

*Date:*

**Subject:** Item 3 | Strategic Growth Council November Meeting Minutes

**Reporting Period:** November 2021 – January 2022

**Staff Lead:** Sarah Newsham, Special Projects Associate

### **Recommended Action**

Approval of the November 16, 2021, Strategic Growth Council Meeting Minutes.

## Strategic Growth Council November 16, 2021 - Meeting Minutes

### **Agenda Item #1: Call to Order**

Vice Chair Flad called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #2: Roll Call**

#### **Council Members and Representatives Present:**

Samuel Assefa, Director, Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR);

Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA);

Lourdes Castro Ramírez, Secretary, California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH);

Elissa Konove (Designee), Undersecretary, California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), on behalf of Secretary David Kim;

Nicole Capretz, Public Member;

Mike Flad (Vice Chair), Public Member;

Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA);

Chancellor Juan Sánchez Muñoz, Public Member;

Mark Starr (Designee), Deputy Director, California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS), on behalf of Secretary Mark Ghaly;

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) - *absent*

### **Agenda Item #3: ACTION: Approval of Minutes**

Motion was made (Blumenfeld) and seconded (Castro Ramírez) to approve the September 8, 2021 meeting minutes. Motion passes (7-0-2\*; Assefa and Konove abstain).

\*marks abstention or absence from vote.

Public Comment:

No public comment.



**Agenda Item #4: ACTION: Council Elections**

Lynn von Koch-Liebert, Executive Director, SGC

Matt Read, Staff Counsel, SGC

*Recommended Action: Council shall nominate and vote on Council Chair and Vice-Chair.*

Capretz nominated Director Sam Assefa as Chair of the Strategic Growth Council. Blumenfeld seconded.

Flad nominated Secretary Karen Ross as Vice Chair of the Strategic Growth Council. Starr seconded.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Capretz' **motion was amended to include a move both nominations.**

The motion passes (9-0-0).

Council comment:

Assefa (OPR): Thanks to Newsom and to this Council for your confidence. For those who don't know me, I was born and raised Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and left at age 17 as a refugee to live in Kenya, Italy, and then the United States. Since I was a child, I've had a passion about the built environment and wanted to pursue architecture, and then city planning. For the last several decades my work has revolved around the intersection between land use, climate, and equity. California has been an important part of my professional career and personal career. This is a pivotal time as CA and the world are experiencing the devastating impacts of climate change daily. OPR and SGC have a responsibility to ensure that the Governor, legislators, and California communities are well-informed and are equipped with the best research, data, policies, and programs for mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency. We are also in the midst of a once-in-a-generation pandemic that has caused staggering loss of life and economic devastation. This pandemic has disproportionality impacted low-income families and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities across California and across the nation. We are in an opportune time to craft and implement bold and effective solutions to address some of the intractable challenges of climate, equity, and affordability. We have the

resources and the leadership to be bold as we transition from the pandemic. I look forward to working with you on these issues.

Starr (CHHS): Want to welcome you on behalf of the Council. Appreciate your comments and the experience you bring to this role, and that you champion racial equity and social justice.

Lynn von Koch-Liebert: Congratulations also to Secretary Ross on her election as Vice Chair and thanks to Mike Flad for his work as Vice Chair and Acting Chair.

### ***Agenda Item #5: Executive Director's Report***

*Lynn von Koch-Liebert, Executive Director, SGC*

Council Discussion:

Assefa (OPR): Excited about the Council priorities. Also wanted to congratulate Secretary Ross and thank Council Member Flad.

Muñoz (Public Member): This repositioning provides an opportunity for SGC to serve as a catalyst across a larger swath of agencies, departments, professionals, etc., particularly related to racial equity and inclusion. Want to recognize the vision of Lynn and her staff and colleagues in a short period of time.

Starr (CHHS): CHHS would like to volunteer to be a champion for Priority 1, the racial equity resource hub. The Governor and Secretary have set the vision for a California for All where equity is a core value. We use a racial equity lens in our climate change work and are looking forward to contributing to the development of the resource hub.

Blumenfeld (CalEPA): If we didn't have the Strategic Growth Council, we'd have to create it. People are realizing too late that climate change must be dealt with in an integrated way. We need to get SGC's message out onto the global and national stage. Excited to prioritize three elements and to participate in site visits to see the impact in communities.

Assefa (OPR): We need to collectively work on our messaging and communication and bring it to a human level. Need to become spokespeople for the work that needs to be done and connect the dots between the challenges that we face.

Castro Ramírez (BCSH): Appreciate the process that Lynn led to arrive at these three priorities, grounded in conversations with us and with stakeholders. These priorities are aligned with our agency's priorities.

Ross (CDFA): Volunteer to be a champion for the technical assistance and capacity building priority. We need to invest in communities to do this kind of work long after we serve on the Strategic Growth Council.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

**Agenda Item #6: ACTION: Amend the Racial Equity Resolution**

*Lynn von Koch-Liebert, Executive Director, SGC*

*Kirin Kumar, Deputy Director of Equity & Government Transformation, SGC*

*Recommended Action: Amend the California Strategic Growth Council Racial Equity Resolution.*

Motion was made (Starr) and seconded (Muñoz) to amend the California Strategic Growth Council Racial Equity Resolution to include, "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in order to advance the Council and member agencies' commitment to racial equity, the Council may develop and maintain a public resource for State Boards, Agencies, Departments, Offices, and other local and regional entities to access information about racial equity initiatives of different governmental agencies."

Council Discussion:

Muñoz (Public Member): Commend SGC staff for an effort that can be accessible to many agencies and provides an opportunity for SGC to provide strategic guidance on racial equity and inclusion. I volunteer to serve as one of the Council champions for this priority.

Blumenfeld (CalEPA): We're trying to make it as easy as possible to have difficult conversations that lead to systemic change. This is a strategic tool that helps us achieve the goal of dismantling systemic racism.

Assefa (OPR): This is an example of how SGC is leading in these issues—this is a tool to frame our discussions and our engagement.

Konove (CalSTA): On behalf of Secretary Kim, CalSTA would also like to volunteer to participate in this effort.

Public Comment:

Sosan Madanat, Lighthouse Public Affairs on behalf of Greenlining Institute  
Vince Leus, Prevention Institute

Weiyu Zhang, California Pan Ethnic Health Network

Elena Santamaria, NextGen California

Julia Caplan, Public Health Institute

Motion passes (9-0-0).

**Chancellor Muñoz (Public Member) is replaced by Associate Chancellor Luanna Putney at 2:17 p.m.**

**Agenda Item #7: Discussion: Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy Direction**

*Lynn von Koch-Liebert, Executive Director, SGC*

*Saharnaz Mirzazad, Deputy Director of Community Investment and Planning, SGC*

*J. Andrew McAllister, Commissioner, California Energy Commission*

Council Discussion:

Blumenfeld (CalEPA): Is the question whether the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) should be funding projects that would get constructed without AHSC support? Regarding immediate vs. long-term greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction potential: projects are evaluated using a calculator tool which quantifies reductions over several decades. AHSC is funded by Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) so want to make sure we're prioritizing GHG reductions. Don't support any weakening of the GHG component of the program. It's being presented as these goals being in conflict—achieving GHG reductions vs. achieving equity and other goals—and I encourage staff to find a way to balance these issues. Would like clarity on not wanting to fund projects that have local funding—do we penalize jurisdictions that have voted to support housing?



Lynn von Koch-Liebert: Spirit of this question is not to pit policy ideas against each other, rather to think through whether we want to use this program to help shape development patterns in areas that do not have the existing infrastructure in place that would lead to the GHG reduction impact you might see in areas that have higher density and greater transportation infrastructure. Do we want this program to catalyze development patterns that we wouldn't see were it not for the AHSC program? It's about trying to thread the needle and thinking about what we want this program to be pushing towards.

Saharnaz Mirzazad: Agree with Secretary Blumenfeld that the core of this program is to make sure that we are coupling housing and transit together to reduce GHG emissions—we shouldn't compromise on that. It's more of a philosophical question—do we want this program to build projects where we have that infrastructure in place already, or are we using this program to shape future land use development and catalyze the things we want to see in areas where it doesn't exist right now? Both are valuable goals, but we are seeking Council direction to know which is a priority for the Council. There are always some limitations in how we can capture GHG emissions because we cannot evaluate things that are not in existence right now but that may be catalyzed by investment.

Blumenfeld (CalEPA): Thank you for the elaboration and thank you to Commissioner McAllister. I strongly support going all-electric, and I think it's important for AHSC to continue to pioneer decarbonization efforts in this area, with a primary focus on requiring all-electric buildings as quickly as possible. Want to make sure we keep integrating CARB into this—they can help us understand the bigger picture of this analysis and crunch the numbers.

Assefa (OPR): Would like staff to consider how we can continue to invest in high-emission areas, and explore our quantification methods.

Castro Ramírez (BCSH): AHSC has been an important program in aligning housing and transportation investments while reducing GHG emissions. Its benefits have been to rural, suburban, and urban areas. There is a benefit in continuing to make this program available to areas where there is already some level of investment, but where the additional focus and alignment that this program brings is important. There is much for us to learn from how AHSC is implemented in urban versus suburban and rural areas. I recommend a menu of options for projects so we can continue to do both—showcase innovation while also focusing on investment where that focus is needed. Do everything we can to push towards decarbonization, but with a lens towards understanding the implication on the current production pipeline, particularly for affordable housing.

Capretz (Public Member): Full decarbonization should be a requirement for AHSC—we should be pioneers. It's important for us to model what electrification looks like and to get contractors used to this kind of construction. The planet is melting and we have to stop burning fossil gas—we're in a climate and public health emergency and we have to accelerate the path to zero carbon. San Diego has never enjoyed the benefits of functional world-class transit or transit-oriented development, so when we receive these awards, they're game-changing because we are demonstrating what urban infill could mean with functional transit. Geographic diversity is important—we're behind in San Diego and we have a long way to go. San Diego has historically not received their fair share of awards. Making sure there's geographic diversity throughout the state is important in order show what it means to do transit-oriented development in all types of communities—there is still resistance and a lack of understanding.

Starr (CHHS): We would like to use these awards to catalyze this development in areas and communities with limited infrastructure. It's important from a health equity perspective that geographic distribution, emissions reduction, and equity are all addressed simultaneously. Achieving health equity requires special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health and marginalized or historically oppressed communities. We think we can prioritize both health equity benefits and GHG emissions reductions.

Castro Ramírez (BCSH): Appreciate that one of the policy areas is about fair housing. BCSH and our departments are measuring our progress on implementing Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). Interagency collaboration is important. With AHSC, we have an opportunity and mandate to continue to lead on fair housing, to create access to opportunity, and overcome historical, entrenched patterns of racial segregation. I would encourage us to adopt an approach that lets us continue to invest in areas of high need but also to increase the supply of affordable housing in high-resource communities. The ASHC portfolio can strike a balance between creating housing in areas of high resources but not doing so at the expense of communities that don't have the same level of infrastructure and investment.

Andrew McAllister: The goal of the working group on housing and decarbonization is to make recommendations to agencies across the administration and align our policy directions. AHSC's demonstration and directional signaling is critical to condition the marketplace. People are paying attention—when a couple of developers utilize best practices, such as all-electric construction, everyone sees the success. We've talked about staging in housing programs—starting with AHSC, then moving to programs at HCD and HFA. Hopefully each program will open up the path for the next. The Energy Commission has a lot of technical expertise in these issues and we're here to help guide the conversation and encourage the synergy between





decarbonization and building more housing. The signaling that AHSC provides is critical.

Flad (Public Member): I'm still conflicted on geographic distribution and GHG reduction—I'm struggling to prioritize one over the other, but the tie goes to GHG reductions. We should be a pioneer on decarbonization. I'm excited to see the homeownership piece—we need to break the cycle of rental dependency and help folks build equity. Need to focus on streamlining the AHSC application process, while retaining the elements that help build collaboration and coordination within communities, which also speaks to the need for technical assistance grants. Would like to hear more in the future about how we're addressing streamlining and what specific tactical things have been done to try to make our process easier to navigate.

Assefa (OPR): There has always been a seeming chasm between addressing climate and equity issues. In the bigger picture, they're intertwined, but it comes up often when you dig into specific policies. Because we're tackling these challenging issues head-on, the hard questions come up—are we pitting one goal against another? We need to find solutions because we're going to have even bolder and bigger policies around housing and climate as we move forward. I was conflicted when I first saw this, because if this is primarily around reducing GHGs, we should reward those who are reducing it the most, but we need to also help those who are not getting there without our support. I don't have the answers, but our staff will be working through these issues. What I hear from the Council is instruction to de-conflate the notion that these are contradictory policy issues, but also to find some middle ground. We need to continue to invest in high-emissions areas because those are the areas that need the most transformation. On the second question, there is agreement that AHSC should be pioneering decarbonization.

Public Comment:

Lisa Madsen, SANDAG

Debbie Arakel, Habitat for Humanity California

Nicole Norori, California Housing Partnership

Bill Higgins, California Association of Councils of Governments

Richard Sadowski, Home Front EJ, Morro Bay

### ***Agenda Item #8: Discussion: California Transportation Assessment (AB 285 Report)***

*Lynn von Koch-Liebert, Executive Director, SGC*



*Egon Terplan, Senior Advisor for Economic Development & Transportation, SGC*

*Elizabeth Deakin, Professor Emerita of City & Regional Planning and Urban Design, UC Berkeley*

**At 3:38 p.m. Secretary Blumenfeld (CalEPA) has been replaced by Deputy Secretary Shereen D'Souza.**

Council Discussion:

Konove (CalSTA): Our transportation planning work and our investments are not as nimble and coordinated as the current time calls on us to be. A key component of the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) is interdepartmental and interagency participation. This job is bigger than just CalSTA and bigger than just transportation. We all have a role to play in incorporating these findings into our work and trying to meet our goals on climate, equity, and public health. Secretary Kim and I are looking forward to working with the Council and stakeholders to turn these findings into further action and better align our work.

D'Souza (CalEPA): California Climate Investments (CCI) programs can serve as a good model for funding programs that reduce GHG emissions and achieve other goals by using a suite of tools and resources that inform program development and project selection. All-electric cars are not going to be enough—to achieve carbon neutrality we need to prioritize investments in more sustainable transportation choices such as public transit, walking, and cycling. CARB working with state agencies to identify strategies needed to create more sustainable and equitable communities as part of the Scoping Plan update. EPA would like to ensure strong collaboration between the AB 285 effort and Scoping Plan process. Recommendations: Establish strong policy signals to prioritize non-automobility modes for future transportation projects and updates to transportation plans and deprioritizing or eliminating capacity-increasing projects in existing transportation plans. Need to create a strong signal for agencies at all levels of government to reconsider the pipeline of projects that were developed years ago and are no longer aligned with the direction of travel that we're going in. Want to see funding for housing and transportation projects that reduce dependence on automobiles by investing in a range of travel options and housing in infill areas that are closer to key destinations. Finally, a focus on accessibility to key destinations and VMT reduction as key metrics in our transportation funding programs.

Starr (CHHS): A little bit depressing but not surprising. Reducing VMT and automobility has health benefits. Traffic safety, physical activity, air quality, noise



pollution, housing, food, medical care access, and employment are all impacted by the transportation sector. Aligning state funding with goals in the California Transportation Plan (CTP) will allow us to achieve climate goals and make progress on health and equity goals. One suggestion we have is to incorporate Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) guidelines for community engagement into other state funding programs to ensure that underrepresented voices are part of the process and their needs are prioritized and addressed in projects. We recommend using public health and equity metrics and indicators when assessing and awarding state transportation investment dollars.

Capretz (Public Member): Depressing to see this report. People are suffering. There is urgency to data like this that is hard to talk about in a rational, calm way, because we're not doing our job. The State is not doing its job. This data makes a compelling case for why you want to invest in different parts of the state. Southern California has suburban sprawl, is car-centric, freeway-centric, drowning in air pollution. We are desperate for investments that help us turn that around because there is historic under-investment. Our MPO has a great plan, but we need resources to implement it. Want to put the human touch on this—we need to get out of our heads and into our hearts about why these changes are needed, the bully pulpit that will be needed around the state to get people to understand why these changes are necessary. Not just top-down. I found these slides hard to digest—what are we doing and how are we going to get to a place where people feel like we're protecting their health and their future?

Assefa (OPR): We know this is a huge paradigm shift. Give credit to CalSTA for CAPTI. This demands bold and immediate action. Depressing and shocking, but at the same time not. Need to change paradigms and cultures that have evolved over decades. If this body and this state cannot do it, then I don't think anyone else in this country can. I'm delighted by the challenges put in front of us in this study. We need to question the challenges we haven't been able to address and figure out how we can be more effective in our investments. Good land use decisions are the best transportation policy—transportation follows where the land use is. This is a wakeup call and highlights that our work needs to be bold and solution-oriented to chip away at these cultural norms in our state.

Flad (Public Member): Echo Capretz, this feels like a call to action. If we don't act now, we're not doing our jobs. Real opportunity to rally. We need to get the hearts of local electeds and local administrators to double down their efforts. That's where land use decisions are made. We need to double down on why we're doing what we're doing, why this is important, why this is an equity issue and a health issue and why it touches everyone. We know we need to change, how do we use this as an incentive or motivation to change quicker and do more?



Assefa (OPR): To summarize, continue to explore what is missing. How do we link this to health issues, health equity, and the existing work that we have already? This is true in the next couple of months but also post submittal to the legislature. The answer lies on some of the bold policy decisions and legislation we already have in place. How do we make the linkage between this report and the work we are already doing around VMT reduction? Staff should make tweaks in the next couple of months, and then most of the work is connecting the dots post submittal to the legislature. Raises a lot of important and fundamental questions. Thanks to Professor Deakin and staff for this important work.

Public Comment:

Nicole Cheng, ClimatePlan

Lisa Madsen, SANDAG

Bill Higgins, California Association of Councils of Governments

Steve Birdlebough, Transportation & Land Use Coalition

**At 4:10 p.m. Vice Chancellor Putney (Public Member) and Secretary Castro Ramírez (BCSH) have left the meeting.**

### **Agenda Item #9: ACTION: Consent Calendar**

Chair Sam Assefa

Virginia Jameson, Climate and Conservation Program Manager, Department of Conservation

*Recommended Action: Approve the staff recommendation to award \$65,989,363 in Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds to support the identified 19 agricultural easements and three planning grants in this report through Round 7 of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program.*

Public Comment:

Tracy Ellison, Solano Land Trust

Nicole Van Vleck, Montna Farms/Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust

Lisa Lindman, Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust

Charlotte Mitchell, CA Farmland Trust

Cain Silvey, The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County

Marc Del Piero, Ag Land Trust of Monterey County

Bob Slobe, California Rangeland Trust

Motion was made (Ross) and seconded (Flad) to approve the staff recommendation to award \$65,989,363 in Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds to support the identified 19 agricultural easements and three planning grants in this



report through Round 7 of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program. Motion passes (7-0-0).

***Agenda Item #10: Public Comment***

Richard Sadowski, Home Front EJ, Morro Bay

***Agenda Item #11: Meeting Adjournment***

Meeting adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

