



Board Report

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Agenda Number:

AD HOC SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE JANUARY 20, 2016

SUBJECT: URBAN GREENING IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

ACTION: APPROVE URBAN GREENING IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

Approve proposed Urban Greening Implementation Action Plan.

ISSUE

Metro completed an urban greening plan funded by a grant from the Strategic Growth Council. At the Ad-Hoc Sustainability Committee meeting on October 14, 2015, committee members directed staff to develop an implementation action plan to put the urban greening plan into practice.

DISCUSSION

The recommended action would approve an Urban Greening Implementation Action Plan with the following components discussed in detail further below:

- developing a carbon calculator;
- training and outreach to cities;
- demonstration projects;
- inter-agency collaboration;
- internal training;
- consideration in Metro programs;
- online mapping tool;
- funding options research.

Metro plays a key role in creating a sustainable region in Southern California. Over the past several years, Metro has overseen the creation of a comprehensive policy framework positioned to promote sustainable and transit-supportive development and public investments. The foundation of this effort is the Metro Countywide Sustainability Planning Policy (CSPP). In keeping with established best practice in sustainability planning, the CSPP is structured around the three dimensions of sustainability: equity, economy, and environment. To contextualize these universal concepts to mission and roles of Metro, the CSPP identifies three primary themes: "Connect, Create, and Conserve." The CSPP lays out how Metro's planning practices can foster sustainable outcomes - as

a regional mobility provider (Connect), a project manager (Create), and a steward of public funds (Conserve).

To further articulate the concepts put forward in the CSPP, Metro is the process of preparing or implementing a growing number of plans and toolkits, including: the First/ Last Mile Strategic Plan, Complete Streets Policy, and Active Transportation Strategic Plan (ATSP), Transit-Supportive Development Toolkit, and the Urban Greening Toolkit.

One goal of the Urban Greening Toolkit is to work in conjunction with Metro's First/Last Mile Strategic Plan by providing resources and best practice guidance for greening and place-making that support transit access and infrastructure. The Urban Greening Toolkit offers an additional degree of articulation regarding the types of strategies that can be applied both in the immediate vicinity of Metro stations. The Urban Greening Toolkit expands the realm of opportunity first identified in the First/Last Mile Strategic Plan to address elements of the built environment that can attract transit riders and provide an environmental benefit.

The Urban Greening Toolkit has been created as a web portal which provides flexibility to incorporate lessons learned and best practices, and enables the sustainability principles in the CSPP to be refined into strategies and projects that can be implemented in individual communities and neighborhoods near Metro facilities, thus enabling the transition from policy to practice. The Toolkit also helps Metro contribute broad regional sustainability goals by putting forth tools to align investments in land use, transportation and the environment.

The Los Angeles region is facing multiple impacts from climate change including water supply and quality, air quality, and heat. As a steward and good neighbor, Metro has an opportunity to continue to expand its sustainability practices on the ground. Currently, Metro is a leader in sustainable practices. There are a number of related Metro board actions that this Urban Greening Implementation Action Plan supports. On October 15, 2015, the Ad-Hoc Sustainability Committee directed staff to pursue an Implementation Action Plan for the Urban Greening Plan.

- Metro Board Motion on Drought Awareness (2015) - On June 18, 2015, the Metro Board approved a drought awareness motion to continue proactive water conservation and management. This motion includes potable water reduction goals, irrigation and landscape goals to respond to the extreme drought conditions in the state.
- First Last Mile Strategic Plan (2014) - In April 2014, the Metro Board adopted the First Last Mile Strategic Plan to expand the reach of transit, maximize multi-modal benefits and build on the RTP/SCS.
- Countywide Sustainability Policy and Plan (2012) - In December 2012, Metro's Countywide Sustainability Policy and Plan (CSPP) was adopted. The CSPP identifies urban greening as a sustainability priority.
- Climate Action and Adaption Plan (2012) - This plan creates a framework to evaluate and prioritize areas of opportunity for Metro to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and present an approach for responding to the likely impacts of climate change on Metro's system.
- Water Action Plan (2010) - This plan provides strategies for water conservation and determines the potential for water conservation opportunities

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- Greenhouse Gas Emissions Cost Effectiveness Study (2010) - This report evaluates current and potential future Metro sustainability strategies for their costs and impacts on greenhouse gas emissions.

Through this expertise and its role in the region, Metro is uniquely positioned to facilitate local responses to climate change that increase accessibility as well as livability. To do this, an implementation action plan is detailed below. The action items include: developing a carbon calculator, training and outreach to cities, demonstration projects, inter-agency collaboration, internal training, consideration for inclusion in Metro programs, online mapping tool, and funding options research.

Implementation Action Plan

Develop a Carbon Calculator

In order to predict and track the positive environmental impacts of specific urban greening interventions, a carbon calculator is needed for the categories of tools in Metro's Urban Greening Toolkit. This calculator would build on existing carbon calculators and tailor an approach to quantify benefits. Once developed, this calculator will also assist LA-area agencies apply for grants by quantifying the environmental benefits of urban greening tools.

Training and Outreach to Cities

A crucial element of the implementation action plan is providing training to city staff and policy makers. This will include briefing meetings for subregions to educate local agency partners and the public on the Urban Greening Toolkit and its benefits. The trainings will focus on the need and opportunity for urban greening, overview of the Urban Greening Toolkit, how to incorporate greening elements into accessibility projects, and development of sample projects. Through the trainings, Metro would facilitate interdisciplinary, multi-benefit projects with regional significance. Trainings would also position projects in the region for appropriate funding opportunities.

Demonstration Projects

Another essential step toward widespread implementation is to demonstrate to cities and the community how some of the urban greening tools can be applied in projects near transit stations. To do this, Metro will work with internal departments, cities and Los Angeles County to identify appropriate greening tools for short, medium and long term projects. These demonstration projects will be evaluated for effectiveness, environmental benefit, and general ongoing sustainability. Staff proposes to execute four small- to medium-scale projects to move the urban greening tools from planning to application. Pending action on these recommendations, staff would develop criteria and process for demonstration projects that would include local partnership, community involvement, and any Metro investment being matched by local resources.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Staff has submitted a grant application for the Caltrans Transportation Planning Sustainable Communities grant program. The submitted project aims to coordinate housing, first / last mile and green infrastructure planning and provide a way to streamline project development that looks at these three categories of projects. Many locations that would be suitable for urban greening fall outside Metro's direct jurisdiction. During the Urban Greening Toolkit development, questions were raised

about how Metro would implement urban greening projects off Metro-owned property. If awarded grant funding, this proposed project would serve as a case study for inter-agency coordination on greening connected to transit.

Internal Training

Staff would expand the reach of the Urban Greening Toolkit by holding trainings for internal Metro departments on the elements of the plan and how additional greening tools could be incorporated into Metro's own projects or projects that Metro manages.

Consideration in Metro Programs

If this Urban Greening Implementation Action Plan is approved by the board, staff would begin discussion and coordination to determine how urban greening could be implemented into Metro programs - allowing for both a regional and local focus for our efforts.

Mapping Tool

The Urban Greening Toolkit includes analysis of environmental factors relevant to greening throughout LA County. To make this information interactive and easily accessible, an online mapping tool would be developed in concert with other web-based mapping efforts by Metro project teams. This online tool will aid Metro, cities and community groups in determining the appropriate locations for greening tools based on underlying environmental factors such as hydrology or urban cooling needs. Additional overlays would situate users to other related factors, as available through relevant Metro data efforts.

Funding Options Research

This action item would highlight specific funding sources and financing options for greening projects. The research would identify public and private grant opportunities and other mechanisms available to cities and community groups to see greening tools put into action.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

\$200,000 (\$50,000 per demonstration) will be requested in FY17 if this Implementation Plan is approved by the Board. The cost center manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting these costs during the FY17 budget development.

Impact to Budget

The source of funding will be determined as part of the overall budget process. We currently are considering Proposition A, Proposition C, and TDA Administration, which is not eligible for bus/rail operating and capital uses.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

One alternative to the recommendations is to not approve the Implementation Action Plan. In this case, the Urban Greening Toolkit would continue to be a resource for Metro, local agencies and communities, however implementation would be less coordinated and more ad-hoc in the region.

NEXT STEPS

If approved, staff would begin implementing each of these items. A timeline would also be developed and staff would report back at the next committee meeting on the schedule and status. Staff would track implementation efforts throughout the Los Angeles County and periodically update the Urban Greening Toolkit with case studies and examples as greening projects connected to transit stations are completed.

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