

SB 375



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Gateway Cities SB 375 Web Survey Report

August 17, 2009



SESPE
CONSULTING, INC.

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Introduction

The Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG) hired a consulting team led by Willdan Engineering and Energy Solutions to assist and advise the COG in addressing the requirements of SB 375 and particularly the development of a Sustainable Communities Strategy. The work effort consisted of several major components with the first involving the development and launch of a web-based survey to capture from member cities their thoughts and actions related to sustainability improvements in their cities.

The web survey was launched July 14 to all member cities and was open almost four weeks. By the time the survey closed, 100% participation was achieved.

The survey questions encompassed general sustainability efforts such as energy efficiency improvements and development of climate action plans and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventories, as well as more specific SB 375 related questions on member cities' efforts to reduce GHG by way of transportation, housing or land use planning activities.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Strategies

Within the spectrum of sustainability efforts and greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies, energy efficiency improvements are often one of the first to be implemented. With its relative low cost, immediate results by way of utility bill reductions and availability of utility incentives, cities and businesses alike often define their sustainability efforts solely by focusing on energy efficiency.

In contrast, SB 375 is landmark legislation that requires cities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks through the integration of their transportation, land use and housing planning processes. SB 375 became effective on January 1, 2009 and has set for itself ambitious timelines that require extensive coordination among sub-regional councils of governments (COGs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and the California Air Resources Board. The complexity of the law overlapped with the aggressive due dates, potential conflict with local land use authority and the current financial issues facing the State have all played significant roles in the uncertainties surrounding SB 375.

With the goals of greenhouse gas emission reductions so ambitious and the numerous tactics available, the Gateway Cities survey was developed to span the spectrum of GHG reduction measures and gather information on efforts, large and small, that cities are undertaking and considering.

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Survey Results

Part One: GHG Reductions through General Sustainability Efforts

The first section of the survey focused on general sustainability efforts as well as the cities' positions related to greenhouse gas emission reductions. As might be expected, the majority of cities have undertaken energy efficiency improvements at city facilities with the majority making modifications to city operations/maintenance procedures. Cities understand this is an ongoing process since no one city indicated that this work is "completed." Beyond modification of operations and maintenance procedures, cities are also making investments in energy efficient retrofits at their municipal facilities with 67% indicating that installations were either completed, ongoing or planned. Interesting to note is that 21% of those cities moving forward with these projects are doing so as a result of grants from the Federal Government made possible by the recent Stimulus Funding.

Conversion of city fleets has also been a successful strategy in the sub-region. 75% of the member cities have initiated the conversion to or purchase of hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles.

Climate Action Plans and Inventorying of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Several questions related to more over-arching sustainability efforts such as development of a climate action plan or Green Element to the General Plan and the inventorying of greenhouse gas emissions.

Survey results showed the efforts of Gateway cities falling into one of three categories as follows:

	Completed, Ongoing, To Be Implemented	Under Consideration	Not Under Consideration
Climate Action Plan	28%	36%	36%
Green Element	22%	39%	39%
Municipal Inventory of GHGs (City Operations)	28%	29%	43%
Community-wide Inventory of GHGs	18%	32%	50%

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The majority of cities have not taken a formal position on climate change such as endorsing the Urban Environmental Accords or US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. However, it should be noted that a slight majority of city respondents showed a favorable view of these efforts.

	Completed, Ongoing, To Be Implemented	Under Consideration	Subtotal	Not Under Consideration
Membership in ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability)	18%	39%	57%	43%
Endorsement of Urban Accords	18%	36%	54%	46%

Greenhouse Gas Reductions from the Community

This first part of the survey also gauged the activities or interest of the cities to engage the community in GHG reduction efforts. The survey touched on three important areas:

1. Inventorying and Creation of Baseline of Community's GHG Emissions.
2. Implementation of Green Team Comprised of Community Residents.
3. Community Outreach and Education.

Because of its scope, complexity and community process, assessing the impact of GHG emissions produced by the city at large is usually considered a secondary step in a city's approach to sustainability. Very few cities in the world and even here in California have taken this step. As such, most of the Gateway cities have not initiated this process and some even indicated these actions are not being considered at all.

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Part Two: GHG Reductions through Land Use, Housing and Transportation

The second part of the survey gauged member cities' actions and feedback on GHG reduction efforts specific to land use, housing and transportation. The survey focused on the following:

- Transportation Demand Management (TDM);
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD);
- Multi or Mixed-Use Development;
- Re-zoning;
- Park Once Districts; and
- Implementation of any SCAG regional plans (i.e., Compass Blueprint, Regional Comprehensive Plan, etc.).

Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a general term for strategies that result in more efficient use of transportation resources and is considered a key strategy in reduction of GHGs from cars and light trucks. Of the GHG reduction strategies listed in Section 2 of the survey, TDM proved to be the most utilized. Among the TDM strategies, the top 3 implemented by Gateway cities include:

- 64% have instituted Compressed Work Schedules and Telecommuting for city employees
- 61% have synchronized traffic signals
- 54% have developed infrastructure such as bike lanes and pathways and pedestrian walkways

Further, it should be noted that the average Gateway city is implementing four TDM strategies at the current time. Only one city had not implemented any of these strategies.

Land Use and Housing

Cities were asked if they had completed, were considering or declined to pursue Mixed-Use and Transit Oriented Developments. The majority of respondents indicated they had either completed or were considering these types of developments.

- 86% had either Completed or were Considering Mixed-Use Developments
- 79% had either Completed or were Considering Transit-Oriented Development

Considering the significant construction boom that the sub-region has recently transitioned from, and the favorable outlook of Gateway cities towards Mixed-Use and Transit-Oriented

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Development as means for infill development and redevelopment, the sub-region likely has the opportunity to show GHG reductions will continue to result from this type of development.

Rezoning

A subsequent set of questions involved the cities' efforts related to rezoning. Though the majority of cities had a favorable view on rezoning to create new housing or employment opportunities, the percentages were lower in comparison to Mixed-Use and Transit-Oriented Developments. A higher number of cities clearly indicated that rezoning was not under consideration.

- 29% are not considering Higher Residential Density Rezoning
- 32% are not considering Higher Employment Density Rezoning

Additionally, based on the individual respondents, member cities that have large employment centers indicated they had already completed rezoning to allow the further intensification of land uses in such areas.

Park Once Districts

To encourage more walking and less driving, cities can implement a Park Once District (POD). This type of district assumes most people will drive to it and, once there, take advantage of the concentration of services and shops, all within walking distance. The result is the conversion of drivers to pedestrians, thereby reducing vehicle trips and miles traveled.

The majority of members have not initiated any POD projects. Of the two cities that answered in the affirmative, one is currently in the process of establishing a district and will soon hire a consultant to assist in implementing a parking program.

SCAG's Compass Blueprint or Regional Comprehensive Plan

Cities were also asked if they had implemented any measures suggested by SCAG through either the Compass Blueprint Program or Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP). These two regional planning efforts are related to SB 375 as they specifically address important regional issues like housing, traffic/transportation, water, and air quality. The RCP and Compass Blueprint include goals and outcomes to measure progress toward a sustainable region.

Interestingly, 71% of respondents said they had not implemented any measures while only 18% responded affirmatively. Based on the free form responses provided by some cities, we learned that cities are using these plans. Some cities indicated they are using them for

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future incorporation into their General Plans while one city indicated it is currently incorporating several of SCAG's blueprint measures in its General Plan update.

Other VMT Efforts

Based on other input provided by the cities, several other GHG reduction strategies not explicitly covered by the survey were identified. The measures cited include:

- Installation of medians to improve traffic flow
- Passage of an ordinance prohibiting diesel trucks idling for extended periods
- Awarded #1 Green Fleet in North America for alternative fuel fleet which includes LNG street-sweeping fleet, plug-in Prius vehicles, etc.
- Consideration of sprawl-reduction measures in forthcoming General Plan update
- Emphasis on energy efficiency and renewable energy in municipal facilities. Retrofits include installation of PV (photovoltaic) systems, energy efficient HVAC, reclaimed water at public facilities, use of native vegetation, enforcement of water conservation landscaping ordinance
- City's transportation system runs on clean-burning propane and provides transit access to all community centers, shopping centers and most residential neighborhoods.

Conclusion

The survey provided the COG and the Willdan Team with insights on GHG reduction efforts currently under way or under consideration. The survey results highlighted the diversity of approaches occurring in the Gateway Cities sub-region, a sub-region encompassing a vast array of differing communities all taking their individual paths while collectively contributing towards sustainability.

Yet there were some consistencies and trends among city respondents. The first relates to those measures and strategies that also serve purposes beyond GHG emission reductions. There were several measures that have been instituted by cities where the original intention may not have been GHG reductions but that nonetheless serve as useful reduction strategies. Examples include:

- 64% have already undertaken modifications to their operations/maintenance procedures to conserve resources
- 68% have already undertaken conversion to or purchase of hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles
- 64% have already instituted Compressed Work Schedules and Telecommuting
- 43% have completed (or just rezoned property to allow) one or more mixed-used developments

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- 25% have developed (or just rezoned property to allow) Transit-Oriented Developments
- 25% have rezoned property for higher density residential development

The other insight is one that is consistent with findings from other regions. The survey demonstrated that once you look beyond the most basic measures as listed above, the majority of other measures, those that are more specific to GHG reductions, are being implemented by a handful of individual cities. For reasons beyond climate mitigation and AB 32 compliance, these communities have found ways to gain city and council approval for such efforts, indicating strong sub-regional leadership in the area of municipal-level climate policies.

As the Willdan Team works toward providing a recommendation to the COG and its member cities on whether it should accept delegation for development of its own sub-regional Sustainable Communities Strategy, this survey provides initial insight on where the sub-region is within the context of the implementation of transportation, housing and land planning measures that reduce GHGs. The survey identifies opportunity areas where SB 375-related GHG reduction efforts are already taking place and are likely to be implemented in the near-term. The survey results indicate strong institutional capacity in the Gateway cities for programs, policies, and initiatives that are the foundation for SB 375 and Sustainable Communities Strategy requirements.

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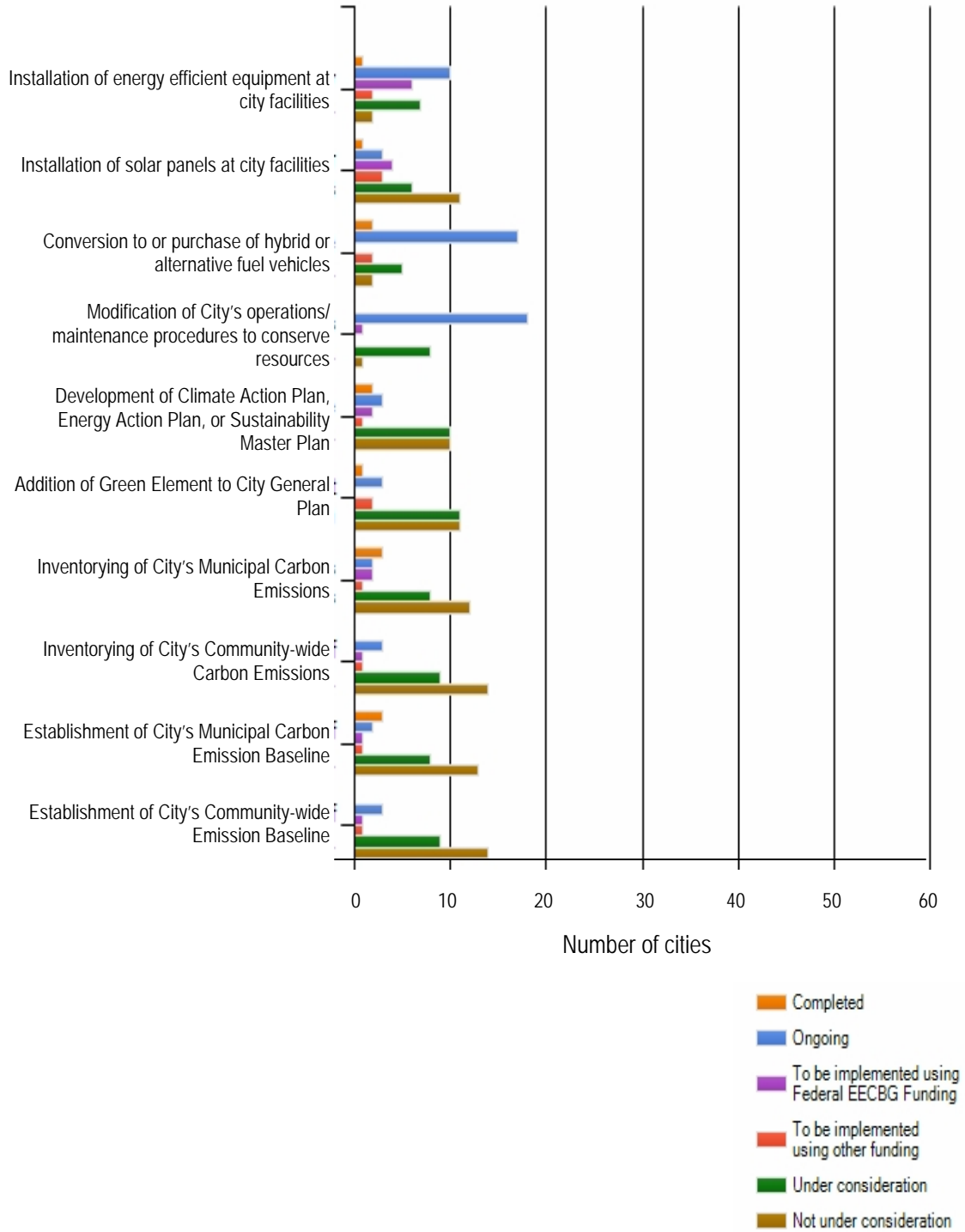
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Survey Summary Response Charts

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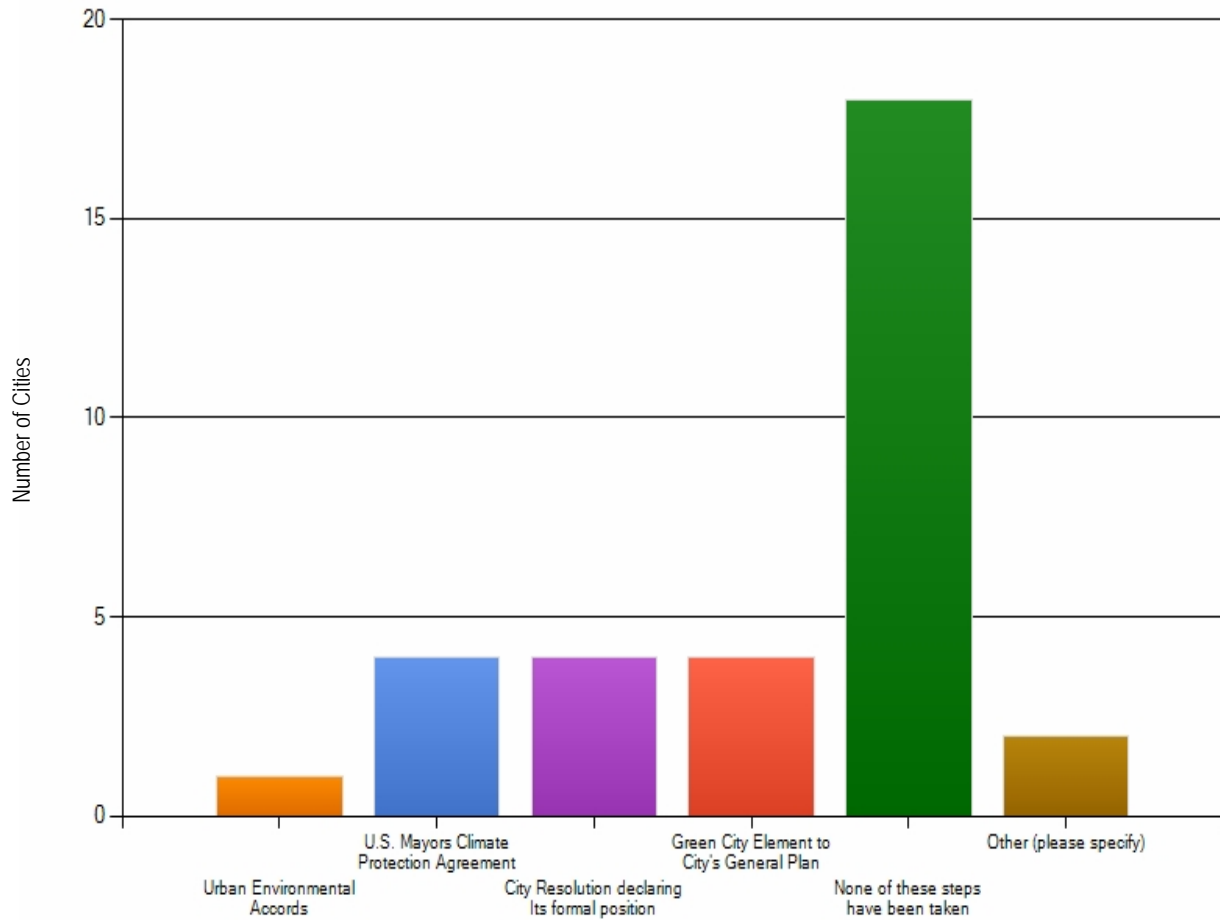


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Has the City taken a formal position on any of the following “green” efforts? Mark all those that apply.

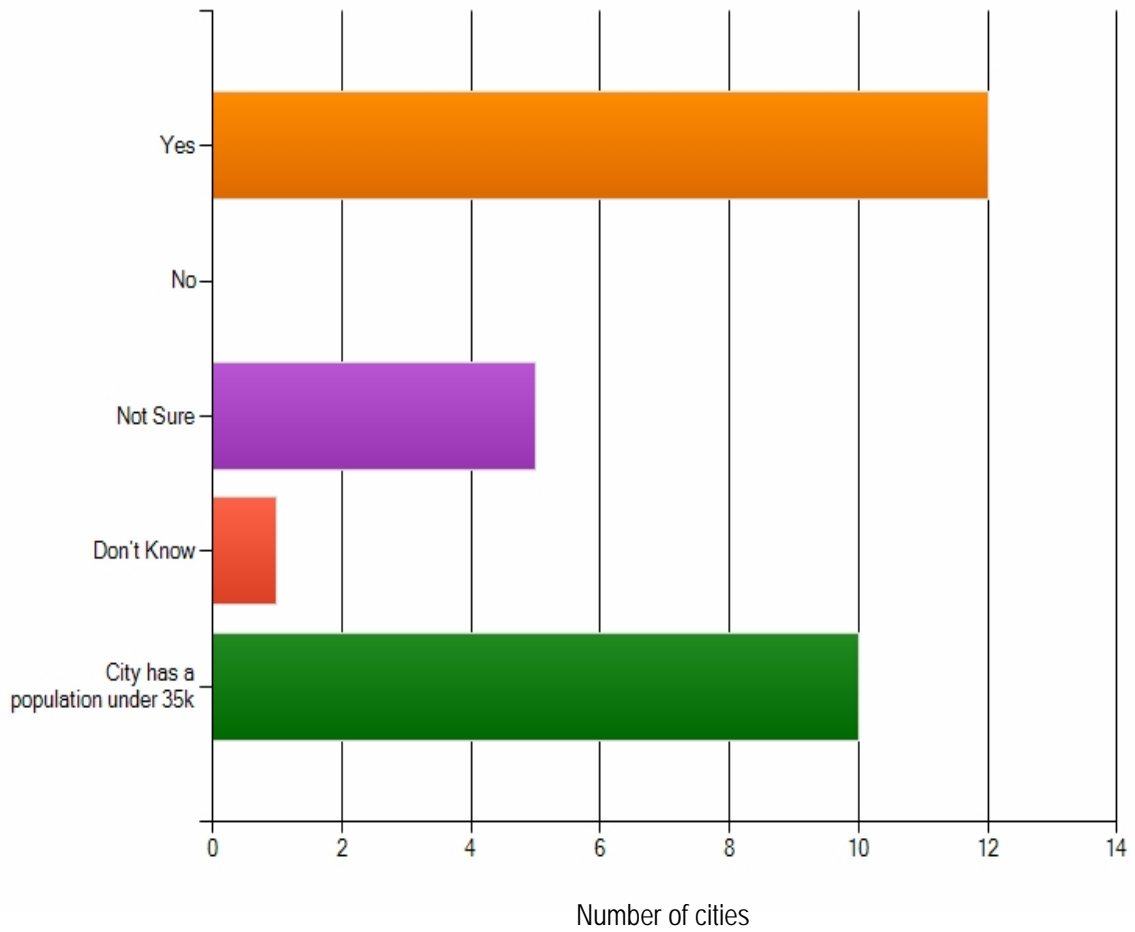


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If your City has a population above 35k and was granted an Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) from the Department of Energy, will your city be submitting an application to access these funds?

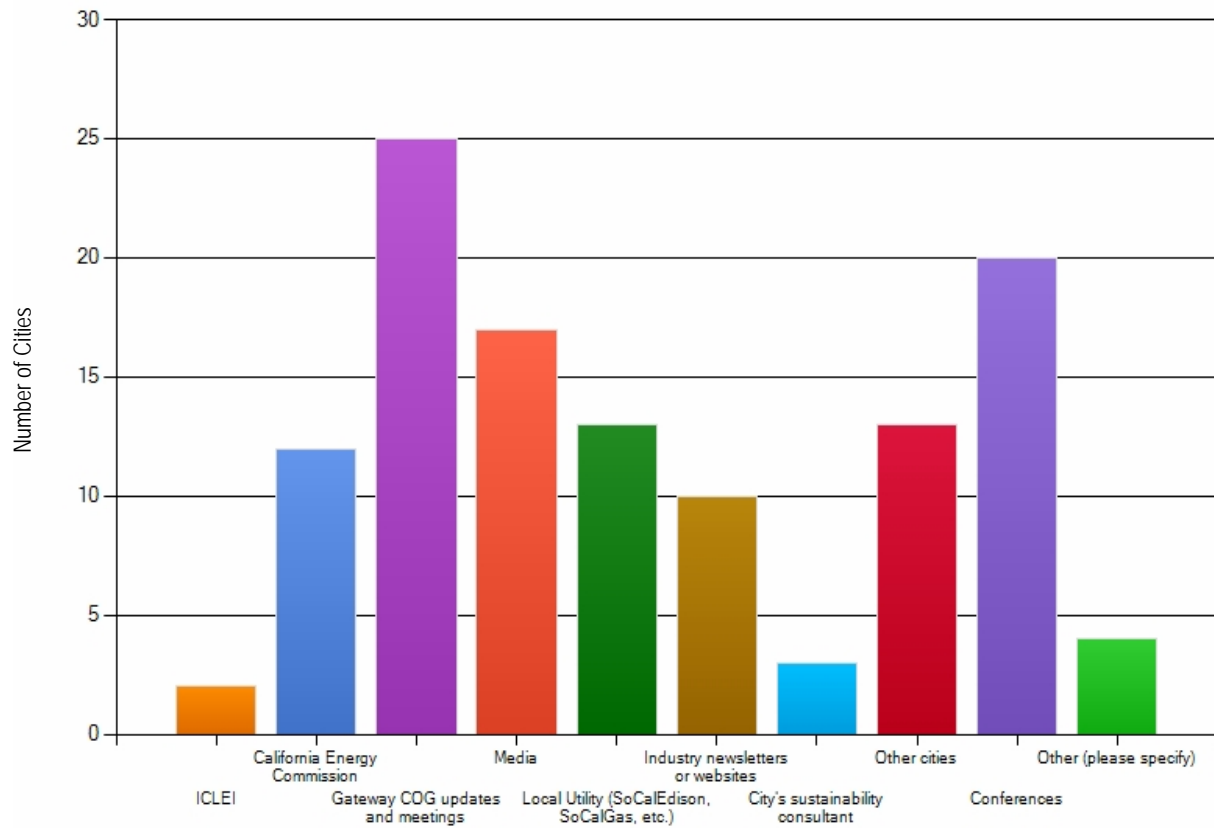


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How do you learn about new and current federal, state, regional, or local “green” efforts or policies? Check all that apply.

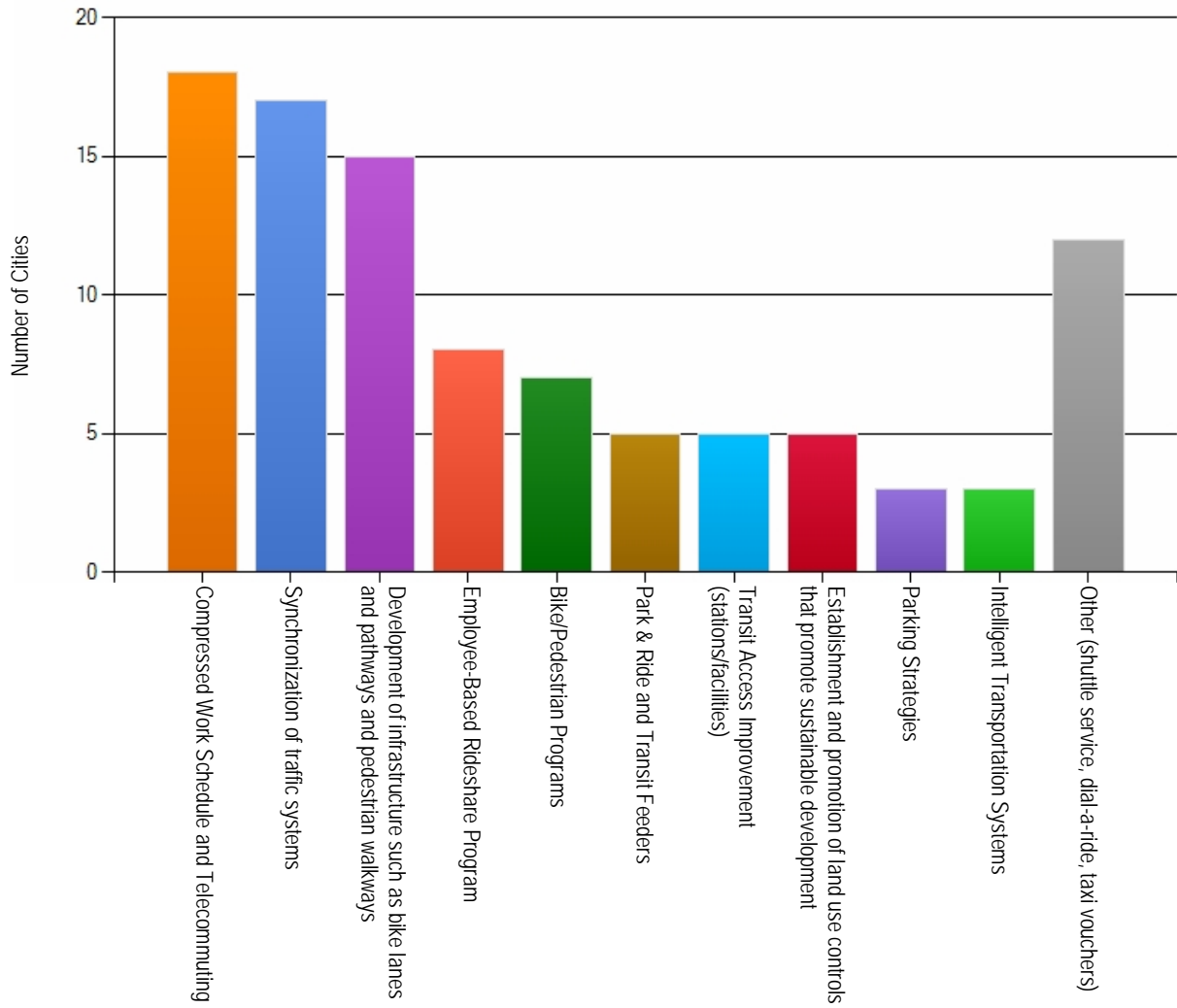


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Has the City implemented any of these Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies? Check all that apply.

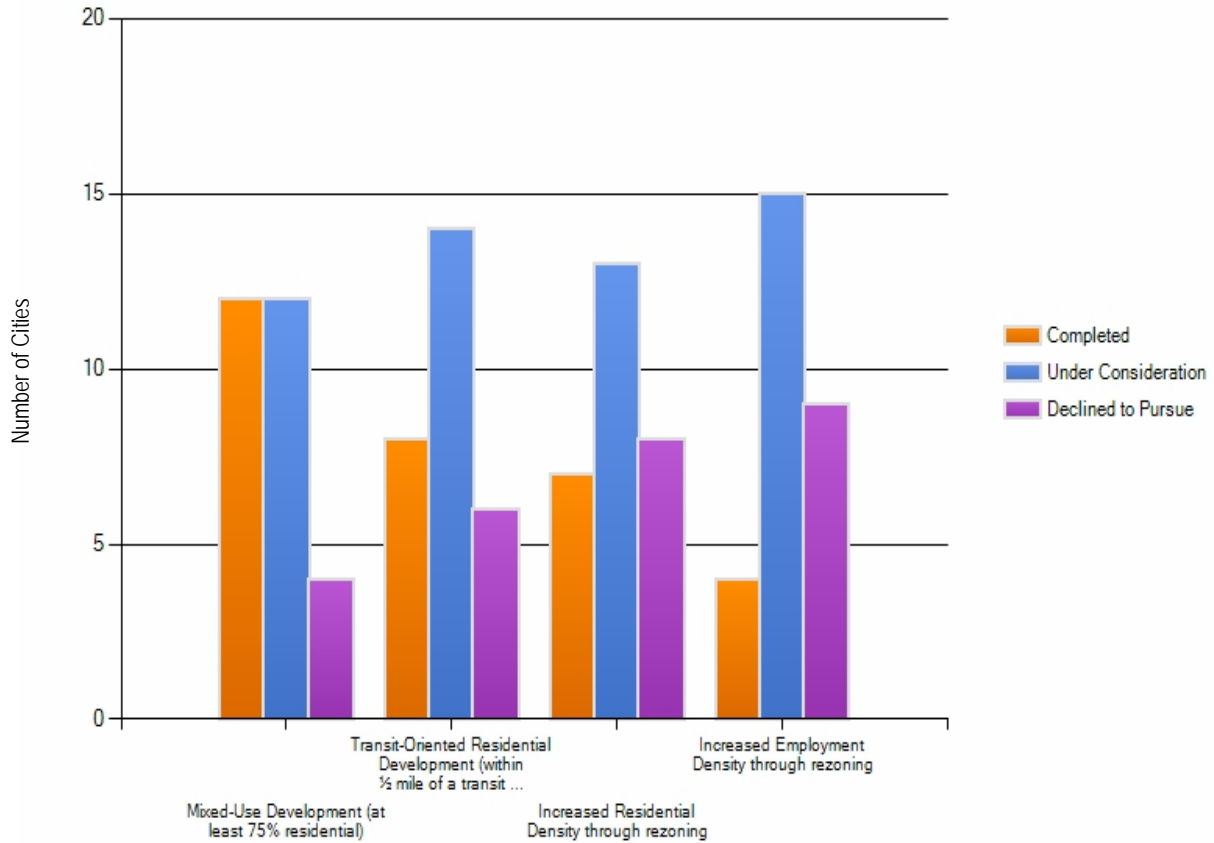


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Has the City completed, considered or declined to pursue any of the following activities through its General Plan, Specific Plans, or other planning processes?

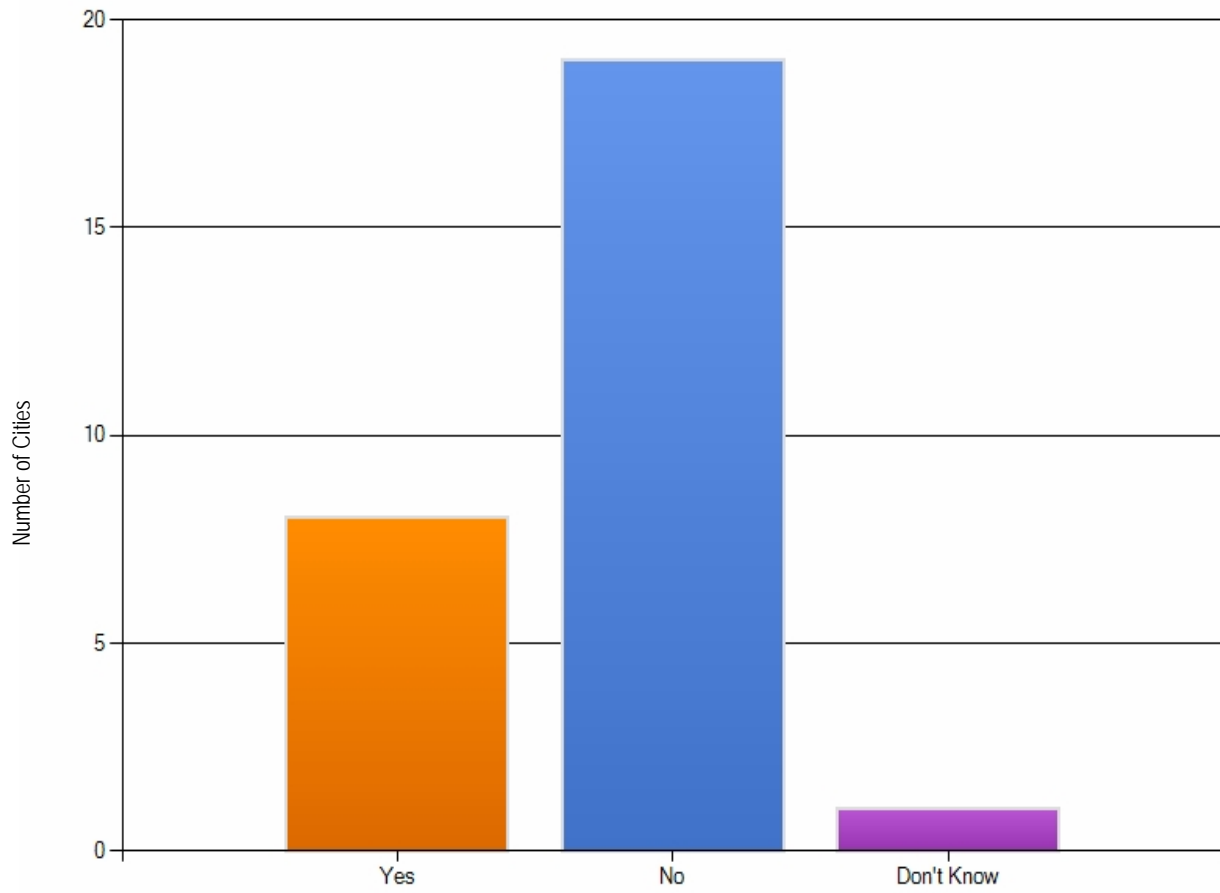


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Has the City initiated any Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects?

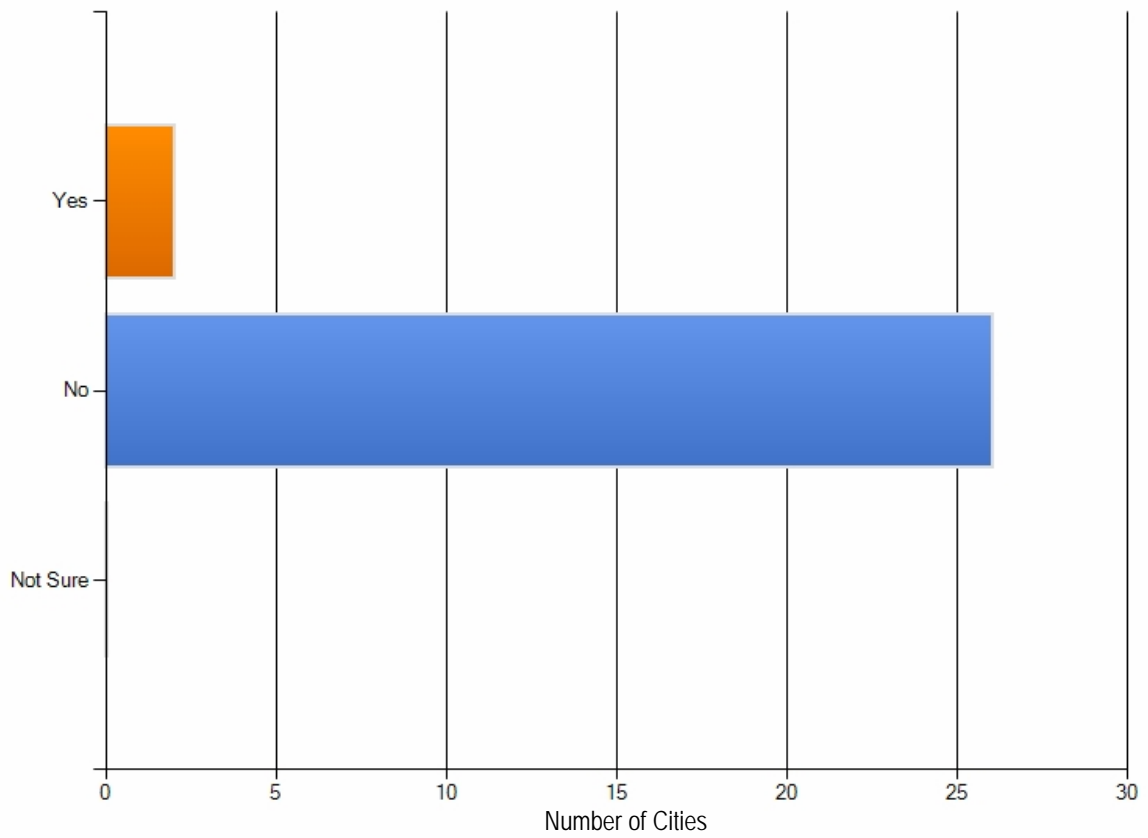


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Has the City initiated any Park Once District (POD) project(s)?



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Has the City implemented any measures suggested by SCAG's Compass Blueprint Plan or Regional Comprehensive Plan, such as the establishment of new General Plan Designations or Zoning Districts, or General Plan Amendments or Rezonings?

