



AGENDA ITEM # 9

Exploring OCCOG Governance Structure Options

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file report. Provide staff guidance with next steps.

SUMMARY

At the May 27, 2021, OCCOG Board of Directors meeting, OCCOG staff was directed to provide the Board with information about the governing structure of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), other statewide MPOs and subregions, and to explore options for structural changes to better serve the SCAG region. Staff began initial planning for this effort and provided an update to the Board at the June 24, 2021 Board of Directors meeting. Today we are presenting a more detailed and in-depth situational analysis to seek additional guidance from the Board for next steps.

BACKGROUND

Orange County is perceived by many as a bedroom community of Los Angeles. This misconception is incorrect, with Orange County having more people commuting from Los Angeles County to work than vice versa.

By contrast, Orange County is a thriving county of over 3.2 million residents and is an economic powerhouse in its own right. Further, we have world-class entertainment destinations, beaches, and sports venues, and 34 unique cities. In nearly any other geographic location, such a populous and vibrant county would be able to exercise a greater level of self-determination over its planning activities. Instead, Orange County is part of the largest Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the country, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and beholden to the policy decisions that come forward via its regional governing body.

SCAG is comprised of 191 cities and six counties, representing 19 million residents, making it by far the largest MPO. Throughout SCAG's history, the management of such a large and diverse region's needs and interests has posed a challenge.



Historically, Orange County has explored options to have a greater say in our future by separating from SCAG. The Orange County Transportation Authority has explored the possibility no fewer than three times over the past twenty years.

The past eighteen months has been fraught with tension between the region's largest city, Los Angeles, and other parts of the SCAG region – not only as a result of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) but for myriad other policy and programmatic reasons.

In fact, the unwieldy size of the Regional Council coupled with the structure of SCAG's long-standing governance model, giving a preponderance of weight to one city and county over all others, makes it challenging for the agency to represent the unique needs of all jurisdictions.

Reforming SCAG from within, attempting to join another MPO, forming a new MPO independently or with other subregions will present its own set of challenges. The process will be extensive and costly in terms of both resources and political capital.

Today's report is a first step in wrapping our arms around this complex process and working through issues with the Board to help ascertain the appropriate path forward to benefit not only Orange County but the region as a whole.

ATTACHMENTS

OCCOG Strategic Planning: Options to innovate regional planning for Orange County and all Southern California communities

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