

I-15 Interregional Partnership (I-15 IRP)
Technical Working Group
Meeting Summary
Thursday, May 8, 2003

Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Jeff Martin, SANDAG, welcomed everyone and called for introductions.

Agenda Item #2: Summary of the April 17, 2003 I-15 IRP Technical Working Group Meeting

The meeting summary was approved by the committee.

Agenda Item #3: Public Comments/Communications

No public comments or communications were made.

Agenda Item #4: Strategy Discussion - Jeff Martin, SANDAG

Jeff Martin, SANDAG, explained the recent work of the Technical Working Group (TWG). He detailed the formulation of three categories of draft strategies: economic development strategies, jobs/housing balance strategies, and long-range transportation strategies. Under the current plan, the TWG should review the proposed strategies, making comments, changes, and deletions. The refined list of strategies should be presented at the next meeting of the I-15 IRP Policy Committee on June 20, 2003. The TWG will ask the Policy Committee to approve the strategies for further evaluation. Final strategies will be presented to the IRP Policy Committee for approval in December of 2003.

#4A: Economic Development Strategies – Kevin Viera, WRCOG

Kevin Viera introduced the draft economic development strategies. **Strategy #1** is the creation of a Web site to connect I-15 commuters with job opportunities and to promote business development in housing-rich southwest Riverside County. The idea evolved from the general intent of marketing the resources of the region, most notably, the large educated workforce that is currently commuting to San Diego via I-15. The TWG has determined that creating a simple Web site that links local commuters and employers with already existing resources (rivcojobs.com, caljobs.com, connectory.com, sitefinder.com, etc.) will be more effective than building a job-search site from the ground up. Using this approach, the Web site can be broader in scope by aggregating resources instead of concentrating on a particular area of expertise, such as job-search. According to the strategy, the Web site would be marketed through periodic newspaper and radio advertising, community newsletters, other local Web sites, and Caltrans freeway message boards.

Jim O'Grady, City of Temecula, agreed that using existing resources is a better approach and cautioned against trying to "reinvent the wheel." He mentioned that there is another existing site called ietechjobs.com that could be a partner. Mr. O'Grady stated that marketing will be the key and suggested we may be able to utilize chambers of commerce

and other organizations to reach directly to employers. Also, he noted that the IRP will have to gain funding through grants and other resources in order to sustain the marketing effort.

Eric Bruvold, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC), mentioned that he had experience with a similar project, aimed at regional image enhancement. He suggested that if the IRP could gain seed money for the Web site project, then encourage the various economic development entities of the region to participate in the planning process, the project could gain early legitimacy. Mr. Bruvold stated that what gets organizations excited is seeing that the process has begun with some funding. They can then see that their opportunity to cooperate may be rewarding to them in the future and it may encourage more participation than if they were asked for funding early in the process.

Conan Cheung, Metropolitan Transit Development Board, suggested that partnering with a university, such as the UC Riverside, would not only provide the project with someone to run and maintain the Web site, but would also locate it conveniently within the labor pool for the region. Kevin Viera agreed that partnering with UCR would be a good idea, and mentioned that another possibility would be an economic development entity, such as the Southwest Riverside Economic Development Corporation. Another possibility mentioned was Azusa Pacific University, and Mr. Viera mentioned that CSU San Marcos could also be considered, because it is technically in the region, although not in southwestern Riverside.

Mr. Viera stated that the Southwest Riverside EDC and the Southwest Riverside Economic Alliance had both been involved in the formulation of the strategies, and both encouraged the development of strategy #1. Neither entity has been asked to host the website, but it is a possibility to be considered.

Mr. Viera then introduced **Strategy #2**, which focuses on mapping the broadband service coverage area in southwest Riverside County. The strategy would be a business attraction tool that could aid in marketing the region to outside businesses that may be considering relocation or expansion.

Mr. Viera noted that Strategy #2 is potentially very complicated and may be difficult to complete. Due to the nature of the information, private service providers may not be entirely willing to provide full disclosure. Additionally, the information would be pulled from a multitude of sources, making the collection and aggregation of the data a difficult task. Potentially, the IRP could serve as a coordinator of the process, working with local jurisdictions that would be completing the grassroots level data-gathering on their own. Many details would have to be discussed for this strategy to take shape, but there is general agreement that it would be a very powerful tool, both for business attraction and for local governments to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of the region. Mr. Viera mentioned a similar project completed in downtown San Diego that can be found at www.bandwidthbay.org.

Eric Bruvold suggested that such a task is a lot of work and it would be useful to try to leverage opportunities such as franchise agreement renewals to gather the information quickly in large pieces. He also noted that in the case of bandwidthbay.org, there is not conclusive evidence that the mapping has been a great business recruiting tool, at least as a first source. He suggested that businesses are more likely to use the information as a second step in the process of making a relocation decision, rather than seeking out the information as a first step. However, demonstrating the bandwidth capability of the region could be important from a general marketing standpoint.

Jim O'Grady noted that the City of Temecula has completed their bandwidth mapping project and will be presenting their report to the city council in June. He stated that some service providers were more reluctant than others in handing over the information, and that it was difficult to get very specific because of some security issues. Mr. O'Grady said that the City of Temecula sees it as a potentially helpful economic development tool, and would recommend it as a strategy to the TWG, but added that it will be important to go beyond that and use the data for encouraging the further development of broadband infrastructure in the region.

Jim Mackenzie, City of Murrieta, mentioned that his city is considering a project to map the broadband infrastructure, specifically in the area called the "golden triangle," between the I-15 and I-215 interchange.

Elgeritte Suhendra, WRCOG, introduced **Strategy #3**, to establish a "coordinated funding group" (CFG) to finance the implementation of the strategies undertaken by the I-15 IRP. She explained that there are two or more possible scenarios for setting up a CFG. Under one, WRCOG would take the lead role in funding the initial effort, hiring a dedicated grant writer, and working with the various economic development entities. Under another, the CFG would be administered by one of the economic development entities, with funding for projects being shared by all of the entities involved and based on a pre-approved formula. Ms. Suhendra noted that King County in the Seattle region has created a similar group that has been very successful over the past few years in gaining funds for regional economic development.

Eric Bruvold asked whether the CFG would focus on the implementation of the economic development strategies alone or whether it would also focus on some of the transportation strategies. Ms. Suhendra stated her belief that the CFG could assist in implementing all of the strategies. In response, Mr. Bruvold stated that if the CFG would focus on strategies that attempt to mitigate the transportation problems caused by the jobs/housing imbalance, then the EDC would be very interested in participating in the project and having input in the structure of the group. He stated that the EDC has a vested stake in encouraging greater rideshare and transportation efficiencies on I-15 and cautioned that it will be important to be specific in the intent of the CFG when the strategy is refined. Kevin Viera stated that the TWG should be open to suggestions on this the further definition of this strategy. The question of the scope of the CFG may be important as it pertains to gaining more funding opportunities. Would the CFG have more opportunities by adopting a broader or narrower focus?

Maurice Eaton, Caltrans District 8, stated that having a dedicated grant writer to seek funds for transportation or other strategies would be of great benefit. There are a lot of pockets of money out there that the IRP could take advantage of.

Jim O'Grady asked if WRCOG or SANDAG already employs grant writers and whether they could supply one for this purpose. He suggested that the COGs may have experience in grant writing by definition. Kevin Viera answered that WRCOG does not have a designated grant writer. SANDAG writes grant applications on a case by case basis and does not have a designated grant writer.

Conan Cheung noted that writing grants can be very subject specific, and that finding a grant writer that is proficient in different areas, i.e. transportation and economic development, may be difficult. He added that having someone or some entity responsible for tracking grant types and the types of funds that would be available to specific projects would be beneficial. This administrator would then task specific departments or persons to write grants that are specific to their expertise.

Eric Bruvold suggested that there may be a first step in this process that the TWG may be passing over. In order to move ahead with the strategies, perhaps SANDAG and WRCOG need to sort them into groups of responsibility. Some of the strategies will clearly fall in the jurisdiction of WRCOG or SANDAG or some other entity. Other strategies may not have a clearly defined "home." These strategies will have to be addressed by partnerships and will necessitate cooperation between entities. Mr. Bruvold suggested that after the strategies have been divided up into groups of responsibility, there should be plans created to implement them. There would have to be a plan for financing the strategy, as well as an analysis of the feasibility of implementation. This process will promote cooperation between the economic development entities, COGs, and other groups, while determining which strategies will make it through the implementation stage.

Strategy #4 focuses on facilitating greater collaboration between regional economic development entities. Kevin Viera explained that this strategy emerged from the idea that the study area of the I-15 IRP is divided only by a political boundary and that the members of the IRP should be thinking in a larger, more regional context. By working together, the economic development entities may gain an advantage in seeking federal or state funding while benefiting locally from the exchange of ideas and approaches to development.

Eric Bruvold agreed that greater cooperation is a great idea. Mr. Bruvold offered that the San Diego Regional EDC would be very willing to coordinate with the EDC of Southwest Riverside County, with the North County EDC, and any other economic development entity in the southwest Riverside region that would want to participate. He suggested that staff look at the calendar and figure out if there is a time in the Fall when the IRP would be reaching a conclusion on some of the strategy approval, when the EDC's could get together for a social meeting to share ideas and get to know one another. At this meeting, staff could present the progress of the IRP and explain how the economic development entities could take part in the implementation of strategies, or at least communicate with each other regarding economic development in the region.

Jeff Martin, SANDAG, noted that he has been in contact with Ron Mittag, North County EDC, and Mr. Mittag has expressed interest in getting more involved with the IRP effort. Staff agreed to continue with the coordination effort and determine a time when such a meeting could be held.

Jim O'Grady asked if there was an opportunity to add strategies to the list. He mentioned encouragement of telecommuting/video conferencing centers in Riverside County and conducting an employer survey to determine which companies have large numbers of commuters from southwest Riverside County. If a company has great exposure to the effects of the jobs/housing imbalance, they may be good targets for potential expansion or relocation of offices closer to their employee base.

Eric Bruvold noted that the EDC is getting survey information from a SCAG license plate survey and its own zip code survey. The zip code survey has not clearly shown that commuters from southwest Riverside County were clustered at certain companies. In addition, some of the companies that did have higher numbers of I-15 commuters were not the type of companies that could move out of the immediate region, i.e. local banks, service businesses. Additionally, Mr. Bruvold mentioned that the San Diego Regional EDC would be opposed to such a survey being conducted by the I-15 IRP, because it would essentially be a tool used for direct recruitment of San Diego-based companies.

Jim O'Grady clarified his statement that the recruitment of companies would be based on the idea of expansion or satellite offices, not for the wholesale relocation of San Diego-based companies.

Jeff Martin, SANDAG, noted that new census information would become available sometime in the summer that may give more details on the interregional commuter. He mentioned that a survey on the scale that Mr. O'Grady mentioned is immense. Also, Mr. Martin explained that in the past there was talk of conducting a survey that would ask what companies are looking for when they seek relocation. This idea has been tabled, however, because there have been numerous surveys of this type conducted nationwide, and the results in the San Diego region are expected to be very similar to those others.

Jim O'Grady agreed and reiterated that any information that can be attained relating to the I-15 commuter and regional employers will be valuable to economic development efforts.

Eric Bruvold continued with his explanation of why the SDREDC would be opposed to such a survey. He explained that for many San Diego companies considering expansion or relocation, the EDC would be happier to see them move into Otay Mesa, Mid-City or other areas of San Diego County where there are economic development challenges.

Kevin Viera noted that a similar conflict of interest has become an obstacle in the IRP between the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) and WRCOG.

Eric Bruvold suggested that maybe there should be a strategy that aims to facilitate the growth of industry clusters that have taken hold in southwest Riverside County. He mentioned the medical device industry as a potentially growing cluster in the region, having already established a strong presence with Guidant and others.

Elgeritte Suhendra, WRCOG, noted that WRCOG is in the midst of a process to designate 5 areas of Riverside County as nodes of economic growth.

#4B: Jobs/Housing Balance Strategies – Kevin Viera, WRCOG

Kevin Viera distributed a legislative update prepared by CalCOG as a preface to **Strategy #1**, to support/sponsor legislation that provides incentives for jobs/housing balance programs. The idea would be to get local jurisdictions to come together to sign a letter of support on bills that the IRP presents as favorable for mitigating jobs/housing imbalance. Mr. Viera mentioned Senator Torlakson's need for support of his bills related to the IRP program in Northern California. A lot of individual jurisdictions support bills based on their local interests, but by engaging more broad-based participation, the IRP could serve as a vehicle for a stronger message of support.

Paul O'Neal, Office of Senator Bill Morrow, stated that the Senator would certainly support the efforts of Assemblyman Hollingsworth, and likely would support Torlakson as well. Mr. O'Neal added that more support is always better. Receiving letters and making those letters part of the record is very important for getting that bill passed.

Strategy #2 concentrates on the outreach effort of the IRP. It seeks to educate the public, both private citizens and businesses, about the effects of the jobs/housing imbalance. Specifically, the strategy would call for the creation of toolkits that TWG members could use to educate groups in both housing-rich and jobs-rich areas, with the toolkits being customized to fit the interests of the specific audience.

Staff explained that there is already a 10-minute slideshow with prepared notes that is available to any TWG member for use in educating the community about the IRP and jobs/housing balance.

#4C: Long Range Transportation Strategies – Jeff Martin, SANDAG

Jeff Martin explained that most of these strategies have been reviewed by the TWG before. Staff has made small changes and has added one new strategy. Like the economic development and jobs/housing strategies, the transportation strategies should be presented to the Policy Committee on June 20, 2003.

Strategy #1, advocating high speed rail transit service in the I-15 corridor, is a strategy that staff feels is important to undertake for the long term. The high speed rail along I-15 through southwestern Riverside County and into the San Diego region would be an extension of the current SCAG long-range plan. Although it is a long way off, staff advocates keeping the strategy on the list for the I-15 IRP.

Strategy #2 aims at implementing transit feeder services to interregional transit, making this form of commuting a more viable, efficient option. Mr. Martin notes that this is a difficult strategy to implement, but it can be very valuable for supporting interregional transit. In most cases, feeder services would be the responsibility of the transit agencies, but in some cases, real estate developers have been made to shoulder the responsibility for shuttle service.

Jim O'Grady explained that Temecula required Lennar Communities to put up \$300,000 for a shuttle service in a new community. Temecula is hoping to use this idea as a test case that could be employed more in the future. There are some issues with advertising because it would be nice to be able to offer advertising to the developer for providing these funds, however, RTA has a strict no advertising policy on its vehicles.

Michael McCoy, Riverside Transit Agency (RTA), agrees that this program is a good idea and cites evidence that the program has been a success so far. He agreed that without marketing or recognition for the private companies that put up the funding, it will be difficult to attract them to similar projects in the future.

Jeff Martin asked if similar programs would be possible in new communities within the unincorporated areas of the county. Mr. McCoy stated that this situation is being addressed through the RCIP process and the development conditioning process.

Conan Cheung mentioned that under the congestion management program (CMP) in San Diego County, SANDAG has improved the process by trying to get developers to allocate funds that are often used in traffic mitigation strategies for new communities to spend it on promoting alternative transportation, such as a shuttle service. There have been examples of successful programs like this in Northern California, notably San Mateo County. They have tied their CMP with their transit demand management program (TDM), which includes shuttles, bike facilities, etc.

Michael McCoy noted that the RTA is in the process of revamping its schedules and routes for Temecula and Murrieta, and should have new plans in place by the end of the year, with an expected large increase in the number of buses.

Conan Cheung suggested a possible addition to the strategy on transit feeder services might be to increase park-and-ride opportunities. Both transit feeder shuttles and increased park-and-ride lots can improve long distance transit by making things easier on the commuter.

Mr. Cheung also noted that it would be extremely helpful if the IRP could seek funding for interregional transit because these types of routes are not productive to the transit agencies due to mileage and low passenger turnover. Staff suggested that ITIP funds could be a source. Maurice Eaton noted that ITIP funding is generally reserved for capital improvements and for this type of strategy we need operations funding.

Jeff Martin suggested that the strategy's focus is actually on coordinating transit services between transit agencies and the private sector, making interregional transit commuting easier and more efficient, so maybe the strategy should "support transit feeder services, instead of implement services."

Susan Baldwin added that supporting greater interregional transit service can be an important and effective long term strategy because improvements such as HOV lanes and high speed rail are still years away. Staff suggested that in addition to changing the wording of the strategy slightly, it could add language reflecting the desire of the IRP to seek funds for alternative transit improvements, including interregional transit, feeder services, park-and-ride, etc.

Strategy #3 suggests preserving transportation rights-of-way through the development process.

Conan Cheung noted that MTDB has been successful in protecting rights-of-way in specific projects in San Diego County, even when funding is not completely available yet. For example, Otay Ranch, where MTDB has a large area, including a wide median in the center of a street that has been reserved for a trolley extension or bus rapid transit (BRT) sometime in the future.

Staff suggested expanding the strategy to include support of priority measures for transit, not just preserving right-of-way. Some of the priority measures discussed among the group were "queue jumping" lanes and priority signaling. It was mentioned that these can be extremely valuable for an efficient transit service, but it is difficult to work with developers and engineers to create extra lane space that is often needed.

The TWG quickly discussed **Strategy #4**, which aims to reduce parking requirements at employment sites. This strategy attempts to get companies to encourage their workers to use alternative commute strategies by physically limiting parking areas and making alternatives available. Staff acknowledged that this is a difficult strategy to implement.

The implementation of an I-15 HOV system, **Strategy #5**, is a response to the Riverside County Transportation Commission's (RCTC) plan to create HOV lanes on I-15, North of the County line. Staff noted that the traffic congestion north of highway 78 in San Diego County remains free flow and probably will be that way for the next couple of years. However, staff believes it makes more sense to create a continuous HOV system extending the length of the I-15 interregional commute corridor. Therefore, this strategy would advocate for the implementation of an HOV system within San Diego County, North of 78, to meet the proposed RCTC plan at the border. Staff feels it is appropriate to keep this strategy on the table because it makes sense for the future of the I-15 interregional commuter.

Jim Mackenzie asked whether a toll collecting structure would be considered. Maurice Eaton responded saying that some toll structure could be considered as an alternative. However, the use of "managed lanes," that allow single drivers to use the HOV lane and also tie pricing to congestion would probably be more acceptable.

#5: Update on the OCCOG/WRCOG IRP – WRCOG Staff

#6: Legislative Update: I-15 IRP – Related Legislation – Susan Baldwin, SANDAG

These updates were postponed to a later meeting due to time constraints.

#7: Next Meeting Date and Location

Staff closed the meeting and announced that the next meeting of the Technical Working Group will be June 12, 2003 at Escondido City Hall in the Mitchell Room. Staff also announced that the next I-15 IRP Policy Committee meeting will be held on Friday, June 20, 2003 in Escondido.