



October 27, 2017

Chairman Mary Nichols  
California Air Resources Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

**Subject: Public Health Comments on SB 375 Regional Target Update**

Dear Chairman Nichols:

On behalf of the undersigned public health organizations and individual health professionals, we are writing to express our support for strong sustainable community planning efforts to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and protect health. These measures must include ambitious regional GHG reduction targets, increased funding and support of active transportation and strong vehicle trip reduction policies. Therefore, we urge the state board to adopt the strongest possible SB 375 greenhouse gas reduction targets in the target update process now before you.

California not only faces the most difficult air pollution burdens in the nation but has also for decades been saddled with planning decisions that promote longer driving distances and undermine community health around the state. This has added to our climate change burdens while also complicating efforts to reduce smog and particle pollution from the broader transportation sector (passenger vehicles, freight, etc.) California's leading transportation programs (e.g. Zero Emission Vehicles, Low Carbon Fuel Standard) are driving down vehicle and fuel emissions but cannot address the need for fundamental changes in land use planning and transportation decisions. This is especially true for disadvantaged communities lacking adequate, safe and connected sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit opportunities, and where a higher proportion of households lack a vehicle.

The vision for sustainable communities serving all Californians is a critical component of climate policy that promotes health and moving toward this goal requires that we account for historical disparities in investment toward healthy communities. In fact, increasing active transportation is the greenhouse gas reduction strategy with the greatest health and health equity co-benefits.

California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375) has spurred important progress at the regional and local level to better align community planning with state greenhouse gas reduction goals, but now state and local leaders need to step

up the progress in order to reach 2030 and 2050 climate goals and achieve this broader vision. In order to promote the greatest health outcomes for all Californians through our land use and transportation plans, decisions and investments, we offer the following recommendations as the California Air Resources Board (CARB) moves to update regional GHG targets over the coming months:

### **1) Support Public Health through Stronger Regional Targets**

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the California Air Resources Board to analyze and develop more ambitious regional GHG reduction targets in support of the 2030 Scoping Plan process. Now that regions are well on their way to achieving the current set of targets, stronger action is needed. The GHG reduction targets included in CARB's June 2017 staff report are more ambitious than those recommended by regional MPOs and signal the importance of increasing efforts across the board to reach our health-protective climate and clean air goals. We support the staff recommendation as a step in the right direction, but it does not go as far as needed to meet the Scoping Plan 2030 GHG reduction goal. Strong targets are critical to ensure that regional plans align with state goals to promote more sustainable transportation outcomes, including:

- Achieve national air quality standards and California's 2030 goal to reduce climate pollution by 40 percent compared to 1990 levels as outlined in the 2030 Scoping Plan currently under development at CARB..
- Support Caltrans' Sustainability Master Plan and the "*Toward an Active California*" plan to double pedestrian and transit trips and triple bicycling trips by 2020, and reduce pedestrian and bicycle fatalities by 10 percent every year.
- Avoid displacement of existing communities and ensuring sustainable communities are inclusive and equitable.

### **2) Ensure New Funding Sources Maximize Progress toward SB 375 Goals**

A key development in recent years has been the creation of new funding opportunities to support healthy communities for all Californians that did not exist during earlier SB 375 planning efforts. CARB must be vigilant to ensure that all of these funding efforts are well coordinated, benefit all communities and show real progress toward SB 375 targets.

The Active Transportation Program (ATP) was created in 2013 and has invested over \$500 million in walking and bicycling projects around the State. Senate Bill 1 (California's "Road Repair and Transportation Accountability Act of 2017") will provide \$1 billion in new funding for the ATP over the coming decade to support active transportation efforts, especially in our most disadvantaged communities. Other new programs including the Congested Corridors and Local Partnership Programs can fund active transportation as part of larger multimodal projects. Additionally, newly approved regional transportation planning grants to implement SB 375 (2017-18 California Budget) and the Transformative Climate Communities grants (per AB 2722, Burke) can provide greater opportunities to address locally-

identified community planning needs. Funding is also available through the VW settlement and local measures like LA County Measure M. All of these funding programs are on top of ongoing Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund allocations for transit, sustainable community planning and affordable housing.

### **3) Support Ongoing Health Analysis of SB 375 Planning Efforts**

Throughout the SB 375 implementation process, several regional planning agencies have begun integrating public health into planning efforts with greater focus on healthier, safer transportation planning and land use patterns, and these efforts must continue. For example, several Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Councils of Governments (COGs) have included health analysis, hired public health and active transportation staff, developed relationships with County health departments and taken other steps to involve public health in the core of their planning processes.

The Southern California Association of Governments' "*Active Transportation Health and Economic Impact Study*" released in November 2016 reported hundreds of millions in public health and economic benefits due to increased active transportation investments contained in the region's 2016 Regional Transportation Plan. The SCAG study identified significant reductions in diabetes prevalence and poor health outcomes (11% and 13% respectively) associated with increased active transportation. Similarly, a published study of the Bay Area found that a modest increase in daily biking and walking would reduce cardiovascular and diabetes rates by about 14%.

We strongly support these efforts and believe that CARB should support the ongoing relationship between public health and community planning agencies by providing the support and resources needed to conduct these types of health evaluations throughout California on an on-going basis to support regional implementation of SB 375.

As health organizations and health and medical professionals, we view integrated health and community planning processes as key to ensuring California meets its goals for a sustainable, healthy future. We look forward to working with CARB, the MPOs and other stakeholders in building healthier communities for all Californians.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Holmes-Gen  
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American Lung Association in California

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