


alone—with transit as a backbone of the regional transportation system—and the focus on cleaner transportation. Land use planning will concentrate on reducing sprawl, preserving open spaces, increasing access to important resources and enhancing resilience to climate change impacts.

Prosperous: Connect SoCal fosters an inclusive and resilient economy. Strategic investments in infrastructure and transportation will improve access to employment centers and stimulate regional economic growth and opportunity in historically underserved areas. The region will prioritize workforce development initiatives, entrepreneurship and innovation to create diverse job opportunities across industries. Connect SoCal will advance the transition to clean-transportation technologies, such as the development of a roadmap for the infrastructure to support zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Investment in clean technologies and the transition to a clean-energy economy will provide valuable opportunities to support economic development and recovery, resilience planning and the achievement of equity.

Accessible: Connect SoCal envisions a future where transportation is efficient, multimodal and accessible to all. Integrated transit networks, including expanded rail systems, bus rapid transit and active transportation infrastructure, will provide seamless connections throughout the region and expand mobility options connecting to previously underserved areas. The improved safety and security of the system will help more people feel comfortable taking transit or active transportation. Innovative technologies, such as zero-emission vehicles, broadband and Intelligent Transportation Systems, will play a vital role in expanding accessibility and reducing congestion and emissions.

Connected: The Southern California region will be characterized by connected and vibrant communities. New compact and mixed-use development patterns will prioritize walkability and create livable neighborhoods with ample green spaces, public amenities and affordable housing options. Transit-oriented development will foster thriving urban centers, reducing dependency on single-occupancy-vehicle travel and the need for long commutes.

Achieving this vision will require the collaboration of each community as well as leadership at the local, regional and state levels to take bold actions that address the injustices of the past, face the challenges of today and make investments for the future. SCAG is committed to ensuring that Connect SoCal remains a living document that is rooted in strong analysis and evolves alongside changes in the economy, technologies and demographics. SCAG adopted its first Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy in 2012. At that time, the region faced uncertainty as to how recovery from the Great Recession would impact the region over the long term. There were not yet e-scooters on our sidewalks, and there were less than 10,000 electric vehicles on our roads. Navigating this shifting context requires continued collaboration with local and state government agencies and other stakeholders.



In 2050, Southern California will be a healthy, prosperous, accessible and connected region for a more resilient and equitable future.

ALL ABOUT THE PLAN

Plan Development

Connect SoCal was developed through a four-year planning process that involved rigorous technical analysis, extensive stakeholder engagement, consultation with state and federal governments (such as land management agencies), and robust policy discussions with local elected leaders who make up SCAG’s policy committees and Regional Council. This process also included formal input processes for our Project List from County Transportation Commissions and land use and growth data from local jurisdictions. In spring 2023, SCAG engaged with thousands of people across the region to gain a clear understanding of the issues and policy choices for the region.

Plan Goals

The goals for Connect SoCal are designed to help us achieve our vision. They fall into four core categories: mobility, communities, environment and economy. These goals are not mutually exclusive—they are mutually reinforcing. For example, the decisions and actions taken to achieve mobility goals can also help to achieve and support environmental goals. The top-line goals are highlighted below, and the supportive subgoals are further detailed in Chapter 3.

Mobility: Build and maintain an integrated multimodal transportation network

Communities: Develop, connect and sustain communities that are livable and thriving

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

Economy: Support a sustainable, efficient and productive regional economic environment that provides opportunities for all residents

Focusing on Objectives

By 2050, the population of the region is projected in the Plan to increase by two million people, or 11 percent, with an increase of 1.6 million housing units, or 26 percent, and 1.3 million jobs, or 14.2 percent. However, growth is not expected to be uniform across the region’s counties or cities.

This Plan invests \$751.7 billion in our transportation system, primarily in operations and maintenance, to ensure the continued performance of our current network. Implementation of Connect SoCal 2024 will add 181,200 new miles of transit revenue service, 4,000 new miles of bike lanes and 869 new miles to the Regional Express Lane Network. More importantly, the Plan includes investments and strategies to better manage these and past investments, including an Intelligent Transportation System and policies for Transportation Demand Management.

This plan projects that 66 percent of new households and 54 percent of new jobs between 2019–2050 will be located in Priority Development Areas, either near transit or in walkable communities.

This will create a region with:

- Transit as a backbone of the transportation system
- More Complete Streets where people and safety are prioritized
- Policies that encourage emerging technologies and mobility innovations that support rather than hamper regional goals
- More housing, jobs and mobility options closer together in Priority Development Areas to preserve natural lands and open spaces
- More housing to address the “existing housing need” as defined by the Regional Housing Needs Assessment
- Safe and fluid movement of goods, with a commitment to the broad deployment of zero- and near-zero emission technologies

For more details on the policies and projects included in Connect SoCal, see Chapter 3.

TECHNICAL REPORT	SUMMARY
Public Participation and Consultation	Documentation of consultation, outreach and engagement activities
Mobility	Focuses on overarching and intersectional issues across all transportation modes. Subsequent modal-specific chapters: Transit/Rail, Active Transportation, and Streets and Highways. Each includes a discussion on our existing conditions, challenges and key strategies
Economic Impact Analysis	Discussion of the Plan's regional economic impacts
Demographics and Growth Forecast	Analysis of the region's current demographics and anticipated future population, household and employment growth patterns
Land Use and Communities	Discussion of the Plan's Forecasted Regional Development Pattern and strategies for sustainable and resilient land use
Housing	Discussion of the regional housing supply and strategies to increase access to housing
Travel and Tourism	Discussion of travel and tourism in the region, including key destinations, the transportation system, programs serving travel and tourism in the region, and the local, county and state agencies, and nonprofit organizations working on enhancing tourism in the region

A CHANGING REGION

Regional COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it impacted the way we live, work and play in the region—and we are still feeling those impacts today. When SCAG’s Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal 2020 for all purposes in September 2020, following the May 2020 adoption for federal transportation conformity only, they affirmed aligning Plan implementation with pandemic recovery and identified emerging trends to be monitored alongside future planning, like Connect SoCal 2024. The following are the key disruptions to the region that SCAG has been tracking since 2020. SCAG monitored these elements alongside Plan development to apply relevant updates to our inputs and assumptions. These changes and challenges are continuing to evolve.

Housing crisis: The COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding economic fallout exacerbated the housing crisis and, for communities of color, widened the economic gap. While early concerns focused on the stalling of housing construction, the more immediate crisis became employment loss—particularly for low-income households—that resulted in a growing number of households falling behind on their mortgage or rent. To minimize this, local, state and federal policymakers prioritized urgent pandemic needs and responses, such as mortgage-relief policies and foreclosure and eviction moratoria. While this had a beneficial impact on households at risk for displacement, it shifted housing priorities away from those that increased housing supply.²

Demographic shifts: The region’s population growth was already slowing during the 2010s due to lower fertility rates and more out-migration than in-migration. The pandemic response provided additional shocks—a near-zero level of foreign immigration, fewer births and excess deaths from the pandemic itself. While these shocks appear to be dissipating substantially, the region’s population declined between 2019 and 2023.

Goods movement: Supply chains were disrupted on a global scale, leading to severe bottlenecks at ports and cascading bottleneck and congestion issues further across the entire goods movement system—from railyards to industrial warehouses and distribution centers.

Transit ridership: While vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and congestion have returned to pre-pandemic levels, transit/rail ridership has rebounded unevenly. These transit/rail ridership declines have resulted in reduced farebox recovery and impacts to operations budgets—and there is widespread concern that transit/rail operators are fast approaching a fiscal cliff. Many transit operators remain uncertain of the longer-term future, particularly if remote working remains a norm for discretionary riders who tend to take rail. Some returning riders are apprehensive about their safety and security as they resume using transit/rail services.

Active transportation: During the pandemic, the region saw an increased use of active transportation (i.e., bicycling [including via e-bikes], walking, rolling, etc.). Bicycling and walking were regarded as reliable and resilient options because they enabled physical distancing and carried a low risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.³ The increase in bicycling was reflected in the higher demand for bicycles and in bicycle sales figures. According to market research company NPD Group, sales of bicycles between April 2020 and April 2021 were up by 57 percent in the United States.⁴ Numerous communities reconsidered how public space was allocated, and several prioritized opening up streets to bicyclists and pedestrians to make it easier to physically distance from others while traveling to essential businesses and engaging in recreation.⁵ However, at the start of the pandemic, most dockless, shared micromobility providers temporarily withdrew from the public space.

Tele-everything: Relying on remote work and school (e-learning) as primary ways to physically distance exposed the region’s digital divide of those who have access to reliable internet and those who do not. The internet, computers and smartphones have provided unprecedented access to information and have helped transform our relationship to transportation. Although many residents have benefited from these advancements, a significant portion of the population

While these relationships are driven by the nature of the work in each of these sectors, a regional plan must consider how to balance the needs of remote workers, who are largely in higher-wage occupations, and the needs of commuting, on-site workers, who are more likely to be in low-wage occupations. Some literature suggests that while flexible work schedules and telecommuting may reduce (or, in the case of satellite offices, reroute) single occupancy vehicle (SOV) commute trips, they likely increase SOV trips for other purposes, such as errands and trips for lunch while an employee is working from home (although not necessarily during peak congestion periods). This is known as the rebound effect.¹¹

Working from home has long been part of the planner’s toolbox for reducing travel. The significant rise of working from home following the pandemic, and the changing travel patterns that have resulted, underscore the importance of pursuing strategies that offer more transportation options for non-work trips, in particular. **A key component of this is fostering more connected and accessible communities that allow a wide range of trips to be accomplished within a short distance or via alternative modes.** More analysis is needed to better understand this changing trend and how it may impact long-term decisions, including choice of housing location. However, despite recent concerns about people fleeing urban areas in general, the fact that the hybrid work model is becoming more predominant than the fully remote work model, workers will have more incentive to return to—or stay near—cities.¹²

At the present time, these changes appear to be felt very heavily in downtown areas, which by definition have the most intense clusters of employment in a region or subregion. American downtowns have had numerous declines and resurgences. Declines occurred during the crime increases of the 1990s and as a result of post-9/11 security concerns. Then, beginning in the mid-2000s, an increase in residential population and amenities took place. Now, due to the post-pandemic work-from-home trend—as well as crime and the perception of crime—many headlines have been sounding the alarm about the future vitality of downtowns. For example, office utilization rates in U.S. downtowns

averaged less than 50 percent in mid-2023, which affects both transit ridership and small businesses, like restaurants.¹³ However, there remains a price premium for both commercial and residential property with connectivity and activity nearby. Livability improvements and continued monitoring of opportunities can help downtowns—which can pool the largest labor force and foster more activity density than anywhere else—and in turn help improve surrounding neighborhoods and the region as a whole.

Emerging Technology

New and emerging technologies have had a significant impact on the transportation sector, transforming various aspects of mobility, efficiency, safety and user experience. These technologies include advancements in vehicle technology, like electric vehicles and automated vehicles, as well as advancement in travel planning and safety systems, such as Mobility as a Service and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems. Several of the key technologies impacting the region today—and on the horizon—include:

Zero-Emission Vehicles (ZEVs): The rise of hydrogen and electric vehicles has disrupted the automotive sector. ZEVs offer lower emissions, reduced dependence on fossil fuels, and improved energy efficiency compared to traditional internal-combustion-engine vehicles.

Shared Mobility: Ride sharing services such as Uber and Lyft have transformed the way people travel, reducing the need for personal car ownership. Car sharing and bike sharing platforms have also gained popularity, providing convenient and cost-effective transportation options.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS): ITS integrates advanced technologies into transportation infrastructure to improve efficiency, safety and sustainability. This includes traffic management systems, dynamic signaling, smart parking and real-time traveler information systems.