
Press Release

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Major Regional Summit to Key in on Economic Solutions, California's Role in Driving the National Recovery SCAG General Assembly to focus on jobs, economy, infrastructure

PALM DESERT, Calif. – The nation's largest metropolitan planning organization gathered in Palm Desert today to push for regulatory relief, comprehensive solutions to our growing transportation and infrastructure challenges, and implementation of strategies to grow the economy and create jobs.

The Southern California Association of Government's 2013 Regional Conference & General Assembly, "Gateway to National Prosperity," is bringing together thought leaders and policy makers from the local, state and national level.

Among the key topics being discussed at the two-day conference at the JW Marriott Desert Springs:

- The desperate need for infrastructure improvements and new energy solutions as Southern California braces for an additional 4 million people in the next quarter century – and how we're going to pay for it all.
- Creative solutions at the local level following the demise of redevelopment agencies.
- What Southern California must do to meet greenhouse gas standards while growing our transportation dependent economy.
- Tearing down the silos between business, labor and government to solve regional issues.

Glen Becerra, a Simi Valley City Council member and president of SCAG, said, "Despite its size and assets, Southern California faces considerable risk as the rest of the state and the nation recover. Transportation challenges, growing competition from other regions for some of our key industries (goods movement, entertainment) and the need for regulatory reform have made the region more vulnerable than ever at a time when it should be leading the nation to prosperity.

“The reality is that Southern California truly is a gateway. The better we do, the better off the country is,” Becerra said. “It’s going to take immediate and sustainable action to overcome the problems and challenges we’ve got, and erase our reputation as being business un-friendly. I look forward to the next two days of discussion at this meeting with the Southern California civic, business, labor and environmental leaders on how we can move the economic outlook crystal ball forward.”

Greg Pettis, a Cathedral City council member and president-elect of SCAG, is expected to outline the agency’s priorities moving forward, including pushing for state and federal legislation in support of economic development and transportation funding.

“There has never been a more important time for California to stand up and be heard,” Pettis said. “Southern California, in particular, is facing critical transportation needs, and the entire state is looking for regulatory reform to spur business and job growth. The time is now to act.”

Jan C. Harnik, mayor of Palm Desert, called the two-day conference “essential to meeting the challenges we face collectively and individually as cities. We need regional collaborative solutions.”

Other speakers include Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom, U.S. Rep. Raul Ruiz, and Controller John Chiang. Said Chiang: “This conference brings diverse interests together to understand the needs of our many-sided economy. Attracting jobs, investing in infrastructure and increasing the role of businesses in our communities are all essential parts of California’s economic recovery.”

Breakout sessions will focus on infrastructure, energy, the environment and economic innovation. It will also feature updates on SCAG’s 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, a blueprint for mobility, sustainability and economic growth throughout the agency’s six-county region.

The RTP/SCS, which was approved last year by state and federal regulators, calls for \$524 billion in transportation-related spending through 2035 to preserve and grow the region’s economy and enhance quality of life for a population expected to grow by 4 million people during that period. SCAG represents 191 cities and more than 18 million residents.

Another highlight of the conference will be presentation of SCAG’s Seventh Annual Compass Blueprint Recognition Awards, which honor innovative transportation and land use planning.

For more information about SCAG’s regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.

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