

Report on the Southern California Compass Project

SOUTHLAND POLICY DIALOGUES

by the California Center for Regional Leadership
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I. WHY SOUTHLAND POLICY DIALOGUES?

The Southern California Compass Project is a collaborative regional planning process designed to develop a shared regional vision that will enable residents, local governments, developers, and other decision-makers to wisely manage projected growth across the region over the next twenty-five years. The Southern California Association of Governments and its Compass consultant team have produced a draft Growth Vision for the Southern California region through a variety of processes: development of growth principles, a survey of public opinion, development of growth “scenarios” through technical analysis, and public input through map-based workshops.

The Compass Project organized the Southland Policy Dialogues to enable local civic leaders to review and develop ideas for implementing the draft Growth Vision. The sessions aimed to achieve the following:

- Familiarize leaders across the region with the draft Growth Vision
- Help leaders to understand its implications for growth-related decisions within the Southland’s “sub-regions”
- Identify barriers (regional and local) to effective implementation of the draft Growth Vision
- Develop and set priorities on key implementation strategies for SCAG, local governments, and other decision-makers



This report presents the key themes emerging from the Dialogues. Notes of the discussions were taken and revised by CCRL staff, and are available on the Compass website. They were sent to all participants, as was an online survey (results presented below).

II. WHAT DID WE DO?

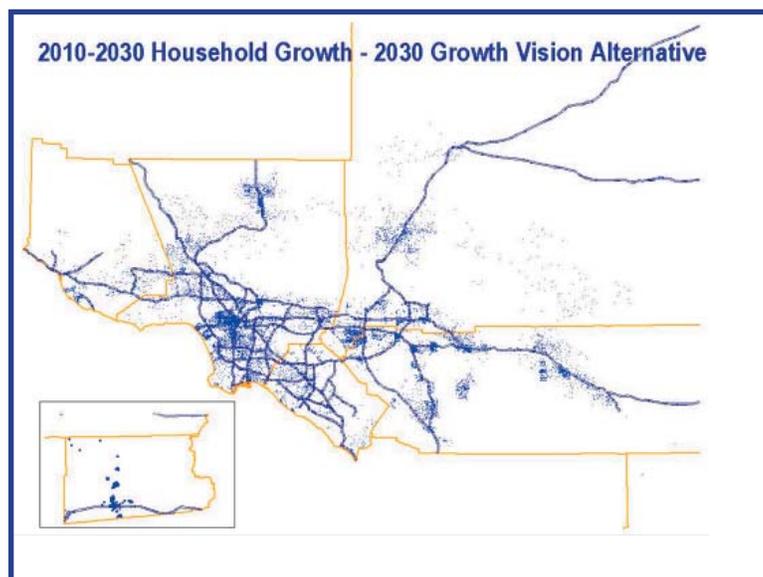
The California Center for Regional Leadership organized the Southland Policy Dialogues in five locations around the SCAG region, each focused on the unique issues of different sub-regions:

- Inland Empire – *March 10, 2004*
- San Fernando Valley, Ventura County, Arroyo Verdugo, North Los Angeles County (held in Van Nuys) – *March 11, 2004*
- South Bay Cities and Gateway Cities – *March 17, 2004*
- Orange County – *March 25, 2004*
- Downtown and Westside Los Angeles – *March 26, 2004*

The Compass Team also coordinated two sessions focused on the Latino community in Los Angeles and Orange County during April 2004.

In addition to the Dialogues noted above, a “pilot” Southland Policy Dialogue was convened on February 27, 2004, with the participation of the 48-member Leadership Southern California (LSC) Class XIV. This group provided invaluable feedback about the Dialogue presentation and discussion format. In addition, many LSC Class members and alumni attended the March Dialogue sessions.

Dialogue participants included local civic leaders, government officials, business owners, developers, neighborhood activists, and representatives of state agencies. In total, nearly 200 local community leaders participated in the five Dialogue sessions. Major sub-regional organizations, such as Councils of Government and other regional entities, were recruited to help plan and host these events. Summary reports and participant lists of each the sessions are attached to this report.



III. WHAT DID WE LEARN?

1. About the Growth Vision and its implementation

The attached Summaries provide detail about responses to the draft Growth Vision and ideas for implementation. However, certain key themes emerged from Dialogue participants across the sub-regions, especially the following actions and issues:

- Encourage local and regional officials to approve, and then use as guidance, the basic principles and directions of the Growth Vision, such as preserving stable, existing single-family neighborhoods; directing new development, whenever possible, to existing employment or housing centers and to robust transportation corridors; promoting development around transit stations; protecting or expanding park and recreation facilities and open space; using land more efficiently wherever development occurs.
- Understand that there are differing opinions on: 1) where further development can be accommodated in existing communities (“it’s a good idea, just not here -- we’re built out”); 2) which highways or arterials could accommodate additional traffic; and 3) what level of incentives it would take for more people to use transit over automobiles.
- Plan from the bottom up, and recognize and value the particular needs of sub-regions and localities. The Southland is composed of connected but profoundly diverse places, and planning should advance different models of development that fit these differences.
- For more integrated and cost-effective results, link regional and local land use planning and project approvals with transportation planning and investment.
- Foster collaborative planning across and among all public sector agencies making land-use and infrastructure investment decisions, including local governments but also transit agencies, school districts, and water districts.
- Promote “choice” (particularly housing and transportation options) through consumer and governmental incentives rather than top-down mandates.
- Appreciate that achievement of the Growth Vision will require broad public understanding and the alignment of thousands of individual decisions made in both the public and private sectors over many years. In that sense, achieving the Growth Vision is as much a “cultural” shift as it is a technical or policy challenge, and will require sustained public education and involvement.



“Local governments and regional agencies are not the only decision-makers that we have to take into account. Thousands of decision-makers will have to align with each other to achieve the Vision: consumers, developers, investors, business executives, employees, and countless others. ”

– Nick Bollman, Dialogue Moderator

- Make the state government a full partner in achieving the Growth Vision, through major reforms in fiscal policy, state agency planning decisions, and infrastructure investments.
- Protect the environment. The commitment to this value runs deeply and broadly across the region and among all kinds of groups.
- Create more effective means of influencing business-location decisions to achieve a better “jobs-housing balance.”
- Understand the differences of opinion on the economics benefits and challenges of mixed-use development.
- Acknowledge that, on the critical issue of whether or not the projected population growth in the region (6 million additional people) will actually occur, there was common agreement that it is likely to happen (often expressed with expressions of resignation rather than anticipation). On the other hand, long-term questions about the “carrying capacity” of the region, particularly with respect to water supply, remain unresolved.
- Bring the education sector into the collaboration. It is crucial to align K-12 education and worker training, as well as school siting, with community needs.
- Promote viable infill development projects by removing the regulatory barriers and supporting local public officials who make tough decisions.

2. About the Compass Project and the Southland Policy Dialogues

- Participation in the Dialogues was somewhat diverse, but did not mirror the population, let alone the future demography of the SCAG region and its sub-regions. Two additional Dialogues, with Latino leaders, were organized to ensure an opportunity for feedback and participation from that community.
- Participants were earnest about becoming engaged in discussion about the future of the entire SCAG region. They do not entirely believe that the Growth Vision will have a large enough impact on growth patterns, but there was general appreciation of SCAG’s efforts to reach out to their communities.
- The Dialogues were a largely a conversation about possible futures and not necessarily the technical aspects of planning and growth management, even among local elected officials.
- The Dialogues represented an opportunity to “close the circle” from the map-based workshops, though the overlap in participants between the two was minimal.
- The opportunities for oral presentation directly to the Growth Visioning Subcommittee of first, the design, and then the results, of the Dialogues ensured a strong linkage between the Committee process and the Dialogue outcomes.

3. Of interest to the Southern California Association of Governments

“If we are to accommodate the addition of a third more people in the state, water supply, quality, and systems will become an enormous problem.”
 – Participant in the March 11 Southland Policy Dialogue

- Sub-regions matter, and local leaders were pleased that SCAG acknowledged them as important “building blocks” and valued their opinions.
- There was deep interest (especially among local elected officials and planners) about how the kind of Vision discussion engendered by the project can be continued, and expanded to the scale necessary to actually result in effective, sustained change.
- Participants expressed a desire for partnership and greater alignment of goals and decisions with the state government, but little knowledge or willingness to get directly involved in making that happen (“Let SCAG do it.”).
- Very few participants (even many of the local elected officials) understand what leverage SCAG itself has (and does not have) to advance the Growth Vision.

IV. EVALUATION RESULTS

1. Who participated in the Southland Policy Dialogues?

Dialogue participants were surveyed electronically two weeks following the events in an effort to help us better understand the sessions. Approximately 200 people attended the five Southland Policy Dialogues and were representative of a wide range of sectors, with business/building developers and regional/local government making up the greatest numbers of participants.

2. Selected survey results

- In all five subregions, over 90% of survey respondents agreed that “the Dialogue increased my knowledge and understanding of the Growth Vision.”
- By contrast, Downtown/Westside Los Angeles session data indicates that 50% of survey respondents were “dissatisfied” with the dialogue overall.
- In four of the five subregions, 75% of survey respondents agreed that “the Dialogue generated solutions to the successful implementation of the Growth Vision.”

Participants in Southland Policy Dialogues by Sector
 (according to survey responses)

Sector	%
Civic Group	20%
Building/Development	16%
Local/Regional Government	15%
Regional Council of Government	11%
State Government	8%
Manufacturing	8%
Other Business	8%
Other	8%
Labor	3%
Academic	3%
Finance	0%

3. Written feedback

Below is a sampling of the written comments provided by respondents to the survey:

...These are fundamentally regional issues that can only be addressed regionally.

There are some good elements in the Vision, but there is no clear road to implementation, and especially no identification where the funding will come from.

...Mobility will be key. Alternatives to the auto must be provided and linked in the region...Maybe this is a start to really address the great challenges ahead to maintain and improve the quality of life in the region.

Although the concepts are terrific and very important to the future of our region, the Vision must include practical/ doable/ locally supportable implementations for it to make a difference in the real world. This next step in SCAG's vision effort (implementation) is so very critical.

Livability is a key ingredient often overlooked when visioning.



4. Ranking of barriers

Survey respondents ranked a series of statements regarding barriers to successfully implementing the Growth Vision:

- The highest-ranking barrier in all five regions was an “under-informed general public, media and other key institutions.”
- The second-highest-ranking barrier in the five regions was the recognition that “local control over land use decisions and competition between municipalities drives land use decisions.”
- There was some variation among the remaining barriers, with “big, diverse, multiple jurisdictions in the region” and “state government historically slow to respond to changing land use needs at the regional level” ranking as third in the South Bay and Downtown/Westside LA, but fourth in the remaining subregions.

5. Ranking of policy recommendations

Survey respondents ranked a series of policy recommendations regarding the successful implementation of the Growth Vision. The following three strategies were rated as high priorities by participants at all of the Dialogues:

- *First priority:* Create a targeted public education campaign to increase awareness of the issues outlined in the Growth Vision
- *Second priority:* Develop a best practices database that shows progress towards implementation of the key principles outlined in the Growth Vision
- *Third priority:* Foster greater cooperation between business and government through public-private partnerships

The policy recommendations that received the most varied response, with no more than 30% of survey respondents supporting the strategy, were:

- Develop a legislative agenda for the region, supported by a range of local governments, to aid in the realization of the Growth Vision
- Work to make the regional economy of the Southland a place where businesses are supported by government policies



V. QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- A. Would this project add value to the work of COGs and MPOs?
How?
- B. Is it possible to reach agreement on 5-10 statewide goals and 35-40 indicators that would measure progress against these goals?
- C. Is it possible/valuable to present a few goals and measures unique to each sub-region?
- D. Is the timeframe practical and are there sufficient resources to develop a quality product?
- E. Who are the audiences for this report?
 - Governor & Cabinet
 - California Performance Review
 - Legislature
 - Regional leaders
 - Media
 - General Public
 - Who else?

