



MEMO

To: Bill King
City of Merced

From: Jennifer Venema, PMC

Cc: Nora De Cuir, PMC
Pam Johns, PMC
Andrea Nelson, PMC

Date: June 27, 2014

Re: Summary of City of Merced June 19, 2014 Focus Group Meeting

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the first focus group meeting convened on June 19, 2014 for the city's programmatic climate action plan project. We have included public comments received at the event as Attachment I. Please contact me with any questions.

The City of Merced Programmatic Climate Action Plan (PCAP) effort is an implementation of the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP), adopted by the City Council in 2012. The goals of the PCAP project are to provide tools to support and implement the CAP. The purpose of PCAP tools are to achieve Merced's adopted greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets while streamlining permitting, review, and regulatory compliance for development. The PCAP will include an action plan, tools to track and analyze the cost-benefit of strategies, design guidance, and recommendations and updates to the City's development code.

FOCUS GROUP

The Focus Group for the PCAP project is an ad hoc committee of key stakeholders representing different organizations and interests in the community. Members of the Focus Group include representatives from businesses, local green industry, the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce, and community groups, along with representatives from the Planning Commission, City Council, and City departments. The Focus Group will convene on a regular basis to provide input and feedback during the PCAP project process to City staff and decision makers. It will review draft GHG reduction strategies, implementation tools, and development code language, along with other products of the PCAP project.

FOCUS GROUP MEETING #1

The first Focus Group meeting was held on June 19, 2014, from 1:30 to 4:30PM at the Sam Pipes Room in the Merced Civic Center. Ten Focus Group members were in attendance, along with approximately nine members of the public. The purpose of the meeting was to provide group members with an overview of the PCAP project and the responsibilities of the Focus Group to the PCAP.

MEETING APPROACH

The meeting agenda included the following items:

- **Welcome and Introductions:** Focus Group members introduced themselves, and were given an introduction to key City staff members and the Project Principal and Project Manager for the PMC consulting team.
- **Committee Administration:** The Focus Group discussed its roles and responsibilities as a committee, and individual member roles and responsibilities. Focus Group members also discussed their roles and opportunities for public involvement and the schedule of future meetings.
- **Project Overview:** City staff and the PMC consulting team presented Focus Group members with the background of the PCAP project, including development of the CAP and an update of Merced's 2008 GHG inventory. City staff and consultants also described the schedule and key milestones for the PCAP project, identified the goals and standards for the project, and summarized input already provided by community members on the PCAP during the public engagement process. Focus Group members provided early guidance for future GHG reduction strategy development and prioritization.
- **Code Concepts:** City staff and consultants discussed concepts for Merced's development code and its relation to the PCAP project. Focus Group members provided guidance on their preferred approach for the code concepts and prioritization of code issues.

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

During the project overview and code concept discussion, Focus Group members and members of the public raised a number of issues and questions, as summarized below:

- Question/comment: A Focus Group member observed that the GHG reduction goal in Merced's adopted CAP is a return to 1990 levels by 2020, not 15% below 2008 levels.
 - *Response:* A member of the consulting team explained how state guidance interprets 1990 emissions levels as a 15% reduction below 2005–2008 GHG emissions levels, which helps estimate 1990 emissions levels locally due to the limited availability of data for the City of Merced in 1990.
- Question/comment: A member of the public asked whether a CAP is a state requirement for all California communities.
 - *Response:* City staff and consultants explained that while a CAP is not required under state law, analysis of GHG emissions is mandatory for environmental review and that CAPs assist in streamlining this review.
- Question/comment: A Focus Group member asked whether GHG emissions from electricity generated outside of the city are double-counted in other community inventories.

- *Response:* A member of the consultant team described that communities generally follow the same methods to calculate GHG inventories, and the City of Merced inventory captures primary GHG emissions for activity occurring within the community. The production of electricity in other communities is a large-scale activity that is generally excluded from the inventory, due to state regulations and data reported by the utilities.
- Question/comment: An attendee asked about estimating GHG emissions from vehicle trips, including the geographic limits of the analysis and whether it would be possible to identify emissions from specific types of trips.
 - *Response:* A member of the consulting team explained the methods used in the analysis and identified its limitations. Currently, the analysis includes trips that “pass through” city limits, neither ending or beginning in the City of Merced.
- Question/comment: Multiple attendees asked about whether specific items not mentioned in the presentation were included in the existing state and local accomplishments, and identified potential additional items to include.
 - *Response:* A member of the consulting team provided additional detail about which items were included, such as the impacts of the Renewables Portfolio Standard on GHG emissions associated with electricity production.
- Question/comment: A Focus Group member asked about the benefit of improved recycling if life cycle emissions are not included in the inventory.
 - *Response:* A member of the consulting team explained the benefit by pointing out that improved recycling decreases the amount of waste sent to a landfill.
- Question/comment: Focus Group members asked whether unincorporated communities are included in the GHG inventory.
 - *Response:* A member of the consultant team confirmed that the inventory focuses primarily on activity that occurs within the city limits of Merced; however, the transportation sector includes trips that pass through Merced and could include trips that are associated with unincorporated communities. The data approach is consistent with the method used by the Great Valley Center and data provided by the Merced County Association of Governments.
- Question/comment: A Focus Group member requested clarifications on assumptions used to develop the GHG emissions forecast, reasons for the slower rate of emissions growth in the nonresidential sector when compared to the residential sector, and whether the forecast assumed annexation of areas within the Merced sphere of influence, as anticipated under the General Plan.
 - *Response:* The consultant team relied on forecasts from the adopted General Plan. The consultant team will review the analysis and confirm the treatment of unincorporated land in the sphere of influence. At the next meeting, the consultant team will provide additional information to help explain the slower rate of growth in the nonresidential

sector, which could be partially attributed to the impact of state programs or lower energy intensity in the nonresidential sector.

- Question/comment: When discussing the Land Use and Design code concept, Focus Group members noted that it was the broadest of all the programs and code concepts, and required a balancing of resources. One member observed that multi-story mixed use may become necessary in the future and supported development that builds up instead of out. Another member noted that requiring compact development may be an appropriate start to transition land use patterns, but observed the challenges of changing long-term behaviors in order to sustain longer-term GHG reductions.
- Question/comment: Focus Group members asked for more information about the different approaches related to the Recycling Facilities code concept, which was supplied by a member of the consulting team. A member pointed out that this code concept could be helpful to shift community behavior.
- Discussion: Focus Group members and members of the public discussed several opportunities to consider to existing or future credits for CAP development, including the following:
 - School bus ridership
 - Healthy living activities and education
 - School energy efficiency projects
 - Permits and fees for solar photovoltaic systems
 - Incentives and development standards
 - Safe Routes to School grant

LIVE POLLING EXERCISE

As part of the first Focus Group meeting, committee members were asked to participate in a live electronic polling exercise to identify their preferences related to GHG reduction programs and code concepts. City staff members attending as representatives of the Technical Advisory Committee for the CAP were also invited to vote. Members of the public in attendance did not cast votes. This polling activity was integrated into the presentation given by City staff members and consultants. Focus Group members were able to use the TurningPoint electronic polling technology to provide their feedback. Results were displayed to committee members immediately following each question.

Key Findings

When asked about priorities for the City of Merced, there was no choice which was the overwhelming favorite. The top priority, Land Use and Design, received 26 percent, followed by Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, and Nonresidential Energy Efficiency, both of which received 21 percent of the vote. No other priority received more than 15 percent of the votes.

Focus Group members overwhelmingly favored incentivizing GHG reduction activities over encouraging or requiring. When asked to select their preferred approach, a majority of Focus Group members chose an incentive approach for five of the seven programs and code concepts, and half of Focus Group members chose incentives for a sixth.

The only program or code concept in which incentives were not the preferred approach for at least half of the Focus Group members was the Land Use and Design code concept. In this instance, 40 percent of members selected incentives as their preferred approach, while another 40 percent favored requiring GHG reduction activities. There was also relatively high support for a mandatory approach to support Nonresidential Energy Efficiency programs; 38 percent of Focus Group members favored this approach. Support for encouraging GHG reductions was between 20 and 30 percent for five of the seven programs and code concepts, and 0 percent for the other two.

Live Polling Results

The tables below show the results for each live polling question. Approximately 10 Focus Group members participated in the polling activity.

Question 1: What are the top three priorities for Merced?

Priority	Percent of respondents
Land Use and Design	26%
Nonresidential Energy Efficiency	21%
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	21%
Recycling Facilities	15%
Landscape Design	12%
Residential Energy Efficiency	12%
Renewable Energy	0%

Question 2: What approach works best to support Residential Energy Efficiency programs?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	20%
Incentivize	70%
Require	10%

Question 3: What approach works best to support Nonresidential Energy Efficiency programs?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	0%
Incentivize	63%
Require	38%

Question 4: What approach works best to support Renewable Energy programs?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	0%
Incentivize	100%
Require	0%

Question 5: What approach works best to support Transportation programs?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	22%
Incentivize	67%
Require	11%

Question 6: What approach works best to support Land Use and Design code concepts?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	20%
Incentivize	40%
Require	40%

Question 7: What approach works best to support Landscape Design code concepts?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	30%
Incentivize	50%
Require	20%

Question 8: What approach works best to support enhanced Recycling Facilities code concepts?

Approach	Percent of respondents
Encourage	22%
Incentivize	56%
Require	22%

PUBLIC COMMENTS

In addition to participating in the discussion as discussed above, members of the public in attendance also had the opportunity to fill out a comment card to provide additional detail about any topics of interest related to the PCAP project. These comments are included as Attachment A.

Public Comment Form (PCAP)

June 19, 2014

General Comments

Your comments are important to us. We'd like to hear from you on any topic of interest to you regarding the project. Please take the time to comment here:

- how Water Conservation Program & Watering Schedule Reduction saves GHG
- how Landscaping could reduce water use & therefore GHG especially in Public Property
- HC Car tracks efficiency of routes & Times to reduce GHG in city. Also Carpooling credits/Biking credits since they are originating in the City.

looks at the Temp Settings in Public Bldgs - go to a higher Setting in Sum
∴ Savings in this low in winter
ie - Very Cold in SAM Pipes Room during Mtgs.

USE MID INFO & input as well as PG&E

How is the Leadership Model for the CAP going to be looked at in this Process.

Make sure we are not preventing Processes from Happening by current Code ie: No Gardens in front Yards, Min amount of Tree what can be done with City Sidewalks Strip.