
Press Release

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Incoming SCAG President Stresses Balance of the Economy, the Environment and Social Equity in Opening Message

INDIAN WELLS – The Southern California Association of Governments, which is charged by the state and Federal governments in creating a Sustainable Community Strategy for the region in conjunction with the required Regional Transportation Plan, is well prepared to undertake that task, says incoming SCAG President Carl Morehouse.

Morehouse believes that the true meaning of sustainability is to keep the three “E’s” of the economy, the environment and the social equity in balance so that any one of those doesn’t cancel out the others. Morehouse, also a member of the Ventura City Council, also emphasizes that “balancing these three is what begets a true quality of life. This is what will help keep Southern California competitive. If one of these ‘E’s’ gets too far ahead of the others, we all lose in the end.”

Morehouse is one of the few professional land use planners to reach the top of the SCAG leadership. He was in the planning department of Ventura County for 20 years and has brought that perspective to the city council and to SCAG.

“I’ve trained my whole career to work on consensus building through a public process for the balanced good of all,” Morehouse says. “Planning isn’t just about zoning or setbacks. It’s an interdisciplinary practice. To do it right you need to look at issues from all angles.”

That’s one of the messages he will bring home during his opening remarks. SCAG can be the balancing force and a strong advocate for an integrated approach to a sustained economy and quality of life in Southern California. SCAG’s unique position as an umbrella organization for 191 cities in six counties can help all members see that no one of them is an island.

“Our region is much more inter-connected than we’d like to believe, but it underscores that old phrase: When one of us sneezes, others catch a cold,” Morehouse says.

Morehouse was a key proponent of SCAG’s current 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy which identified more than \$524 billion in transportation-related investments that would create – directly and indirectly – more than 500,000 jobs per year and yield a return of \$2.90 for every dollar spent. It is a prime example of how SCAG can combine the transportation planning needs with the desires to reduce the impact travel has on the environment while still maintaining a political and economic system that provides opportunities. In other words: Balancing the three E’s.

Morehouse will assume the Presidency as part of SCAG’s Regional Conference and General Assembly on May 1-2 in Indian Wells. One key item for discussion at the conference will be the need for transportation solutions.

Years of neglect, a continually expanding population and an inability to pay for needed infrastructure improvements is pushing California toward a transportation meltdown that threatens the region's economic stability, the air we breathe and our quality of life, regional policy makers warn.

Fixing that requires regional solutions, and at the conference, nearly 400 elected leaders from throughout Southern California will discuss the future of transportation, the connection between mobility and prosperity, and creative solutions to the funding and regulatory challenges that could leave our region in gridlock for decades to come.

Morehouse said that a second objective of his presidency will be to ensure that smaller communities recognize SCAG as a resource for their city governments. "Smaller communities might not have a fulltime planning department and they might need assistance with population and demographic or land use analysis," he says. "They need to know that SCAG can help them. SCAG can provide that information so they don't have to pay an outside consultant." Morehouse said one key aspect of his presidency shall be to reach out to the city managers and leaders in small communities of 25,000 population or less.

The Southern California Association of Governments hosts its annual Regional Conference & General Assembly every spring, and this year's takes on special importance with a Congressional deadline looming over transportation reauthorization and the work that's begun on SCAG's 2016-2040 RTP/SCS.

The conference features a number of breakout sessions on the transportation and quality-of-life challenges and needs facing our region. Among the highlights is a panel on the region's high poverty levels, and how educators, businesses and policy makers must work collaboratively to create employment opportunities. Last December, SCAG reported that 25 percent of children in the six-county region live in poverty.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities, 39,000 square miles and more than 18 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's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.