

Working with Other Movements to Achieve Community Health Goals:

Climate Change, Health in All Policies, and More



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In California, two policy-oriented movements offer tremendous opportunities for communities working to build community health and health equity by improving food and physical activity environments.

Both movements bring together practitioners and advocates from many different arenas, building a diverse and potentially powerful constituency that could reinforce the voice of community health advocates. Both movements can also benefit tremendously from having community health advocates and local community residents add their voices, perspectives, and vigilance to the effort.

California's climate change legislation offers the chance to improve community health and health equity, through better housing, land use and transportation plans linked to a vision for California that significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions over the next 25 years.

The Health in All Policies approach looks at all policies for their impact on health, and includes positive health outcomes and health equity goals as part of how any policy should be assessed. It brings multiple agencies, including those responsible for health, economics, education, planning, land use, transportation and housing, together to strategically incorporate public health into all policy discussions and action.

Here, we provide an overview of both of these movements. We show what communities advocating for healthier food and physical activity environments and for health equity could gain by connecting to or leveraging off of these efforts. And we offer links to where to find out more, as well as contact information to help your community get involved. Finally, we briefly list a few other significant efforts that also offer promising opportunities for collaboration to accomplish shared goals.

I. California's Climate Change Legislation

Overview

Now and through the next few years, California community residents and community health advocates have a significant new opportunity to shape the future of their communities, by influencing regional planning efforts that link land use and transportation decisions to address climate change.

In 2006, California passed Assembly Bill 32 (AB32), to reduce greenhouse gasses in order to slow climate change. To achieve this, another law, Senate Bill 375 (SB375) was passed, which requires the most populous regions in the state to develop a combined land use and transportation plan for the region.

These plans must meet the needs of the region's population growth, while at the same time significantly reducing per capita greenhouse gases. These regional plans are called Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS). Once these SCS plans have been developed, cities and counties will revise their local housing guidelines and zoning laws to meet their regional housing allocations. And regional transportation agencies should begin to fund new transportation projects consistent with the terms of the SCS plan.

The Sustainable Community Strategies offer a prime opportunity for community health advocates to influence housing, land use and transportation decisions for years to come, to improve health and equity.

The SCS process requires ample opportunity for public input into the process, which offers communities the chance to make sure these plans address community health needs like affordable housing, safe and walkable streets, and good transit (healthy community solutions that can also reduce greenhouse gases).

At the same time, regions will need people watching and pushing, to make sure that the plans are actually implemented so that those health and equity goals become real. Various different plans could meet the greenhouse gas targets. Only some of them also achieve co-benefits for health and equity. In addition, SB375 does not provide strong mechanisms to link the regional plans with city and county implementation of those plans and on-the-ground development decisions. The potential benefit to communities through the SCS process is great, but it will require strong and persistent advocacy to achieve these goals.

Here, you will find an overview of what communities have to gain, and how to get involved. Though the Sustainable Communities Strategy process is complex, a statewide coalition, called ClimatePlan, has been formed that can help community health advocates learn when and how to get involved in targeted, strategic, and time-efficient ways.



Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC

What Do Communities Have to Gain?

A work group of social and health equity advocates has developed a list of what they call the “Six Big Wins”. These provide a good synopsis of the potential benefits to communities from the SB375 process.

Six Big Wins

(adapted from Six Big Wins for Social Equity, Earthhouse Center)

1. Healthy & Safe Communities

What? Better air quality in impacted and underserved communities; increased opportunities to use physically active transportation modes safely, such as biking and walking to jobs, schools, and services.

How? To reduce greenhouse gas emissions SB375 presents an opportunity to develop land use and transportation patterns that reduce reliance on cars, increase walkability and bikability, and improve air quality.

2. Investment without Displacement

What? Neighborhood development and investment that serves low-income communities without displacing them.

How? SB 375 provides an opportunity to channel more transportation spending to transit and active transportation, aligns the regional housing planning process with the Regional Transportation Plan, and updates the law that defines local housing allocation. We must make sure that these desirable community improvements do not force low income residents out of their homes, but instead improve quality of life for current residents in those neighborhoods.

3. Affordable Housing

What? More affordable housing near entry-level jobs, reliable public transit, good schools, parks and recreation, healthy neighborhoods, and other opportunities.

How? SB375 alters the regional housing allocation process. It requires that the SCS plan include housing for the entire population of the region at all income levels. We must make sure that the plan succeeds in effectively including affordable housing, and that housing locations improve both health and equity.

4. Reliable Public Transit

What? More frequent, reliable and affordable bus and transit service.

How? One of the primary goals of SB375 is to better link transportation investments with sustainable community planning. It thus offers an opportunity to increase affordable transportation options, improving transportation access and equity.

5. Economic Opportunity

What? Lowering greenhouse gas emissions can and should result in access to healthy living wage jobs for all, especially those in historically disenfranchised communities

How? SB375 presents the possibility to create more transit operations and construction jobs (transit creates more jobs than roadways), provide isolated low-income communities with better transit access to high-quality jobs, and locate new affordable housing near workplaces.

6. Community Power

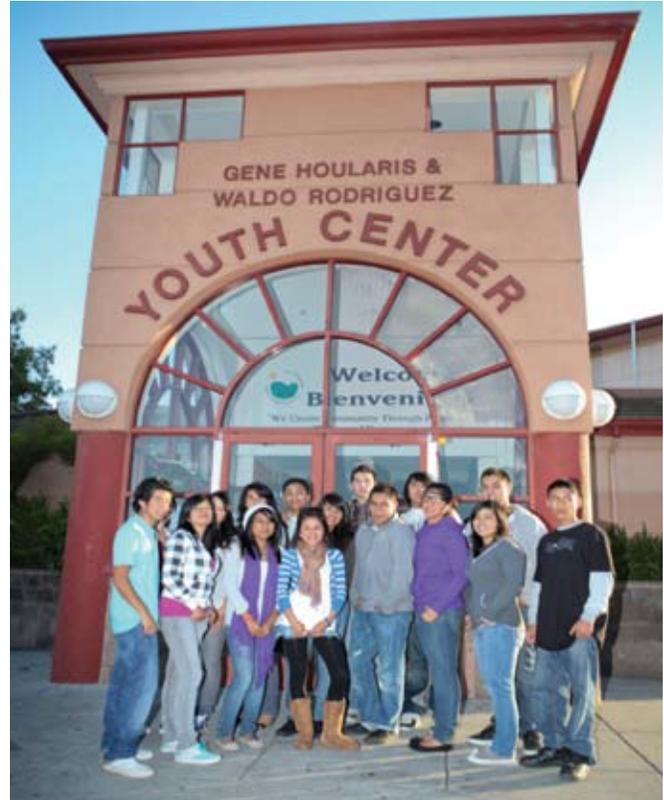
What? Greater community power in local and regional decision making and community mobilization for low income people, working families and communities of color.

How? SB375 provides for robust public participation. Because an updated Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) will be adopted every four years, it is important to build power and solidify wins with each successive SCS.

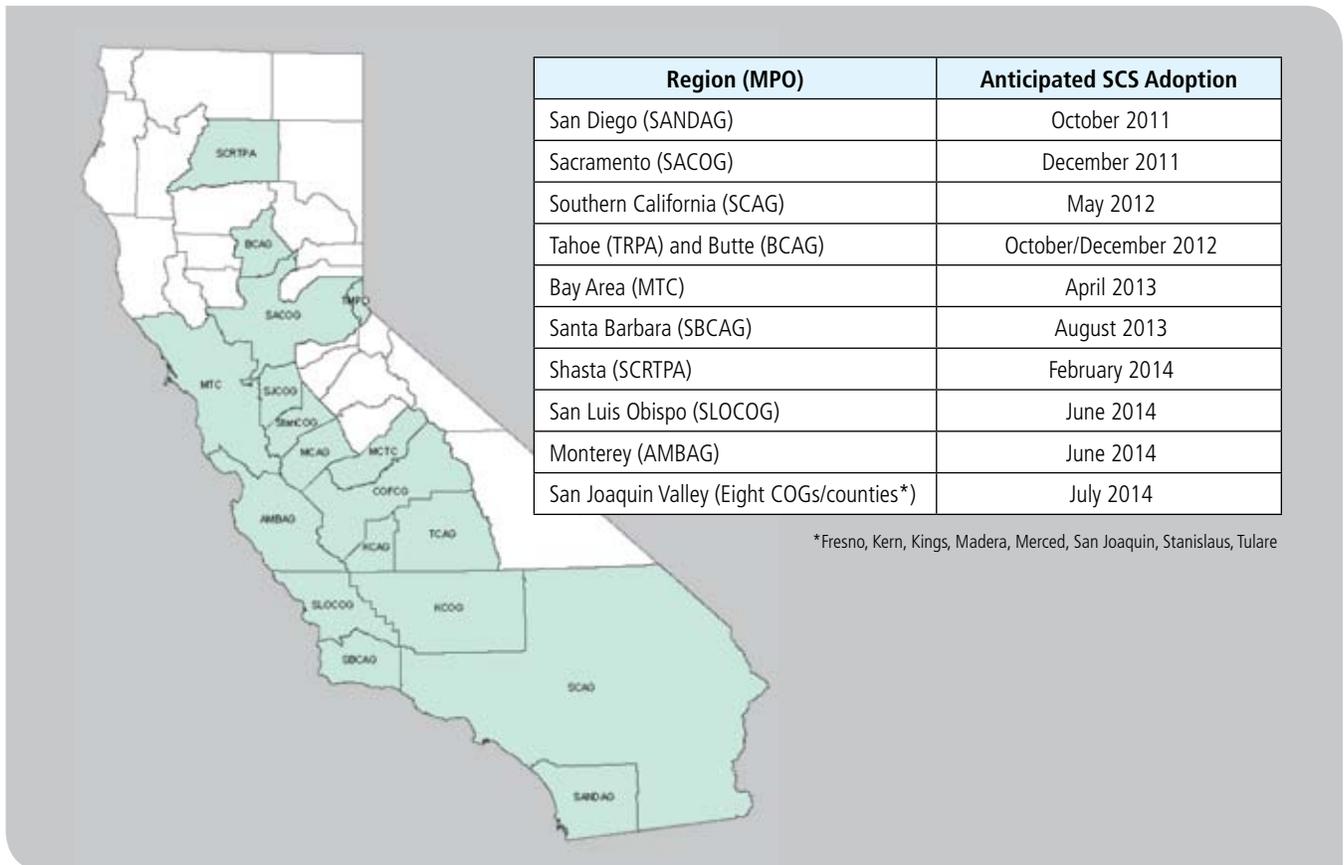
Key Things You Need to Know to Get Involved

Planning By Region: The Sustainable Communities Strategies planning process happens separately in each region, through that region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). For communities, this means that the place to get involved and advocate, at this planning stage, is at the regional level.

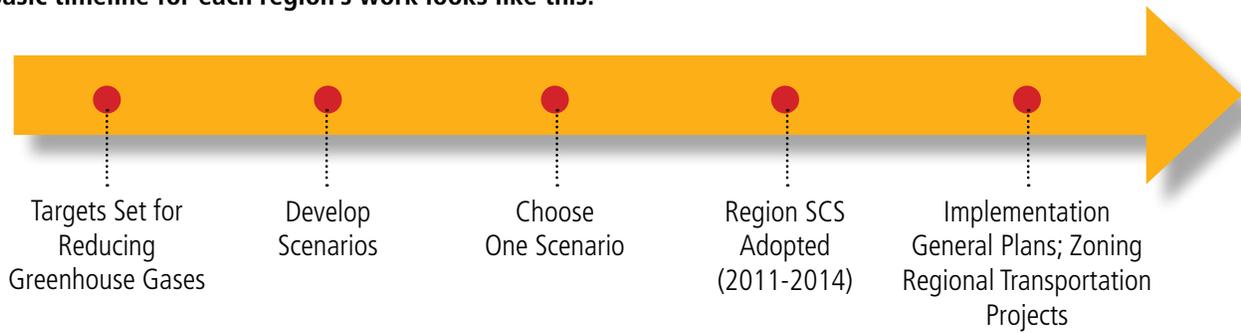
Each region has its own deadline.



Metropolitan Planning Organization Boundaries:



A basic timeline for each region's work looks like this:



Where, When, and How to Get Involved

Key moments for community input to achieve health and equity goals include:

- Input to make sure one or more of the scenarios developed by regional MPO includes your health and equity goals.
- Input when decision is being made between scenarios, to make sure health and equity scenario is adopted.
- After the SCS is adopted, working at the local level to make sure general plan and zoning updates fulfill the SCS goals, and development decisions follow those guidelines.
- When decisions are being made about specific transportation projects, to make sure they meet the goals of the SCS plan.

The ClimatePlan coalition offers a coordinated way to connect to this process, wherever you are in the state. The coalition is diverse – it includes representatives from transit, affordable housing, farmland protection, public health, urban planning, bike/walk advocates, social equity and environmental groups. ClimatePlan staff are working with coalition partners to monitor the SB375 process around the state and they can steer you to opportunities to influence it.

See the ClimatePlan website for additional information about SB375. It will also soon have pages dedicated to several of the regions, with updates about the process in that region. In addition, ClimatePlan staff responsible for the coalition's work in each region are eager to connect with organizations that wish to get involved.

Contact:

www.ClimatePlanCA.org

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Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC

II. Health in All Policies

Overview

The Health in All Policies movement offers opportunities both to influence state policy in California, with impacts statewide, and to galvanize change locally. Health depends upon myriad factors, many of them defined by the environments in which people live, learn, work and play. Clean air, water and housing, safe parks and sidewalks where people can play and be active, streets that make it safe to bike or walk, access to fresh healthy foods, access to quality education and to job opportunities – factors such as these have far greater impact on the health of California than health care.

Many policies influence these various aspects of people's environments and lives, including economic, educational, planning, land use, transportation and housing policy. Historically, agencies responsible for these policies have looked through different lenses, spoken different languages and often had competing priorities. At the state level, through a Health in All Policies Task Force established in 2010, these California state agencies have begun to work collaboratively and strategically to incorporate public health into all policy discussions and action. The premise of the Health in All Policies approach is to recognize the immense impact that all policies may have on health, and to explicitly consider health in those decisions.

Health in All Policies in California: State Level

In February 2010, then-Governor Schwarzenegger signed an executive order directing the state's Strategic Growth Council to establish a Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force. The task force brought together policy players and stakeholders to identify priority strategies to improve the health of Californians while advancing the Strategic Growth Council's goals. With the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) coordinating the process, the Task Force was asked to submit a report recommending programs, policies, and strategies for consideration.

CDPH conducted community outreach to help outline the aspects of a healthy community and to identify recommendations for state agency actions. Staff also met with all of the agencies designated to be on the task force, first meeting one on one with each agency representative. These initial conversations explored the 'win-win' possible through coming together, and how their agency's goals could be achieved or supported through the Health in All Policies (HiAP) process. CDPH staff then convened the task force as a whole for a series of meetings to develop a collective set of HiAP recommendations.

The Task Force worked together to narrow down a very long list of possibilities to 34 top recommendations, presented to the Strategic Growth Council in December 2010. The Council accepted the recommendations, but instructed staff to further winnow the list to a set of high priority, near-term actionable items.

Another round of public outreach included collecting examples of projects done by communities that fall into the categories of the recommendations; and also, asking which of the 34 recommendations would be most important in helping to improve community health. CDPH staff approached this as a two-way conversation, asking what local health advocates feel needs to happen at the state to create healthier communities; and asking, as well, what types of projects, programs and changes are already being modeled, at the community level.

This public input was brought back to the task force, which identified 11 top recommendations that will be presented to the SGC in June 2011. If this list is approved, the task force will then work to develop implementation plans for each top recommendation. These implementation plans will involve the many agencies on the task force implementing the pieces that are relevant to their agency.

Looking ahead, HiAP staff would like to improve their offerings of training, technical assistance, and other resources to local communities in order to build local capacity for multi-sectoral work to improve health, and they would like to secure permanent funding for the HiAP work.

California's state Health in All Policies Task Force sees itself as "a venue for people with many different perspectives to come together" and ask:

How can California's health sector help to advance the goals of other sectors whose work will have a huge impact on ecosystem and economic sustainability and thus on human health and survival? And simultaneously, how can other sectors incorporate a health lens as they address their own... problems, so that California's population is as healthy, productive, and resilient as possible?

To learn more, and to keep up with developments as the state HiAP Task Force continues its work, see: www.sgc.ca.gov/hiap



Health in All Policies at the Local Level

Latino Health Access- City of Santa Ana

Latino Health Access, in Santa Ana, California, is one of the local community health advocacy groups that participated in the public workshops convened by the state Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force. Based on their experience working locally, they saw value to promoting a HiAP framework at the state level. While they had successfully accomplished a number of local changes, they realized that to achieve more far-reaching and sustainable improvements to community environments for health, they needed state policies to anchor such change.

We eagerly got involved. We see the real need and value for state level activities to advance health policy, to provide the standards and mandates that provide leverage for the local work. At the local level, we can do programs and set up pilot projects; but state mandates provide the leverage to then take those successful pilots or programs and implement them city-wide.

Ana Carricchi, Latino Health Access

Latino Health Access finds that one of the real advantages of the HiAP framework is the commitment to bringing agencies together to look for improved efficiencies. In these times of economic difficulty for cities, city departments often see budgetary concerns as a barrier to making healthy changes. By bringing departments together and looking for the win-win, city staff find ways to achieve health and other goals within existing budgets or programs.

The City of Santa Ana has already made an explicit commitment to incorporating health into its policies, by joining the League of Cities Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Initiative. To join the campaign, each city must have passed one or more policies that offer health benefits or co-benefits. As HEAL members, cities can receive training, resources and technical assistance; they also receive recognition at the League of Cities annual conference and on its website, and a tailored press release to help publicize their efforts locally. To date, 76 cities throughout California are members. And recently, the City of Santa Ana is applying, as a city, for a health related grant. Latino Health Access sees this as a win-win.

To learn more about the League of Cities HEAL Campaign, see: www.healcitiescampaign.org



Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC

The City of Richmond aims to create policies that maximize health outcomes and reduce health disparities. This will be done by implementing strategies for considering health impacts in all City policies.

City of Richmond website, May 23, 2011

City of Richmond Health Element

In 2006 the City of Richmond proposed to include a section in its general plan (the plan that guides development for the city) specifically devoted to making sure that health was taken into account in development decisions. When the City Manager Bill Lindsay introduced this idea, the local Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) collaborative, just starting out at that time, got involved. HEAL collaborative members advised the city, and helped organize community and youth involvement.

Richmond's proposed health element went beyond what might typically go into a general plan. General plans primarily focus on guiding decisions about a city's built environment, such as new development projects. But, according to Healthy Communities by Design, "because the City of Richmond is defining public health broadly, the Community Health and Wellness Element will also address socio-economic conditions that largely explain health disparities among low-income and minority communities."

Though the health element has not yet been formally adopted, the city nevertheless began, early on, implementing policies with health in mind. Richmond developed a Parks Master Plan (with significant youth input), and passed a Healthy Vending policy. It introduced Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and community policing to address Richmond's high levels of violence, as well. Health considerations were woven throughout an overarching vision for turning this once-troubled city around.

The health focused changes in Richmond have been sufficiently notable that in a recent front page news article praising "Richmond's Renaissance", the commitment by all city services to consider health in all of their decision making was specifically called out as a component of the city's success.

Coire Reilly of West County HEAL in Richmond says, "Having a health element is a lightning rod, a focal point. It helps people focus." The City of Richmond's experience is an example of what can be accomplished by taking a Health in All Policies approach at a local level.

To learn more about Richmond's Community Health and Wellness Element, and its health in all policies approach, see it's website at: www.ci.richmond.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=2421



Opportunities for Communities

In sum, Health in All Policies offers two key opportunities for community health and equity coalitions.

- 1) Adopt or adapt a Health in All Policies resolution locally, as Richmond did with its general plan health element, and as Santa Ana did with respect to healthy food and physical activity policies by joining the League of Cities HEAL initiative. A local resolution can galvanize local change; it also provides examples to other cities, and builds momentum for Health in All Policies across the state.
- 2) Participate in and support state-level Health in All Policies activities. Build your capacity as community leaders to use your collective voice to advocate for the state's HiAP recommendations and support implementing them at the state, regional and local level. Provide testimony and input at opportunities such as Strategic Growth Council meetings and HiAP Task Force public workshops, to articulate and inform how the state's HiAP work benefits the community.



Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC

III. Other Movements

Climate change and Health in All Policies are both ripe opportunities for community health advocates to get involved, and thereby advance their health equity, and food and physical activity environment goals.

There are a few other recent movements that share some overlapping goals, and may make for good allies and coalition partners on certain issues. These include:

- **Food justice** – Views access to healthy foods, food production, and food systems as key points of engagement for social justice and equity. Food deserts, farming practices, target marketing (marketing unhealthy foods in targeted ways to communities of color, or to youth) and urban gardening are all points of advocacy for food justice proponents.
- **Transportation justice** – Evident in the LA bus riders' strike, as well as in rural Humboldt County's attention to transportation access and equity, the transportation justice movement advocates for allocation of transportation spending, and for transportation decision making that equitably benefits all communities, and meets the need for many modes of transportation.
- **Environmental justice** – Whereas the mainstream environmental movement has sometimes been accused of valuing animals and wilderness at the expense of people,

the environmental justice movement looks primarily at environmental degradations that have a direct impact on people, frequently and disproportionately on low income communities, and on communities of color.

- **Green jobs** – Aims to build economic opportunity in the sector of jobs that support environmental goals, ranging from addressing climate change (for example increasing transit), to reducing dependency on oil (for example building and installing solar panels), to sustainable agriculture.

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