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# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

### AGENDA ITEM

05

**DATE:** January 25, 2023

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

#### **SUBJECT**

**ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE  
COLLABORATIONS: ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL SOCIAL EQUITY WORKING  
GROUP (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The County of San Diego (County) has positioned itself as a leader in addressing climate change, sustainability, and furthering the goals to reach zero carbon. Two important aspects that must be central to ensuring that the region is measuring, preparing, and creating actions to transform and innovate to march towards these goals are:

- creating a baseline understanding of equity across jurisdictions and regional agencies; and
- bringing together the region's brain trust for developing strategies for the green jobs and workforce transition for San Diego County as an innovator and regional-binational economic partner.

This work aligns with the recent adoption by the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) 2022 Scoping Plan which was approved on December 15, 2022. The CARB Scoping Plan is ambitious and sets direction for the state of California, the world's fourth largest economy, to become carbon neutral by 2045 and reduce the State's dependence on fossil fuels. The 2022 state budget includes a total of \$2.6 billion this year appropriated via the Budget Act of 2022 from a multi-agency commitment to decarbonization (Total of \$6.1 billion through FY 2026-27). For our region, the San Diego Air Pollution Control District has identified and received approval for advancing emissions reductions in two San Diego communities through the AB 617 Community Air Protection Program: the Portside Environmental Justice Community and the San Diego International Border. These CARB investments are receiving prioritization and efforts should be aligned to ensure we are advocating collectively for AB 617 program and incentive funding for these frontline communities. At the federal level, the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides \$973 billion over five years (FY 2022 through 2026) including \$550 billion in new investments for all modes of transportation, water, power and energy, environmental remediation, public lands, broadband and resilience. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is aimed at curbing inflation and investing into domestic energy production while promoting clean energy.

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The law will raise \$738 billion and authorize \$391 billion in spending on energy and climate. This will be the largest investment in climate change in United States history.

As we continue to address sustainability and environmental justice issues in the region, the County needs to do more to improve conditions in our frontline communities. With the establishment of the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ), the tremendous advancement of how we address internal sustainability for the County enterprise and in support of the Integrated Regional Decarbonization Framework, it is time to begin the work of engaging on strategies and activities that are regional, multi-sectoral, and multi-jurisdictional.

Today’s action directs the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to establish a Regional Social Equity Working Group to consult with OSEJ on regional sustainability and environmental justice issues. The action also directs the CAO to coordinate a workshop to develop strategies for what the region will need for job growth and building the workforce development pipeline and report back in 180 days.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)  
CHAIRWOMAN NORA VARGAS AND VICE CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER**

1. Find that today’s actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 15378(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to establish a Regional Social Equity Working Group (“Regional Equity Group”) to consult with the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ) on regional sustainability and environmental justice issues. These may include social equity guidance for climate action and decarbonization efforts around the region, as well as other social equity issues related to water, air pollution, and affordable housing. This group will consist of:
  - a. community residents or tribal leaders that have lived experiences in environmental injustice;
  - b. community-based organizations or tribal organizations that advocate for health, social, economic or environmental justice in a specific environmental justice community or sovereign tribal land; or
  - c. academics or researchers that have technical expertise in addressing the underlying causes of health, social, economic, or environmental disparities in disadvantaged populations.
3. Direct the CAO to coordinate a workshop to bring together economic development sectors, labor unions, non-profits, economic development corporations and councils, chambers, universities and colleges, and environmental organizations to develop strategies on what the region will need for job growth, decarbonization, and develop strategies for building the workforce development pipeline for the region and provide a report back to the Board of Supervisors within 180 days.
4. Direct the CAO to consult with the San Diego Air Pollution Control District to identify opportunities for collaboration to increase AB 617 program funding and CARB incentive funding for the two San Diego AB 617 communities.

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**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Integrated Regional Decarbonization Framework (RDF) is centered on equity. The voices of communities impacted by environmental injustices were critical in the development of the technical, scientific reports and will continue to play an important role throughout the design and development of implementation actions, as the County of San Diego continues its robust public outreach and engagement. The technical report of the RDF, received on August 31, 2022 (5) and drafted in partnership with the University of California San Diego(UC San Diego) School of Global Policy and Strategy and the University of San Diego (USD) School of Law’s Energy Policy Initiatives Center (EPIC) identified that existing climate action plan commitments by local jurisdictions, including the incorporated cities and the unincorporated area, that are designed to reduce greenhouse gases, will fall short. It also identified areas where the region can do more to reach its decarbonization goals. One finding in the report noted that the different jurisdictional plans have varying definitions of equity, have no equity statement and/or do not identify equity as an important prioritization for advancing climate goals. By establishing a baseline understanding of equity across jurisdictions and regional agencies, the region, through OSEJ, can identify metrics and progress for ensuring climate solutions, investments, and inclusion.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The proposed action to provide opportunities to convene regional stakeholders in the workforce and economic development space will contribute to many of the County of San Diego’s Sustainability goals by advancing community engagement in meaningful ways to foster inclusive and sustainable communities for the development of strategies and investments for transitioning to a green and carbon free economy, including tribal government and agricultural community participation; and focus investments in chronically underserved communities. Additionally, the proposed action to establish a Regional Social Equity Working Group will invest in building resilience for vulnerable populations in partnership with communities and remediate environmental harms for communities that have been disproportionately impacted.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this action. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years. There may be fiscal impacts associated with future related recommendations for which staff would return to the Board for consideration and approval.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

The County of San Diego has an opportunity to convene regional stakeholders in the workforce and economic development space to begin to provide more detail to the necessary strategies to prepare for transitioning to a greener economy, including tribal government and agricultural community participation. The RDF will provide a guiding framework for climate-related jobs and investments with innovative science and technological advancements, climate resiliency efforts, new renewable energy generation and storage projects, clean technology in transportation and building systems, research and development in greenhouse gas (GHG) capture and storage, economic benefits from emissions reductions, and the associated high-quality job creation in the green economy. Advancing regional workforce transition plans by engaging stakeholders in the economic development space will create a regional engagement space to advance these efforts with and for workers and the business community.

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## **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

## **BACKGROUND**

With the leadership of the County Board of Supervisors over the last two years, the County has positioned itself as a leader in addressing climate change, sustainability, and furthering goals to reach zero carbon. Two important aspects that must be central to ensuring that the region is measuring, preparing, and creating actions to transform and innovate to march towards these goals are:

- creating a baseline understanding of equity across jurisdictions and regional agencies; and
- bringing together the region's brain trust for developing the best green jobs and workforce transition for San Diego County as an innovator and regional-binational economic partner.

This work aligns with the recent adoption by the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) 2022 Scoping Plan which was approved on December 15, 2022. The CARB Scoping Plan is ambitious and sets direction for the state of California, the world's fourth largest economy, to become carbon neutral by 2045 and reduce the State's dependence on fossil fuels. The Scoping Plan will drive economic growth and transformation with unprecedented investments by the State and Federal governments. The 2022 state budget includes a total of \$2.6 billion this year appropriated via the Budget Act of 2022 from a multi-agency commitment to decarbonization (Total of \$6.1 billion through FY 2026-27). This year focuses investments on an equitable zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) transition by continuing to find ways to support priority populations. This direction is consistent with the direction provided from 06-29-2022 (06) authorizing the application and acceptance of grant funds related to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). At the Federal level, the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides \$973 billion over five years (FY 2022 through 2026) including \$550 billion in new investments for all modes of transportation, water, power and energy, environmental remediation, public lands, broadband and resilience. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 seeks to curb inflation and invest in domestic energy production while promoting clean energy. The law will raise \$738 billion and authorize \$391 billion in spending on energy and climate. This will be the largest investment in climate change in United States history.

As we continue to address sustainability and environmental justice issues in the region and as an organization, the County needs to do more to improve conditions in our frontline communities. With the establishment of the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ), the tremendous advancement of how we address internal sustainability for the County enterprise and in support of the Integrated Regional Decarbonization Framework (RDF), it is time to begin the work of engaging on strategies and activities that are regional, multi-sectoral, and multijurisdictional.

## **Regional Equity**

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As RDF research by Brookings and the San Diego Regional Policy Innovation Center presented in their report initial work by cities to address the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is in the form of creating climate action plans (CAPs) many of which pledge specific carbon reductions<sup>1</sup>. “Yet even as these plans proliferate, cities leaders are struggling to hit their targets. One gap in city climate planning and action is internal, with cities often failing to specify detailed strategies that will advance their goals. The other gap is regional: Individual cities do not have the fiscal, technical, or programmatic capacity to single-handedly drive decarbonization across their metropolitan regions, and often, they do not coordinate with other jurisdictions.” Additionally, “while almost all decarbonization plans identify equity as a goal, nearly three-quarters lack details on how to achieve it.”

The establishment of a Regional Equity Group to advise OSEJ will assist jurisdictions with identifying strategies to ensure success on meeting climate targets in their CAPs, and will also provide social equity guidance for climate action and decarbonization efforts around the region, as well as other social equity issues related to water, air pollution, and affordable housing and bring opportunities to integrate other regional entities like the San Diego Association of Governments, and the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District. This direction is consistent with the direction provided from 05-19-2021 (02) to establish a working group with multi-jurisdictional partners in the region. As an example, the County can explore partnering with the San Diego County Air Pollution District for staffing and other resources to support this Regional Working Group, and to coordinate with existing AB 617 communities.

**Workforce Transition**

San Diego County as a region is known as a place of innovation from biotech to our research institutions to being identified as a key regional-binational economic partner. As the RDF’s study on climate workforce recommendations from Inclusive Economics presented in their June 2022 report, there are next steps that our region can take to advance the development of a just transition for the workforce and be able to provide pathways for ensuring the development of the workforce into green jobs even as the State continues to advance climate legislation and decarbonization.

The County has an opportunity to act as a convener that can bring together interagency groups in this space along with stakeholders to discuss scenarios and transition plans; create a stakeholder engagement process with the San Diego region’s community partners to engage in advanced planning and policy recommendations. It is in this spirit of collaboration and partnership that we look to create the space for these next discussions for the development of strategies for building the workforce of the future.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

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<sup>1</sup> Not According to Plan: Exploring Gaps in City Climate Planning and the Need for Regional Action.  
[https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/lueg/regional-decarb-frameworkfiles/Brookings\\_Decarbonization\\_final.pdf](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/lueg/regional-decarb-frameworkfiles/Brookings_Decarbonization_final.pdf)

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These actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 15378(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines because they are administrative actions that will cause no direct or indirect foreseeable change to the physical environment.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This action supports the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan initiatives of Sustainability (Climate, Environment, Resiliency), Equity (Health), Community (Engagement and Quality of Life), and Justice (Environmental) as the recommended actions support the Integrated Regional Decarbonization Framework to provide data-driven strategies to help the region collectively achieve zero carbon emissions, reduce disparities caused by climate change impacts, center efforts on equity, and ensure the region has the steps to create a just transition of the workforce to a green economy.

Respectfully submitted,



CHAIR NORA VARGAS  
Supervisor, First District



VICE CHAIR TERRA LAWSON REMER  
Supervisor, Third District