



CHAPTER
6

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LOOKING AHEAD

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Connect SoCal has presented a suite of valuable regional strategies and catalytic transportation investments reflecting our aspirations for a healthier, safer, more resilient and economically vibrant region. In particular, Connect SoCal introduces the Key Connections which are packages of strategies that lie at the intersection of land use, transportation and innovation. These strategies depend on broad inter-agency partnerships, and will position the region to deliver sustained performance in meeting the plan's objectives. Our air can be cleaner to breathe, our streets can be safer to navigate, and our resources can be preserved and restored when we directly confront our challenges and take decisive action. Real progress can be made towards sustainable results over the next 25 years if cities and counties are equipped with sufficient resources and practical tools. SCAG will help forge partnerships beyond jurisdictional boundaries for over 20 million people so we can achieve our regional goals.

There is always more to accomplish in Southern California – much more than what a single regional transportation plan can articulate. Although Connect SoCal helps our region advance towards a more sustainable future, additional needs remain, and this Chapter seeks to illuminate new challenges that are on our horizon.

A REGIONAL RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

The challenges our region will face in meeting ambitious goals over the next 25 years and beyond are increasingly difficult to predict, as the recent COVID-19 pandemic has proven. Disruptions to the region from our changing climate, natural hazards, technology, the global economy and other external forces will be significant in the near- and long-term. These disruptions may be acute shocks that are sudden such as earthquakes, or chronic stresses such as high unemployment or housing insecurity. It is critical that we recognize the likelihood of disruption and strengthen our collective resolve to become an even more resilient and prepared region. Disruptions will impact to varying degrees our region's public health, vulnerable populations, economy, natural resources, built environment, transportation system, housing and water supplies, utility infrastructure and emergency services.

To better anticipate a wide range of potential futures and strengthen the resilience and preparedness of the region, a collaborative exploratory scenario planning process will be initiated to augment the traditional Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) planning

process. This process will not be focused on achieving predetermined outcomes or targets. Rather, it will explore pressing issues and potential near- and long-term disruptions to Southern California, such as earthquakes, extreme weather, drought, wildfires, pandemics and economic shocks. This exploration will be expansive and help identify pathways for developing future regional and local plans, including those addressing resilience, emergency preparedness and health equity.

A framework and approach will help define “regional resilience” and identify specific strategies to reduce vulnerabilities, thus allowing the region to further adapt, withstand and respond to disruption. Specifically, the approach will consider the potential degree of disruption to the region that could result from land based, atmospheric, public health and geologic natural hazards. Opportunities for being better prepared for climate change and public health impacts may be prioritized, and implementation tools will be established.

Connect SoCal recognizes that a resilient and prepared region requires that the transportation system, built environment and natural resource areas coexist in a well-balanced land use pattern. Further, it recognizes that when well-coordinated, these components can result in multiple benefits, including greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, improved health, equity and conservation. Accordingly, the framework will be developed to maximize the implementation of Connect SoCal's regional strategies and investments that support resilience.

SCAG recognizes that disruptions and their impacts may be borne differently by people depending on demographics and location. Crafting a regional resilience framework and approach therefore requires the meaningful engagement of diverse stakeholders from throughout the region. To better reach and engage a broader cross section of residents – particularly when physical distancing may make traditional outreach more challenging – SCAG intends to develop, expand and deepen partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Partnering with CBOs can support equitable and resilient regional outcomes.

IDENTIFYING & FULFILLING HOUSING NEEDS

Connect SoCal's strategies and investments seek to support expanded housing choices for all income levels in areas with a range of transportation choices and economic opportunities. For instance, land use strategies such as prioritizing growth in Job Centers are intended to reduce commute distances and times, and regional initiatives focused on supportive infrastructure for housing in

these areas seek to incentivize infill housing production. However, as prices have soared in areas closest to employment centers, high housing costs have lengthened commutes and growth has been pushed to distant locales that often have important natural resources meriting conservation.

Moreover, since 1990, new home construction in the region has on average been at much lower levels than the decades before and vacancy rates have declined. The cost of building housing has been increasing and the risk of displacement has amplified. Production of affordable housing in particular has also remained well below the region's needs during a critical time. Overcrowded households and the burdens of housing costs have increased as a result of low supply and increased demand.

Cost-burdened households with limited transit options who reside further from Connect SoCal's Priority Growth Areas (PGAs) such as Jobs Centers, Transit Priority Areas (TPAs) and High Quality Transit Areas (HQTAs) are more likely to acquire an automobile, drive longer distances, and drive more often. Accordingly, a comprehensive approach is needed to expedite the production of housing in and near PGAs and in other areas with multiple mobility options. Investigating opportunities and barriers to producing units of all types for households of all ages, sizes and income levels is critical.

A Regional Housing Strategy Framework should be developed that places enhanced value on infill opportunities within Connect SoCal's identified and potential future PGAs such as Job Centers, TPAs, HQTAs, Neighborhood Mobility Areas and Livable Corridors. Strategies to preserve existing affordable housing and avert displacement will be essential. This effort should balance housing production strategies well supported by multiple transportation options with the conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats. The "Housing Supportive Infrastructure" Key Connections strategy, discussed in Chapter 3, will be a starting point to coordinate policies and investments across different agencies involving innovations in technology, planning and financial tools.

Finally, it is important to note that recent legislation has increased funding to support local planning for housing. Specifically, under Assembly Bill 101 (AB 101) (2019) legislation, SCAG is eligible for approximately \$47 million from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). These funds will be used to develop a Regional Housing Strategy Framework and provide planning resources, grants and services to jurisdictions to implement their 6th cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation, which is supportive of Connect SoCal goals and policies. In addition, depending on their population size, local jurisdictions are eligible to receive between \$65,000 and \$1.5 million individually through AB 101 funding to develop and implement

their 6th cycle housing element. Collectively, SCAG jurisdictions are eligible for up to \$50 million based on this direct funding resource. SCAG is promoting coordination among these funding opportunities to accelerate housing production throughout the region.

PLANNING FOR TECHNOLOGY & MOBILITY SERVICES

Given existing land use patterns and our maturing transportation system, expanding transportation capacity and infrastructure to serve exurban areas is ever more expensive to build and maintain. Accordingly, it is essential to ensure we are getting the most productivity out of our existing built areas and transportation system through system optimization strategies. These strategies can be facilitated by new technology and mobility innovations that are fundamentally transforming the way people travel.

Connect SoCal provides a number of policies and recommendations to support and facilitate the three revolutions of transportation — electrification, sharing and automation — and ensure that these transformative innovations support, rather than hinder, our regional goals. For example, research suggests that Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) contribute to increased congestion, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and therefore GHG emissions. Various studies report that between 43 percent and 61 percent of TNC trips substitute for transit, walk or bike travel, or would not have been made at all. The University of Kentucky found that Uber and Lyft decrease rail ridership by 1.3 percent per year and bus ridership by 1.7 percent per year. These impacts could be dwarfed by the increased VMT that may occur in a future where privately owned automated vehicles are the primary means of travel. More discussion is provided in the Emerging Technology Technical Report.

Through additional policy discussions and planning efforts, SCAG will build upon Connect SoCal recommendations and develop a regional framework for technology and mobility services to ensure that the power of technology and innovation is harnessed to improve mobility, accessibility and sustainability in Southern California. This framework should be built on a foundation of guiding principles, data and analysis, to provide a blueprint for integrated policies, practices and programs. SCAG will develop work plans in partnership with various jurisdictions to implement innovative strategies aligned with the "Smart Cities and Job Centers," "Go Zones," "Accelerated Electrification" and "Shared Mobility and Mobility as a Service" Key Connections described in Chapter 3.

Through its Emerging Technologies Committee, SCAG will develop a set of guiding principles to inform decision-making processes related to new technologies in transportation. Guiding principles provide for the objective evaluation of technology to ensure outcomes are consistent with shared priorities, including congestion reduction, efficient use of land and public rights-of-way, equity, open data, labor, seamless connectivity and safety. Additionally, in order to enhance SCAG's understanding of emerging technology, staff will build on its Future Mobility Research Program in collaboration with the other large metropolitan planning organizations in California.

SCAG will also continue research efforts to understand travel behavior in response to incentives including pricing and other transportation demand management strategies. SCAG will engage with regional stakeholders to ensure local components of the Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture are updated with the latest national standards, implement planned ITS investments, and to identify key actions for local jurisdictions to prepare for a connected and automated future. Through its ongoing Future Communities Initiative, SCAG will continue to ensure that public agencies in Southern California lead the nation with respect to efficiency, innovation and transparency through improvements in data collection, analysis and technology.

