
INFORMATION ITEM**STAFF REPORT**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 7, 2017
TO: EL DORADO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
FROM: JERRY BARTON, SENIOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNER
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN COOL

REQUESTED ACTION

None. This item is for information only.

BACKGROUND

SACOG was awarded a grant from the Strategic Growth Council to provide technical assistance to communities within the SACOG six-county region. In coordination with El Dorado County staff, SACOG, EDCTC, and in response to concerns about traffic circulation, recreation event traffic, pedestrian/bicyclist safety, and connectivity issues in the commercial area near the junction of State Highways 49 and 193, the Cool community was selected by SACOG to receive technical assistance, community engagement and planning. The technical assistance was led by Robert Liberty and Judy Walton from Portland State University (PSU), with support from two students in the PSU Masters of Urban and Regional Planning program, Steve Rosen and Victor Tran. The PSU team worked with planning staff from El Dorado County and the El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) in preparing a spectrum of design and place-making solutions based on community input. The project sought to engage key stakeholders and the greater Cool community in discussions about planning that would further community and regional goals and remain consistent with the principles of the 2015 El Dorado County Regional Transportation Plan. Project participants had the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities for sustainable community planning in the area and then discuss next steps. The PSU project team was asked to gather information about community planning, traffic circulation, and connectivity issues in the commercial center of Cool, and share the information to establish a common understanding around a base set of facts. The role of the PSU team was to provide the Cool community with a new perspective and any insight they had from experience working with other similar-sized rural communities across the U.S.

DISCUSSION

The Cool Community Engagement and Transportation Planning project scope of work included five key steps, as outlined below:

Background Review – The SACOG/PSU technical assistance team reviewed existing plans that affect the Cool community. The team also discussed the background context for the project area with project staff from El Dorado County and EDCTC.

Stakeholder Interviews – The project team identified 21 stakeholders, 17 were interviewed, mostly by phone. Interviews were conducted between January and March of 2017. Some interviewees provided additional feedback through email. Interviewees represented diverse professional and personal backgrounds, with roles in government agencies (including El Dorado County, El Dorado County Transportation Commission, and Caltrans), local businesses and commercial enterprises, community associations, cultural centers, the general public, and a public school. While following a general script for consistency, the interview process was open-ended, allowing respondents to elaborate on their specific concerns or ideas and provide detailed background information. Interviews typically lasted from 30 minutes to an hour.

Stakeholder Convening – Interview participants and other identified stakeholders were invited to meet immediately before the Cool Community Open House to discuss their ideas, review and provide feedback on materials for the Open House, and identify ways they could help facilitate the event. The Stakeholder Meeting took place on March 20, 2017 at the Cool Community Church with about 25 participants including District 4 Supervisor Michael Ranalli. The meeting included a presentation by the two graduate student researchers from Portland State University, illustrating a range of concepts and suggestions. The concepts and suggestions were based on the comments, concerns, and ideas expressed in the interviews.

Public “Open House” Workshop – The Cool Community Open House was held March 20, 2017 6:30-8:00 pm at the Cool Community Church, with over 60 participants plus the organizers. Participants were welcomed by Supervisor Ranalli and listened to the presentations that had been rehearsed at the Stakeholder Meeting. Then participants offered their reactions and suggestions in one or more ways: verbally to the organizers, by writing or drawing on a map of Cool at their table, and by writing messages on visualizations taped to the walls.

Visit by Expert of Retail Strategies, Placemaking, and Community Identity – After the Community Open House, the Urban Sustainability Accelerator sent an expert advisor to Cool to offer pro-bono consulting on retail renewal, place-making, and community identity and branding. Michele Reeves of Civilis Consulting spent the morning of Friday, April 14 with a small group of business owners and managers.

Final Memo/Next Steps – The PSU Team provided EDCTC with a final report titled Cool, California: Ideas for making Cool a “cooler” rural community. The report has been posted on a project web page on the EDCTC website and outreach to involved stakeholders was conducted to ensure they have an opportunity to review the document and remain in contact with County, SACOG, and EDCTC staff.

Approved for Agenda:

Woodrow Deloria, Executive Director

Attachments: A) Cool, California: Ideas for Making Cool a “cooler” Rural Community
B) Cool Community Engagement slideshow

Both digital attachments may be found here: <http://edctc.org/3/CoolCommunity.html>