COGs/Subregions Forum
#COGForum

September 18, 2017

INVESTING in PLACE
- Nine planning areas created by SCAG, the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Significant variation in population of sub-regions
- Typically bounded by shared issues stemming from transportation links, corridors/freeways/transits, or watersheds
- Variation between number of jurisdictions, though majority range from 2-5 jurisdictions
- Almost all subregions contain portions of unincorporated LA County
- City of LA spans four of the subregions
"Official COG" means the COG has a Joint Powers Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with the County and Metro to participate in policymaking; subregions can also participate in policymaking permitting they have bylaws.

- COG boundaries don't always line up with subregion boundaries. For example: SFV Santa Clarita and Burbank vote on decisions that only affect LA and San Fernando.

- But some subregions are in the process of becoming COGs so we can expect to see more alignment in the future.
COG 101

Council of Governments

Local government and elected officials

- Typically COG members are cities, counties and supervisorial districts; sometimes other public agencies including water districts and ports.
COGs work with member cities and are not directly funded by the County or Metro.
COGs rely on members’ dues or external grants or other funding opportunities. Dues are paid by member cities - higher dues or more members allows for more COG staff. While this maintains an independent structure for individual COGs, it leads to a difference in bandwidth and expertise between COGs.
COG 101

Why COGs matter

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- So why does any of this information matter to you?
To illustrate my point, I’d like to first start with this young woman. Does everyone here know who this person is?

Yes, Rihanna: singer, actress, fashion icon, recent beauty brand launcher, and all-around definition of celebrity.
- Now does anyone here know who this woman is next to Rihanna?
- That’s OK, most people don’t. Her name is Melissa Forde and she is one of Rihanna’s day one friends from Barbados who moved to the States when Rihanna did, about 14 years ago
- But even though most of us don’t know who Melissa Forde is, she is in Rihanna’s inner circle, is her unofficial Instagram photographer and even influences Rihanna’s most iconic brand: her fashion and style.
- In fact, google “Rihanna and Melissa Forde” and you’ll find all sorts of delightful photos and fluff pieces showing what a close and symbiotic relationship they have
- So let’s think about this relationship and imagine that Rihanna is Metro
- That’s not a hard sell: both are huge entities that are well-known and impact millions of people. And both have quite a bit of money.
- Now let’s think about Melissa as the COGs.
- Not as known to the masses, but nevertheless holds a seat at the table of a huge influencer and can in turn influence their
- One difference between Melissa Forde and the Councils of Governments is that if you google “Metro and COGs” you won’t get a lot of clickbait. You might not get a lot of information at all. This isn’t done intentionally and we think that it’s time that COGs get their day in the sun and are recognized for the important role they have in shaping decisions and investments on our region
- COGs engage directly with Metro board members, who sit on COG boards or are assigned to COG regions. Metro staff are also assigned to COGs and subregions have influence with County Supervisors who represent their areas.
- Each COG has a voting seat on Metro’s Technical Advisory Committee and the Streets and Freeway TAC subcommittee, which advises Metro on policy and projects and has a significant role in Metro grant programs like the Call for Projects. And of course they have a seat on Metro’s newly formed Policy Advisory Council (PAC).
- They are also involved in short- and long-term planning with Metro. They can submit priority projects for implementation to Metro to consider putting into final plans.
- Like Melissa Forde and Rihanna, their close relationship with Metro enables COGs a significant amount of influence.
- Like Melissa Forde’s bucket hat launch at Opening Ceremony, COGs also have other day jobs.
- COGs coordinate amongst their member cities and other large infrastructure projects in their subregions. Every COG has a member on their local Measure A Steering Committees, which will impact the future of parks and open space in LA County. Some have appointed homelessness coordinators to direct programs and services, and COGs also weigh in on LA River revitalization and other regional water issues.

- COGs are also strong at educating their board members, providing technical assistance to member cities and their elected officials and agency staff.
COGs are set-up to serve their member cities and jurisdictions, around planning and other public needs. This includes identifying subregion priorities, which shape recommendations provided to Metro, LA County, and other large-scale implementation agencies. There is not currently a standardized way for members of the public to engage with their local COG or subregion. While stakeholders can attend COG meetings, the process for incorporating public input into COG recommendations to Metro is generally determined by each COG membership. Stakeholders can also work through their local cities or jurisdictions to inform their participation in COG decisions; this is also not standardized across jurisdictions. It is important to note that COG board members consist of elected officials, chosen by voters to represent their interests. While this provides COGs with a natural accountability to their subregions, we believe increasing transparency and the input process for all subregion community members is an important way to determine public investments.
COGs are an institutionalized, but not very well-known, way to influence the billions of dollars in public investments that Metro oversees. While Melissa Forde may not write checks with Rihanna’s money, she is a close ally who helps shape Riri’s values and priorities and is an important player in Rihanna’s public persona. The most immediate example of COGs and their role in guiding investments is the Multi-year Subregional Program out of Measure M. $10B of generally discretionary funding is available for COGs and subregions to create their own wishlist of transportation investments.
Engaging with COGs

Multi-year Subregional Program (MSP)

- The MSP is some of the most flexible funding available through Measure M.
- Metro has created a Policy Advisory Council (PAC), which meets on the first Tuesday of every month at SCAG and is open to the public; members of each COG are represented on the PAC and Metro has assigned PAC representatives for the public.
- The PAC is currently developing criteria and guidelines for the MSP fund areas, which include a 5-year plan of projects and execution of funding agreements once project-level details are complete.
- Priority components of the MSP guidelines include: community engagement, performance metrics, and the Metro Mobility Matrices, which are an advisory list of priority projects identified by subregions and submitted to Metro in 2015.
- As a side plug, we at Investing in Place are excited about the allocation of a half-percent of MSP funds that are eligible for COG staff program administration. This is a great way to provide resources to increasing transparency and broad engagement.
- In the COG manual we passed out today, there is a timeline of key dates to engage with the PAC and weigh in on the MSP guidelines, which has a relatively short timeline for finalization.
COG 101

Engaging with COGs

Multi-year Subregional Program (MSP)

Project Development

- Given the important role COGs play in shaping our region, what are some ways we can highlight their work and include impacted community voice in the conversation?
- As implementation money from Measure M becomes available, COGs will be taking the lead on developing project lists to be implemented in our communities.
- How do folks get involved? Please take a look at the MSP programs in your COG manual and consider what projects can be developed through the programs in your subregion of interest (pages 8-10).
- This process is an opportunity to engage with your city and PAC representatives (Appendix A, Investing in Place COG Forum Manual)
- For the MSP, projects are divided between Transit and Highway. Highway is Measure M-speak that also includes City and neighborhood streets and can lead to multimodal solutions for communities.
There are several ways to get involved between now and the end of the year.
Please consider attending these public PAC meetings on the first Tuesday of every month.

**Timeline of Next Steps**

**INVESTING in PLACE**

**OCTOBER**
10/3 - Metro Policy Advisory Council (PAC) Meetings 1:30p – 3:30p

10/30 - Investing in Place - #JustGrowth work group meeting 3:00p – 4:30p

**NOVEMBER**
11/7 - Metro Policy Advisory Council (PAC) Meetings 1:30p – 3:30p

**DECEMBER**
12/5 - Metro Policy Advisory Council (PAC) Meetings 1:30p – 3:30p
A key deadline in the MSP administrative guidelines formation is the goal of finalizing implementation guidelines by the end of 2017.

Metro’s goals by December 2017:
- Finalize MSP implementation guidelines
- Subregional Equity Program
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