updated specifically to account for retreat-related expenses.

Stacie acknowledged the clarification and, in closing, noted an administrative item related to appointments. She stated that her agency currently had a vacancy for a city representative appointment and that, as part of the annual reappointment process conducted in January, a new city representative would be appointed by the end of the month. She encouraged other agencies to flag any similar vacancies in their Regional Policy Committee (RPC) appointments.

8. Committee Updates

a. *SVJ Swap Meet*

Kayley Clay

Blake Dunford, SJCOG, reported that a brief committee meeting was held on December 12, during which participants primarily checked in on the status and progress of the 2027 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) and the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Environmental Strategy (RTP/SCS). He noted that this meeting served as an interim coordination opportunity to ensure work on these major planning documents remained on track.

He further explained that the committee initiated a discussion on emergency relief funding during the December meeting. While the discussion was preliminary, Blake indicated that the topic would be carried forward for more in-depth consideration at the next meeting. He stated that the next meeting was anticipated to take place in early February, following the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) meeting scheduled for the 28th of the current month.

b. *Housing and Land Use*

Kim Anderson

Kim Anderson, SJCOG, provided an update on the status and upcoming activities of the Housing and Land Use Group. She reported that the group had not convened since October; however, a meeting was scheduled for the following week on January 13 at 9:30 a.m. Kim explained that the primary focus of the upcoming meeting would be a presentation by representatives from SACOG, specifically Dov, Caden, and Chelsea Lee. The presentation would center on the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process, with an emphasis on preparing for the next RHNA cycle and on requirements for consistency between Regional Transportation Plans/Sustainable Communities Strategies (RTP/SCS) and the current RHNA methodology.

Kim noted that the discussion would provide participants with an opportunity to better understand how future RHNA cycles intersect with long-range transportation planning requirements and to begin proactively addressing consistency across land use, housing, and transportation planning documents.

In addition to the upcoming meeting, Kim highlighted a significant milestone related to the San Joaquin Regional Housing Fund. She announced that the fund would hold its first advisory committee meeting toward the end of the month and that the program anticipated issuing its first round of gap-financing awards for housing projects in the San Joaquin Valley later in the spring. Kim characterized this as an important achievement for the region and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share the update.

Stacie Guzman, Chair, MCAG, responded by congratulating Kim and acknowledging the significance of the milestone, noting that the launch of the advisory committee and forthcoming housing awards represented a meaningful step forward for regional housing efforts.

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c. **Travel Modelers Group**

Rob Ball

Rob Ball, Kern COG, provided an update on the regional modelers group, noting that the group had last formally met in November. He explained that many of the group's participants had convened more recently at a special modeling coordination meeting held the previous day, which Ryan had referenced earlier in the meeting. Rob stated that the next scheduled meeting of the modelers group would take place on February 9 at 1:30 p.m.

Rob explained that the roundtable discussion held during the special meeting focused on a status check of where each agency and consultant stood with their respective modeling efforts. He indicated that a similar roundtable format would be used again at the upcoming February meeting. He noted that one key distinction between the special meeting and a typical modelers group meeting was that Caltrans had not participated in the special session, whereas all MPO modelers and their consultants were present and actively engaged in the discussion.

Rob further reported that, based on recent coordination, several metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) across the region were targeting August adoption dates for their Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs). He stated that current modeling work was being structured and timed to support those anticipated adoption schedules, underscoring the importance of maintaining progress and alignment across agencies.

He also highlighted a significant technical challenge emerging across multiple MPOs related to demonstrating greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions and related targets under the new modeling assumptions. Rob explained that lower population and employment growth projections in the updated models were making it more difficult for some agencies to show compliance with required targets. In response to this challenge, he noted that telework and telecommuting strategies were increasingly being incorporated into modeling assumptions as a potential means to offset some of the impacts of reduced growth, and that these strategies appeared to be a major focus for several MPOs.

Rob concluded his update by reiterating his expectation that many participants would reconvene at the February meeting and expressed appreciation for the continued coordination among agencies as modeling efforts advanced toward RTP adoption later in the year.

9. **SVJ REAP Program**

Georgiena Vivian & Robert Phipps

Robert Phipps, Vice Chair, Fresno COG, provided a comprehensive update on the close-out of the REAP 1 program, noting that despite challenges toward the end of calendar year 2025, the program was successfully completed with the support and coordination of multiple partners. He extended specific thanks to CalCOG, Bill Higgins, and the broader CalCOG team, as well as to staff and consultants who supported completion of the VisionEval model deliverables. Robert reported that the VisionEval work was finalized and invoiced, and that a training session for the regional modelers group was held near the end of the year. He noted that all training materials had been posted and were available to staff who were unable to attend live and offered to provide additional technical details if questions arise.

Robert then transitioned to the CalCOG deliverables completed under REAP, highlighting the customized demographic and housing-related products prepared specifically for Valley jurisdictions and regions. He introduced Bill Higgins, CalCOG, to elaborate on those products and noted that Georgiena Vivian would subsequently explain how the materials would be incorporated into the regional website.

Bill provided an overview of CalCOG's work, explaining that CalCOG had leveraged prior technical assistance work completed with PlaceWorks to maximize the value of REAP funding. He described this approach as a "win-win" that allowed CalCOG to repurpose overproduced technical work in a manner consistent with REAP objectives while restructuring internal costs. Bill noted that HCD requested additional customization near the end of the process, which CalCOG addressed through several tailored deliverables.

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Bill outlined four primary customization efforts. First, CalCOG customized existing housing policy white papers by incorporating Valley-specific branding, logos, and language to better reflect regional issues; these materials were posted on the regional website with links to CalCOG's Housing Implementation Programs Exchange (HIP) Resource Center. Second, CalCOG delivered a housing law update webinar tailored to Valley needs, with participation by local and regional staff, and absorbed the cost within the REAP funding framework. Third, CalCOG conducted a housing element alignment assessment for each agency using artificial intelligence tools, including both an open-source Civic Roundtable platform and a closed-document ChatGPT environment. These tools were used to compare adopted (or draft) housing elements against RHNA methodology and SCS assumptions, producing draft, staff-level assessment summaries. Bill emphasized that these assessments were intended for internal, informational use and recommended careful staff review and editing prior to any broader public dissemination, characterizing them as strong draft materials rather than finalized policy documents.

Fourth, Bill explained that CalCOG reviewed the assessment findings to identify gaps in available policy resources. While existing HIP resources adequately addressed implementation tools such as permit streamlining and density bonuses, the assessment revealed a need for more policy-oriented guidance on infill housing, middle-income housing, and similar strategies. To meet contract requirements, CalCOG identified interim resources and documented recommendations in a memo. Bill committed to expanding the HIP Resource Center beyond the contract scope to better address these needs for Valley jurisdictions and CalCOG members statewide.

Following clarification that the HIP Resource Center and HIP Exchange referred to the same CalCOG platform, Georgiana Vivian described how REAP materials were being presented on the regional website. She explained that the site included a dedicated REAP resources section linking to the CalCOG HIP, case studies, and a Regional Housing Needs Allocation overview page, where staff-level assessment materials could eventually be housed if appropriate. Bill reiterated caution regarding posting AI-generated assessments publicly without additional editing and contextual explanation, emphasizing that their primary value was internal staff insight and informing future resource development.

Robert then confirmed that, upon the completion of deliverables and the submission of associated invoices, REAP 1 was officially closed from a fiscal and fiduciary standpoint. He noted that some additional narrative reporting to HCD would still be required to document final products, but that staff would handle those requirements. He stated that REAP 2 was being implemented on an agency-by-agency basis rather than as a Valley-wide effort, and therefore, REAP 1 updates would be removed from future agendas. Stacie Guzman, Chair, MCAG, expressed strong appreciation for Robert's leadership throughout the REAP process, noting the complexity of interpreting program requirements, establishing new governance structures, and navigating implementation challenges. She thanked CalCOG, consultants, and staff across agencies for their patience and effort, emphasizing the confidence Robert's stewardship had provided. Robert responded by crediting staff, consultants, and HCD for their flexibility and collaboration, and acknowledged that HCD's willingness to problem-solve was critical to the successful completion of the program.

Finally, Kim Anderson, SJCOG, noted that REAP 2 updates would be incorporated into regular Housing Committee reports going forward, formally transitioning ongoing REAP-related discussions to that venue, and marking the conclusion of Valley-wide REAP 1 activity.

INFORMATION ITEMS

The following items are for informational purposes and require no action or vote. The individuals listed will provide a brief verbal update at the meeting.

10. Caltrans Directors' Report

Michael Navarro, D6 &
Grace Magsayo, D10

Michael Navarro, Director, Caltrans, District 6, provided a comprehensive update to the directors, beginning with several staffing announcements within Caltrans District 6. He reported that following the departure of John Liu, a new maintenance and operations deputy, referred to as "Life After John Liu," had begun the prior week. In the interim, Jose de

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Alba was serving as the Acting Maintenance and Operations Deputy for January, with interviews underway and a permanent appointment anticipated by the end of the month. Michael indicated that once the permanent appointment was finalized, the information would be shared with the group. He also announced that Braden Duran had formally assumed the role of permanent Office Chief overseeing the planning division. In this capacity, Braden would be responsible for regional planning and land use activities under the leadership of Shane Gunn, and Michael expressed appreciation for having him in a permanent role.

Michael then provided an update on Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants, noting that District 6 received ten applications during the most recent funding round in November, representing approximately \$3.8 million in requested funding. He stated that the district had completed its scoring of the applications and commended applicants for submitting highly competitive proposals. The scored applications would be forwarded to Caltrans Headquarters, with award announcements expected in May or June. Michael indicated that the district felt optimistic about the quality of the applications submitted this cycle.

He also thanked the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) directors in District 6 who had met with him or his staff to discuss the ongoing "SHOPP rebalancing" effort and its implications for project delivery. Michael emphasized that the impacts being experienced should be viewed as project delays rather than deletions, and he encouraged continued dialogue if additional questions or concerns arise. He reminded the group that the draft 2026 State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) had been released for review, with comments due by January 16, and that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) would be holding hearings on the draft program in February.

Michael further noted that changes to Buy America requirements were a significant issue for many local agencies. In response, Caltrans Headquarters' Local Assistance Division will host virtual office hours in March and April to provide guidance and answer questions. Invitations to these sessions would be distributed to local agencies in advance.

In closing, Michael announced that Caltrans District 6 would host the 5th Annual Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/Small Business (DBE/SB) Summit in Fresno. The one-day event, sponsored by the Caltrans Office of Civil Rights, was scheduled for March 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. He reported that invitations had been extended to the Caltrans Secretary, the Caltrans Director, Mayor Jerry Dyer, and representatives from the Federal Highway Administration. Michael noted that the summit had been very well attended in prior years, with approximately 700 participants at the previous event, and expressed optimism that similar attendance would be achieved given the heightened interest in DBE-related issues. He concluded his update by offering to respond to any questions from the group.

11. California High-Speed Rail

Augie Blancas, CHSRA

An update was not provided.

12. San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority – Passenger Rail

Ahdel Ahmed

Ahdel Ahmed, SJJPA, provided an update on leadership, service launches, special-event operations, and program development. He began by announcing that Chris Orlando had officially assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer for both the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and the Rail Commission, noting that this was his first week in the position. Ahdel stated that plans were underway to invite Mr. Orlando to a future meeting to formally introduce himself and to provide opportunities for individual engagement with regional transportation partners.

Ahdel then highlighted the recent launch of Route 40, a new intercity bus service connecting Merced to San Jose. He explained that the service began operating earlier in the week and that information about the route had been posted on the agency's website. In addition to the service launch, Ahdel noted that staff were planning a formal in-person event, potentially a ribbon-cutting ceremony, to commemorate the new route. He indicated that staff coordination with partner agencies was already underway and that the event was tentatively scheduled for the first week of February. Ahdel

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emphasized the strong media interest surrounding Route 40, particularly given the expanded transportation options it provides for residents traveling between Merced and the Bay Area.

Ahdel also shared an update on special event rail service, noting that a Super Bowl train was planned to operate from Stockton to Santa Clara. He explained that the train would depart early in the morning and return late at night to accommodate event attendees. However, he acknowledged that the service presented logistical challenges due to closures around Levi's Stadium, which affected traditional drop-off locations. He stated that staff were actively coordinating with regional partners and the Super Bowl Host Committee to ensure passengers could be transported efficiently from train drop-off points to their final destinations.

Finally, Ahdel provided a brief update on the Valley Rail program, stating that the agency was updating the program and refining its implementation approach. He noted that he had just presented information to the station committee earlier that day and that staff were developing a revised phased approach for the program. Ahdel indicated that he would return at a future meeting to provide a more detailed update on the revised Valley Rail phasing and next steps.

13. San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Mark Montelongo

An update was not provided.

14. Miocar Car Sharing

Michael Sigala

An update was not provided.

OTHER ITEMS

15. Director Items

Terry King, KCAG, raised a fiscal and administrative question regarding outstanding invoices for Valley legal services. He noted that, following his agency's recent move and organizational changes, he was uncertain how much funding remained available and expressed concern that no bill for Valley legal services had been received during the fiscal year. Terry requested clarification to ensure that, if any legal service costs had been incurred, an invoice could be received before the end of the fiscal year to allow for proper payment and close-out.

In response, Stacie Guzman, Chair, MCAG, explained that she would follow up with Kate Miller, StanCOG, to confirm the status of legal services billing. She recalled that the Regional Policy Council had decided, at the July meeting, to place the legal services contract on hold. As a result, she indicated that it was possible no legal service costs had been incurred during the current fiscal year, or that any costs would be minimal and potentially limited to a single meeting prior to the hold. Stacie committed to verifying the timing and implications of that decision and reporting back as needed.

Robert Phipps, Vice Chair, Fresno COG, added that, in addition to legal services, there was some uncertainty regarding the status of federal and state advocacy contracts. He acknowledged Terry's broader concern about contract tracking and noted that he was also unclear on the current billing status for advocacy services.

Stacie elaborated that she had been working with Kate over the holiday break to reconcile outstanding invoices, better understand what had already been billed, and to which agencies. She explained that part of the challenge stemmed from the transition of administrative responsibilities and the need to piece together historical billing records, including older invoices. She also noted that there were still some outstanding items to clarify with Jen regarding advocacy services. Stacie emphasized that this reconciliation effort was ongoing and that she expected clarity once the review was completed. She reiterated that, specifically regarding legal services, any remaining costs were likely to be very small or nonexistent. Terry responded, expressing relief that no legal costs remained outstanding.

Before closing the agenda item, Stacie raised an additional informational item for the Directors' awareness. She noted that there appeared to be emerging interest from a Policy Council member representing Madera County, Member Poythress,

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MCTC, in re-engaging in discussions about proactive strategies or alternatives related to the gas tax. Stacie explained that while the topic was not discussed in detail at the current meeting, due in part to the absence of certain members, it could arise at the upcoming Policy Council meeting. She flagged the issue so Directors would be aware that broader discussions on gas tax alternatives might occur in future meetings.

16. Public presentations for items not on the agenda.

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons wishing to address the Committee on items within its jurisdiction but NOT on this agenda. Unscheduled comments may be limited to three minutes. The public may comment on listed agenda items as they are considered.

There were no public comments.

17. Directors' Only Session – **Not Scheduled**

ADJOURN MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 PM.

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Other Meeting Participants

Yes	No	Director Agency	Yes	No	Director Agency
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephan Sanchez Kern COG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gus Khouri Khouri Consulting
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rob Ball Kern COG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mitch Weiss Khouri Consulting
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kayley Clay KCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jen Covino Covino, Smith & Simon
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Kimball TCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	David Gellman Covino, Smith & Simon
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steven Ingoldsby TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aly Hernandez Covino, Smith & Simon
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Roberto Brady TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alex Marcucci Trinity Consultants
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Giuliani TCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Samer Shaath, CHSRA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aime Kane TCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Augie Blancas, CHSRA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paul Herman Fresno COG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Navarro Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ofelia Abundez Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Braden Duran Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Simran Jhutti Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Harpreet Binning Caltrans D6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brenda Thomas Fresno COG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alec Kimmel Caltrans D6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dylan Stone MCTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nabeelah Abi-Rached Caltrans D6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jeff Findley MCTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grace Magsayo Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Evelyn Espinosa MCTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Caleb Brock Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nav Bagri MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eric Mather Caltrans D10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elizabeth Forte MCAG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tom Dumas Caltrans D10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meg Prince MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Duper Tong Caltrans, D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Jackson MCAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gurwinder Sekhon Caltrans D10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jose Luis Caceres StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gregoria Ponce Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Monica Streeter StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gabbie Sefranek Caltrans D10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nick St. Cook StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Natalia Castillo Deleon Caltrans
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Shannon Silva StanCOG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill Higgins CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Josephine Oshana StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sabrina Bradbury CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jean Foletta StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gregory McAteer CALCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cindy Malekos StanCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vincenzo Caporale CALCOG
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ryan Niblock SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Michael Sigala Sigala, Inc.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kim Anderson SJCOG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rene Gutierrez ACE Rail
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yvette Davis SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Peter Whippy CHSRA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Christine Corrales SJCOG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Shane Gunn Caltrans D6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Montelongo SJVAPCD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Dunford SJCOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dan Leavitt SJJPA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shichen Fan Fresno COG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Michael Hanebutt SJJPA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Raymond Kern COG
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Georgiena Vivian SJV Coordinator VRPA Technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kristine Kai LSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carolina Ilic VRPA Technologies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	James Corless SACOG
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dena Graham VRPA Technologies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blake Rincon
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ryan Vivian VRPA Technologies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guest

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AGENDA ITEM 6

Policy Council and Directors' Committee

Draft Retreat Program

DRAFT

Policy Council and Directors' Retreat

Note: The timeframe for conclusion can be extended on Day 2 to 5:00 pm instead of 4:15 pm.

DAY 1

1:00 PM | Group Activity – “Break the Ice”

6:00 PM | Dinner Reception Event

PROPOSED FULL-DAY RETREAT AGENDA

DAY 2

SESSION 1

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM | Arrival, Networking, & Continental Breakfast

- ✓ Informal introductions (Directors, Policy Council members, Regional Agency Staff)
- ✓ Materials distributed:
 - FY 2026–27 Valleywide OWP
 - Organizational Chart
 - Valley Voice Platforms (Federal and State)
 - SR 99 CMCP Brief
 - RTP/SCS Coordination Brief
 - Air Quality Conformity & Modeling Update Brief

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM | Welcome & Opening Remarks

Speakers:

- ✓ **Chair, Policy Council** (Supervisor Daron McDaniel, MCAG)
- ✓ **Chair, Directors' Committee** (Stacie Guzman, MCAG)

Topics:

- ✓ **Retreat Purpose**
 - Strengthen Valleywide coordination
 - Review and refine organizational structure, governance, and meeting protocols
 - Align policy priorities, Valley Voice advocacy themes, and Valleywide OWP activities

- Build stronger relationships among RPAs and external partners
- Establish shared goals and operational improvements for the FY 2025–26 cycle and beyond
- Ensure the Valley speaks with a unified regional voice on transportation, air quality, legislative policy, and funding
- ✓ **Retreat Objectives**
 - Collaboratively refine Valleywide priorities—including goods movement, SR 99 multimodal planning, air quality conformity, modeling, RTP/SCS coordination, and legislative efforts.
 - Importance of unified regional coordination
 - Brief acknowledgment of 2026–27 priority areas

SESSION 2

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM | State of the Valley – Strategic Overview

Panelists: AQ, Housing, Economic Development, Legislative, and Modal Representatives/Experts

Facilitator: Valleywide Coordinator, Georgiena Vivian (VRPA Technologies)

Content:

- ✓ The Valley’s unique role: 27,000 square miles, major freight hub, agricultural epicenter
- ✓ Brief Summary of FY 2026–27 Coordinated Valleywide Activities:
 - SR 99 and major highway coordination
 - Goods movement planning & inland port progress
 - Air quality conformity
 - RTP/SCS coordination & VMT issues
 - State & federal relationship building
 - Valley Voice legislative advocacy
 - Passenger rail & housing planning initiatives

Outcome:

Context-setting for all subsequent discussions.

BREAK

9:30 AM – 9:45 AM

SESSION 3

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM | Organization Vision, Goals, & Priorities Workshop

Panelists:

Facilitator: Valleywide Coordinator, Georgiena Vivian (VRPA Technologies)

Activities:

- ✓ Breakout 1: “What should the Valley accomplish (Goals) by 2031?” – 35 Minutes
 - Define measurable goals in:
 - Funding readiness for SR 99 & I-5
 - Freight systems modernization
 - Vehicle Gas Tax Alternative
 - Meeting RTP/SCS GHG targets
 - Improving Valleywide air quality coordination
 - Strengthening multi-county modeling capabilities
 - Enhancing public visibility & legislative impact

Deliverable:

Break-out Group Feedback: Draft Valley-wide priority goals for FY 2026–27 and a 5-year outlook.

SESSION 4

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM | Strengthening the Organizational Structure

Panelists:

Facilitator: Valleywide Coordinator, Georgiena Vivian (VRPA Technologies)

Topics:

- ✓ Clarify roles between Directors, Executive Committee, Policy Council, Valleywide Coordinator, consultant teams, and agency fiscal responsibilities.
- ✓ Review Directors’ rotation schedule and responsibilities
- ✓ Review roles of agents for Air Quality, Valleywide Coordinator, and Legislative Consultants
- ✓ Ensure clarity for:
 - Directors vs. Policy Council responsibilities
 - Executive Committee role
 - VLAC role (legislative affairs) (If applicable)
 - Staff-level committees (TMG, Housing/Land Use Committee, SJV Swap Meet Group)

Activity:

Organizational “pain points” and structural gaps.

Outcome:

A refined organizational structure map + recommended updates.

Speech Topics:

- ✓ Statewide funding outlook
- ✓ CAPTI implementation
- ✓ Multimodal SR 99 future
- ✓ Federal infrastructure opportunities

LUNCH

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM | Lunch & Keynote From External Partner

Suggested keynote options:

- ✓ **CalSTA Secretary (or designee)**
- ✓ **CTC Commissioner**
- ✓ **Caltrans District Director (District 6 or 10)**

SESSION 5

1:00 PM AM – 2:00 PM | Establishing Meeting & Communication Protocols

Panelists:

Facilitator: Valleywide Coordinator, Georgiena Vivian (VRPA Technologies)

Content:

- ✓ Modernize communication pathways, meeting timing, and interagency coordination (including CTC, CalSTA, ARB, Caltrans Districts 6 & 10, SJVAPCD).
- ✓ Review current meeting frequency changes (Policy Council & Executive Committee updates).
- ✓ Reaffirm the annual meeting calendar aligned with:
 - OWP draft
 - RTP/SCS deadlines
 - Valley Voice visits
 - Federal/State grant cycles

Key Objectives:

- ✓ Improve preparation, agenda structure, timing, and materials flow
- ✓ Improve Director-to-Director communication during CTC/CalCOG cycles
- ✓ Improve communication with ARB, EPA, FRA, FTA, FHWA, USDA, and HCD

Deliverable:

A standardized meeting & communication protocol handbook.

SESSION 6

Panelists:

Facilitator: Valley wide Coordinator, Georgiena Vivian (VRPA Technologies)

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM | Valley Voice 2026–27 – Planning and Development

- ✓ Washington D.C. (Sept 2026)
- ✓ Sacramento (Spring 2027)

Deliverable:

Draft Valley Voice Purpose, Planning, Process, New Ideas

BREAK

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM

SESSION 7

Panelists:

Facilitator: Valleywide Coordinator, Georgiena Vivian (VRPA Technologies)

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM | Investment in Training & Leadership Development

Recommended Training Areas:

- ✓ Legislative advocacy & coalition-building
- ✓ Transportation funding readiness
- ✓ Air quality conformity & EMFAC modeling
- ✓ Interagency communication practices

Deliverable:

Annual Training & Professional Development Plan

CLOSING SESSION

Speakers:

- ✓ **Chair, Policy Council** (Supervisor Daron McDaniel, MCAG)
- ✓ **Chair, Directors' Committee** (Stacie Guzman, MCAG)

3:30 PM – 4:15 PM

- ✓ Summary of next steps
- ✓ Assignment of responsibilities (Directors, Coordinator, consultants)
- ✓ Positive reflections and adjournment

RETREAT OUTPUT PACKAGE (Deliverables)

- ✓ **Updated Valleywide Vision & Goal Framework**
- ✓ **Refined Organizational Structure Overview**
- ✓ **Meeting & Communication Protocol**
- ✓ **2026–27 Valley Voice Planning Guide**
- ✓ **Training & Professional Development Roadmap**
- ✓ **Draft 2026–27 Valleywide Priorities Integrated with Final OWP**