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## Editorial: Getting to the future

### Transit plan is key to region's well-being

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How will the Sacramento region cope with the growing population, and what role will transit play? Those are questions two sets of planners are studying.

Yesterday, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments board released a draft of its Metropolitan Transit Plan for 2035, opening a 45-day comment period. This is the transportation component of SACOG's Blueprint project, which seeks to guide future growth in ways that minimize the problems and maximize the opportunities. And today, Sacramento Regional Transit begins a major review of its Transit Master Plan, the first update since 1993.

The problems the region faces are obvious. SACOG projects that by 2035 the region will add 525,000 homes and 535,000 jobs as the population grows by an additional 1 million residents. More traffic congestion, dirtier air and longer commutes will be inevitable if nothing is done.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035 will invest \$42 billion in the six-county Sacramento region over the next 28 years. Using land-use and transportation planning, SACOG seeks to reduce time spent commuting, protect air quality and improve the quality of life in the region.

RT hopes to build upon the SACOG plan with an extensive review of its options. The problems for RT are clear: Only 1.1 percent of all trips in its service area are on buses or light rail, and bus ridership has been declining 1 percent per year. More people walk and bike than use RT. If RT is going to increase its minuscule share of daily trips, it will need to attract "lifestyle users," people who have other options.

Where to focus its efforts and how to pay for its projects will be a major part of coming discussions.

RT is calling this "The People's Plan," and it promises that this review will involve significant public input. Today, RT launches the process with a meeting with stakeholders. In the future, RT will launch a Web site that will include interactive opportunities.

Now is the time for people in the region to help RT make the right choices.

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