SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

CLEVELAND NAT'L FOREST FOUNDATION, et al.,

Petitioners,

v.

SAN DIEGO ASS'N OF GOVERNMENTS,

Respondent;

And CONSOLIDATED CASE and COMPLAINT IN INTERVENTION BY the ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CALIFORNIA

Case No. 2011-00101593

RULING ON PETITIONS FOR WRIT OF MANDATE

Judge: Timothy B. Taylor
Dept.: 72

Hearing: November 30, 2012

1. Overview and Procedural History.

In this CEQA case, the petitioners and the Attorney General claim SANDAG abused its discretion when it decided to certify an EIR and adopt a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) which for the first time included a "Sustainable Communities Strategy" (SCS) ostensibly designed to meet a greenhouse gas emission reduction target as required by Senate Bill 375, Stats. 2008, Ch. 728. The parties agree this is the first RTP in California to be adopted following the 2008 legislation [AR2075; AR 04465], but they fundamentally disagree about the reach and requirements of that statute as it interfaces with the requirements of CEQA. No court has heretofore interpreted SB 375; the RTP/SCS at issue is meant to provide a blueprint for transportation planning for the next

40 years; and entities like SANDAG up and down the State are looking for guidance from this case regarding how to implement SB 375 in the context of an EIR. Thus, this court is but a way station in the life of this case, which is clearly headed for appellate review regardless of the outcome at the trial level. The case arises against a backdrop of intense scientific and political debate over what one counsel referred to as the signal issue of our time: global climate change.

Petitioners Cleveland Nat'l Forest Foundation ("Cleveland") and the Center for Biological Diversity ("CBD") filed the petition on November 28, 2011. The case was assigned to Judge Hayes, but Cleveland challenged her and the case was reassigned. Petitioners CREED-21 and the Affordable Housing Coalition ("AHC") filed a substantially similar petition, also on November 28, 2011 (ROA 42). This case, No. 2011-00101660, was initially assigned to another department, but the parties later stipulated to (and the court ordered) consolidation with the low-numbered case (ROA 41).

Cleveland and CBD filed an amended petition on 1/23/12, adding the Sierra Club as a petitioner (ROA 17). The AG sought and obtained leave to intervene on 1/25/12, and filed her petition in intervention the same day on behalf of the People (ROA 22-25).

At a CMC on 2/24/12, the parties advised the court that the Administrative Record in this case exceeds 10,000 pages in length (as it turned out, it is over 30,000 pages). In light of this, the court adopted a party-proposed briefing schedule, granted relief from brief page limits imposed by the Rules of Court, and set the matter for a merits hearing (ROA 38). SANDAG subsequently filed answers to both the Cleveland/CBD/Sierra Club amended petition and the CREED-21/AHC petition (ROA 48, 49). SANDAG also filed its answer to the AG's petition in intervention.

The Administrative Record, which is contained on a CD, was lodged on June 27 (ROA 53), having been certified by SANDAG on May 3 (ROA 45). Joint excerpts are contained in two binders, which were lodged 10/25/12. On November 19, the parties lodged a "Corrected Joint Appendix" (ROA 80); but by this time, the court had done the lion's share of its review using the joint excerpts lodged in October.

The briefing has been extensive, and as will be explained below, might have been even more extensive. On June 27, the AG filed an opening brief, an amended opening brief, and (a few days later) an errata to the amended opening brief (ROA 52, 56). Also on June 27, CREED-21/AHC filed their opening brief (ROA 54), and Cleveland/CBD/Sierra Club filed their opening brief (ROA 55). This was a total of 81 pages of briefing (not counting the AG's amendments and corrections). On Sept. 10, SANDAG filed its responsive briefs: one in response to the AG's amended brief (ROA 62), and a second in response to the Cleveland and CREED-21 briefs (ROA 61). This was a total of 95 pages of briefing.

On September 25, 2012, the court had the unpleasant experience of denying several requests for leave to file *amicus* briefs. ROA 68. Respondents recruited several *amici*

who spent time and energy preparing extensive briefs. See ROA 59, 64. The parties and the proposed *amici* appeared on September 25 to ask the court to allow the filing of these briefs, and to set a briefing schedule for joinders and responses thereto. The court was constrained to exercise its discretion to deny all such requests; it explained its decision in two ways. First, the court is aware of its limited role here: to ensure a complete record, and to provide the parties with a timely decision so that the case may proceed promptly to appellate review. The court was concerned that allowing *amicus* briefing, joinders and responses would retard rather than advance the latter goal (particularly given that the trial court's decision will not affect the others statewide with an interest in this topic, but rather only the parties – and then only for the limited period between the decision set forth below and the issuing of a learned opinion from the 4th DCA, Div. 1).

Second, and in a related vein, the court noted that Brobdingnagian budget cuts recently suffered by the Judicial Branch have caused the San Diego Superior Court to lay off hundreds of staff, stop providing court reporters in civil cases, restrict office hours, and, most recently, close a county-wide total of seven civil independent calendar courtrooms (with a consequent re-distribution of the caseload among the "surviving" departments). Again, the court was concerned that 100+ pages of additional briefing (on top of the lengthy party/intervenor briefs) could not be properly addressed by the court in a timely fashion, given these harsh fiscal and workload realities. Fortunately, the work done by *amici* will not have been wasted; they remain free to polish their briefs in light of this court's decision and seek leave to file them as the case proceeds to review before courts with broader authority.

Finally, reply briefing was filed by the AG on October 12; petitioners filed their consolidated reply that same day (ROA 72, 73). This was an additional 50 pages of briefing. The court has reviewed the opening, opposition and reply briefing, as well as the Administrative Record and the Supplement thereto filed October 22 (ROA 74).

The court notes that the briefing was accompanied by lodgments of non-California authorities. The court asks the parties to forebear from routinely lodging copies of federal or foreign authorities in the future. These are ordinarily available to the court on Westlaw. Counsel are encouraged to review the Summer 2011 amendments to CRC 3.1113(i) in this regard. The former rule made such lodgments mandatory; the current rule permits judicial discretion in this area. The court will advise counsel if it needs a lodgment of a non-California authority. Many trees will be saved if counsel will honor this request. Also, recent budget cuts imposed on the court make the clerk time for the handling of these lodgments quite problematic.

On November 16, 2012, the court published a lengthy tentative ruling. The court did so early, in order to facilitate counsel's preparation in light of the intervening Thanksgiving holiday. The court entertained well-prepared and very thoughtful argument on November 30 from Mr. Seymour on behalf of SANDAG, Mr. Selmi on behalf of petitioners, and by Mr. Patterson and Ms. Durbin on behalf of the AG. Petitioners and the AG used a Powerpoint presentation, which the court marked as Ex. 1 to the hearing for record purposes. Following argument, the court took the matter under submission. The court

now renders its decision. Record references below are to the excerpts lodged by the parties in October, except where stated. The court notes that, near the end of her comments during the 1 hour 45 minute hearing, Ms. Durbin requested a Statement of Decision. This is not required, as there was no "trial" of this matter as contemplated by CCP section 632. There was no testimony or cross examination; the matter proceeded, as most if not all CEQA cases do, in the manner of a complex motion argument. The court hopes that the following discussion will be deemed by the parties and the reviewing court to be an adequate specification of the grounds for non-compliance as required by Pub. Res. Code section 21005(c), and an adequate setting forth of the court's decision and the reasons therefor.

2. Overview of the CEQA Process.

A. The Court's Role in CEQA Cases.

In *Mira Mar Mobile Community v. City of Oceanside,* 119 Cal.App.4th 477, 486 (2004) (*Mira Mar Mobile Community*), the court explained that "[i]n a mandate proceeding to review an agency's decision for compliance with CEQA, [courts] review the administrative record *de novo* [citation], focusing on the adequacy and completeness of the EIR and whether it reflects a good faith effort at full disclosure. [Citation.] [The court's] role is to determine whether the challenged EIR is sufficient as an information document, not whether its ultimate conclusions are correct. [Citation.]" An EIR is presumed adequate. Pub. Res. Code § 21167.3, subd. (a).

Courts review an agency's action under CEQA for a prejudicial abuse of discretion. Pub. Res. Code § 21168.5. "Abuse of discretion is established if the agency has not proceeded in a manner required by law or if the determination or decision is not supported by substantial evidence." *Id.;* see *Mira Mar Mobile Community, supra,* 119 Cal.App.4th at 486; *County of San Diego v. Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College Dist.* ("*Grossmont*"), 141 Cal. App. 4th 86, 96 (2006)(same).

In defining the term "substantial evidence," the CEQA Guidelines state: " 'Substantial evidence' ... means enough relevant information and reasonable inferences from this information that a fair argument can be made to support a conclusion, even though other conclusions might also be reached. Whether a fair argument can be made ... is to be determined by examining the whole record before the lead agency. Argument, speculation, unsubstantiated opinion[,] narrative [or] evidence which is clearly erroneous or inaccurate ... does not constitute substantial evidence." CEQA Guidelines, § 15384(a). "In applying the substantial evidence standard, [courts] resolve all reasonable doubts in favor of the administrative finding and decision. [Citation.]" *Mira Mar Mobile Community, supra,* 119 Cal.App.4th at 486; *Grossmont, supra,* 141 Cal. App. 4th at 96.

Although the lead agency's factual determinations are subject to the foregoing deferential rules of review, questions of interpretation or application of the requirements of CEQA are matters of law. While judges may not substitute their judgment for that of the decision

makers, they must ensure strict compliance with the procedures and mandates of the statute. *Grossmont, supra*, 141 Cal. App. 4th at 96.

B. The Three Steps of CEQA.

CEQA establishes "a three-tiered process to ensure that public agencies inform their decisions with environmental considerations." *Banker's Hill, et al v. City of San Diego*, 139 Cal. App. 4th 249, 257 (2006)("*Banker's Hill*"); see also CEQA Guidelines, § 15002(k)(describing three-step process).

First Step in the CEQA Process.

The first step "is jurisdictional, requiring that an agency conduct a preliminary review in order to determine whether CEQA applies to a proposed activity." *Banker's Hill, supra,* 139 Cal. App. 4th at 257; see also Guidelines, § 15060. The Guidelines give the agency 30 days to conduct this preliminary review. (Guidelines, § 15060.) The agency must first determine if the activity in question amounts to a "project." *Muzzy Ranch Co. v. Solano County Airport Land Use Com.* (2007) 41 Cal.4th 372, 380. "A CEQA ...project falls into one of three categories of activity which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (§ 21065.)" *Sunset Sky Ranch Pilots Assn. v. County of Sacramento* (2009) 47 Cal.4th 902, 907.

As part of the preliminary review, the public agency must also determine the application of any statutory exemptions or categorical exemptions that would exempt the proposed project from further review under CEQA. See Guidelines, § 15282 (listing statutory exemptions); Guidelines, §§ 15300–15333 (listing 33 classes of categorical exemptions). The categorical exemptions are contained in the Guidelines and are formulated by the Secretary under authority conferred by CEQA section 21084(a). If, as a result of preliminary review, "the agency finds the project is exempt from CEQA under any of the stated exemptions, no further environmental review is necessary. The agency may prepare and file a notice of exemption, citing the relevant section of the Guidelines and including a brief 'statement of reasons to support the finding.' " *Banker's Hill, supra*, 139 Cal.App.4th at 258, citing Guidelines, §§ 15061(d), 15062(a)(3).

Second Step in the CEQA Process.

If the project does not fall within an exemption, the agency proceeds to the second step of the process and conducts an initial study to determine if the project *may* have a significant effect on the environment. (Guidelines, § 15063.) If, based on the initial study, the public agency determines that "there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record ... that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, an environmental impact report [(EIR)] shall be prepared." [CEQA, § 21080(d).] On the other hand, if the initial study demonstrates that the project "would not have a significant effect on the environment," either because "[t]here is no substantial evidence, in light of whole record" to that effect or the revisions to the project would avoid such an effect, the

agency makes a "negative declaration," briefly describing the basis for its conclusion. (CEQA, § 21080(c)(1); see Guidelines, § 15063(b)(2); *Banker's Hill, supra*, 139 Cal.App.4th at 259.)

The Guidelines and case law further define the standard that an agency uses to determine whether to issue a negative declaration. "[I]f a lead agency is presented with a *fair argument* that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, the lead agency shall prepare an EIR even though it may also be presented with other substantial evidence that the project will not have a significant effect." (Guidelines, § 15064(f)(1), italics added.) This formulation of the standard for determining whether to issue a negative declaration is often referred to as the "fair argument" standard. See *Laurel Heights Improvement Assn. v. Regents of University of California,* 6 Cal.4th 1112, 1134–1135 (1993). Under the fair argument standard, a project "may" have a significant effect whenever there is a "reasonable possibility" that a significant effect will occur. *No Oil v. City of Los Angeles*, 13 Cal.3d 68, 83-84 (1974). Substantial evidence, for purposes of the fair argument standard, includes "fact, a reasonable assumption predicated upon fact, or expert opinion supported by fact." § 21080, subd. (e)(1). Substantial evidence is not argument, speculation, unsubstantiated opinion or narrative, evidence that is clearly inaccurate or erroneous, or evidence of social or economic impacts unrelated to physical impacts on the environment. § 21080, subd. (e)(2).

If the initial study reveals no substantial evidence that the project may have a significant environmental effect, the agency may adopt a negative declaration. Pub. Res. Code § 21080, subd. (c)(2); Guidelines, § 15070, subd. (b); *Grand Terrace, supra,* 160 Cal.App.4th at 1331; *Save the Plastic Bag Coalition v. City of Manhattan Beach*, 52 Cal. 4th 155, 175 (2011)(holding common sense is part of the substantial evidence analysis). "Alternatively, if there is no substantial evidence of any net significant environmental effect in light of revisions in the project that would mitigate any potentially significant effects, the agency may adopt [an MND]. [Citation.] [An MND] is one in which '(1) the proposed conditions "avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where *clearly* no significant effect on the environment would occur, *and* (2) there is *no substantial evidence* in light of the whole record before the public agency that the project, as revised, may have a significant effect on the environment." (§ 21064.5 . . . .)' [Citations.]" *Grand Terrace, supra,* at 1331-1332. The MND allows the project to go forward subject to the mitigating measures. Pub. Res. Code §§ 21064.5, 21080, subd. (c); see *Grand Terrace, supra,* 160 Cal. App. 4th at 1331.

Third Step in the CEQA Process.

If no negative declaration is issued, the preparation of an EIR is the third and final step in the CEQA process. *Banker's Hill, supra*, 139 Cal. App. 4th at 259; Guidelines, §§ 15063(b)(1), 15080; CEQA, §§ 21100, 21151.

C. The Environmental Impact Report.

Central to CEQA is the EIR, which has as its purpose informing the public and government officials of the environmental consequences of decisions before they are made. [Citation.] "An EIR must be prepared on any 'project' a local agency intends to approve or carry out which 'may have a significant effect on the environment.' Pub. Res. Code §§ 21100, 21151; Guidelines, § 15002, subd. (f)(1). The term 'project' is broadly defined and includes any activities which have a potential for resulting in a physical change in the environment, directly or ultimately. Pub Res. Code § 21065; Guidelines, §§ 15002, subd. (d), 15378, subd. (a); [Citation].) The definition encompasses a wide spectrum, ranging from the adoption of a general plan, which is by its nature tentative and subject to change, to activities with a more immediate impact, such as the issuance of a conditional use permit for a site-specific development proposal." *CREED v. City of San Diego*, 134 Cal. App. 4th 598, 604 (2005).

"To accommodate this diversity, the Guidelines describe several types of EIR's, which may be tailored to different situations. The most common is the project EIR, which examines the environmental impacts of a specific development project. (Guidelines, § 15161.) A quite different type is the program EIR, which 'may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) Geographically, (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, (3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.'" Guidelines, § 15168, subd. (a); *CREED, supra*, 134 Cal. App. 4th at 605. As the court held in *CREED*, a program EIR may serve as the EIR for a subsequently proposed project only to the extent it contemplates and adequately analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the project. *CREED, supra,* 134 Cal. App. 4th at 615.

The EIR at issue in this case is of the latter variety, a program EIR. Cleveland/CBD/ Sierra Club accuse SANDAG of attempting to use the "programmatic" nature of the EIR as an invalid attempt to excuse it from fully analyzing the health impacts of the RTP. [ROA 55 at 15] The AG joins in this criticism. [ROA 52 at 29]

Under CEQA, an EIR is presumed adequate (Pub. Resources Code, § 21167.3), and the plaintiff in a CEQA action has the burden of proving otherwise. (*Preserve Wild Santee v. City of Santee*, 210 Cal. App. 4th 260, 275 (4th DCA Div. 1 Oct. 19, 2012, internal quotation marks omitted), quoting *Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A. v. Los Angeles Unified School Dist.* (1994) 24 Cal.App.4th 826, 836.) Courts review an agency's determinations and decisions for abuse of discretion. An agency abuses its discretion when it fails to proceed in a manner required by law or there is not substantial evidence to support its determination or decision. [§§ 21168, 21168.5; *Vineyard Area Citizens for Responsible Growth, Inc. v. City of Rancho Cordova* (2007) 40 Cal.4th 412, 426-427 (2007) ("*Vineyard*")]. "Judicial review of these two types of error differs significantly: While [courts] determine de novo whether the agency has employed the correct procedures, 'scrupulously enforc[ing] all legislatively mandated CEQA

requirements' [citation], [courts] accord greater deference to the agency's substantive factual conclusions." (*Vineyard, supra*, 40 Cal. 4th at 435.)

Consequently, in reviewing an EIR for CEQA compliance, courts adjust "scrutiny to the nature of the alleged defect, depending on whether the claim is predominantly one of improper procedure or a dispute over the facts." (*Vineyard, supra*, 40 Cal.4th at 435.) For example, where a petitioner claims an agency failed to include required information in its environmental analysis, the court's task is to determine whether the agency failed to proceed in the manner prescribed by CEQA. Conversely, where a petitioner challenges an agency's conclusion that a project's adverse environmental effects are adequately mitigated, courts review the agency's conclusion for substantial evidence. (*Vineyard, supra*, 40 Cal. 4th at 435.)

4. Issues Raised in This Case.

SANDAG is a council of local governments, and is one of 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations ("MPO") in California. Each MPO is charged under law with the development of the region's RTP, which must be updated every four years. SANDAG began its work in April of 2010, released drafts of the RTP/SCS for public comment on 4/22/11, and released the draft EIR for public comment on June 7, 2011 [AR225-1580]. Petitioners and the AG's office criticized the drafts. [AR4430, 12696-12699, 17972-75, 18053-55] The final EIR was released on October 18, 2011 [AR1969-3401], and was certified after a public hearing on October 28, 2011. Inasmuch as the petitions were filed on November 28, there is no issue in this case regarding the timeliness of the legal challenges to the EIR. Nor are any issues raised by SANDAG with regard to exhaustion of administrative remedies or standing.

There is substantial overlap in the attacks on the EIR leveled by petitioners and the AG. Both sets of petitioners assert that the EIR fails to adequately analyze air quality impacts [ROA 54 at 3-6; ROA 55 at 12-20]. The AG joins in this assertion [ROA 52 at 7-29]. Both petitioners add that the EIR failed to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives [ROA 54 at 6; ROA 55 at 38].

CREED-21/AHC's brief focuses on the failure of the EIR to properly analyze air quality impacts in two specific areas: greenhouse gas emissions and sensitive receptors [ROA 54 at 4-6]. The Cleveland/CBD/Sierra Club brief carefully analyzes the deficiencies of the EIR in relation to greenhouse gas emissions (ROA 55 at part III), while the AG provides extensive discussion on both sensitive receptors and greenhouse gas emissions [ROA 52 at 14-18 and 22-29]. The Cleveland/CBD/Sierra Club brief raises several other issues which neither the AG nor CREED-21/AHC discuss in any detail (mass transit ridership, agricultural land, growth-inducing impacts, parking management, etc.).

5. Ruling.

The court finds that the real focal point of this controversy is whether the EIR is in conformance with a series of state policies enunciated by the legislative and executive branches since 2005 relating to greenhouse gases. Governor Schwarzenegger issued, in

2005, Executive Order S-03-05, which for the first time set a state goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This Executive Order gave rise to the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), which is codified at H&S Code section 38500 *et seq.* Section 38550 provides:

"By January 1, 2008, the [Air Resources Board] shall, after one or more public workshops, with public notice, and an opportunity for all interested parties to comment, determine what the statewide greenhouse gas emissions level was in 1990, and approve in a public hearing, a statewide greenhouse gas emissions limit that is equivalent to that level, to be achieved by 2020. In order to ensure the most accurate determination feasible, the state board shall evaluate the best available scientific, technological, and economic information on greenhouse gas emissions to determine the 1990 level of greenhouse gas emissions."

It is undisputed that the ARB has established greenhouse gas targets for the SANDAG region for 2020 and 2035.

In 2008, the Legislature passed SB 375, which amended both the Public Resources Code and the Government Code in several respects. In section 1 of the statute, the Legislature found and declared:

"(a) The transportation sector contributes over 40 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions in the State of California; automobiles and light trucks alone contribute almost 30 percent. The transportation sector is the single largest contributor of greenhouse gases of any sector.

(b) In 2006, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed Assembly Bill 32 (Chapter 488 of the Statutes of 2006; hereafter AB 32), which requires the State of California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels no later than 2020. According to the State Air Resources Board, in 1990 greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks were 108 million metric tons, but by 2004 these emissions had increased to 135 million metric tons.

(c) Greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks can be substantially reduced by new vehicle technology and by the increased use of low carbon fuel. However, even taking these measures into account, it will be necessary to achieve significant additional greenhouse gas reductions from changed land use patterns and improved transportation. Without improved land use and transportation policy, California will not be able to achieve the goals of AB 32.

(d) In addition, automobiles and light trucks account for 50 percent of air pollution in California and 70 percent of its consumption of petroleum. Changes in land use and transportation policy, based upon established modeling methodology, will provide significant assistance to California's goals to implement the federal and state Clean Air Acts and to reduce its dependence on petroleum.

(e) Current federal law requires regional transportation planning agencies to include a land use allocation in the regional transportation plan. Some regions have engaged in a regional "blueprint" process to prepare the land use allocation. This process has been open and transparent. The Legislature intends, by this act, to build upon that successful process by requiring metropolitan planning organizations to develop and incorporate a sustainable communities strategy which will be the land use allocation in the regional transportation plan.

(f) The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is California's premier environmental statute. New provisions of CEQA should be enacted so that the statute encourages developers to submit applications and local governments to make land use decisions that will help the state achieve its climate goals under AB 32, assist in the achievement of state and federal air quality standards, and increase petroleum conservation.

(g) Current planning models and analytical techniques used for making transportation infrastructure decisions and for air quality planning should be able to assess the effects of policy choices, such as residential development patterns, expanded transit service and accessibility, the walkability of communities, and the use of economic incentives and disincentives.

(h) The California Transportation Commission has developed guidelines for travel demand models used in the development of regional transportation plans. This act assures the commission's continued oversight of the guidelines, as the commission may update them as needed from time to time.

(i) California local governments need a sustainable source of funding to be able to accommodate patterns of growth consistent with the state's climate, air quality, and energy conservation goals."

Section 4 of SB 375 added Government Code section 65080, which provides, in relevant part:

"(a) **Each transportation planning agency** designated under Section 29532 or 29532.1 **shall prepare and adopt a regional transportation plan directed at achieving a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system**, including, but not limited to, mass transportation, highway, railroad, maritime, bicycle, pedestrian, goods movement, and aviation facilities and services. The plan shall be action-oriented and pragmatic, considering both the short-term and long-term future, and shall present clear, concise policy guidance to local and state officials. The regional transportation plan shall consider factors specified in Section 134 of Title 23 of the United States Code. Each transportation planning agency shall consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the transportation plans of cities, counties, districts, private organizations, and state and federal agencies.

(b) The regional transportation plan shall be an internally consistent document and shall include all of the following:

(1) A policy element that describes the transportation issues in the region, identifies and quantifies regional needs, and describes the desired short-range and long-range transportation goals, and pragmatic objective and policy statements. The objective and policy statements shall be consistent with the funding estimates of the financial element. The policy element of transportation planning agencies with populations that exceed 200,000 persons may quantify a set of indicators including, but not limited to, all of the following:
(A) Measures of mobility and traffic congestion, including, but not limited to, daily vehicle hours of delay per capita and vehicle miles traveled per capita.
(B) Measures of road and bridge maintenance and rehabilitation needs, including, but not limited to, roadway pavement and bridge conditions.
(C) Measures of means of travel, including, but not limited to, percentage share of all trips (work and nonwork) made by all of the following:
(i) Single occupant vehicle.
(ii) Multiple occupant vehicle or carpool.
(iii) Public transit including commuter rail and intercity rail.
(iv) Walking.
(v) Bicycling.
(D) Measures of safety and security, including, but not limited to, total injuries and fatalities assigned to each of the modes set forth in subparagraph (C).
(E) Measures of equity and accessibility, including, but not limited to, percentage of the population served by frequent and reliable public transit, with a breakdown by income bracket, and percentage of all jobs accessible by frequent and reliable public transit service, with a breakdown by income bracket.
(F) The requirements of this section may be met utilizing existing sources of information. No additional traffic counts, household surveys, or other sources of data shall be required.

(2) A sustainable communities strategy prepared by each metropolitan planning organization as follows:
(A) No later than September 30, 2010, the State Air Resources Board shall provide each affected region with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the automobile and light truck sector for 2020 and 2035, respectively.

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(B) **Each metropolitan planning organization shall prepare a sustainable communities strategy,** subject to the requirements of Part 450 of Title 23 of, and Part 93 of Title 40 of, the Code of Federal Regulations, including the requirement to utilize the most recent planning assumptions considering local general plans and other factors. The sustainable communities strategy shall (i) identify the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region, (ii) identify areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region, including all economic segments of the population, over

the course of the planning period of the regional transportation plan taking into account net migration into the region, population growth, household formation and employment growth, (iii) identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight-year projection of the regional housing need for the region pursuant to Section 65584, (iv) identify a transportation network to service the transportation needs of the region, (v) gather and consider the best practically available scientific information regarding resource areas and farmland in the region as defined in subdivisions (a) and (b) of Section 65080.01, (vi) consider the state housing goals specified in Sections 65580 and 65581, (vii) **set forth a forecasted development pattern for the region, which, when integrated with the transportation network, and other transportation measures and policies, will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks to achieve, if there is a feasible way to do so, the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets approved by the state board,** and (viii) allow the regional transportation plan to comply with Section 176 of the federal Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 7506).

Section 14 of SB 375, among other revisions, amended Pub. Res. Code section 21155.3 to provide as follows:

"(a) The legislative body of a local jurisdiction may adopt traffic mitigation measures that would apply to transit priority projects. These measures shall be adopted or amended after a public hearing and may include requirements for the installation of traffic control improvements, street or road improvements, and contributions to road improvement or transit funds, transit passes for future residents, or other measures that will avoid or mitigate the traffic impacts of those transit priority projects.

(b)(1) A transit priority project that is seeking a discretionary approval is not required to comply with any additional mitigation measures required by paragraph (1) or (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 21081, for the traffic impacts of that project on intersections, streets, highways, freeways, or mass transit, if the local jurisdiction issuing that discretionary approval has adopted traffic mitigation measures in accordance with this section.
(2) Paragraph (1) does not restrict the authority of a local jurisdiction to adopt feasible mitigation measures with respect to the effects of a project on public health or on pedestrian or bicycle safety.

(c) The legislative body shall review its traffic mitigation measures and update them as needed at least every five years."

As already noted, the centerpiece of this case is the parties' fundamental disagreement over implementation of these statutory requirements within the framework of CEQA. In all the statutory quotations immediately above, **bold type** has been added by the court.

The court agrees with the points made in section III of the Cleveland brief (ROA 55), part II of the AG's brief (ROA 52), and pp. 4-5 of the CREED-21 brief (ROA 54) regarding the inadequate treatment of greenhouse gas emissions in the EIR. This failure is not, as SANDAG would have it, merely a debate over "editorial control" of the EIR (ROA 62 at 32:24). Rather, the issue is whether the EIR fails to carry out its role as an informational document to inform the public about the choices made by its leaders. The court finds that this failure is manifest in several ways.

First, although SANDAG acknowledges SB 375 mandates a "sharper focus on reducing GHG emissions" (AR 13091, Excerpt Tab 190), the EIR is impermissibly dismissive of Executive Order S-03-05. SANDAG argues that the Executive Order does not constitute a 'plan' for GHG reduction, and no state plan has been adopted to achieve the 2050 goal. [ROA 62 at 34] The EIR therefore does not find the RTP/SCS's failure to meet the Executive Order's goals to be a significant impact. This position fails to recognize that Executive Order S-3-05 is an official policy of the State of California, established by a

gubernatorial order in 2005, and not withdrawn or modified by a subsequent (and predecessor) governor. Quite obviously it was designed to address an environmental objective that is highly relevant under CEQA (climate stabilization). See AR 17622 (Excerpt Tab 216). SANDAG thus cannot simply ignore it. This is particularly true in a setting in which hundreds of thousands of people in the communities served by SANDAG live in low-lying areas near the coast, and are thus susceptible to rising sea levels associated with global climate change. The court in *Association of Irritated Residents v. State Air Resources Board*, 206 Cal. App. 4th 1487, 1492-93 (2012), recognized the importance of the Executive Order in upholding the ARB's Scoping Plan. The court agrees with petitioners that the failure of the EIR to cogently address the inconsistency between the dramatic increase in overall GHG emissions after 2020 contemplated by the RTP/SCS and the statewide policy of reducing same during the same three decades (2020-2050) constitutes a legally defective failure of the EIR to provide the SANDAG decision makers (and thus the public) with adequate information about the environmental impacts of the SCS/RTP. Moreover, as was pointed out in oral argument, having chosen to develop a plan for 15 years beyond that which was required under law, SANDAG was obligated to discuss impacts beyond the 2020 horizon. The ARB's scoping plan adopts the Executive Order, and SANDAG failed to extend the analysis to 2050.

Second, SANDAG's response has been to "kick the can down the road" and defer to "local jurisdictions." See, e.g. AR 31-0064, 32-0065, 33-0066, 34-0067, 35-0068, 117-0090, 118-0091 (Excerpts Vol. 1, Tab 3); 4.8-36, 0790 (Excerpts Tab 7); AR G-63-64, 03825-3826 (Excerpts Tab 8B); AR 27734 and 8A:2588 (Nov. 19 Appx.). This theme is repeated in SANDAG's brief at page 38 (arguing mitigation is the responsibility of other agencies). This perverts the regional planning function of SANDAG, ignores the purse string control SANDAG has over TransNet funds, and more importantly conflicts with Govt. Code section 65080(b)(2)(B) quoted above. As the AG argues, it is certainly feasible for SANDAG to agree to fund local climate action plans, yet the EIR does not adopt or even adequately discuss this form of mitigation (AR 2588, Excerpt Tab 8A). And as argued by petitioners in their consolidated reply brief, "encouraging" an optional local plan that "should" incorporate regional policies falls well short of a legally enforceable mitigation commitment with teeth. This is what the CEQA Guidelines require at subsections 15126.4(a)(1)(B), (a)(2) and (c)(5) in a setting in which SANDAG controls the funding for at least some of the projects contemplated by the SCS/RTP. Contrary to SANDAG's assertion (Oppo. at 38:21), it does have the legal power -- indeed, the obligation – to see to it that TransNet funds are spent in a manner consistent with the law. SANDAG conceded (even embraced) this at the November 30 hearing.

Resolution No. 2012-09, adopted by SANDAG, finds that the RTP/SCS "achieves the regional greenhouse gas reduction targets established by CARB" (AR 239-0219, Excerpts Tab 4) when in fact it either does not (AR 118-0091-92, Excerpts Tab 3; AR 4.8-21-23, 0775-0777, Excerpts Tab 7; AR 4.8-15-17, 02567-2569, 2578, Excerpts Tab 8A; AR08242-8245, Excerpts Tab 111) or does so based on questionable inputs [AR 30143, 30187 *et seq.* (Supp. filed 10/22/12); compare AR 14550 (Excerpt Tab 190). The shortcomings of the **EIR** in this regard (for petitioners do not contend, nor does the court

find, that SB 375 was violated) were called to SANDAG's attention as evidenced by what it called "Master Response # 20-23," discussed at AR G-55, 03817 *et seq.* (Excerpts Tab 8B); see also AR 19685 (Excerpts Tab 296); AR 25640 *ff* (Excerpts Tab 311). SANDAG erroneously and peremptorily states in response to these comments that the "upward trajectory" in per capita GHG emissions "does not present an SB 375 or CEQA compliance issue." AR G-59. CEQA requires further discussion, not a one sentence dismissal. Nor is the court convinced that SANDAG may avoid examination of GHG reduction due to "modeling constraints." AR G-68, 003830 (Master Response #23).

In light of the foregoing, the court finds that the petitioners and intervenor have overcome the presumption of validity and have established a prejudicial abuse of discretion. The court does not reach this conclusion lightly, as it is evident from section 9.0 of the EIR that it involved thousands of hours of effort by numerous talented professionals. No doubt the EIR is a satisfactory informational document in many respects; being the first in the state to tackle something as important to future generations as reduction of greenhouse gases in a regional transportation setting carried some risk, and the court, after reviewing the Administrative Record independently, finds that the EIR is inconsistent with state law as described above. Thus, it is the court's duty under *Vineyard, supra*, to sustain the positions advanced by petitioners and the petitioner in intervention.

Had they been permitted to file briefs, *amici* would no doubt have argued that the court's interpretation of CEQA's interface with Executive Order S-03-05 and the statutory scheme of SB 375 (which the Legislative Counsel's Digest filed with Secretary of State September 30, 2008 concedes is an "unfunded mandate") will retard growth, harm California's efforts to attract jobs and create economic activity, and slow down the state's recovery from the recession. All of this may very well be true, but these are arguments properly presented to the political branches of the government which adopted the Executive Order and enacted SB 375 in the first place.

Because the court finds it can resolve the case solely on the inadequate treatment in the EIR of the greenhouse gas emission issue, it finds that it need not address the other issues raised by the parties. *Compare Natter v. Palm Desert Rent Review Comm'n.,* 190 Cal. App. 3d 994, 1001 (1987); *Young v. Three for One Oil Royalties*, 1 Cal. 2d 639, 647-648 (1934).

Let a writ of mandate issue forthwith, directing respondent SANDAG to set aside its October 28, 2011certification of the EIR for the RTP/SCS. Counsel for petitioners is directed to forthwith submit same to the court for signature.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: December 3, 2012

TIMOTHY B. TAYLOR
Judge of the Superior Court

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Central
330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101

SHORT TITLE: Cleveland National Forest Foundation vs. San Diego Association of Governments [IMAGED]

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE BY MAIL	CASE NUMBER: **37-2011-00101593-CU-TT-CTL**

I certify that I am not a party to this cause. I certify that a true copy of the Ruling on Petitions for Writ of Mandate dated December 3, 2012 was mailed following standard court practices in a sealed envelope with postage fully prepaid, addressed as indicated below. The mailing and this certification occurred at San Diego, California, on 12/03/2012.

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