



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
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2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

About SCAG

Founded in 1965, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a Joint Powers Authority under California state law, established as an association of local governments and agencies that voluntarily convene as a forum to address regional issues. Under federal law, SCAG is designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and under state law as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Council of Governments.

The SCAG region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura) and 191 cities in an area covering more than 38,000 square miles. The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans including sustainable communities strategy and growth forecast components, regional transportation improvement programs, regional housing needs allocations, and a portion of the South Coast Air Quality management plans. In 1992, SCAG expanded its governing body, the Executive Committee, to a 70-member Regional Council to help accommodate new responsibilities mandated by the federal and state governments, as well as to provide more broad-based representation of Southern California's cities and counties. With its expanded membership structure, SCAG created regional districts to provide for more diverse representation. The districts were formed with the intent to serve equal populations and communities of interest. Currently, the Regional Council consists of 86 members.

In addition to the six counties and 191 cities that make up SCAG's region, there are six County Transportation Commissions that hold the primary responsibility for programming and implementing transportation projects, programs and services in their respective counties. Additionally, SCAG Bylaws provide for representation of Native American tribes, Air Quality Districts, and the Transportation Corridor Agencies on the Regional Council and Policy Committees.

SCAG's 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—that need the leadership and support of the California State Legislature and Congress to resolve challenges facing the SCAG region.

SCAG's legislative efforts are the product of a committee process whereby the agency's Legislative/Communications & Membership Committee, comprised of elected officials from throughout the region, identifies and recommends specific legislative action for consideration by the Regional Council with respect to state and federal legislation affecting the SCAG region.

The following state and federal legislative principles for 2021 encompass broad, policy-oriented objectives of the agency that build upon long-standing, Regional Council-adopted policies.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

1. Support increased funding to the state's Active Transportation Program (ATP) to provide the resources necessary for First/Last Mile Improvements; separated, on-street bike facilities to increase safety; multi-use trails; Safe Routes to School Programs; and other strategies to increase safe walking and biking.
2. Support and encourage investing in active transportation infrastructure as a component of other state-funded transportation improvement projects recognizing the critical role walking, biking, and complete streets serve in connecting the multi-modal transportation system.
3. Support legislation that protects the safety of active transportation users and ensure any legislation related to new mobility devices (scooters, etc.) and automated vehicles adequately addresses the needs of these modes.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOUSING PRODUCTION

1. Support the restoration and expansion of tax increment tools to build affordable housing stock, improve public transit, and reduce climate-warming carbon emissions. Incentivize collaboration among potentially impacted jurisdictions by sharing the net proceeds from future tax increment financing districts and emphasize tax increment as a public financing tool that does not increase taxes to residents.
2. While underscoring our support for environmental protection, support California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reform to expedite and streamline both project development and delivery for residential projects, especially those located in a transit-rich area, jobs-rich area, or urban infill site.
3. Advocate for the consistency within state law the sometimes-competing demands contained within SB 375 and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).
4. As jurisdictions in the SCAG region work to accommodate a 6th Cycle RHNA allocation of 1.3 million units, as provided by California Department of Housing & Community Development, a number that is nearly three times larger than the determination provided under the 5th cycle, advocate for providing greater flexibility to local jurisdictions for their housing element updates.
5. In the spirit of collaboration and equity, advocate for the reinstatement of the practice that allows cities and counties to share or trade RHNA allocations as a tool that equips local jurisdictions to facilitate not only effective planning for housing, but its actual development.
6. Continue to refine and update cap-and-trade's Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) guidelines to better reflect the reality of Southern California's growth patterns, such as Integrated Connectivity Projects. Support a regional equity goal for the programming of AHSC revenues.
7. As the homeless population continues to grow in our region, and eviction and homelessness may be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, support new state funding programs to assist cities, counties, and regional collaborations to address eviction prevention and the challenges associated with homelessness.
8. While providing local jurisdictions with additional tools and funding, preserve local authority to address housing production, affordability, and homelessness challenges.

BROADBAND ACCESS

1. Support coordinated efforts that would prioritize additional funding and resources for broadband infrastructure, particularly in low-income and rural communities, to bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

1. Support direct and flexible emergency funding for local governments of all sizes to respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or to backfill tax revenue lost due to the global pandemic.
2. Advocate that communities affected by natural disasters receive the resources they need to rebuild.
3. Support programs that provide the resources necessary for communities to prepare for the consequences of a changing climate and resulting natural disasters.
4. In collaboration with other metropolitan planning organizations and stakeholders, explore potential updates to SB 375 (Steinberg, 2008) with the goal of focusing on ambitious yet achievable actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in partnership with the State.
5. Support the expansion of General Fund and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund-funded forest health and fire prevention activities, which are primarily focused on conifer tree forests, to include chaparral landscapes. Advocate for ongoing land management and the stewardship of lands that contain essential chaparral and associated habitats to be context-sensitive, focus on biodiversity maintenance, and restore native vegetation.

CAP & TRADE

1. Support transparency, sufficient allocation, and equitable distribution to the SCAG region of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) resources commensurate with the region's responsibility and opportunity in meeting the state's overall GHG reduction goals.
2. Support program guidelines and scoring criteria that recognize and are sensitive to California's urban and suburban built environment.
3. Support expanded investment in the state's Commercial Organics Recycling Program that diverts organic material from landfills and support increased funding for local governments implementing the program.
4. Support the increased percentage of the continuous appropriations for the GGRF-funded Transit & Intercity Rail Capital Program and Low Carbon Transit Operations Program to promote transit expansion, ridership, and carbon reduction.

CONGESTION REDUCTION

1. Support legislation that expands access to commuter benefit programs for employees.
2. Support legislation that would develop new strategies for reducing congestion caused by school trips, such as expanding access to free or reduced student transit passes, supporting school bussing programs, and funding ongoing Safe Routes to Schools programs.
3. Support local pilot programs and funding mechanisms that employ innovative transportation strategies that reduce congestion and improve mobility, such as congestion or cordon pricing systems, while promoting equity measures.
4. Support dedicated funding for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and strategies.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

1. Support the establishment of a new California State University (CSU) campus in the City of Palm Desert (Coachella Valley) to increase educational and economic opportunities in the SCAG region.
2. Support the consistency within state law of the federal Opportunity Zones program in which private investments in economically distressed communities may, under certain conditions, be eligible for capital gains tax incentives.

FREIGHT & GOODS MOVEMENT

1. Support increased funding to the Trade Corridors Enhancement Program (TCEP), building upon the success of the Trade Corridors Improvement Fund (TCIF), to provide the resources necessary for critical infrastructure enhancements along the State's high-volume freight corridors.
2. Support funding to preserve and maintain transportation infrastructure for key regional goods movement corridors that link freight facilities and systems to the rest of the nation.
3. Support the creation of programs designed to assist in leveraging technology to improve freight mobility, increase goods movement efficiency, reduce harmful emissions, mitigate negative impacts on disadvantaged communities, and address shifting consumer behaviors (i.e., e-commerce).

GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

1. Update the Ralph M. Brown Act to give public agencies the flexibility to omit a lengthy and time-consuming "Roll Call" process during a public vote, while maintaining the existing practice of recording and publishing the individual members' votes and making those votes available for public review.
2. Support legislative efforts to make permanent aspects of Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20 which allow local government agencies to conduct official meetings via teleconference and other electronic means without violating state open meeting laws found in the Bagley-Keene Act or the Brown Act.

PROJECT STREAMLINING

1. While underscoring our support for environmental protection, support California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reform to expedite and streamline both project development and delivery, especially for transportation, transit-oriented, infill, and/or housing projects.
2. Support measures that require transparency in CEQA litigation and eliminate duplicative CEQA lawsuits.
3. Support innovative approaches to reform and streamline CEQA where reasonable, including, but not limited to, proposals to establish a CEQA-specific court or judicial procedure that is specialized in CEQA case law and related statutes to expedite legal review of CEQA challenges.
4. Provide judicial streamlining and an accelerated schedule for judicial review for projects challenged under CEQA when those projects have a clear public benefit, such as transportation, transit-oriented, infill, and/or housing projects.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Support legislative efforts that further a "Health in All Policies" approach to facilitate equitable health outcomes related to SCAG's core public health focus areas: accessibility (to healthy food, parks and open space, and other services), affordable housing, air quality, climate resiliency, economic well-being, health equity, physical activity, and safety.
2. Support statewide and county efforts to collect public health-related data that is stratified by race and ethnicity to allow for improved health equity analyses.
3. Recognizing that climate change, public health, and racial justice, are interconnected, support efforts that invest in and empower communities that will be disproportionately impacted by climate change.
4. Support efforts that fund transit-oriented communities, mixed land uses, green streets strategies, and safe streets so all ages and abilities can maximize opportunities for active lifestyles, have access to essential services, and use transit or non-motorized transportation options.

RACIAL JUSTICE

1. Recognizing that systemic racism continues to create barriers to success for people of color, SCAG seeks to lead and join in legislative efforts that reverse the effects of inequitable policies, processes, and practices, and affirmatively advance equity and social justice as it relates to planning decisions in the region.

TECHNOLOGY & DATA

1. Support the incorporation of new technologies and innovations into national and state transportation systems, such as advancements in alternatively powered zero/near-zero emission vehicles, autonomous vehicles, aviation, maritime, commerce, and small electric mobility devices that both improve transportation accessibility, efficiency, and capacity and reduce environmental impacts.
2. Secure funding to support the coordination among state agencies, MPOs, and other government entities to collect and share data, which reflects emerging technologies and mobility choices.
3. Encourage the California Public Utilities Commission and support legislation related to Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), motorized scooters, and bike share systems that ensures new regulations adequately protect users of all modes and supports the ability of local jurisdictions to secure access to public interest data, including ridership data, for local and regional planning purposes.

TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT ACT

1. Support the development of greater efficiencies within the Transportation Development Act while streamlining and updating performance metrics relating to farebox recovery.
2. Support existing statutory authorization allowing SCAG to receive up to three-quarters of one percent of TDA revenues from SCAG-region county transportation commissions for transportation planning and programming responsibilities.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

1. Support additional emergency funding for the SCAG region's local transportation agencies that have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic and are expected to lose up to \$7 billion in transportation revenue from local, state, and federal sources over fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21.
2. Protect all existing and new sources of transportation funding from borrowing, use for any purpose other than transportation, or new conditions on the distributions of funds that reprioritize transportation projects.
3. Support a transition to a mileage-based user fee funding mechanism as a replacement to state gas taxes to provide sustainable funding to meet our state's transportation infrastructure needs and maintain system management, preservation, and resilience. Support measures that protect privacy, promote equity, and guarantee return-to-source.
4. Support regional equity considerations for any funding source to ensure Southern California receives its fair share of funding based upon population, burden, and other quantifiable measures corresponding with the funding source.
5. Support increased funding for transportation projects based on applied regional performance metrics.
6. Support new funding for transportation agencies to offset the cost of implementing climate change initiatives, such as the Innovative Clean Transit regulation and the purchase of zero emission vehicles and infrastructure.
7. Support legislation that would decrease the voter approval threshold—from the current requirement of 67% to 55%—for the creation, extension, or increase of local transportation tax measures like the authority given to school districts.

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

1. Support legislation and updated, statewide policies that implement the recommendations of the state's Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force, which would provide jurisdictions with greater local control to combat rising traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries, especially for the most vulnerable roadway users.
2. Work with the state and local partners to identify new tools and funding mechanisms to strengthen safety outcomes and achieve the region's safety targets, especially for those communities most impacted by high concentrations of serious and fatal crashes.
3. Work with state and local partners to develop resources that would support local jurisdictions' efforts to implement a "Safe System" approach on their local streets and roadways.