

## CONNECT SOCIAL UPDATE

On May 7, the Regional Council approved Connect SoCal (2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy) for federal transportation conformity purposes, certified the Connect SoCal program environmental impact report (PEIR), and delayed for up to 120 days approval of the plan for other purposes primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this action, the Regional Council directed SCAG staff to conduct outreach to jurisdictions to confirm general plan and entitlement information in the Connect SoCal growth forecast. Six jurisdictions requested revisions along these lines and SCAG confirmed those revisions in August. SCAG also shared an update with local city managers and county administrators on revisions to the Connect SoCal growth forecast and updated a broad group of stakeholders on COVID-19 related outreach in preparation for consideration of Connect SoCal for full adoption by the Regional Council at its meeting scheduled for September 3.

During the 120-day delay, SCAG staff further engaged with stakeholders to clarify the constraints of SCAG's Tier 2 transportation analysis zone (TAZ)-level growth forecast (used for Connect SoCal modeling purposes). As a result of these discussions, SCAG clarified the Connect SoCal Growth Forecast Guiding Principles as reflected in the September 3 meeting agendas for the joint meeting of the policy committees (JPC) and the Regional Council. The Connect SoCal staff report and resolution for consideration by the Regional Council elaborate on the non-binding, advisory nature of this dataset and clarify the limits of SCAG's authority with respect to the use of TAZ-level data.

The timely approval of Connect SoCal in its entirety will enable SCAG staff to proceed with the distribution of the draft Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocations to local jurisdictions and submit Connect SoCal to the California Air Resources Board for confirmation that the plan will meet per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions targets if implemented, thereby ensuring the region's eligibility and competitiveness for roughly \$1.4 billion requested from state transportation funding programs. Approval of Connect SoCal will also enable staff to proceed with implementing activities designed to support pandemic recovery efforts as further outlined in the Connect SoCal Implementation Strategy, which has been provided to policy committee members and the Regional Council as a separate report in the September 3 meeting agendas. The final plan aims to address the prior May 7 direction of the Regional Council and secure full adoption of the plan in its entirety.

As part of the September 3 Connect SoCal staff report for consideration by the JPC and Regional Council, staff is also recommending adoption of an addendum to the Connect SoCal PEIR, which evaluates technical refinements for Connect SoCal and addresses two comment letters from the Center of Biological Diversity (CBD) received on May 1 and May 6, respectively, wherein the CBD requested expanded background information related to the PEIR environmental setting, environmental impacts, and consideration of other mitigation measures. While SCAG is not obligated to respond to late comments (as the public review period occurred from December 9, 2019 to January 24, 2020), in the interest of providing as much information to the public as possible, SCAG has addressed the CBD's comments and incorporated additional information in the Connect SoCal PEIR addendum.

For more updates on Connect SoCal, please visit [ConnectSoCal.org](https://ConnectSoCal.org).

## SCAG HOSTS TWO-DAY VIRTUAL WORKSHOP IN SUPPORT OF LOCAL HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATES

SCAG hosted a two-day virtual workshop—one session on August 20 and the other on August 27—that provided local governments and other stakeholders in the SCAG region with information and resources to support their 6th Cycle RHNA housing element updates. The workshop served as a stepping stone to begin the conversation, as well as emphasize SCAG's role as a resource for housing element updates supported in part by the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) program. SCAG was joined by staff from both the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to present new legislation relating to housing element compliance and the safety elements and environmental justice components of general plan updates.

Speakers from HCD and SCAG provided an in-depth summary of the available and planned technical assistance for housing element updates. The workshop also featured information on determining accessory dwelling unit capacity and affordability, site inventory strategies, best practices, and lessons learned from veterans preparing past housing element updates. With over 300 attendees, many key stakeholders were engaged in the briefings of legislative and technical requirements of the housing element updates. Attendees included representatives of local government, consultants, housing advocates, and residents. Please visit the [SCAG website](#) for more information and resources.

## SCAG TO PARTNER WITH MSRC FOR LAST MILE FREIGHT PROJECT COMMERCIAL DEPLOYMENT

At the August 20 Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC) Board meeting, the MSRC Board unanimously approved a statement of work contract proposed by SCAG for \$10 million in grant funds to implement Phase 1 of the Last Mile Freight Project Commercial Deployment. SCAG will partner with the MSRC, serving as the implementor of the Last Mile Freight Project Commercial Deployment through a sole-source contract. SCAG has developed a two-phased approach for the Last Mile Freight Project Commercial Deployment

- **Phase 1:** Establish a call-for-projects process, focusing on the procurement and commercial deployment of zero-emission (ZE) or near-zero emission (NZE) heavy- and/or medium-duty on-road trucks (can include ZE/NZE equipment and supporting infrastructure).
- **Phase 2:** Conduct robust outreach to expand Phase 1 projects and coordinate with both public and private sector stakeholders to deploy broader innovative technologies currently being demonstrated by leading last mile delivery companies, particularly in e-commerce use-cases.

The project's Phase 1 commercial deployment will align with Connect SoCal's key connections including accelerated electrification through ZE vehicles, equipment, and supporting infrastructure. The last mile component is a crucial and growing area of focus with the increasing purchase of goods by consumers through e-commerce, especially as e-commerce growth has accelerated from COVID-19-related impacts. As part of the initial step of this project, SCAG will develop and present the program guidelines for approval in the upcoming months.

## GO HUMAN CAMPAIGN RE-LAUNCHES

In August, SCAG's [Go Human](#) program re-launched its advertising campaign with new messaging to encourage drivers to slow down and watch for people walking. Residents across the region saw ads on billboards, gas pump toppers, and social and digital platforms, reaching 280 million impressions. The advertising campaign is just one of many strategies to support safety across the region, which also include a Safe Driver Twitter chat that was held on August 27. SCAG has also developed a [Safe Driver Pledge](#) that asks individuals to practice safe driving practices that create safe streets for vulnerable users, particularly those who walk and bike.

## 2020-2021 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TO LAUNCH IN SEPTEMBER

In early September, SCAG will launch the 2020-2021 Sustainable Communities Program funding opportunity to provide technical assistance and resources to local jurisdictions in support of local sustainability and active transportation planning efforts and the implementation of Connect SoCal. The first call for applications will focus on active transportation and safety projects with another three calls for projects to be announced in the future. To date, SCAG's grant programs in support of these efforts have surpassed \$43.4 million in total funding through the Compass Blueprint program (\$22 million), 2016 Sustainability Planning Grants Call for Proposals (\$12.8 million), and the 2018-2019 Sustainable Communities Program funding opportunity (\$8.6 million). Please visit the [2020-2021 Sustainable Communities Program page](#) for further details.

## GO HUMAN MINI-GRANT ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY

A total of 28 *Go Human* Safety Mini-Grant projects from across the SCAG region are now underway. Awarded projects span a wide range of activities that are centered on the mobility and transportation needs of those most impacted by COVID-19, including a storytelling radio series focusing on transit, virtual workshops for youth, free bike match and repair for essential workers and families, and co-creation of community resilience and safety resources, among many other creative and impactful projects. More than \$200,000 was awarded to community-based organizations across the region. Please visit the [SCAG Go Human blog](#) for more information about the Mini-Grants program and other upcoming projects and events.

## SCAG RELEASES PRE-CERTIFIED LOCAL HOUSING DATA TO HELP JURISDICTIONS WITH HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATES

In collaboration with HCD, SCAG has developed a housing needs data package for each local jurisdiction. This data will provide an important tool to save costs and time in updating housing elements for all local jurisdictions in the region. To comply with state housing law, jurisdictions within California must update their housing element every eight years. The data has been pre-certified by HCD to satisfy nearly all statutory requirements for quantification of a local jurisdiction's housing needs and are [available as complete reports as well as in raw format](#). SCAG is continuing to develop innovative methods of technical assistance to help local jurisdictions with their 6th Cycle RHNA housing element updates, including working with HCD to streamline the review process.

## SCAG PARTNERS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP IN LONG BEACH ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRANSPORTATION FOR SENIORS AND OTHERS

On August 13, Long Beach Grey Panthers, in partnership with SCAG, hosted "Seniors Move," a virtual conversation about COVID-19's impact on transportation for seniors and other vulnerable populations in Long Beach. SCAG President Rex Richardson kicked off the panel with opening remarks and Myron Wollin, President of Long Beach Grey Panthers along with Long Beach Councilmember Mary Zendejas facilitated the conversation between panelists Mike Gold (Long Beach Transit), KeAndra Cylear Dodds (LA Metro), Mariham Iskander (LGBTQ Center Long Beach), and Dr. Dean Toji (CSU Long Beach). The panel discussed the unique vulnerabilities of the elderly community in Long Beach, with a focus on the LGBTQ community. Existing challenges in reaching and providing services to vulnerable members of the Long Beach community have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly due to barriers in disseminating critical information to transit users on service changes and safety for seniors. The conversation aired live on the Long Beach Grey Panthers Facebook page.

This event was the first in a series of engagements hosted by community-based organizations (CBO) examining the path to an equitable recovery of the transportation system, supported by SCAG's Mobility Innovation and Pricing project. This initiative aims to provide a forum for a shared learning experience with community members to better understand the travel patterns and needs of underrepresented communities throughout the region. Each of these events will be planned and hosted by CBOs to focus on the needs and lived experiences of their community members. Supporting the participation of underrepresented communities in the planning process can build the foundation for equitable implementation of future innovative transportation planning and programs, both through COVID-19 recovery and beyond.

## SCAG HOSTS WEBINAR ON RESETTING THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TABLE AFTER THE COVID-19 SLOWDOWN

On July 23, SCAG hosted a webinar with Kosmont Companies discussing the potential local financing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for local governments. This session was attended by roughly 100 stakeholders from local jurisdictions and other groups and featured projections of transient occupancy tax and sales tax revenue, as well as information on funding and financing programs that can support accelerated revitalization of retail properties and hotel sites with a focus on retrofitting larger shopping center sites that experienced COVID-19 induced vacancies from tenants forced to close who will not likely reopen. The webinar is [available for viewing online](#).

## TOOLBOX TUESDAY TRAINING FOCUSES ON GREEN REGION INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS MAP

On July 21, SCAG hosted a Toolbox Tuesday webinar, “Measuring the Region’s Progress with the Green Region Initiative Sustainability Indicators Map,” which provided an overview of the map tool that will help jurisdictions within the SCAG region measure and track sustainability progress across 11 categories and 28 sustainability indicators. In addition, the training covered how the map tool can be used to apply for grants as well as track sustainability progress and best practices in Southern California. A recording of the webinar, as well as materials from the training session, are [available on the SCAG website](#).

## FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM UPDATES

Between July 10 and August 21, SCAG’s Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) team processed two Regular Amendments and two Administrative Modifications for our county transportation commissions in order to obligate federal funds prior to the end of the federal fiscal year. At the same time, staff processed 12 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Grant Concurrences and assisted transit operators to obligate their FTA grants. Staff also issued the FY 2020, 3rd Quarter Section 5307 Balance Reports for the 6 urbanized areas: LA-Long Beach-Anaheim, Riverside-San Bernardino, Temecula, Santa Clarita, Lancaster–Palmdale and Murrieta–Temecula–Menifee. The FTIP is critical to the delivery of a wide variety of transportation projects across the region such as highway improvements, transit, rail and bus facilities, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, signal synchronization, intersection improvements, freeway ramps, non-motorized projects, and bicycle- and pedestrian-related improvements.

## SCAG TDM STRATEGIC PLAN RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

On August 5, SCAG received the Association for Commuter Transportation National Award for Excellence in Planning for its Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategic Plan. The TDM Strategic Plan was developed with the guidance of TDM experts at the local and regional levels from both public and private sectors. It identifies goals, objectives and performance measures to help shape TDM-related planning and policy, with a focus on improving air quality, public health, and quality of life through improved mobility, access to alternative modes, and information sharing. The exploration of existing conditions, international best practices, and the future of mobility helped establish recommendations for addressing the challenges in TDM implementation across the region. The TDM Strategic Plan is a critical component of Connect SoCal and SCAG is currently advancing several planning studies to implement priority recommendations. The final report is available on the SCAG website.

## SCAG HONORED WITH STATE-WIDE AWARD FOR PUBLIC OUTREACH ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The California Chapter of the American Planning Association selected SCAG as the 2020 Excellence Award Winner for Public Outreach for SCAG’s “Climate Talks” climate adaptation community outreach events. During these events, the public was invited to walk through an immersive Climate Talks pop-up box that depicted different communication strategies to help residents understand the impact and potential real-life consequences of climate change. This work is part of the Regional Climate Adaptation Framework, which is currently in development and will include tools for local governments and community-based organizations to address climate resiliency and reduce the harms from climate change-related hazards like wildfires, sea-level rise, extreme heat, and flood risks.

## SCAG STAFF RECEIVES ZEVe AWARD FROM STATE

In July, SCAG staff member, Joseph Cryer, was recognized by the Governor’s Office of Business Development (GO-Biz) with a ZEVe Award for his work supporting ZEV infrastructure. The ZEVe Award honors ZEV champions throughout the state for their leadership and dedication to improving the ZEV infrastructure approval process. Joseph is a co-lead of SCAG’s accelerated electrification strategy, one of the Key Connections defined in Connect SoCal for implementing the Plan and creating a more sustainable region. This fall, SCAG will kick off a study and public outreach campaign to help drive the growth of electric vehicle charging in the region.

## **SCAG LAPTOP REFRESH COMPLETED**

Despite extended teleworking conditions, SCAG's Information Technology (IT) department successfully completed an agency-wide laptop upgrade project, which included remote distribution, migration of data, and setup and support for all SCAG staff. The new laptops, approved in February 2020, replace outdated and unreliable hardware by providing staff with updated computing capabilities to support the agency's work.

## **GO HUMAN DEMONSTRATION PROJECT LEADS TO MAKEOVER OF SAN PABLO AVENUE IN PALM DESERT**

In May 2016, SCAG's *Go Human* campaign supported a two-week demonstration project in downtown Palm Desert called "Vision San Pablo," which provided residents with a preview of proposed changes to San Pablo Avenue and an opportunity to give feedback on the proposed changes and designs. In August of this year, after one year of construction, San Pablo Avenue in Palm Desert has been reconfigured with improved crosswalks, bike lanes, pocket parks, and landscaping, to complete Phase 1 of the makeover. Congratulations to Palm Desert on their efforts to go human!