



# CHAPTER 1

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# ABOUT THE PLAN

## WHAT IS CONNECT SOCAL?

As a metropolitan planning organization – the largest in the nation – SCAG is responsible for developing long-range transportation plans and a sustainability strategy for a vast and varied region. The centerpiece of that planning work is Connect SoCal, our 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). The plan charts a path toward a more mobile, sustainable and prosperous region by making key connections: between transportation networks, between planning strategies and between the people whose collaboration can make plans a reality.

SCAG is just one part of a large body of governments and public organizations that collectively plan, construct, operate and maintain the region's transportation system. SCAG's work helps facilitate implementation, but the agency does not directly implement or construct projects. The policies and strategies laid out in Connect SoCal materialize only in collaboration with local, county, state, federal and private partners.

Connect SoCal embodies a collective vision for the region's future, through the horizon year of 2045. It is developed with input from a wide range of constituents and stakeholders within the Counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura, including public agencies, community organizations, elected officials, tribal governments, the business community and the general public.

Connect SoCal is an important planning document for the region, allowing public agencies who implement transportation projects to do so in a coordinated manner, while qualifying for federal and state funding. The plan includes robust financial analysis that considers operations and maintenance costs to ensure our existing transportation system's reliability, longevity, resilience and cost effectiveness. In addition, Connect SoCal is supported by a combination of transportation and land use strategies that outline how the region can achieve California's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and federal Clean Air Act requirements. The plan also strives to achieve broader regional objectives, such as the preservation of natural lands, improvement of public health, increased roadway safety, support for the region's vital goods movement industries and more efficient use of resources.

## LAWS THAT GUIDE THE PLAN

Key laws and requirements that drive Connect SoCal include:

- **Developing a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** - SCAG is required by federal law to prepare and update a long-range RTP (23 U.S.C. §134 et seq.). The RTP must include, among other things: the identification of transportation facilities such as major roadways, transit, intermodal facilities and connectors that function as an integrated metropolitan system over at least a 20 year forecast period; a financial plan demonstrating how the RTP can be implemented with "reasonably available" resources and additional financial approaches; strategies to improve existing facilities and relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods; and environmental mitigation activities. (23 U.S.C. §134 (i)(2)).
- **Keeping up with Clean Air Act Requirements** - With respect to air quality, most areas within the SCAG region have been designated as nonattainment or maintenance areas for one or more transportation-related criteria pollutants. Pursuant to the federal Clean Air Act, SCAG's 2020 RTP/SCS is required to meet all federal transportation conformity requirements, including regional emissions analysis, financial constraint, timely implementation of transportation control measures, and interagency consultation and public involvement (42 U.S.C. §7401 et seq.).
- **Monitoring System Performance** - With the passage of the 'Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century' (MAP-21) federal transportation authorization legislation in 2012, transportation system performance planning and monitoring also became a federal mandate. This commitment to a national performance management and reporting system was further solidified with the passage of the subsequent federal transportation authorization package (the 'FAST Act') in 2015. SCAG has been a pioneer in the development and use of performance metrics to evaluate progress toward achieving regional goals before MAP-21/FAST Act became law, a practice that has only gained momentum in recent years. Starting with the 1998 RTP, SCAG has been using quantitative performance measures to evaluate how well the RTP may achieve the regional goals established in the plan.

# Connect SoCal Goals

- **Developing a Sustainable Communities Strategy** - California State law also imposes additional requirements. For example, state law specifies that, “The plan shall be action-oriented and pragmatic, considering both the short-term and long-term future” (Government Code §65080(a)). California Senate Bill 375, codified in 2008 in Government Code §65080 (b)(2)(B), also requires that the RTP include a sustainable communities strategy or “SCS”, which outlines growth strategies for land use and transportation and help reduce the state’s greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light duty trucks.
- **Hitting Specific Targets for Greenhouse Gas Reduction** - For the SCAG region, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) has set greenhouse gas reduction targets at eight percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2020, and 19 percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2035. As we will be discussed further in Chapter 3, the plan lays out a strategy for the region to meet these targets.

SCAG is committed to not only meeting its statutory requirements but also ensuring that Connect SoCal, as with the agency’s prior RTPs, remains a living document that is rooted in strong analysis and evolves as the region’s demographics, priorities and economy change.

## GOALS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The goals of Connect SoCal fall into four core categories: economy, mobility, environment and healthy/complete communities. The plan explicitly lays out goals related to housing, transportation technologies, equity and resilience in order to adequately reflect the increasing importance of these topics in the region, and where possible the goals have been developed to link to potential performance measures and targets. The plan’s guiding policies take these goals and focus them, creating a specific direction for plan investments.

Federal policy also requires that SCAG sets performance measures and targets in Connect SoCal. As required under MAP-21/FAST Act, in 2016 and 2017 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued national performance measures and guidelines for use in the setting of statewide and regional performance targets. The FHWA rule-making process established a four-year performance target setting and reporting cycle, with a two-year mid-term progress evaluation point. SCAG coordinated closely with State of California Department of

1. Encourage regional economic prosperity and global competitiveness
2. Improve mobility, accessibility, reliability, and travel safety for people and goods
3. Enhance the preservation, security, and resilience of the regional transportation system
4. Increase person and goods movement and travel choices within the transportation system
5. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality
6. Support healthy and equitable communities
7. Adapt to a changing climate and support an integrated regional development pattern and transportation network
8. Leverage new transportation technologies and data-driven solutions that result in more efficient travel
9. Encourage development of diverse housing types in areas that are supported by multiple transportation options
10. Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats

# Connect SoCal Guiding Principles

1. Base transportation investments on adopted regional performance indicators and MAP-21/FAST Act regional targets
2. Place high priority for transportation funding in the region on projects and programs that improve mobility, accessibility, reliability and safety, and that preserve the existing transportation system
3. Assure that land use and growth strategies recognize local input, promote sustainable transportation options, and support equitable and adaptable communities
4. Encourage RTP/SCS investments and strategies that collectively result in reduced non-recurrent congestion and demand for single occupancy vehicle use, by leveraging new transportation technologies and expanding travel choices
5. Encourage transportation investments that will result in improved air quality and public health, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions
6. Monitor progress on all aspects of the Plan, including the timely implementation of projects, programs, and strategies
7. Regionally, transportation investments should reflect best-known science regarding climate change vulnerability, in order to design for long term resilience

Transportation (Caltrans) in the establishment of specific performance targets for the state and for our region in the various transportation performance areas established under MAP-21/FAST Act. These targets provide quantifiable objectives to achieve each measure during the performance period.

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

In preparing Connect SoCal, SCAG engaged with local, state and federal agency partners from the very beginning. Through many collaborative initiatives SCAG was able to better understand existing conditions in the region, building a foundation for planning how to accommodate growth and direct future transportation investments.

SCAG sought regular input from the Regional Council and Policy Committees while creating Connect SoCal. These groups of elected officials consist of representatives from county transportation commissions, tribal governments, as well as towns, cities and counties throughout the region.

The development process also involved working closely with local governments throughout the region to collect and compile data on land use and growth trends. This *"Bottom-Up Local Input and Envisioning Process,"* helped us get a clear picture of what's going on at the local level – and formed the basis for projections and strategies in Connect SoCal. Through this collaborative initiative, SCAG staff held one-on-one meetings with all of the region's 197 towns, cities and counties. In addition to seeking feedback on regional forecasts of population, household and employment growth, SCAG gathered data on land use, protected natural lands, farmland, flood areas and coastal inundation, regional bikeways, regional truck routes, planned major transit stops, high quality transit corridors, future transit priority areas and other local data. In addition to the jurisdictions themselves, the data came from county assessors' offices, county transportation commissions, and state and federal partners.

This local input process gave jurisdictions the opportunity to ask questions, understand data elements and seek technical support, as well as provide feedback on local data. The process was guided by the Connect SoCal Guidelines and Schedule that were adopted by the Regional Council in October 2017. Overall, 90 percent of jurisdictions provided feedback on one or more

data elements requested for local review. Collectively, these towns, cities and counties represent an estimated 94 percent of the region's residents.

SCAG staff also regularly convened a series of technical advisory groups that engaged local, state and federal agencies in the transportation and sustainable communities planning process. To more accurately understand future growth, SCAG engaged with expert demographers and economists to peer-review projections of population, households, and employment at the regional and county levels.

SCAG worked closely with each of the six county transportation commissions throughout 2018 to update the list of regionally significant transportation projects that was established in Connect SoCal's predecessor, the 2016 RTP/SCS. Each county transportation commission in turn worked with their partner transportation agencies (including applicable transit providers, rail operators, marine port and airport authorities and Caltrans District offices) to finalize a list of county-priority projects to submit to SCAG. This effort culminated in a comprehensive update to the list of programs and projects, which numbers in the thousands. SCAG worked collaboratively with key stakeholders to identify additional regional initiatives that go beyond county-level commitments and are intended to address challenges that are regional in nature.

To better coordinate with the State, Connect SoCal was developed to align with the California State Rail Plan, California Transportation Plan (CTP 2040), California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP), California Aviation System Plan (CASP), and State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. SCAG is also actively participating in the update of the California Transportation Plan, CTP 2050, to coordinate and better align regional and statewide planning. The CTP is a long-range statewide level transportation plan that combines regional transportation and land-use plans to produce a unified multimodal strategy to achieve our collective vision of a lasting and well-integrated transportation system that benefits both people and goods over the next 25 years.

Throughout this process, SCAG staff has regularly convened technical advisory committees and topic-specific working groups, which bring together regional stakeholders to discuss the plan's development and provide technical expertise. There were seven formal Regional Planning Working Groups, including: Active Transportation, Environmental Justice, Mobility Innovations, Natural and Farm Land Conservation, Public Health, Sustainable Communities and Transportation

Safety. These allow interested parties from across industries and sub-regions to have a direct pipeline into SCAG's planning process, and helped develop a vision for the future that promotes regional goals and sustainability while respecting local control. Some takeaways include: the importance of identifying common barriers to sustainable development, such as funding and 'NIMBYism'; the need for a balance of jobs and households in communities; the need for coordination and support on emerging transportation technologies; support for sustainable development solutions for existing suburban communities and the challenge of providing sufficient affordable housing.

To ensure that underrepresented voices were involved in the planning process, we also implemented a new grassroots outreach initiative to engage diverse constituencies across Southern California. SCAG partnered with 18 community-based organizations, or CBOs, from across the region. These organizations assisted with workshop and survey outreach as well as hosting local gatherings for community members to provide input on Connect SoCal. Using this strategy, we successfully broadened our outreach to traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities including:

- Children and youth
- Individuals with access and functional needs
- Low-income communities of color
- Older adults or retired people
- Populations with limited English proficiency
- Women and female-headed households

SCAG's 18 CBO partners represented constituents from Long Beach to Coachella Valley, Santa Clara River Valley to Orange County. Though their missions and areas of focus vary, each of these groups has a common commitment to creating a more equitable, sustainable, accessible and affordable Southern California.

Feedback received through our CBO partners was used to identify areas where the plan could be refined to meaningfully reflect the priorities and concerns of these traditionally underserved groups, particularly because they have historically been disproportionately burdened by the negative outcomes associated with existing and changing land use patterns and transportation policies. Highlights of what we heard from them include:

- Concerns about housing availability and affordability, limited

alternative transportation options, displacement and access to destinations, the effects of increased greenhouse gas emissions, and the risks associated with climate change

- A push for Connect SoCal to take into account the degree to which transportation and housing options vary between communities, and that having a limited range of travel options often increases residents' reliance on vehicles
- Pronounced support for strategies that create affordable housing, improve the existing transportation network, and expand mobility options that reduce the harmful impacts of displacement to historically marginalized neighborhoods

Overall, the communities surveyed agreed with the themes, policies and interventions proposed by Connect SoCal.

In developing a vision of future growth for Connect SoCal, SCAG also sought feedback from residents throughout the region through public engagement initiatives that featured 28 public workshops, an extensive advertisement campaign, a telephone town hall meeting and a widely distributed online survey. Public workshop attendees were asked to review four potential growth scenarios, each with a unique set of strategies. These included enhancing job centers, prioritizing connecting people to more transportation options, protecting natural lands and farmland areas and planning for our region's future resiliency from natural disasters. Local plans and policies, as conveyed through the local input process, were integrated into each of these scenarios, ensuring that they reflected an attainable future. The input we received included support for locating more growth near transit and job centers, desire to prioritize infill and redevelopment within existing cities to accommodate future growth and promote affordable housing, and concerns about overcrowding or gentrification within existing communities. Taken together, the feedback pointed to a need for Connect SoCal to envision a sustainable development pattern that respects and enhances the quality of life within local communities.

SCAG considered input gathered through the CBO engagement and public workshops to ensure Connect SoCal addresses challenges faced by our region's residents. Strategies, therefore, emphasize growth in areas rich with destinations and mobility options, promote diverse housing choices, leverage technology innovations, support implementation of sustainability policies

and promote a green region. This more compact development pattern, combined with the identified transportation network improvements and strategies, results in improved pedestrian and bicycle access to community amenities, lowers average trip length and reduces Vehicle miles traveled. These outcomes not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also support the development of more livable communities that provide lower-cost housing choices, conserve natural resources, offer transportation options and promote a better quality of life.

Connect SoCal will help residents thrive, providing better access to jobs, housing, schools, healthcare, recreation and everything in between. In our region's history, we've seen that small actions can build to extraordinary outcomes. With investments to improve our roadways, expand our transit system, multiply walking and bicycling amenities, protect natural lands and integrate new initiatives like road pricing — Connect SoCal works to address residents' challenges by promoting job accessibility, enabling shorter commutes, making communities safer and encouraging lower-cost housing developments.

The various components of Connect SoCal were reviewed by SCAG's Regional Council and Policy Committees in a series of meetings. At their Nov. 7, 2019 meeting the Regional Council authorized the release of Connect SoCal and its accompanying Technical Reports for public review and comment. This final version of Connect SoCal, which incorporates adjustments based on feedback received during the public review process, was presented to the Regional Council on May 7, 2020 and approved for federal transportation conformity purposes only.



## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

SCAG collaborated closely with a wide range of partners to develop Connect SoCal. It is our goal that Connect SoCal be used by the same constituents and stakeholders that worked with us to create it, as a trusted reference and guiding document for prioritizing transportation projects, encouraging behavior change and furthering regional strategies that can shape Southern California's transportation and land use development for years to come.

Use the Connect SoCal plan to:

- Understand the biggest trends and challenges in the region (Chapter 2)
- Review a comprehensive set of policies, strategies and tools to improve mobility and sustainability (Chapter 3)
- Evaluate the sources and structures of funding that will support executing the plan (Chapter 4)
- Refer to performance measures and ways of tracking our success in becoming a more mobile and sustainable region (Chapter 5)
- Identify new challenges that remain on our horizon (Chapter 6)

Connect SoCal is also supported by 20 technical reports that provide additional data and material on all topics and concepts covered in this plan. All citations used throughout the main book and technical reports conform to AP style.

# Connect SoCal Technical Reports

Active Transportation  
Aviation & Airport Ground Access  
Congestion Management  
Demographics & Growth Forecast  
Economic & Job Creation Analysis  
Emerging Technology  
Environmental Justice  
Goods Movement  
Highways & Arterials  
Natural & Farm Lands Conservation  
Passenger Rail  
Performance Measures  
Project List  
Public Health  
Public Participation & Consultation  
Sustainable Communities Strategy  
Transit  
Transportation Conformity Analysis  
Transportation Finance  
Transportation Safety & Security