



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of March 18, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 5-C

PREPARED BY: Dylan Stone, Principal Regional Planner

SUBJECT:

2026 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy – Preferred Scenario

Enclosure: No

Action: Approve Scenario C – Affordable Housing, as the preferred planning scenario for the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

BACKGROUND:

The preparation of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a federal requirement for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to identify a long-range (typically 20-year) vision for transportation priorities and investments. According to federal regulations (23 CFR § 450.324 and 23 USC § 134), MPOs must update this plan periodically to ensure it remains consistent with current conditions and air quality standards every four years in regions that do not meet federal air quality standards (nonattainment or maintenance areas).

With the passage of Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) in 2008, MPOs are required to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) able to demonstrate an ambitious, yet achievable, approach to how land use development and transportation can work together to meet greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reduction targets for cars and light trucks as a component of the RTP. SB 375 requires the analysis of multiple growth scenarios with a preferred scenario being selected as the foundation from which the plan and its subsequent environmental document is built upon.

SCS scenario planning is a strategic exercise used to evaluate how different land use patterns when integrated with transportation investments influence the region's future transportation behavior. By modeling various growth patterns, the SCS can forecast the resulting impacts on factors such as greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, transit ridership, and land uses. This process allows stakeholders to compare the trade-offs of each scenario and select a Preferred Scenario that best meets state climate mandates and local goals. Ultimately, these scenarios provide the data-driven foundation for the Sustainable Communities

Strategy, ensuring that the RTP/SCS is both environmentally sustainable and economically viable.

DISCUSSION:

MCTC staff, working with the SCS development consultant team, began the scenario development process in Summer of 2024. This included a robust public outreach and engagement campaign. The participation of community members and stakeholders ensures the plan truly reflects the community's needs while balancing the regions need to address mandated emissions reduction targets.

Staff identified three primary planning scenarios at the recommendation of the SCS Oversight Committee after reviewing public and partner agency feedback. These scenarios are able to address local needs while progressing towards achievement of state goals by way of their core strategies. Focus then shifted from high-level scenario concepts to activity centered on technical validation and policy alignment to ensure scenarios are not just hypotheticals but grounded in local reality. Key details of the three scenarios are explained in the table below:

	Scenario A 2022 RTP Preferred Scenario/Existing Plan	Scenario B Transit Supportive Development	Scenario C Affordable Housing
Housing	Regional forecast housing; higher unit/acre & multi-family than historical	Regional forecast housing; trend-consistent	Higher multi-family housing than trend & near employment centers
Development Location	Infill focus; consistent with general plans	Transit-oriented; near major corridors & Amtrak/HSR	Concentrated in Downtown, Main Street & HSR areas
Farmland/Resource Land	Farmland as constraint	Farmland as constraint	Farmland as constraint
Transportation	Maintain roads; improve SR 99 & SR 41 safety and congestion	Improve transit services & connections; maintain roads; improve SR 99 & SR 41	Improve downtown walkability, bikeability, transit; maintain roads; improve SR 99 & SR 41
High Speed Rail	HSR by 2033; little TOD by 2035	HSR by 2033; moderate TOD by 2035	HSR by 2033; little TOD by 2035

Project consultants, after consulting local general plans, incorporated growth parameters based on these scenarios into a land-use model that assigns housing types geographically through the region. An example of this is prioritizing developable land near local transit services for Scenario B or prioritizing housing near established urban cores or employment centers for Scenario C.

Each scenario represents a distinct approach to accommodating projected population, housing, and employment growth and after being processed through the land use model is programmed into the travel demand models. Scenario performance is measured using indicators such as:

- Percentage change GHG reduction per capita (State mandate)
- Vehicle Mile Traveled change per capita
- Additional air quality analysis (Federal standards)
- Percentage of future housing in non-single family
- Congestion/Travel Time
- Transit Trips change

Upon running the travel demand model using the three land use scenarios, travel data is produced allowing further mandatory analysis of emissions required for SB 375 and Federal Air Quality Conformity Analysis. The performance measure results of the three scenarios are shown in the two tables below:

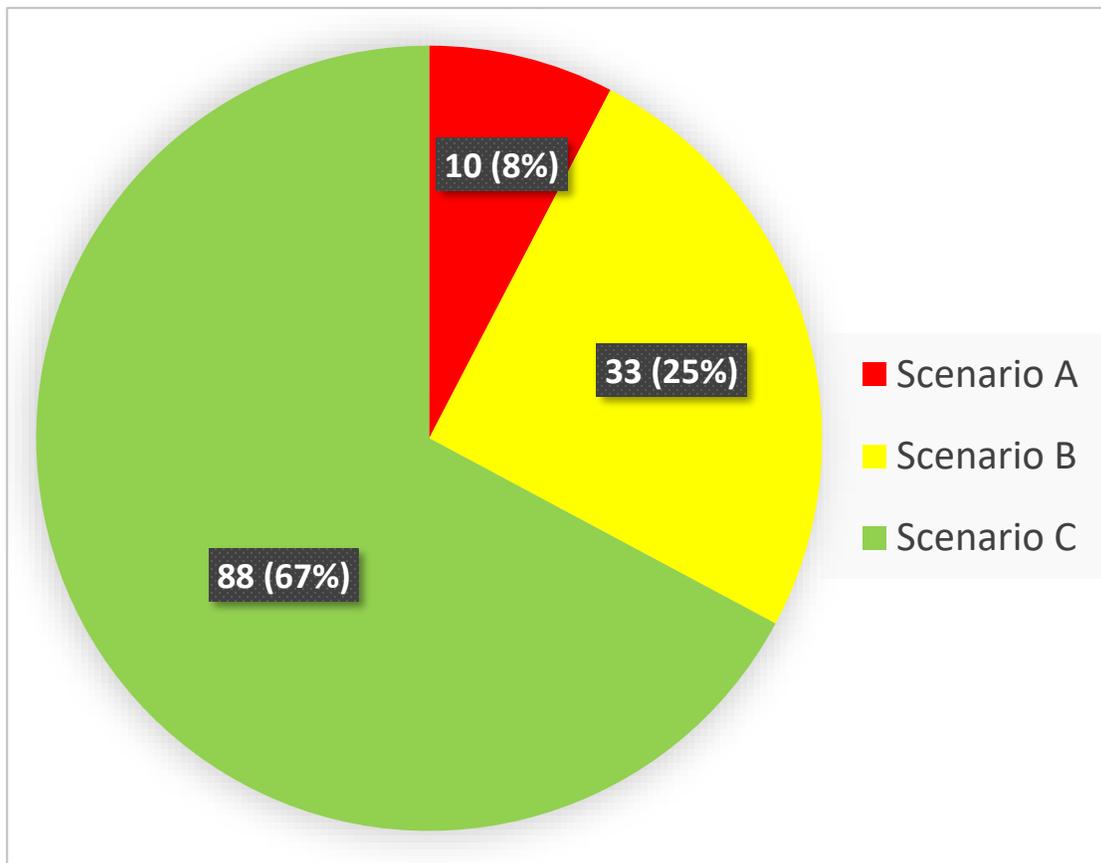
	Scenario A 2022 RTP Preferred Scenario/Existing Plan	Scenario B Transit Supportive Development	Scenario C Affordable Housing	Notes
% GHG Reduction Per Capita vs 2005	15.40%	15.65%	15.69%	Higher is better (16% is the target)
VMT Per Capita	14.62 Miles	14.54 Miles	14.53 Miles	Lower is better
Air Quality	Worst (still meets Federal standards)	Moderate	Best	Federal Criteria Pollutants (all projected to Pass)
% of new housing in non-single family	29%	17%	25%	More is better for GHG reduction
Congestion/Travel Time	96,208	96,310	96,052	Total travel time (hours)
Transit Trips Growth	0.09%	0.11%	0.09%	Higher is better

	Scenario A 2022 RTP Preferred Scenario/Existing Plan	Scenario B Transit Supportive Development	Scenario C Affordable Housing	Notes
% GHG Reduction Per Capita vs 2005	Worst	Moderate	Best	Higher is better (16% is the target)
VMT Per Capita	Worst	Moderate	Best	Lower is better
Air Quality	Worst	Moderate	Best	Federal Criteria Pollutants (all projected to Pass)
% of new housing in non-single family	Best	Worst	Moderate	More is better for GHG reduction
Congestion/Travel Time	Moderate	Worst	Best	Total travel time (hours)
Transit Trips Growth	Moderate	Best	Moderate	Higher is better

Each of the three scenarios are expected to meet the 16% GHG reduction per capita target set by CARB for Madera County when combined with strategies not able to be captured through MCTC's modeling tools. These include rideshare as a service such as Calvans, telecommuting, or San Joaquin Valley Air Pollutant Control District Rule 9410: Employer Based Trip Reduction. Additionally, these results are expected to pass Federal standards for various criteria pollutants needed for the air quality conformity determination that must be prepared for the 2026 RTP/SCS and 2027 FTIP.

These results have been shared with the SCS Oversight Committee and at various community events, at a public workshop, and through online materials and surveys in February and March of 2026. Results of feedback regarding the most suitable scenario for Madera County are shown below:

Scenario Feedback Results



Public feedback results have indicated strong support for Scenario C – Affordable Housing. This opinion was also expressed by the SCS Oversight Committee members at the March 4, 2026 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the technical analysis, outreach findings, and Oversight Committee selection, Staff is recommending Scenario C – Affordable Housing be selected as the Preferred Scenario. The

selected scenario will serve as the foundation for the Sustainable Communities Strategy included in the 2026 RTP/SCS and the Program Environmental Impact Report for the plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact on the approved 2025-26 Overall Work Program and Budget.