
News Release

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SCAG President lauds passage of infrastructure bill

\$1 trillion legislation includes \$550 billion in new spending and will allow SoCal to compete for critically needed funds that were previously unavailable

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) President Clint Lorimore today praised Congress for its passage of a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, the impact of which will be felt for generations to come as regions such as ours address pressing challenges in transportation, energy, broadband access and the environment.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed by the House on Friday night and expected to be signed soon by President Biden, includes a five-year reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation programs as well as \$550 billion in new spending.

Lorimore, an Eastvale City Councilmember, said the funding ultimately will help implement many of the 4,000 transportation projects identified in Connect SoCal, SCAG's 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.

"This will allow our region to compete for funds that weren't previously available and meet the rapidly growing infrastructure needs of one of the most critically important population and economic centers in the country," Lorimore said.

The biggest piece of the new infrastructure bill is a roughly \$475 billion reauthorization of the core federal transportation program for the next five years. This marks a 56 percent increase over the current Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which was signed into law in 2015.

Of particular importance to the SCAG region, the \$550 billion in new spending includes \$110 billion for roads, bridges and other projects; \$65 billion to expand high-speed internet access; \$25 billion for airports; and \$17 billion for port infrastructure.

These kinds of investments offer a significant return – reducing commuter delays and generating new jobs. For example, the \$638 billion in transportation improvements identified in Connect SoCal, fully implemented, would net a 22.8% reduction in daily miles driven per capital, more than 360,000 jobs created per year and a return of \$1.54 for every \$1 spent.

"The importance of all of this is more magnified in a region such as ours, which continues to grow and serves a pivotal role in the nation's supply chain. Our infrastructure challenges in this area are formidable, and will require creative solutions both now and, in the future, as we learn how to operate in a post-COVID environment," Lorimore said.

Kome Ajise, SCAG Executive Director, said the \$550 billion in new spending that was included in the bill adopted by Congress will help address challenges that we unimaginable a decade or two ago. In the SCAG region alone, 10% of households do not have access to adequate internet speeds or have no internet access whatsoever, the vast majority of which located in disadvantaged communities.

“Broadband has become essential infrastructure for the 21st century, and as part of our Broadband Action Plan, we’re working collaboratively with other entities to try and secure the funding needed to address the digital divide in our region,” Ajise said. “The situation as-is has created a vicious cycle for residents in disadvantaged communities, who are struggling to participate in the digital landscape due to lack of affordability or infrastructure.”

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG, please visit: www.scag.ca.gov.