

Key Mobility Challenges

Limited Reliable Travel Options Besides Driving: As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one of the top challenges noted by Connect SoCal survey respondents is having limited reliable travel options other than driving. Despite billions of dollars in investments in our transit and active-transportation infrastructure, gaps in service and reliability remain—and these gaps impact perceptions of available options. As evidenced by responses to other survey questions, many people in the region prefer to drive alone on some trips, like errands, but want different options, such as walking or transit, for other trips that might include going to work or school or visiting friends.

The current lack of travel options besides driving in parts of the region can lead to increased congestion on the regional transportation network, which then leads to time wasted in traffic and increased emissions and pollutants. In other parts of the region, people with access to a transit network have noted concerns about reliability and safety.

Transportation Safety: Safety can refer to both personal security when traveling on transit and safety when on our roadways, either in a vehicle, on a bike or on foot. Traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries are a critical and preventable public health and equity issue in the region. Approximately 1,600 people die, and 140,000 are injured—more than 7,000 of which are serious injuries—on roadways throughout the SCAG region every year.¹⁵ Collisions are happening in every community in the region and to people from all walks of life, including those who drive, walk and bike. Approximately 90 percent of collisions occur in urban areas, with most taking place on local roads, not highways. Regionally, about 65 percent of fatalities and serious injuries occur on less than 1.5 percent of the roadway network. Of particular concern are vulnerable groups such as children, older adults, pedestrians, bicyclists and users of personal mobility devices like e-scooters.

The regional housing crisis has resulted in people without housing seeking shelter in public spaces, particularly at locations with 24-hour transit/rail service. Unhoused persons frequently utilize buses or trains for overnight stays. The situation raises several concerns for both transit/rail agencies and riders. Returning riders are apprehensive about their safety and security as they resume using transit/rail services. Buses or trains occupied by unhoused persons may face lingering cleanliness issues, and there have been reports of threats, assault and crime incidents that deter ridership.¹⁶ From the transit/rail agency's perspective, addressing homelessness on systems poses a complex challenge, particularly amidst many other pressing issues and limited funding. Across the region, transit/rail agencies will need to develop comprehensive strategies that address homelessness on their systems, considering factors such as safety, cleanliness and the welfare of both riders and unhoused persons.

Increasing safety for pedestrians and bicyclists can make transit and active transportation a more appealing travel option, thereby motivating mode shifts away from single occupancy vehicle travel and reducing GHG emissions. However, finding sustainable solutions within the context of limited resources will remain an ongoing challenge.

ENVIRONMENT

Overview

What is the health of our people and environment? Despite significant improvements over the last several decades, the SCAG region still has some of the worst air quality in the country. Poor local air quality and the lack of dependable transportation options, active transportation, affordable housing, health care and job opportunities in many SCAG region communities can lead to poor health outcomes. The region is already facing the impacts of climate change, including extreme heat and severe wildfires. Heat-related events occurring from 2010 to 2019 resulted in more than 53,000 emergency room visits, 7,000 hospitalizations, and 600 deaths in California. Indicators show that the number and intensity of extreme-heat health events will worsen drastically throughout the state by midcentury. Extreme heat causes drier landscapes, which then make wildfires and drought more likely and extreme. In 2020, California experienced a record number of dry heat days due to a changing climate and had over 6,000 fires that burned millions of acres, making that year the largest wildfire season recorded in the state's modern history. Economic costs from wildfires include resources involved in fighting the fires, damage to property, health care bills, disrupted business costs, lost tax revenue, and decreased property values—and were estimated to be \$10 billion in 2020.

Natural lands offer important benefits to the region, including capturing carbon emissions and recharging groundwater resources. However, natural lands have decreased by roughly 50,000 acres, or 0.2 percent, between 2012 and 2019. Farmland decreased by 40,000 acres, or 3.5 percent, between 2012 and 2018. While farming practices can contribute to GHG emissions, these are typically far less than emissions in urban environments, and farm and grazing lands can provide co-benefits such as wildlife habitats, flood control and groundwater recharge. Our agricultural sector generates \$12.8 billion (2023 \$US) average annual output each year and employs an average of 53,000 workers.

As the region faces unprecedented challenges, it is important to coordinate regional land use and transportation strategies. It is also essential to address Southern California's growth and sustainability challenges in order to protect the SCAG region's natural resources and reduce future risks from climate change.

Key Environmental Challenges

Climate Change: This challenge includes increased wildfires, flooding, extreme heat, drought, sea-level rise and heavy storms, among other hazards. These impacts influence public health, communities, natural systems and the economy, as well as how we travel if there are disruptions and damages to our transportation system.

Poor Air Quality and Related Health Impacts: Across the SCAG region, transportation and land use decisions are shaping neighborhoods while also influencing the health outcomes of residents. The way a community is designed impacts the likelihood that a person will bike or walk to school, work or local shops; have access to healthy food or parks; and breathe air free of pollutants. Conditions in the places where people are born, live, learn, work and play are known as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), and they help explain why some health outcomes (e.g., rates of asthma or diabetes) vary widely across the region. To improve health outcomes and reduce these inequities, it is critical to consider public health in integrated land use and transportation planning such as through meeting federal air quality standards. (For more details, see Chapter 5 for SCAG's transportation conformity, the Supplementals section for the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Contingency Measure Plan, and the Goods Movement Technical Report Section 5.2 for goods movement related air quality.)

Loss of Open Space: The urbanization of the region over the past several decades has led to the consumption of hundreds of thousands of acres of natural land and farmland. The diverse natural landscapes of Southern California are an invaluable asset to the millions of people, native plants and animal species that call the SCAG region home.

Key Economic Challenges

Lack of economic opportunity: One of the top economic challenges raised by people throughout the region was the lack of higher-paying jobs within the region. Sometimes this was expressed as a lack of sufficient education and training to access those jobs. As we transition to clean energy technologies, it will be important to support residents in the necessary training to ensure that they have the skills to access opportunities within these related fields.

Population aging: By 2050, the region's median age is projected to increase to 43.8 years—up from 37.7 years in 2019 and 30.5 years in 1990. This will lead to a substantial change in the ratio of working-age individuals (16–64) to seniors (65+). In 1990, there were 6.8 working-age people per senior, and by 2050, there are projected to only be 2.9. This will likely put additional strain on retirement benefits, including Social Security.

Increasing supply-chain complexities: Accommodating the needs of a growing goods movement sector across the supply chain is a challenge. Variables beyond the region's control, such as trade tariffs, the COVID-19 pandemic and other geopolitical tensions can impact how we can efficiently move goods within and through the region. Additionally, national, state and local policies will have an impact on both freight intermodal capacity and industrial development across goods movement industries.

TAKING ACTION

Implementation of Connect SoCal relies primarily on the actions and decisions of other transportation agencies, local jurisdictions and actors in the private sector to operate transit service, install new bike paths, approve new land uses or build new housing. SCAG's role for Plan implementation rests on collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders, policy leadership, our role as an information hub, through research—and, lastly, by providing resources to local agencies or jurisdictions to advance their planning efforts or implementation of Connect SoCal. Implementation Strategies for Connect SoCal 2024 can be found in Chapter 3.

Regional Leadership

SCAG's role in implementing Connect SoCal 2024 is primarily through one of four ways: collaboration, funding administration, research and resources.

Collaboration and policy leadership: Coordinating policies across jurisdictions is crucial to successful Plan implementation. SCAG will collaborate with local governments, transit agencies, non-profits, community organizations and other stakeholders to align land use and transportation planning, streamline regulations and encourage cooperation.

Local Technical Assistance Resources:

Local Information Services Program: Responding to the needs of local jurisdictions, SCAG has initiated the Local Information Services Program by providing tools, resources, technical assistance and training to local jurisdictions to support local planning projects. The program consists of three major services, which benefit local jurisdictions: Toolbox Tuesday Technical Webinars, Local Information Services Team (LIST) and GIS training services. The program has also created tools like the Safety Hub and the Housing Element Parcel Tool (HELPR). Overall, the purpose of the program is to:

1. Improve internal and external collaboration, education and engagement
2. Promote SCAG's available tools and resources
3. Provide personalized one-on-one (1:1) technical assistance to local jurisdictions
4. Enhance staff planning knowledge and technical capabilities

Go Human: To address the safety of people walking and biking in the region's transportation network, SCAG created the *Go Human* campaign, an award-winning community engagement program with the goals of reducing traffic collisions and encouraging people to walk and bike more in the SCAG region. With support from the California Office of Traffic Safety, SCAG's *Go Human* program has implemented four rounds of grant-funding opportunities since 2018, helping local organizations create and lead traffic-safety projects. With more than \$893,000 distributed through grant funds in the SCAG region, *Go Human* funding has supported 106 traffic-safety projects and reached more than 981,000 people. In April 2023, *Go Human* launched

its Community Hubs Program, which offers funding opportunities for community organizations to implement local traffic-safety and community-engagement strategies that leverage community gathering and resource sites or networks. The program aims to build street-level community resiliency and increase the safety of populations that have historically been and/or are currently most harmed by traffic injuries and fatalities, including Black, Indigenous and people of color; people with disabilities; and frontline workers, particularly those walking and biking.

Sustainable Communities Program: SCAG helps to advance Connect SoCal through the Sustainable Communities Program (SCP), which has facilitated over \$16.9 million in funding to local jurisdictions since the adoption of Connect SoCal in 2020. This adds to the \$17 million in funding to local jurisdictions through the SCP between the adoption of the 2016 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal 2020. The funding program's goals are to provide needed planning resources to local jurisdictions so they can plan for active and multimodal transportation, sustainable land use and affordable housing—all to support the implementation of Connect SoCal and increase the region's competitiveness for federal and state funds. See Table 2.1 for the projects funded since 2020.

Regional Early Action Program: On July 5, 2023, SCAG was awarded \$237 million from the California Department of Housing and Community Development. This was part of the Regional Early Action 2.0 program to accelerate progress toward state housing goals and climate commitments through a strengthened partnership between the state, its regions and local entities. These resources will enable SCAG to fund projects and programs that support Connect SoCal implementation.

CONNECT SOCAL 2024: LOOKING FORWARD

Creating an Equitable Future

SCAG has made a commitment and, in some cases, has the legal obligation to analyze and address the inequities that the government and planning profession, and others have created by systemically driving and perpetuating societal differences along racial lines. These inequities have resulted in vastly different living and social conditions, as well as reduced access to opportunities.



As part of Connect SoCal development, SCAG convened the Racial Equity & Regional Planning Subcommittee, which recommended that Connect SoCal 2024 function as a vehicle to promote racial equity. In this way, it can serve to address the historic impacts of systemic racism and coordinate and implement equity-centered activities across the region. SCAG aimed to consistently apply an equity lens while developing the Plan—and the Technical Reports, too, which address specific equity issues relevant to their respective topics.

While SCAG considers potential impacts on people of color and low-income households in our regional growth, transportation and economic development planning and analysis, SCAG recognizes that **more affirmative approaches that seek to counter the effects of historic practices are needed to advance equity and social justice across the region.** It is imperative that SCAG approach this work with a keen understanding of the diversity of the region—including sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities—to ensure that efforts to advance racial equity are inclusive and responsive to the needs across the region. Some key strategies for improving equity in the region include:

Priority for Equity Communities:

Prioritization of historically marginalized communities is a key focus for SCAG and

state and federal funding programs, which is why it was elevated as a priority by the Subcommittee. **Prioritized capacity-building and funding efforts support historically marginalized communities—often communities of color— to develop programs that respond to community-identified needs and advance community-driven solutions.**

Reconnecting Communities: Historic physical and economic segregation was caused by some U.S. housing and transportation policies and led to decades of inequalities. **We are now planning policies and projects that involve removing, retrofitting or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including mobility, access or economic development.**

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing: Our goal is to take meaningful actions that address significant disparities in housing needs and access to opportunity, replace segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns, transform racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity, and foster and maintain compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws.

To further these strategies, SCAG develops studies and programs focused on creating more equitable outcomes for the region, including the following examples:

A VISION FOR 2050

Looking Toward the Future

The Vision and Goals for Connect SoCal 2024 are rooted in the direction set forth by Connect SoCal 2020, reflecting both SCAG's statutory requirements and the emerging trends and persistent challenges facing the region. SCAG then engaged with stakeholders and members of the public on a draft vision for Connect SoCal in 2050 and a set of draft goals. Reflecting that input, SCAG's vision for Southern California in the year 2050 is "A healthy, prosperous, accessible and connected region for a more resilient and equitable future." The following goals and subgoals will help the SCAG region to achieve this vision:

Mobility: Build and maintain an integrated multimodal transportation network

- Support investments that are well-maintained and operated, coordinated, resilient and result in improved safety, improved air quality and minimized greenhouse gas emissions
- Ensure that reliable, accessible, affordable and appealing travel options are readily available, while striving to enhance equity in the offerings in high-need communities
- Support planning for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds

Communities: Develop, connect and sustain livable and thriving communities

- Create human-centered communities in urban, suburban and rural settings to increase mobility options and reduce travel distances
- Produce and preserve diverse housing types in an effort to improve affordability, accessibility and opportunities for all households

Environment: Create a healthy region for the people of today and tomorrow

- Develop communities that are resilient and can mitigate, adapt to and respond to chronic and acute stresses and disruptions, such as climate change
- Integrate the region's development pattern and transportation network to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enable more sustainable use of energy and water
- Conserve the region's resources

Economy: Support a sustainable, efficient and productive regional economic environment that provides opportunities for all people in the region

- Improve access to jobs and educational resources
- Advance a resilient and efficient goods movement system that supports the economic vitality of the region, attainment of clean air and quality of life for our communities

SCAG's vision for Southern California in the year 2050: A healthy, prosperous, accessible and connected region for a more resilient and equitable future.

Regional Planning Policies

SCAG developed a set of Regional Planning Policies to guide decision-making in the region that aligns with the Plan’s vision and achievement of our goals. These policies carry forward priorities that have been refined over several planning cycles to promote a multimodal transportation system and sustainable land use and development. The policies listed in the Regional Planning Policies section near the end of this chapter incorporate recent discussions and direction from SCAG’s Regional Council, Policy Committees and special subcommittees. The categories covered by these policies are detailed in each of the following sections.

Connect SoCal 2024 represents our most up-to-date understanding of the region, along with the policies, strategies and projects to advance the region’s mobility, economy and sustainability through 2050.

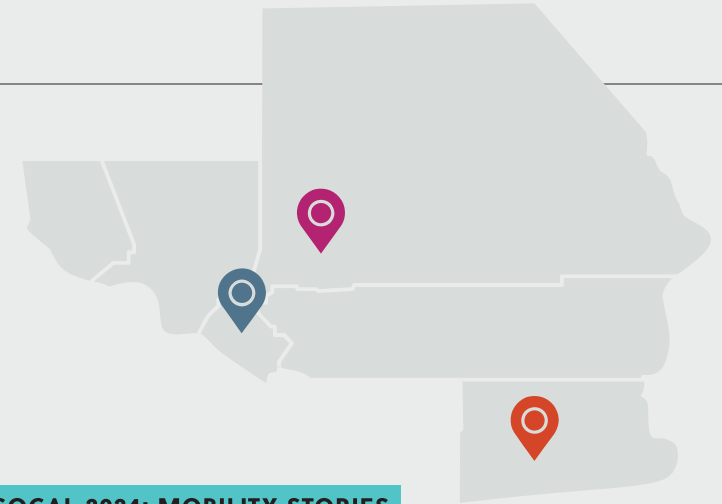
MOBILITY IN 2050

The Future of Movement

How will we move and increase access to opportunities in 2050? Transportation and its corresponding technologies connect us to places and allow us to move between home and important destinations like work, school or the grocery store. Our community’s land use pattern determines the distribution of these destinations which, when combined with available transportation options, either support or negatively impact our ability to meet our needs. Historically, patterns such as racial segregation, gentrification and displacement have limited mobility and access for communities of color. These historic inequities have present-day impacts that surface in a variety of ways, including increased exposure to air pollution, noise and traffic collisions. Ensuring mobility and accessibility is important, especially in the region’s Priority Equity Communities, which are census tracts with a greater concentration of populations that have been historically marginalized and are susceptible to inequitable outcomes based on several socioeconomic factors. Additionally, it is critical that SCAG and our partner transportation agencies work in collaboration with communities most impacted by socioeconomic, environmental and transportation burdens. For people across the region to thrive, a healthy mobility ecosystem needs to exist, one where various modes of transportation work in tandem to meet the needs of the community.

In spring 2023 public outreach survey, SCAG asked thousands of people across the region what would be the ideal mode to access various activities. About 30 percent or more of respondents would prefer to walk/bike/roll when traveling to school or childcare, for errands and to social activities. In contrast, for work trips, about 25 percent would prefer to take transit and 25 percent would prefer to drive alone. The mismatch between the expressed preference of these survey respondents and the data on how we move today in Chapter 2—where 66 percent of commute trips are made by driving alone—indicates that there is pent-up demand for more options.

Connect SoCal 2024 includes investments, policies and programs for improving access to a robust multimodal transportation system that is reliable and safe for all users. Achieving the Plan vision requires ensuring that the current network is well-maintained and that policies are in place to support an efficient and coordinated operation of the system. This section highlights the investments and areas of focus for ensuring a robust transportation network in the region.



CONNECT SOCAL 2024: MOBILITY STORIES

Traveling in the Region Tomorrow

Santa Ana, CA: A freshman at Santa Ana College rents a room close to school so that she can walk to class. When she needs to get to her internship in Corona, she takes Metrolink. For other trips, she relies on her Mobility Wallet to make the best choice, depending on cost and speed. Sometimes this means taking the OC Streetcar for local trips, a dockless shared bike for some extra exercise or renting a shared electric vehicle to make a longer trip.

San Bernardino, CA: A senior citizen lives in an assisted living facility. He can no longer safely operate a vehicle but still maintains an active social and civic life. He uses an app to reserve paratransit rides that transport him to appointments and community meetings. For shorter trips, he uses his motorized scooter on neighborhood sidewalks but plans his routes through streets with the most trees to keep cool in the shade.

El Centro, CA: A mom uses her electric car to drive her son to daycare and to get to work. She lives in an apartment that only has one charger, but she is able to rely on the robust public charging infrastructure to always have enough charge to get where she needs to go. She likes to ride her bike with her son to visit family on the weekends and feels safe doing so, thanks to the new bike paths.