

Citizen's Focus Group and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting #2

September 10, 2014, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Sam Pipes Room, Merced Civic Center at 678 W. 18th Street

Meeting Objectives

At this meeting, the Focus Group will discuss the recent progress on the Programmatic Climate Action Plan (PCAP) project, the results of the preliminary reduction measure analysis, and plans for the cost-benefit and feasibility evaluation. There are several key issues to address during this meeting, including the following objectives:

- **Project Overview**
 - Summarize the PCAP project status its relation to the adopted Climate Action Plan (CAP).
 - Review the outcomes and results of the last Focus Group meeting.
 - Discuss outreach events and hear a presentation from the Institute for Local Government (ILG).
- **Emissions Forecast**
 - Review the projected 2020 community greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions levels, including changes to reflect General Plan growth, and the 2020 emissions reduction goal.
 - Summarize the reductions from state and existing local accomplishments.
- **Reduction Measures**
 - Discuss the purpose of reduction measures and how they are developed.
 - Summarize how GHG emissions reductions from measures are calculated.
 - Review the reduction measure categories and present one measure in each category.
 - Discuss how the measures will be evaluated, including an example of a cost-benefit analysis.
 - Summarize how measures are monitored and present an example of measure performance targets.
- **Questions and Wrap-Up**
 - Answer any outstanding questions related to the Focus Group and TAC or PCAP project.
 - Present next steps for the PCAP project and future meeting dates.

Meeting Agenda

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** (*Bill King, City of Merced, and Jennifer Venema, PMC*)
 - a. City Staff and PMC
 - b. Focus Group and TAC members

- II. **Project Update** (*Bill King, Jennifer Venema, and Steve Sanders*)
 - a. Project purpose
 - b. Project status
 - c. Educational outreach events (Institute for Local Governments)
 - d. Review of reduction forecast and progress to date
 - e. Focus Group input

- III. **Preliminary Reduction Measure Results** (*Jennifer Venema*)
 - a. Measure summary
 - b. Developing measures
 - c. Examples
 - d. Measure evaluation and monitoring
 - e. Achieving the target
 - f. Preliminary results
 - g. Questions and opportunities

- IV. **Focus Group Discussion** (*Jennifer Venema and Pam Johns, PMC*)
 - a. Voting activity
 - b. Measure discussion
 - c. Additional questions

- V. **Next Steps** (*Jennifer Venema and Bill King*)
 - a. Next Focus Group and TAC meeting
 - i. Homework assignment
 - b. Upcoming events

- VI. **Opportunity for Additional Comments and Discussion**

Next Steps

At the end of each meeting, Focus Group and TAC members will be given a small number of topics to think about and prepare a response to. These responses will help inform the discussion of the next meeting and relate to items on future meeting agendas.

For this meeting, Focus Group and TAC members are asked to think about and **prepare responses by October 23** to the following questions. We will discuss responses to these questions at the next meeting, currently scheduled for November 13. Please **send your responses** to Bill King at: **KingB@cityofmerced.org**.

- Considering the preliminary reduction measure results, what do you perceive now as the primary political, financial, or technical obstacles to achieving the reduction target?
- How can we (the committee, City staff, the community, etc.) effectively address these obstacles? Are there additional opportunities or partners for GHG emissions reductions are we missing?
- What additional information will be most useful to prioritize the phasing or implementation of PCAP measures?

Attachments

- A. Focus Group Responses to Meeting #1 Questions

Attachment A. Focus Group Responses to Meeting #1 Questions

Meeting #1 Questions Posed to Focus Group

- Considering the priorities for CAP implementation that the Focus Group identified in today's presentation, what are the political, financial, and technical considerations that may provide obstacles to these strategies?
- How can we (the committee, City staff, the community, etc.) address these obstacles?

Focus Group Member Responses

Considering

Responses from Focus Group members submitted to Bill King by 9/5 are presented below. Responses are presented anonymously in no particular order and shown in green text.

Response #1

- Considering the priorities for CAP implementation that the Focus Group identified in today's presentation, what are the political, financial, and technical considerations that may provide obstacles to these strategies?
 - Political: The primary problems I foresee is resident acceptance. People are resistant to change that inconveniences them unless they see it as a benefit. The residents of our community are not sold of the facts of the environmental impact of greenhouse gases.
 - Financial: Financing of any project is always going to be an obstacle if it involves the institution of new fees and/or taxes.
 - Technical: I don't foresee any technical hurdle that can't be overcome. I have great faith in our technological capabilities.
- How can we (the committee, City staff, the community, etc.) address these obstacles?
 - Overcoming
 - Political: The "spin" here needs to be on the ancillary benefits that will result in these programs. Namely the reduction in POLLUTION as opposed to GREENHOUSE GASES. Nearly everyone in the community recognizes that exhaust fumes and many other chemicals negatively impact our health. Whereas, if you try to justify the program as a climate change initiative you will experience significant push back.
 - Financing: There not much to say here because everything comes at a costs. There will be some amounts that can be shifted from budgets in other areas and some amounts that will be net zero that will result from education/advocation. However, the majority of new programs will likely

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- require new/innovative financing sources. Justifying those sources and presenting them in the right light will be key to the success of the program.
- o Technical: See above.

Response #2

1. Implementation of Priorities...Since the City of Merced is current reviewing and revising its codes, now would be a great time to include a number of the priorities. Since all code & zoning changes must be presented by city staff, any technical problem can be worked out before approval by the city council. The city council can consider any political or financial challenges that CAP priorities present.
2. The Focus Group can review and outline any questions that staff or council should consider before implementation...represent the citizens, who may look at things from another angle than staff...the personal touch.

Response #3

(Technical) While I'm encouraged by the enthusiasm of the City staff & the consultants to quantify adjustments that have already been made, I'm worried that this is setting the bar too low by focusing on the little steps. I don't want to be content with the status quo. I think some of this came out in MCAG's approach to the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Instead I want to us to set ambitious goals for Merced's future.

- Merced City's PCAP is a chance to re-envision the city and how a California City "has" to be built. It's going to take a concerted effort, where design guidelines, business incentives, and public education should play strong roles. We should strive to break away from car-dependence. We should encourage active transport, which will only happen by restructuring design guidelines & city codes away from major car-thoroughfares and focusing on connectivity and a different sense of scale.

(Political) Some leaders of Merced City and County view climate change as a non-starter for the area's economic health. Any sort of change from the status quo (which seems to me: pushing for sprawl, widely-spaced single family homes, and business incentives no matter the impact on resources or space) is viewed as slowing our economic growth or even economic suicide.

- I don't think the PCAP and the area's economy have to stand at odds. I applaud the City staff and consultants for hosting the Focus Group. To further address these issues, we should continue to host open dialogues. I think our committee would be the ideal agent for disseminating this information into the community, and for adding voices during major discussions during City Council meetings or other important events.

(Political/Technical) From people I have met in Merced, some are open to change, some are oblivious, and some are highly resistant. Changing resource use is dependent

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on knowledge and motivation. For issues like water or energy conservation - part of the challenge will be getting people motivated to change behavior.

- Education using partnership programs with the Utilities. Leading by example (Merced City making and tracking and publicizing changes, for example with water use and watering schedules). Being nimble with regards to justifications - I don't think ignoring climate change will help our cause, but at the same time it may set some people off. I don't know if we need those who would be adamantly against that justification in order to meet the goals.

(Financial) The polling indicated a strong preference towards incentives, but cash incentives cannot be used unilaterally for Merced City (and the rest of the region).

- The City can prioritize cash incentives using available money based on input from the committee and the community. Well attended public input events would help here (and optimistic here given the great showing at the February event). Another way is to use alternative or creative incentives - many of which we discussed at the meeting.

(Technical/Political?) To meet goals, I think we need to make code changes on a neighborhood to city level. Transit and transportation questions are larger than any one business.

- Adjusting code changes on a city-level (or by regions of the city) gives us the best foundation for the other changes. Recent norms have been large scale single-family tract housing and business centers - sidewalks have been well provided for, but we often lack connections between sidewalks and business centers due to landscaping, or lack shade due to few or poorly maintained trees. Mixed-use development is being incorporated well into projects like the Bellevue Corridor plan. A large-scale view offers the best framework to reach multiple businesses and citizens without effort on the part of the businesses or individuals. It would be great to also see a urban forest proponent of our work - maybe through collaboration with Tree Fresno, or an educational series like the Tree Tender program offered by Tree Pittsburgh.

Response #4

I think these are pretty obvious but I thought I would list them anyway and in no particular order.

What are the political, financial, and technical considerations that may provide obstacles to these strategies?

1. There still appears to be a group of people that do not believe climate change is real.

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2. Traveling without the use of a car is difficult especially if you need to be someplace at a certain time.
3. The region is quite poor so most improvements will need to find funding.
4. University will spur growth and needs to be planned for.
5. Installing a recycle water distribution system or any other infrastructure for that matter is quite expensive.
6. Understanding where our water is used is still not clearly understood by the community. Also do not understand how much is used in the urban areas versus agricultural areas. Also the difference between water usage by different crops.
7. Surface water quantities are wanted by many entities.
8. Our groundwater table is not stable.
9. Limited locations for groundwater recharge.

How can we (the committee, City staff, the community, etc.) address these obstacles?

1. Can zoning play a part in ag usage of water?
2. Is there a way to improve public transportation for commuters to Modesto and Fresno? Can there be local commercial areas to minimize transportation?
3. Create more jobs in the area.
4. Education campaigns.
5. Keep the two day a week watering in place year round.