

The background of the entire page is an aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Long Beach, California, taken during the 'golden hour' of sunset. The sky transitions from a bright yellow near the horizon to a clear blue at the top. The city is densely packed with buildings and palm trees. In the foreground, a long wooden pier extends from the beach into the dark blue ocean. The water shows gentle ripples. A semi-transparent dark teal box is overlaid on the bottom right of the image, containing the report's title and subtitle.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

YEAR IN REVIEW: 2020–2021

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ABOUT SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization (MPO), representing six counties, 191 cities, and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to encourage a more sustainable Southern California now and in the future.

VISION STATEMENT

Southern California's Catalyst for a Brighter Future

MISSION STATEMENT

To foster innovative regional solutions that improve the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive collaboration, visionary planning, regional advocacy, information sharing, and promoting best practices.

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On behalf of the Regional Council, I am pleased to share this report of SCAG's annual accomplishments for 2020–2021. The featured accomplishments highlight our extensive work to identify and address the needs of the region and promote sustainability, prosperity, and quality of life improvements for all Southern Californians.

With the challenges brought onto the region by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, building an inclusive and equitable recovery strategy that addresses the health, social, and economic challenges created by the pandemic was my top policy priority as president of SCAG. To get us going on the right track, I developed a comprehensive work plan entitled, "Framework for Recovering & Reimagining a Resilient Region," which consists of a slate of "Opportunity Areas" focused on racial and social equity, implementation of Connect SoCal, data and information services, the promotion of housing production and solutions, and legislative efforts, as well as specific actions to carry out the objectives for each of the Opportunity Areas. As such, the accomplishments of the past year are categorized according to these Opportunity Areas. I have also included a section on awards to recognize the great work of our agency.

Despite the pandemic, SCAG has had many successes and new developments this year — even under the most trying of circumstances. We were able to conduct a comprehensive virtual listening tour across the six-county region to engage in substantive policy discussions with our counties and cities, tribal governments, members, and stakeholders. We convened the Special Committee on Equity and Social Justice and a Joint Policy Committee meeting as part of the agency's commitment to combat racism, social injustice, and an equity gap that has reached historic levels. We also hosted two events virtually this year: the 31st Annual Demographic Workshop in June 2020 and the 11th Annual Southern California Economic Summit in December 2020. The Southern California Economic Summit was an important convening as it brought focus to the critical need for an inclusive economic development strategy (which was outlined in my work plan and is currently under development) as the region navigates what experts expect will be a slow and prolonged post-pandemic recovery.

The agency's successes, which came from countless hours and dedication from our members and staff, are a testament once again to the unbridled power of collaboration and partnership that is ingrained into the great work SCAG is known for. We still have a long road to recovery, but I believe our best days are ahead of us as we collectively work for the long-term betterment of the region.

On behalf of the Regional Council and agency staff, I would like to thank you all for your partnership and efforts in helping us build a stronger, resilient, and more inclusive region for our six counties, 191 cities, and 19 million residents.



Rex Richardson

President, 2020-2021
Southern California Association of Governments

IMPLEMENT REGIONAL COUNCIL'S RESOLUTION ON EQUITY

In July 2020, the Regional Council made a commitment to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout Southern California. For the region to become healthy, livable, sustainable, and economically resilient, SCAG needs to dramatically improve outcomes for low-income families and people of color. To that end, SCAG's core function, its planning work, must directly address the long-standing systemic and institutional barriers that have fostered inequities in health, wealth, and opportunities.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Special Committee on Racial Equity and Social Justice was established to advise the Regional Council on policies and practices to end racial and social disparities internal to the agency, strengthen the way the agency engages and convenes to protect and expand community voice and power, and work in partnership with others to close the gap of racial injustice and better serve all communities in the six-county SCAG region.

The Committee, which met on a quarterly basis starting in September 2020 and concluding in March 2021, was comprised of elected officials, nonprofit and private sector representatives, and university partners. The work of the Committee included reviewing and providing feedback on an agency-wide working definition of “equity,” existing equity-related activities throughout the agency,” the draft framework for the agency’s action plan on racial equity, and the work plan for developing an inclusive regional economic recovery strategy.

The Committee was focused on developing strategic recommendations for the agency for advancing equity across the region. To support the work of the Committee, SCAG staff researched equity definitions, analyzed agency efforts to integrate equity into its current work, assessed racial inequities across the region, developed a Racial Equity Framework and the corresponding Racial Equity Early Action Plan, and conducted both internal and external outreach in support of each of these items.

RACIAL EQUITY EARLY ACTION PLAN

The Racial Equity Early Action Plan provides a framework for internal- and external-focused actions to help facilitate the consistent integration of equity into the agency’s planning work. The Racial Equity Early Action Plan is an iterative process, with opportunities to identify new actions and commitments going forward to ultimately improve regional conditions, through SCAG’s policies and programs and in partnership with other agencies and institutions, across sectors, putting community in the center of efforts.

The Racial Equity: Baseline Conditions Report, which is included in the Racial Equity Early Action Plan, highlights past transportation and housing policies and practices that yielded the inequitable conditions that exist today and provide a preliminary baseline assessment of racial equity in Southern California to inform future planning. These inequitable conditions fall into categories aligned with the goals (economy, healthy/complete communities, mobility, and environment) of SCAG’s long-range transportation plan, Connect SoCal (2020–2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy).

BROADBAND ACTION PLAN

On Feb. 4, 2021, the Regional Council adopted a resolution with the goal of bridging the digital divide and increasing broadband access in underserved communities throughout Southern California. The resolution is aimed at addressing a problem that has become even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic as schools, many jobs, healthcare, and a significant number of government services have gone online. Approximately 10 percent of households in the SCAG region either lack internet access or experience inadequate internet speeds. These households are disproportionately located in low-income or rural areas, where the population is predominantly Black, Latino, or senior citizens. Without adequate broadband infrastructure, underserved communities find themselves at a bigger disadvantage, resulting in a widening of the equity gap.

The adopted resolution directed SCAG staff to develop a Broadband Action Plan, which would include:

- Developing a model resolution and policy paper for local jurisdictions, addressing the digital divide.
- Pursuing grant funding opportunities and partnerships to assist local jurisdictions with broadband implementation.
- Convening a working group to develop ways to facilitate rapid deployment of broadband technology such as streamlining the permit process, lowering fees to a reasonable level, and reducing the cost of entry and operation of broadband systems within underserved communities.
- Including broadband planning, data and research findings, and strategies as part of SCAG’s work in promoting an inclusive regional economic recovery and strategy.

LOS ANGELES GOVERNMENT-TO-UNIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Launched in February 2020, the SCAG- and Pardee RAND Graduate School-led Los Angeles Government-to-University (G2U) initiative is one of five around the country (the others are in Pittsburgh, Kansas, Chicago, and North Carolina) that are addressing critical governance challenges by building regional networks of governments and universities. Initiated by the non-profit Volcker Alliance, founded by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, G2Us sustainably connect government's hiring and research needs with local university capacity and is premised on the notion that bringing government and university leaders together is a powerful approach to strengthening government's ability to deliver on its mission. At the core of the G2U Initiative is a growing group of vibrant, regional networks connecting local, state, and federal government leaders with key faculty and administrators from surrounding colleges and universities.

The Los Angeles G2U launched a project to address barriers to talent and diversity in public sector careers. The project's objectives are to conduct a study that documents challenges to attracting talented and diverse college and university students in public sector careers in the Los Angeles region, produce videos to support recruiting efforts, and support the Los Angeles G2U team in formulating action plans to address challenges and messaging for future communication campaigns. This project supports SCAG's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and the steering committee includes member cities, as well as state, federal, and other local and university partners. The first of two SCAG-hosted webinars in support of the study, which will serve as opportunities to share information and broaden awareness and engagement, was held on March 25.

ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONNECT SOCAL PLAN

Connect SoCal is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental, and public health goals. Connect SoCal embodies a collective vision for the region's future and is developed with input from local governments, county transportation commissions, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, businesses, and local stakeholders within the six-county SCAG region. Strategies related to this opportunity area targeted innovation in emerging sectors to stimulate job growth and housing production with a focus on economic inclusion, public health, and equity and social justice.

CONNECT SOCAL ADOPTED

On Sept. 3, 2020, the Regional Council approved and fully adopted Connect SoCal following its adoption in May 2020 for federal purposes only. The approved plan outlines more than \$638 billion in regional investments and will support more than 4,000 projects and the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of economic activity. In addition, the Regional Council also adopted an addendum to the Connect SoCal Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) to address comments relating to the environmental setting, environmental impacts, and consideration of other mitigation measures. The meeting concluded more than three years of development and extensive coordination with SCAG's local jurisdictions, the county transportation commissions, partner agencies, as well as significant public outreach.

Due to the pandemic, the Regional Council delayed the full adoption of the plan in May 2020 and directed staff to conduct additional outreach to seek input on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the plan and its implementation and identify and to confirm general plan and entitlement information. As a result of this increased outreach and additional internal analysis, staff developed a 2024 Emerging Issues Report and a Connect SoCal Implementation Strategy that identifies a set of overarching pandemic recovery priorities derived from the outreach and engagement process and board discussions to guide SCAG's work to implement the plan. SCAG has benefited greatly from listening to the many needs and concerns of stakeholders and partners over the course of this process and will continue to address emerging regional issues and build greater consensus on the region's vision for a brighter future.

The plan fully achieves conformity with the federal Clean Air Act and meets state greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. Approval of Connect SoCal ensures the region remains eligible for critical transportation funding and enabled staff to implement activities designed to support pandemic recovery efforts as further outlined in the Connect SoCal Implementation Strategy.

LAST MILE FREIGHT PROGRAM

In August 2020, the Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC) Board unanimously approved a statement of work contract proposed by SCAG for \$10 million in grant funds to implement Phase 1 of the two-phase Last Mile Freight Program. Last mile freight activity is a critical component of supply chains for both consumers and intermediary businesses. As e-commerce has had a profound impact on last mile delivery growth, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the frequency of deliveries, which has added further stress on global supply chains. At the same time, air quality challenges continue to impact the public health of the region. Under Phase 1 of the project, which aligns with Connect SoCal's Key Connections that call for the accelerated electrification of vehicles, equipment, and supporting infrastructure, SCAG developed and is set to release a call-for-projects in early May focused 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). The last mile component is a crucial and growing area of focus with consumers increasingly purchasing goods through e-commerce, especially as e-commerce growth has accelerated from COVID-19-related impacts. Under Phase 2, SCAG will 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.

2020 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM: CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) is SCAG's technical assistance program providing planning resources to local agencies to implement Connect SoCal by supporting multimodal transportation, housing, and sustainable land use planning. To align with the Connect SoCal Implementation Strategy and its pandemic recovery priorities, the funding dedicated to the SCP was increased from previous cycles and the project categories were expanded and selection criteria refined to also promote health and equity. For the 2020 SCP Call for Applications, there are four individual Calls for Applications:

- **Active Transportation & Safety (ATS):** SCAG released the ATS Call for Applications in September 2020. This Call will fund planning and quick build projects that result in increased rates of walking and biking,

promote traffic safety, expand opportunities for multimodal transportation options, and better position local jurisdictions to be competitive for implementation funds. SCAG conducted robust outreach, to support local agencies in developing applications. SCAG received 39 applications, requesting \$20.6 million. SCAG's finalized project list includes 11 projects.

- **Housing & Sustainable Development (HSD):** SCAG released the HSD Call for Applications in November 2020. This Call will provide beneficial resources to cities and counties for housing production planning implementing the Regional Housing Needs Assessment allocation and to further implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy within Connect SoCal. SCAG received a total of 26 applications, all of which were approved for funding by the Regional Council.
- **Smart Cities & Mobility Innovations (SCMI):** SCAG released the SCMI Call for Applications in February 2021. Resources through this call will support local jurisdictions' use of technology and innovation to improve the efficiency and performance of the transportation system by implementing curb space management measures that encourage shared modes, manage parking effectively, and support commerce and the growth of housing and employment in job centers. SCAG received 21 applications, with more than \$5 million requested. The project list has yet to be approved.
- **Civic Engagement, Equity & Environmental Justice (CEEEJ):** SCAG initiated development of this Call for Applications in spring 2021. Resources for this Call aim to reduce barriers to civic engagement and prioritize social and racial equity plans, to implement SCAG's Racial Equity Early Action Plan, and support historically disinvested communities within environmental justice areas and Communities of Concern. The CEEEJ Call for Applications will be released in fall 2021 and is expected to include significant community engagement efforts and technical planning assistance for member jurisdictions.

GO HUMAN

Go Human, SCAG's active transportation safety and encouragement campaign, launched the Local Community Engagement and Safety Mini-Grants Program in April 2020, offering up to \$10,000 to community-based organizations to build street-level community resiliency and increase the safety of vulnerable street users. In July 2020, more than \$200,000 to 28 projects across the region, to projects that prioritized the mobility and transportation needs of those most impacted by COVID-19.

In August 2020, the nationally recognized *Go Human* safety advertising campaign was re-launched 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. A local co-branding strategy was implemented with 17 partners across the region and even expanded across the state to Placer County in support of their Active Transportation Program-funded project. To further complement the campaign, *Go Human* expanded its Safety Pledge, calling on local governments to commit to improving safety. To date, 65 signatories from 48 jurisdictions have signed the Safety Pledge.

To continue the great work SCAG has accomplished through the *Go Human* campaign, OTS awarded the agency a \$1.25 million grant. Announced in November 2020, the new OTS grant will fund continued *Go Human* activities through Sept. 30, 2021, which include:

- **Community Safety Ambassador Program**, a participatory and experiential planning and leadership series.
- **Resilient Streets Strategies** to implement street activations that address safety and resiliency in response to the pandemic.
- **Safety Mini-Grants**, which fund local projects led by community-based organizations.
- **Sub-Regional Safety Peer Exchange Program**, a series of community-informed virtual sessions for stakeholders and practitioners addressing traffic safety.
- **Co-Branded Safety Advertisements**, print and digital graphics provided at no cost to jurisdictions who have committed to the SCAG *Go Human* Safety Pledge.

Finally, SCAG hosted two *Go Human* safety demonstration projects during this past year. In December 2020, *Go Human* staff partnered with the City of Ojai to demonstrate improved safety infrastructure on Maricopa Highway. This long-term quick build will be installed through August 2021, collecting key stakeholder feedback, to inform the proposed ATP project that is slated to begin construction in 2022. In March 2021, "Go Active Wildomar," in the City of Wildomar, showcased design improvements and collected feedback from more than 100 residents to inform the Wildomar Mobility Plan, which is planned for adoption in June 2021.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK AND SOCIAL CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLANNING GUIDE

Starting in October 2020, SCAG shared tools and resources from the SoCal Climate Adaptation Framework through presentations to partner agencies across the region, culminating with a launch of the framework in December 2020. In advance of this, the subregional presentations provided an opportunity for SCAG to share some of the tools ready for use by jurisdictions. These include general plan model policies to assist jurisdictions with updates to safety elements, communication and outreach strategies and templates to help with climate messaging, and the recently published SoCal Climate Adaptation Planning Guide to help guide jurisdictions through the adaptation planning process from beginning to end. SCAG also hosted a number of engagements with regional stakeholders to further link these tools to address jurisdictions' needs, including technical assistance trainings through the Toolbox Tuesday series as well as meetings of the Climate Adaptation Working Group.

In advancing the SoCal Climate Adaptation Framework, the Regional Council unanimously adopted a resolution in January 2021 to promote climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience throughout the region. The action overall affirmed a climate emergency in the SCAG region and called on local and regional partners to join together to improve regional resilience and reduce hazards from a changing climate. The resolution directs SCAG to develop a framework to help the region plan and prepare for a changing climate as well as potential near- and long-term disruptions to Southern California, such as earthquakes, extreme weather, drought wildfires, pandemics, and economic shocks. Other activities include initiating a regional climate planning network that will provide technical assistance for local climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives, providing resource support and technical assistance for local jurisdictions to integrate climate planning in their local planning activities, initiating a regional advanced mitigation program as described in the Connect SoCal PEIR, developing a work plan to accelerate the electrification of transportation as envisioned in Connect SoCal, and evaluating the economic and job creation benefits of climate adaptation and mitigation practices for inclusion in regional planning efforts. The resolution also states that Connect SoCal 2024 will include mitigation analysis and strategies and that SCAG will continue to develop programs and outreach strategies to support adaptation to address regionally significant vulnerabilities and long-term regional resilience planning at the local level.

CLEAN CITIES COALITION ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION PERMITTING WEBINARS

The SCAG Clean Cities Coalition, in partnership with Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) and the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (Go-Biz), hosted a series of virtual training sessions on permit streamlining for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations from January to March 2021. These trainings increase adoption of EVs by helping to fulfill a state directive to streamline the EV station permitting process set by AB 1236 and achieve the Accelerated Electrification goals of Connect SoCal. The training series also covered guidance and best permitting practices for hydrogen fueling station development. More than ten jurisdictions across Riverside and San Bernardino Counties attended one of the three trainings held in February and March. These small group trainings support peer-to-peer learning and spur local process improvements for electric vehicle charging station permit streamlining. SCAG will continue hosting webinars to assist local jurisdictions in Imperial, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties with streamlining their EV permitting processes.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION STUDY

On Dec. 9, 2020, SCAG kicked off an Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station Study that will help 18 cities in the region deploy more EV charging. The project will benefit the entire SCAG region with a region-wide site suitability analysis for EV charging that will help identify the best locations for EV charging stations. The 18 cities included in the project will additionally benefit from detailed site analyses to help prepare specific locations in the cities for EV charging stations so they can take advantage of grant funding opportunities and work with EV charging providers. The project will also help tackle policy barriers to EV charging and include an education campaign and charging for owners of multi-family dwellings, city staff, and the general public. This work is one of the first programs implementing SCAG's Accelerated Electrification strategy from the Connect SoCal regional plan.

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING INITIATIVE

As part of its \$1.3 million Disadvantaged Communities Active Transportation Planning Initiative, SCAG created a template for low resourced and disadvantaged communities to develop active transportation plans. SCAG worked with seven disadvantaged communities across the region to inform and operationalize the template through the develop of seven active transportation plans in the Cities of Perris, Adelanto, Saticoy, Stanton, Highland, Santa Fe Springs, and Calipatria. The template and data tool, which adheres to the requirements of the California Active Transportation Program, will be released in summer 2021. Due to the scope of this project, it also has the potential for statewide utilization.



GUIDE REGIONAL RECOVERY EFFORTS WITH DATA & INFORMATION SERVICES

Like many places around the world, Southern California is facing complex social, economic, and environmental challenges stemming from population growth, climate change, a lack of affordable housing, and evolving mobility needs. Improved and more coordinated planning across the region is the key to more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future. SCAG aims to provide local jurisdictions with data, tools, resources, and best practices to not only plan smarter locally, but also in the context of regional systems that affect quality of life for the entire region. Whether through technical assistance with local jurisdictions or through conferences and workshops, SCAG is now—more than any other time in the agency's past—increasingly seen as an important source of data and information.

REGIONAL DATA PLATFORM

In mid-2020, SCAG and Esri kicked-off the Regional Data Platform (RDP) project, which will become a critical component of SCAG's regional planning tools going forward. The RDP will support regional and local planning for implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy by: 1) Enhancing SCAG's existing data system capability to meet local needs for data-driven decision making, government transparency, collaborative regional, and community planning; 2) Expanding SCAG's data infrastructure system, enhancing regional data standardization, and performing best practices for improvements on data updates; and 3) Improving system management, maintenance, and security in order to fully implement and facilitate the region's needs of open data, big data, and new technology utilization for data sharing and data visualization in innovative planning. This will result in an integrated data platform that supports the update of local general plans, including interactive dashboards that help local jurisdictions make decisions according to sustainability metrics included in SCAG's Sustainable Communities Strategy.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, outreach interviews of ten representative jurisdictions were conducted to provide direction for the development of the RDP. Specifically, the interviews focused on: 1) Understanding current workflows and challenges experienced by staff involved in General Plan updates; 2) Identifying specific technology features that could improve the General Plan update process; and 3) Identifying key datasets used in General Plan updates, and what data is desired to improve planning. Based on the feedback received, the RDP team prioritized the development of the Housing Element Parcel (HELPR) Tool, which will be the first in a suite of resources to be provided through RDP. Launched on Dec. 8, the HELPR tool is a web-mapping tool to help local jurisdictions and stakeholders understand local land use, site opportunities, and environmental sensitivities for aligning housing planning with the California Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) 6th cycle housing element requirements. The tool is principally based on updated, curated versions of parcel-level land use data and other datasets which have been available through SCAG's open data portal. Most recently, the HELPR tool was modified to include improved visualization capabilities, jurisdictional dashboards of housing statistics, and new data and filtering capabilities based on accessory dwelling unit (ADU) site dimensions set forth in state law.

On Dec. 15, SCAG and Esri conducted a special briefing with all participants involved in the local outreach interviews to provide key findings, follow up on outstanding questions, and discuss the next steps in the RDP developmental process. The findings were categorized into three major focus areas, which are long-range planning workflows by phase, housing element, and data. For next steps, SCAG is communicating with the ten interviewed local jurisdictions to identify six pilot jurisdictions for the RDP Configuration and Testing phase.

Responding to jurisdictions' requests for further technical assistance, SCAG also launched the Local Information Services Team (LIST), a team of technical staff that provides customized one-on-one technical and information services. The LIST aims to help connect local jurisdictions with SCAG's available information products to help address local information needs (e.g., data, applications, model policies and best practices, topical white papers etc.), as well as provide local jurisdiction staff an opportunity to offer feedback on how SCAG can improve its products to facilitate better collaboration. In January 2021, the LIST rolled out a General Plan Update Technical Assistance Program to provide more tailored training to assist with General Plan Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice element updates. This initiative will provide one-on-one assistance and help local jurisdictions leverage SCAG's comprehensive parcel-level land use database and Esri software to advance long-range planning. Apart from the wide selections of tools that will be available through the RDP, complementary Esri software licenses—ArcGIS Online, Pro (Standard), Urban, Business Analyst, and Hub—are available for jurisdictions to support local planning work and build technological capacity in the region.

11TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ECONOMIC SUMMIT

More than 400 leaders in business, public policy, housing, and education joined us for the agency's first ever virtual Southern California Economic Summit. The 11th iteration of this annual conference took a serious look at the strategies needed for building back a strong, inclusive Southern California economy and featured forecasts from the region's top economists.

Congresswoman Karen Bass delivered an opening address that laid out an optimistic view about what is to come for Southern California. Bina Shrimali from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco gave a presentation on the importance of building a healthy and inclusive economy, one in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their

full potential. Wallace Walrod, SCAG's Chief Economic Advisor, provided a comprehensive overview of the region's economy, noting that much progress has been made in the recovery from the pandemic so far, but much work is left to do. The Regional Briefing Book on the Southern California economy was also released to provide the first step toward a more comprehensive framework for an inclusive economic recovery.

The panel session focused on local government resiliency, which led to a lively discussion about the factors cities need to consider when it comes to planning for a resilient local economy and government. The panel was followed by breakout discussions focused on improving access to good jobs, access to affordable housing, and access to transportation.

In the summit's keynote address, three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times columnist, Thomas Friedman made a case for reimagining the intersection of government, private industry, and other stakeholders to come together to create solutions. He stressed the need for "complex adaptive coalitions" as changes in climate, new technology and globalization further complicate the problems we all face. Mr. Friedman ended his address on a hopeful note and noted that inclusivity is necessary for our cities, region, state, and country to thrive.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY

As part of my 2020–2021 work plan, SCAG is developing an Inclusive Economic Recovery Strategy (IERS) that aims to support an equitable and inclusive economic recovery for the SCAG region. SCAG hosted more than 25 small focus groups from late February to early April for various industries to gather feedback and insights into what an inclusive economy would look like in their respective sectors and how SCAG can provide support. Through the focus groups, SCAG met with community-based organizations, labor unions, incubators and accelerators, financial sector representatives, and commercial developers. We received invaluable input on the needs of each sector and SCAG's potential role in addressing these needs and narrowing racial disparities in accessing opportunities to economic mobility.

SCAG's Global Land Use and Economic (GLUE) Council was also reconvened in February 2021, bringing together existing members and new members that reflect diverse industries from across the region. SCAG also hosted a dedicated focus group for the GLUE Council to learn more about how they see local and regional governments supporting efforts to promote an economic recovery that is centered on racial and gender equity. SCAG will take the feedback from the various focus groups, combined with baseline data, to recommend strategies, policies, and programs for increasing our regional competitiveness and accelerating the creation of family supporting jobs. To assist with the development of the IERS, the Center for Social Innovation at the University of California, Riverside was selected to conduct research and offer insights and recommendations to advance economic inclusion and equity across Southern California.

There are five principles that have guided the development of the IERS:

- **Center on Racial and Gender Equity:** The IERS will focus on strategies to close the wealth and income gaps across race and gender. Its recommendations will uplift strategies to improve outcomes for communities of color, who have been hit hardest by the economic crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Rebuild Our Region's Middle Class:** A thriving middle class makes for a thriving economy. We want to build an economy in which every individual and family has economic stability and security so that they can more fully participate in local and regional economies.
- **Contribute to a Climate Ready Region:** As an agency committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we can curb the physical, social, and economic impacts of climate change. The IERS will focus on investments that prepare our region for the worsening impacts of climate change and seek out opportunities such as adopting and advancing clean technologies, maximizing infill development, and investing in green infrastructure.
- **Tailor Our Strategies:** The IERS will include strategies that are crafted to reflect the unique needs and opportunities of different subregions and sectors. We will work with local stakeholders to understand what would be most effective in supporting each sector and sub-region's economic recovery, where we can leverage existing assets and efforts, and those with whom we can partner.
- **Reflect New and Diverse Voices:** The IERS will reflect voices from a broad range of stakeholders across sectors and disciplines to grow a clean and inclusive economy. The strategies we outline will require us to make "the table" bigger so that we can have more voices and partners engaged in this work. Including a variety of perspectives in the strategy and its implementation will support aligned and sustained impact.

Using the principles to guide, shape, and prioritize recommendations, the IERS will recommend key actions in each of the following focus areas while also recognizing they are inter-connected and equally important:

- **Transportation:** We will aim to advance a clean and accessible transportation system that meets the needs of historically marginalized communities and increases connectivity and accessibility to high-opportunity jobs.
- **Housing Production:** This section will identify strategies to support production of a range of housing to meet the needs of different householders at all income levels.
- **Infrastructure:** In this focus area, we will identify foundational and catalytic infrastructure projects that will change the trajectory of our regional economy.
- **Sector Based Strategies:** The IERS will identify top needs of growth industries and sectors that provide the greatest opportunities for middle class, family supporting jobs – jobs that are accessible and have meaningful career ladders within the industry.
- **Human Capital:** To improve the lives of Southern Californians, we must ensure individuals and households have access to the support systems they need to thrive in their jobs and pursuit of economic mobility.

The draft IERS was presented to the Regional Council at its meeting on May 6. After addressing additional feedback and considerations from the Regional Council and targeted stakeholders, the final IERS is expected to be released in summer 2021.

31ST ANNUAL DEMOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP

SCAG and the University of Southern California’s Sol Price School of Public Policy hosted the 31st Annual Demographic Workshop over two sessions—one on Thursday, June 11, 2020, and the other on Thursday, June 18, 2020—virtually via videoconference. The theme of the program, “Accelerating Planning to Catch Up to 21st Century Demographics,” focused on responding to demographic changes across the region and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Part 1, “The Changing Demographic Outlook and Housing Trends,” provided an update on the latest in demographic trends, including migration, fertility and aging, and their implications on regional planning as we begin a new decade. Part 2, “Impact of COVID-19 on Housing and Economy,” included a panel on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and an update on the progress and challenges of Census 2020.

COVID-19 VULNERABILITY INDICATORS DASHBOARD

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic’s severe and unprecedented implications on a wide range of areas that SCAG plans for, including public health, transportation, housing, public finance, and the economy, SCAG has published an interactive dashboard that includes indicators of potential vulnerability to COVID-19 for each of the 191 cities and six counties in the region. These datasets provide a wide range of variables related to economic, social, health, and housing vulnerability indicators. The dashboard was presented and well received by the attendees at the SCAG 31st Annual Demographic Workshop. The purpose of the indicators is to provide context and insightful information for local jurisdictions and stakeholders to better understand the impacts of the pandemic through data. The comprehensive list of vulnerability indicators is made up of slightly more than 70 variables from various sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, California State Controller’s Office, InfoUSA, California Tax Credit Allocation Committee, and HCD.

SCAG PARTICIPATES IN MIT POLICY HACKATHON

SCAG staff participated in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Policy Hackathon, an event held by the Institute for Data, Systems, and Society in MIT’s Technology and Policy Program. The Hackathon aims to address relevant societal challenges through data and policy analysis, and students work in teams to develop creative policy solutions and compete for cash prizes. Participants came from a wide range of backgrounds and topics this year included COVID-19, internet policy, environmental justice, planning, and transportation. SCAG participated as the Transportation Challenge Sponsor, crafting a challenge to better understand the potential impact of new bicycle infrastructure on neighborhood change and displacement in the SCAG region. SCAG’s Mobility Planning and Management department staff assisted students and judged each team’s presentations and policy memorandums. The student teams presented thoughtful research, analysis, and policy strategies, ultimately providing SCAG with meaningful guidance on these important issues.

SUPPORT HOUSING PRODUCTION, PRESERVATION & PROTECTION

The current housing crisis has been, and remains, one of the most significant challenges we face as a region and a state. With housing units, both for rent or purchase, becoming increasingly inaccessible by a growing portion of the Southern California population, it is crucial that we address the unaffordability and limited supply issues facing the region for the long-term economic health of the region. Access to housing is a key issue that impacts all racial and ethnic groups, age brackets, and genders. SCAG's efforts in planning and housing policy development include providing a forum for policy dialogue, information sharing, and technical analysis. SCAG will focus on continued efforts to promote production while also addressing immediate need for shelter for the unemployed.

REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) is mandated by state housing law as part of the periodic process of updating housing elements of local general plans. RHNA quantifies the need for housing within each jurisdiction during specified planning periods. Communities use RHNA in land use planning, prioritizing local resource allocation, and in deciding how to address identified existing and future housing needs resulting from population, employment, and household growth. SCAG is in the process of developing the 6th cycle RHNA allocation plan, which will cover the planning period October 2021 through October 2029.

Over the past year, there have been a number of RHNA-related accomplishments. Following the Regional Council's adoption of Connect SoCal in September 2020, SCAG distributed the draft allocations to local jurisdictions. The RHNA appeals process was conducted throughout the month of January to hear 52 appeals filed by 47 jurisdictions on the draft RHNA allocation. At its March 2021 meeting, the Regional Council adopted the RHNA Allocation Plan, which was found to be consistent with the regional determination provided by HCD in October 2019. Final adoption of the 6th cycle RHNA is expected in October 2021.

REGIONAL EARLY ACTION PROGRAM

The Regional Early Action Program (REAP) is intended to increase planning to accelerate housing production throughout the SCAG region through implementable actions that will increase housing supply to meet the 6th cycle RHNA. SCAG is administering the REAP funds through a combination of direct technical assistance, including housing element data components and policy assessments, subregional partnerships, community-based partnership grants in collaboration with philanthropic organizations, and planning support offered through the SCP to local jurisdictions or entities serving single or multiple jurisdictions. SCAG set aside approximately \$23 million, or 50 percent, of its REAP funding, for the Subregional Partnership Program, which allocates planning resources to councils of government and subregional partners based on the final RHNA allocation.

CALL FOR COLLABORATION

In partnership with California Community Foundation (CCF), SCAG launched the Call for Collaboration program, which will fund the development of community-based policies and plans to help cities and counties reach 6th Cycle RHNA goals of planning for more than 1.3 million new housing units across the six-county SCAG region. The program aims to increase community involvement in local planning and housing initiatives by promoting community-driven, equitable growth strategies. SCAG dedicated \$1 million of the REAP state grant fund to combine with funds from CCF, the Irvine Foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and other funding partners.

The program will fund several grants for non-profit organizations through two opportunities:

- **Partnership Programs:** Awards of up to \$125,000 to support the expansion and/or implementation of existing plans, initiatives, and/or partnerships that promote equitable growth strategies.
- **Spark Grants:** Smaller, capacity-building grants of around \$50,000 to seed new models of collaboration and engagement to support community-driven approaches and partnerships that promote equitable growth strategies.

A wide range of activities were eligible for funding with these planning grants, including programs and plans designed to promote pro-housing policies, streamline the housing approval process, develop community support for new housing and remove barriers to new housing development. All activities had to show a nexus supporting increased housing production.

After releasing a request for proposals, there was an overwhelming response of 45 applicants from across the six-county SCAG region. A review panel comprised of experienced staff from SCAG, CCF and other funding partners and experts selected 15 applicants to receive nearly \$1.3 million in funding available. Many of the grantee's projects will cover a range of activities related to housing policy and land use, including deeper community engagement with low-income and communities of color.

HOUSING ELEMENT SUPPORT

To comply with state housing law, jurisdictions within California must update their housing element every eight years. In collaboration with HCD, SCAG developed a housing needs data package for each local jurisdiction. This data provides an important tool to save costs and time in updating housing elements for all local jurisdictions in the region. The data was 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.

All jurisdictions must include an analysis of the anticipated affordability of ADUs in their respective Housing Elements to determine how they should be assigned in relation to the RHNA income categories. SCAG conducted an ADU Affordability Analysis that provides a regional analysis of current market rents that can be used to assign ADUs to income categories in 6th Cycle Housing Elements.

SCAG also hosted a two-day virtual workshop in August, 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 steppingstone to begin the conversation, as well as emphasize SCAG's role as a resource for housing element updates supported in part by the REAP program. SCAG was joined by staff from both the 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. The workshop also featured information on determining ADU 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.

SCAG continues to develop innovative methods of technical assistance, such as the HELPR web-mapping tool, to help local jurisdictions with their 6th Cycle RHNA housing element updates, including working with HCD to streamline the review process.

HOUSING PRODUCTION ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS

Over the past year, SCAG hosted three virtual roundtable convenings to discuss ways the region can accelerate housing production for households of all income levels. This first convening on Oct. 29 involved 36 local government practitioners, including seven representing our subregional partners. The event was a facilitated discussion on how subregional partnerships can help meet our region's diverse housing needs. The meeting featured several speakers from across the state who are exploring cross-jurisdictional partnerships to meet shared housing goals. SCAG invited representatives from five jurisdictions to share best practices, gather feedback, and discuss housing priorities for their communities. The second convening on Nov. 17 involved representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs), philanthropic organizations, and local jurisdictions working together to organize community power in housing development and implementation. The meeting also publicized the Call for Collaboration program. The third convening, Road to Recovery: Bold Housing Ideas for a Just Post-Pandemic Economy, was held on April 6, bringing together a broad group of more than 70 stakeholders to discuss how addressing the regional housing crisis is a key part of a holistic equitable economic recovery. The event was headlined by California State Senator Susan Rubio, who presented a variety of housing-related bills being debated in the current legislative session. In addition, a panel of housing experts discussed the Roadmap Home 2030 policy platform developed by Housing California and California Housing Partnership. The feedback and takeaways from these housing convenings will inform SCAG's legislative agenda, targeted partnerships, and additional future convenings focused on post-pandemic economic recovery.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

SCAG maintains a State and Federal Legislative Program, which consists of the Regional Council's positions on policies and legislative initiatives related to SCAG's core planning and policy areas—transportation, air quality, freight/goods movement, housing, environmental impact, sustainability, and economic recovery and job creation. Over the past decade, the agency has increased its presence in the hallways of the capitols in both Sacramento and Washington, advocating for policy initiatives to improve the quality of life for all throughout the six-county SCAG region. Highlights from the year's advocacy efforts are provided below.

STATE ADVOCACY SUPPORTS LOCAL EFFORTS TO MEET REGIONAL HOUSING GOALS AND STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

SCAG formally submitted a letter on June 8, addressed to Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon and Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins, requesting deadline extensions on Housing Element submissions and Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) Grants Program applications. Draft budget trailer bill language indicates early support for extending the LEAP deadline for local cities and counties.

The letter, which was also jointly signed by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), asked for a six-month extension for housing element updates in order to give local jurisdictions flexibility as they balance more immediate concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Copies of the letters were provided to members of the budget and housing committees of both chambers and shared with COGs in the region.

The state budget was another focus of SCAG's advocacy efforts. Letters were submitted to Senate Budget Committee Chair Holly Mitchell and Assembly Budget Committee Chair Phil Ting expressing support for the legislature's increased allocation of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act funding for cities and counties, and to establish a floor allocation of \$50,000 per city. Additionally, SCAG expressed support for AB 617 Implementation funding, which brings air monitoring to a more localized level, and asked for the program to be prioritized in light of reduced cap-and-trade auctions in May 2020.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY FOCUSES ON REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES, TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION, AND ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

On Feb. 10, SCAG's elected leadership and staff conducted two virtual meetings, respectively, with Congressman Ken Calvert (R-Corona), Member of the House Appropriations Energy and Water Subcommittee, and Congressman Mike Garcia (R-Santa Clarita), Member of the House Appropriations Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee. We were joined by a number of Regional Council members, which emphasized the importance we place on building and maintaining these important relationships.

These meetings provided an opportunity for leadership to advocate and discuss some of the agency's most critical federal legislative priorities. First, to support direct and flexible federal aid for all cities, regardless of population size, to help with unexpected COVID-19-related expenses and to backfill tax revenues losses. Secondly, to support a long-term federal surface transportation reauthorization bill. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was extended for one-year to Sept. 30, which will give Congress more time to work on a new bill. Lastly, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic that has amplified the need for reliable and affordable broadband services, local governments and the private sector must have a strong federal partner as they deploy broadband infrastructure especially in underserved communities.

SCAG hosted a "virtual fly-in" on March 17-18, where SCAG's elected leadership, several Regional Council members, and staff met with Representative Norma Torres, member of the House Appropriations Committee and Rules Committee, and Representative Maxine Waters, chair of the House Financial Services Committee. The delegation also met with key members of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) leadership, including Acting Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Christopher Coes and USDOT Deputy Assistant Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs, Charles Small. The focus was to develop relationships with SCAG's congressional delegation and incoming USDOT staff and to engage them on our legislative priorities for the upcoming infrastructure stimulus package and surface transportation reauthorization. Discussions have now started on a comprehensive infrastructure proposal that could make investments in broadband, housing, schools, water, and climate-related infrastructure. Simultaneously, Congress will be reauthorizing a new federal surface transportation bill to succeed the current law, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which funds transportation programs through Sept. 30 of this year.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Congresswoman Torres highlighted her numerous opportunities to influence and shape a potential infrastructure bill. She invited frequent communication as a proposed package is negotiated and passed through the legislative process. She has also placed a priority on focusing on jobs, housing, and broadband, which are some of SCAG's top federal legislative priorities. Congresswoman Maxine Waters reviewed the "Housing is Infrastructure Act," which she authored and provides \$100 billion for affordable housing. It was included in the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2), which was last year's effort in the House to pass an infrastructure bill and will likely be included in this year's package. Congresswoman Waters talked at length about how the federal government is investing heavily in community development financial institutions and community banks, especially for the Paycheck Protection Program. Her interest is not just in rental housing, but in homeownership as well.

Officials from the USDOT discussed the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program, which is focused on highway freight projects. The Biden administration released its revised version of the notice of funding opportunity for INFRA, emphasizing climate change and environmental justice impacts. Acting Assistant Secretary Coes invited feedback on the funding opportunity. He also discussed how projects should not just be shovel-ready, but "shovel-worthy."

On April 13, SCAG's elected leadership and staff participated in a virtual meet-and-greet with newly sworn-in U.S. Senator Alex Padilla. Joined by several Regional Council members as well, the meeting served as an opportunity to establish a working relationship with the Senator and his office, especially since he was appointed as the newest member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (which is responsible for crafting the transportation reauthorization bill) and the Senate Budget Committee. Senator Padilla is a former SCAG Regional Council member, having served during his time on the Los Angeles City Council. Our elected leadership and Regional Council members had an excellent conversation with the Senator on infrastructure investment in the upcoming American Jobs Plan, broadband, water, and other critical infrastructure.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

SCAG STAFF RECEIVES ZEV_E AWARD FROM STATE

In July 2020, SCAG staff member, Joseph Cryer, was recognized by GO-Biz with a ZEV_E Award for his work supporting ZEV infrastructure. The ZEV_E 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 in Connect SoCal for implementing the plan and creating a more sustainable region.

SCAG HONORED WITH TWO EXCELLENCE AWARDS FROM THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

The APA California Chapter honored SCAG with two awards of excellence for the agency's work in establishing an active transportation database and its climate adaptation communications strategies. SCAG was honored with the Excellence Award in the category of Best Practices for its active transportation data collection tools. Launched in March 2019, the Active Transportation Database was developed to streamline and simplify data collection, make it easier to count pedestrians and bicyclists, and measure how frequently people in a certain area bike or walk. SCAG earned its other Excellence Award in the category of Public Outreach for its climate adaptation communications strategies. Working with the 191 cities and six counties it represents, SCAG led a regionwide effort to support regional climate adaptation planning and held community pop-up events that welcomed everyday residents to share their concerns on climate risks. The project is helping to connect local and regional land use and transportation planning with state policy goals and includes an extensive public engagement process.

SCAG ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION DATABASE WINS APA-LA PLANNING AWARD

The agency's Active Transportation Database (ATDB) was selected to receive the Award of Excellence in the Innovative Use of Technology category by the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Planning Association. The award category recognizes a program or process that features an innovative use of technology. The ATDB currently has nearly 70 registered agencies (includes cities, counties, state agencies, community-based organizations and consulting firms working on behalf of jurisdictions) and more than 700 locations with available count data. The ATDB offers a wide assortment of open data on bicycle, pedestrian, wheelchair, and scooter/skateboard volumes to help inform and improve planning projects in Southern California. This wealth of active transportation data will only continue to grow through our partnership with Caltrans and will be of use to planners and researchers for years to come.

SCAG TDM STRATEGIC PLAN RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

In August 2020, 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 THE 2020 WTS-LA EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

SCAG was honored by the WTS Los Angeles (WTS-LA) Chapter Board of Directors as the 2020 Employer of the Year. WTS-LA recognized SCAG's commitment to excellence, outstanding record of diversity in hiring and promotion, support of continuing education and professional development, commitment to parental leave and social justice, and the agency's continued leadership in the transportation sector. WTS-LA is one of the largest chapters of WTS International, a 6,500-strong international organization dedicated to the advancement of women in transportation.

SCAG HONORED WITH THE 2020 WTS-OC ROSA PARKS DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

In September 2020, SCAG was awarded the Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership award by the Orange County Chapter of the Women's Transportation Seminar. Following the Regional Council's July 2020 resolution that commits the agency to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout Southern California, SCAG began taking more concrete steps to address equity in all the agency's planning practices, which is a decision that has impacted all of SCAG's work since then. This award represents an acknowledgment of the exemplary work that SCAG has done over the past year to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and in the work that we do.

SCAG REGIONAL EXPRESS LANES CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS RECEIVES NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS AWARD

In April 2021, SCAG was awarded the Management Innovation Award by the American Public Works Association, which recognized the innovation of our Regional Express Lanes Concept of Operations. The purpose of the Concept of Operations is to provide a blueprint for a regional express lane network that integrates individual express lane facilities into a regional system with consistent or compatible rules covering operations, design, and policy. Ultimately, this important project provides an opportunity to increase efficiency in the development of express lanes throughout the region, improving mobility, safety, air quality, and financial sustainability for our regional partners.



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