



Southern California Association of Governments
Remote Participation Only
July 1, 2021

To: Energy & Environment Committee (EEC)
Regional Council (RC)

From: Sarah Jepson, Director of Planning
213-236-1955, jepson@scag.ca.gov

Subject: SoCal Greenprint Background & Status Update

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
APPROVAL**

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR EEC AND RC:

Information Only – No Action Required

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This item supports the following Strategic Plan Goal 3: Be the foremost data information hub for the region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Following the adoption of Connect SoCal and certification of its related Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), initiatives have been underway to provide assistance to cities, counties and transportation agencies with regard to growth, transportation infrastructure, and resource conservation opportunities. SCAG has been developing the SoCal Greenprint, a required mitigation measure in the PEIR, to provide a practical, accessible resource to help stakeholders prioritize lands for growth and conservation based on the best available scientific data. The SoCal Greenprint will serve as a web-based tool that compiles more than 100 existing data sources into interactive maps that help stakeholders visualize how to better integrate nature into future growth and development. The Greenprint is not a “plan,” nor will it produce any new data; rather it will aggregate data from existing public sources to support local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, developers, non-profits and other stakeholders in advancing the policies adopted in Connect SoCal.

In February 2021, SCAG staff and The Nature Conservancy presented to both the EEC and CEHD detailing the project’s progress to date and identifying 2021 deliverables and milestones. A presentation was also provided at the Emerging Technology Committee in April 2021. SoCal Greenprint is on schedule for completion in late 2021.

BACKGROUND:

The SoCal Greenprint will be the first regional conservation-focused data tool for the six counties in the SCAG region that will convert more than 100 existing data sources into interactive maps,

making it easier to understand how to integrate nature into future planning and development. Examples of the interactive maps that will be available include locations of groundwater sources, wildlife corridors, areas at risk of experiencing wildfires, and places that will experience extreme temperatures. Each map will include a thorough explanation of what the data means and how the information can be used to integrate nature into project planning. Suggestions will be included on how to plan and mitigate for the impacts of climate change in support of Resolution # 21-628-1 adopted by the Regional Council on January 7, 2021.

The mapping tool was built with five user groups in mind who are shaping the future of the region: developers, planners, government agencies, community organizations and conservation professionals. One of the project goals is to make it simpler for intended users to easily access information about natural resources so that planning and mitigation measures can be identified early, saving project costs, expediting timelines, and making it possible to proactively address issues that can help avoid potential litigation.

SCAG has contracted with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to assist in developing the Greenprint. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has extensive experience and expertise in developing Greenprints in California that serve as easy-to-use resources to promote conservation. The tool is anticipated to go live in Fall 2021 and everyone will be able to access it for free.

The SoCal Greenprint is part of SCAG's efforts to provide cities, counties and transportation agencies with the information and tools needed to implement the vision outlined in Connect SoCal to advance the region's economic vitality, improve mobility options and grow in a sustainable way that builds healthy and vibrant communities. It is also intended to advance Connect SoCal's specified goal to "promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats." The SoCal Greenprint will be an important resource to identify environmental challenges and opportunities early in the planning process to help expedite and reduce risks to infrastructure project delivery and build healthy communities.

The planning process for the SoCal Greenprint was launched in 2019 and has included input from a diverse group of stakeholders in the fields of planning, land development, transportation, infrastructure, conservation, and community organization. The project's first year entailed extensive, targeted outreach to stakeholders to gain insight on the tool's potential key users, uses, main themes, and the most useful datasets to include. More than 60 organizations, representing every county in the SCAG region, have participated in the development process.

SCAG and TNC have also assembled an advisory Steering Committee to provide SCAG staff with ongoing guidance on the development of the tool. Steering Committee members attend monthly meetings with SCAG, TNC, and GreenInfo Network (GIN) to provide feedback and assist with outreach and identifying key contacts. Steering Committee participants have included

representatives from Audubon California, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Friends of Harbors Beaches and Parks, Nature for All, Tataviam Land Conservancy, and UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, among others.

TNC and SCAG also assembled a Strategic Advisory Committee and a Science and Methods Advisory Committee that include experts and external stakeholders from the building industry, local governments, infrastructure and natural resource agencies, conservation organizations, community organizations, landowners, parks and open space districts, scientists, and academia. Committees were assembled to reflect the diversity of people, landscapes, and experiences within the SCAG region to help the tool be meaningful for key users. Committee participants are asked to contribute actively in meetings and provide feedback to SCAG and the TNC team at key inflection points throughout the data gathering, development, and refinement process. This includes:

- Connecting with regional stakeholders who should be engaged or might provide additional expertise;
- Providing input on themes and data outputs, and identifying sources of data;
- Providing feedback on data communication and interpretation; and
- Supporting developing case studies and participating in beta testing of the Greenprint tool.

An important element of the project entails interviews with key stakeholders, including members of the building and development community. “Rapid Assessment” sessions have been conducted with various organizations to identify their priorities and walk individual stakeholders through potential data outputs for inclusion in the Greenprint. These sessions have been held with representatives of the Building Industry Association of Southern California (BIASC), Los Angeles County Planning Department, Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District, Sierra Club, Clean Power Alliance, and San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA). Additional invitations for Rapid Assessment sessions were extended to local jurisdictions, county transportation commissions, subregions, community-based organizations, and local conservancies.

With stakeholder input from these collective engagements, six themes were developed to organize the data:

1. Agriculture and Working Lands
2. Habitat and Biodiversity
3. Environmental Justice, Equity, and Inclusion
4. Built Environment
5. Climate Vulnerabilities and Resilience
6. Water Resources

Climate change, urban greening and equity will be represented in all themes.

Stakeholder outreach and data vetting will continue through 2021, and will focus on developing and testing the tool and preparing a launch campaign. The SoCal Greenprint is on schedule for completion in late 2021. Additional information on the project is available online at <https://scag.ca.gov/greenprint>.

Included as attachments to this report are recent correspondence regarding the SoCal Greenprint project:

1. Letter received by SCAG from the Building Industry of Southern California dated 5/12/21 (Attachment 2)
2. Letter sent by SCAG to the Building Industry of Southern California dated 5/25/21 (Attachment 3)
3. Letter received by SCAG from the Center for Biological Diversity and Abundant Housing LA dated 6/9/21 (Attachment 4)
4. Letter received by SCAG from a group of elected officials representing certain local jurisdictions in the region dated 6/18/21 (Attachment 5)

These letters are attached to this report for informational purposes. SCAG will continue to work with all stakeholders to address concerns and ensure the tool serves as a resource to advance the policies of Connect SoCal.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This project is funded in SCAG's Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Overall Work Program under 290-4862.01 and 290-4862.02.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. PowerPoint Presentation - SoCal Greenprint
2. Building Industry of Southern California Correspondence
3. SCAG Correspondence to the Building Industry of Southern California
4. Center for Biological Diversity and Abundant Housing LA Correspondence
5. Elected Officials Correspondence

SoCal Greenprint

Background & Status Update

Sarah Jepson
Director of Planning, SCAG

Jason Greenspan, AICP
Manager of Sustainability, SCAG

www.scag.ca.gov



Integrating Nature into the Region's Future

- Healthy, sustainable communities are Connect SoCal goals
- Nature is essential to future growth and development
- Creates first conservation-focused data tool for SCAG's six counties
- Built for stakeholders shaping the region's future
- Converts existing data into interactive, user-friendly maps
- Balance growth while protecting biodiversity
- Resource for SCAG member agencies and stakeholders



Greenprints Plan with Nature



Goal of the SoCal Greenprint

To protect, restore, and enhance natural lands, public greenspace, working lands, and water resources and the benefits they provide to people and nature throughout the SCAG region

Infrastructure Goals of the SoCal Greenprint



- Encourage early consideration of nature in project planning
- Reduce risks to projects
- Generate support for projects
- Support strategic mitigation investments
- Foster a sustainable region

Key Users of the SoCal Greenprint



Infrastructure Agencies



Conservation Practitioners



Community-Based Organizations



Developers



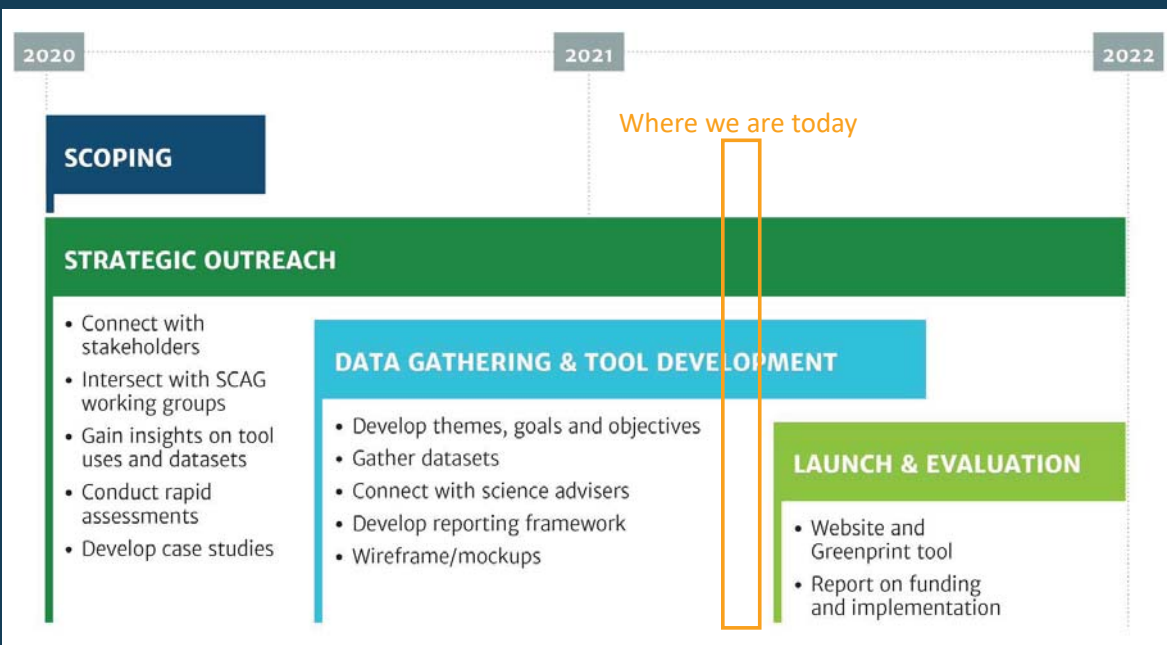
Planners
(Town, City, County, Tribal)

Outreach & Rapid Assessments

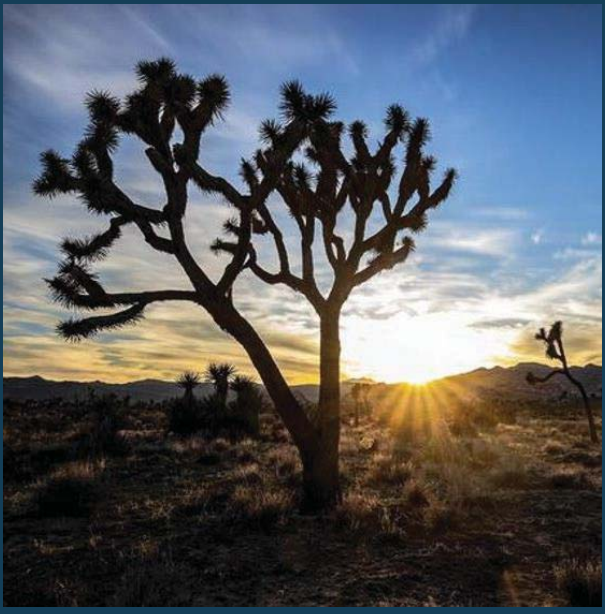
- Working Groups & Advisors
- Early case-study exercise
- Uses real project data
- Meet the needs of targeted user groups
- Gather feedback on:
 - information proposed to be in the Greenprint
 - how that information is analyzed and communicated



Milestones



Outreach Activities - Overview



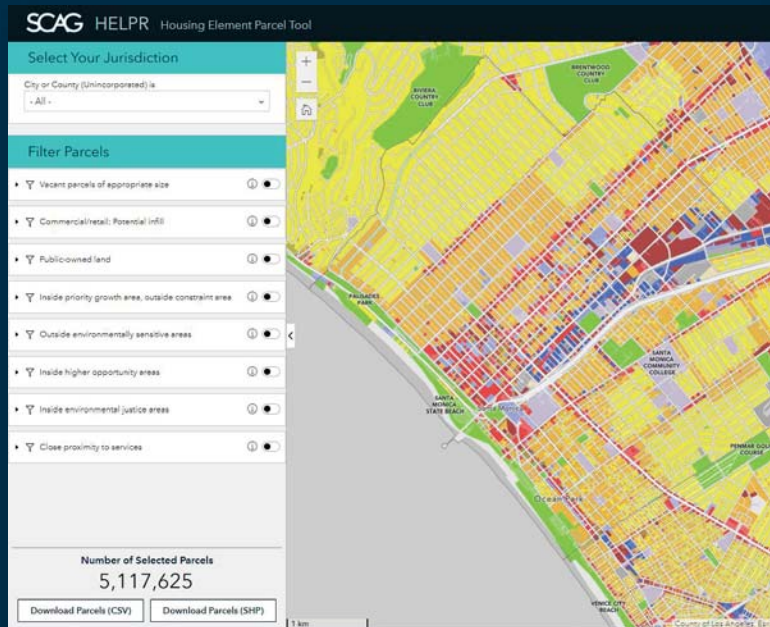
- Steering committee includes outside experts
- 60+ advisors/4 interactive workshops
 - Multiple sectors and diverse geographies
 - Public agencies and municipalities
 - Building and development community
- Ongoing conversations and small working groups
- 8 Rapid assessment interviews
- Developed 6 user profiles
- Pre-launch testing
- Case studies

Outreach Activities – Rapid Assessments

Organization Name	Organization Type	Housing-related?	County	Project Specifications	Greenprint Advisor?
Pacoima Beautiful	Community Based Organization	No	Los Angeles	Interest: Identifying opportunities to expand greenspace	No
Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District	Agriculture Governmental Agency	No	Western Riverside and San Bernardino	Interest: Highlighting the co-benefits of protecting agricultural lands.	Yes
Clean Power Alliance	Infrastructure Conservation Organization	No	Ventura	Interest: Understanding the impacts and resources on a proposed project site for renewable energy.	Yes
San Bernardino County Transportation Authority	Transportation Agency	No	San Bernardino	Interest: Identifying the impacts of a potential transportation corridor.	Yes
LA County Planning	Planning Agency	Yes	Los Angeles	Interest: Identifying the environmental resources on a site proposed for housing development.	Yes
Building Industry Association of Southern California	Developer Organization	Yes	Los Angeles	Interest: Understanding the potential opportunities and benefits of a proposed housing development.	Yes
Sierra Club – Santa Clarita Chapter	Conservation Organization	Yes	Los Angeles	Interest: Understanding the environmental impacts of a proposed housing development.	No
Placeworks	Planning Consultant	Yes	San Bernardino	Interest: Understanding how the Greenprint can be used to inform General Plan updates.	No

Attachment: PowerPoint Presentation - SoCal Greenprint (SoCal Greenprint Background & Status Update)

Technical Contributions



- SoCal Greenprint Data contributed to the HELPR tool
- Data flow between SoCal Greenprint and other SCAG tools
- Data in the SoCal Greenprint utilizes publicly available resources

SoCal Greenprint Data Review Process

1. **Compilation:** TNC Science team compiled lists of publicly-available data and developed metrics for each theme; used in rapid assessments.
2. **External Review:** Advisors with expertise for each theme reviewed data, outputs, and provided feedback + rapid assessment interviews with representative projects.
3. **Internal Review:** TNC Science team is reviewing recommendations and SCAG staff will make final decisions about data inclusion.

Data Inventory – Agriculture Example



GIS Data Name	Source Name	Data Layers Used	Metric Type
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program 2016	California Department of Conservation	2016 Prime Farmland; 2016 Important Farmland; 2016 Farmland of Statewide Importance; 2016 Farmland of Local Importance; Grazing Land	Tabular: Acres in project area/region
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program 1984	California Department of Conservation	1984 Prime Farmland	Descriptive/Graphic: Change in area of prime farmland between 1984 and 2016 (historic trend)
Soil Agricultural Groundwater Banking Index (SAGBI)	California Soil Resource Lab at UC Davis and UC-ANR	Groundwater recharge	Tabular: Acres of soils suitable for groundwater recharge in the project area/region
Crop production	USDA	Agricultural production by CWHR 13 Agriculture Types	Descriptive: Dollar value of crops grown in the project area/region
Projected Change in Climate Water Deficit	USGS-BCM (Flint and Flint)	Climate water deficit	Descriptive: Additional water needed for irrigation under climate change (cross-cutting metric)
CA Storie Index	USDA - Soil Survey Geographic Database	Soil rating	Tabular: Acres of project area with high Storie Index score in project area/region – indicator of soil health
Class 1 and 2 lands that are of high value for food production.	USDA - Soil Survey Geographic Database	Irrigation capability of soil	Tabular: Acres in project area/region
Williamson Act properties	County by county data		Protection metric: Number of properties in the project area or region enrolled in the Williamson Act
Farmland Under Threat	American Farmland Trust		Descriptive: Information about the types of threats to farmland and action-oriented metric about the importance of conserving agricultural lands

San Bernardino County Transportation Authority

Length: 49.3 miles

Area (quarter-mi buffer): 15,898 acres

Area (half-mi buffer): 32,038 acres

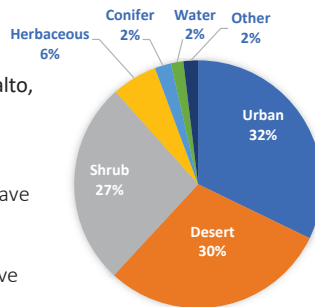
Cities: Apple Valley, Fontana, Hesperia, Rancho Cucamonga, Rialto, San Bernardino, Victorville, Unincorporated

Counties: San Bernardino

Watersheds: Lytle Creek, Chino Creek, Bell Mountain Wash-Mojave River, Middle Santa Ana River

Air Basin: Mojave Desert Air Basin, South Coast Air Basin

Air Districts: South Coast Air Quality Management District, Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District



Rare Species and Habitats

- USFWS Critical Habitat for 3 threatened & endangered species: Arroyo toad, San Bernardino Merriam's kangaroo rat, Southwestern willow flycatcher
- Locations of 14 rare species within 0.5 miles of your project site (CNDDDB): arroyo toad, California glossy snake, Parry's spineflower, San Bernardino kangaroo rat, slender-horned spineflower, southwestern willow flycatcher, desert tortoise,

Transportation & Built Environment

Roads

- 1,679 roads are within 0.5 miles of your project area (484 miles).
- 39 highway is within 0.5 miles of your project area (61 miles).

Public Transit

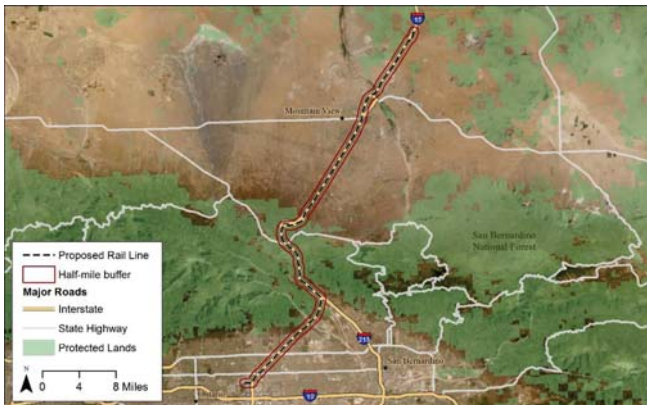
- 2 miles of public transit (Metrolink) within a half mile of your project area.

Transit Priorities

- <1% of your project area is in a transit priority area.
- <1% of your project area is in a high-quality transit area.

Average Vehicle Miles Traveled

- 48.2 average weekday household vehicle-miles traveled
- 68.9 average weekday household person-miles traveled



Questions & Discussion

www.scag.ca.gov





Building Industry Association of Southern California, Inc.

May 12, 2021

Mr. Kome Ajise
Executive Director
Southern California Association of Governments
900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Dear Executive Director Ajise,

On behalf of the Building Industry Association of Southern California (BIASC), thank you for the time you and your staff took to meet with us on March 4, 2021. The ability to share our ongoing concerns in a direct manner represents an important step towards achieving a shared understanding on the SoCal Greenprint, and continuing to work collaboratively on achieving the housing needs of the region’s residents.


Our meeting was productive, but we do need to follow-up on several pending issues:

First was the comment expressing that completion of the SoCal Greenprint is a requirement of Connect SoCal 2020. We have reviewed Connect SoCal (Plan, Appendices, and Program EIR), and have not found any requirement for the completion of the SoCal Greenprint, as drafted, which includes all developed and undeveloped lands in the region. Nor do we see any requirement that this be prepared by an environmental/conservation advocacy organization based on development constraints and other values selected by that organization. Attachment A to this letter includes all references to “Greenprint” in Connect SoCal and the PEIR (inclusive of appendices to both documents).

Next, we would like to continue the conversation about: (a) course correction actions to pause current work on Greenprint, (b) using that pause to reach out to stakeholders (especially cities and counties, and builder/developers, who are collectively striving to reach RHNA housing production planning and production targets) to better understand potential mitigation needs for these activities and for SB 1 transportation projects, and (c) retool the scope of Greenprint to avoid lands planned or approved for development and focus on the priority mitigation opportunities available for housing and transportation projects.

To get this started, we suggest a meeting of our respective legal teams to draft language that will adequately reflect the items outlined above. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to work with you on the SoCal Greenprint and look forward to a collaborative effort to support infrastructure and future attainable housing in Southern California. Please reach out to Adam Wood at awood@bildfoundation.org to schedule a time for our respective legal teams to draft the appropriate and mutually agreed upon solutions that strengthen the SoCal Greenprint for all of Southern California.

Sincerely,


Dave Bartlett, Brookfield Residential
President, Building Industry Association
of Southern California


Jeff Montejano
Chief Executive Officer
Building Industry Assoc. of Southern California



Attachment: Building Industry of Southern California Correspondence (SoCal Greenprint Background & Status Update)

Diana Coronado

Diana Coronado
BIA LA/Ventura Vice President



Los Angeles/Ventura Chapter

Carlos Rodriguez

Carlos Rodriguez
BIA Baldy View Executive Officer



BALDY VIEW CHAPTER

Lou Monville

Lou Monville
BIA Riverside Interim Executive Officer



Riverside County Chapter

Steve LaMotte

Steve LaMotte
BIA Orange County Executive Officer



Attachment

2020 Connect SoCal Plan and Program EIR References to “Greenprint”

The 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategy of the Southern California Association of Governments - Connect SoCal – Adopted on September 3, 2020 (link [here](#))

- There are no references to the term "Greenprint" in either the Connect SoCal Plan or in any Appendix to the Plan. Greenprint is not a requirement of the Plan.

September 3, 2020 Staff Report on Connect SoCal (link [here](#))

- Page 5 of the Staff Report, addressing “Regional Resilience,” includes one reference to Greenprint as a “strategic web-based conservation tool.” The Staff Report does not identify Greenprint as a requirement of the Plan.
 - The challenges our region will face in meeting ambitious near- and long-term regional goals are increasingly difficult to predict, as the COVID-19 pandemic has proven. As part of plan implementation and to prepare for future plan updates, Connect SoCal called for the creation of a Regional Resilience Framework. The framework will include a collaborative exploratory scenario planning process to explore pressing issues and potential disruptions to Southern California, such as pandemics, earthquakes, extreme weather, and economic shocks. SCAG’s ongoing Climate Adaptation Framework project will identify pathways for developing future regional and local plans, and investments that support resilience given our region’s heightened vulnerability to extreme heat, wildfires, drought and rising sea levels. SCAG is also developing a “**SoCal Greenprint**” that will be designed to serve **as a strategic web-based conservation tool** to provide the best available scientific data and visualizations to help stakeholders make better-informed land use and transportation infrastructure decisions that recognize the multiple benefits of conserving natural and working lands. These planning resources will inform SCAG’s programs as well as serve as a resource for local jurisdictions and transportation agencies as they pursue activities to implement the growth vision and transportation strategies in Connect SoCal.

Certified Final Connect SoCal PEIR (link [here](#))

Like the Staff Report, the Biological Resources subsection of the PEIR includes references to “Greenprint” as a “tool” to help “develop a regional conservation strategy” to identify “potential priority conservation areas.” None of these Biological Resources section references mandate creation of a “Greenprint” on areas already approved or planned for development by SCAG’s local government and transportation agency members, or other stakeholders.

- Page 34 – Executive Summary – Biological Resources:
 - SMM BIO-2: SCAG shall continue to develop a **regional conservation strategy** in coordination with local jurisdictions and other stakeholders, including the county transportation commissions. The conservation strategy will build upon existing efforts including those at the sub-regional and local levels to identify potential priority conservation areas. **SCAG shall develop new regional tools, like the Regional Data Platform and Regional Greenprint to help local jurisdictions identify areas well suited for infill and redevelopment as well as critical habitat and natural lands to be preserved, including natural habitat corridors.** SCAG will also collaborate with stakeholders to establish a new Regional Advanced Mitigation Program (RAMP) initiative to preserve habitat.
- Page 426 – 3.4.3.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures (narrative text discussion)
 - Regional land use and transportation strategies set forth in the Plan focus new growth in HQTAs, existing suburban town centers, and more walkable, mixed-use communities. The Plan recognizes that as population continues to grow, there is increasing pressure on natural lands. One of the goals of the Plan (See Chapter 2.0, Project Description) is to promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of critical habitats. The land use mix for the Plan assumes that 60 percent of new housing and 73 percent of new jobs will be in Growth Priority Areas and therefore would be directed away from sensitive habitat. The Plan also aims to preserve, enhance, and restore regional wildlife connectivity through strategies that encourage compact urban development. SCAG’s Sustainable Communities Program supports planning in local jurisdiction to advance the regional growth vision. **In addition, SCAG new regional data tools, like the Regional Data Platform and Greenprint, would help local jurisdictions identify areas well suited for infill and redevelopment as well as critical habitat and lands with sensitive natural resources to be preserved.**
- Page 433 – SMM BIO-2: Mitigation measure for substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modification, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service. (Note that the same text appears on p. 1991 (Section 10.0 Corrections and Additions), on p. 15 of the Certified Final Connect SoCal PEIR Resolution: Exhibit A – Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (link [here](#)), and p. 59 of the Certified Final Connect SoCal PEIR Resolution: Exhibit B – Findings of Fact (link [here](#)). None of these require the Greenprint to be created, completed, or applied to lands planned or approved for development and transportation activities by SCAG’s member local governments and transportation agencies.
 - SCAG shall continue to develop a **regional conservation strategy** in coordination with local jurisdictions and other stakeholders, including the county transportation commissions. The conservation strategy will build upon existing efforts including those at the sub-regional and local levels to identify potential priority conservation areas. **SCAG shall develop new regional tools, like the Regional Data Platform and Regional Greenprint to help local jurisdictions identify areas well suited for infill and redevelopment as well as critical habitat and natural lands to be preserved, including natural habitat corridors.** SCAG will also collaborate with

stakeholders to establish a new Regional Advanced Mitigation Program (RAMP) initiative to preserve habitat.

- Page 449 - Impact BIO-4
 - One of the goals of the Plan is to **preserve, enhance, and restore regional wildlife connectivity** through strategies that encourage compact urban development. **SCAG is also developing a Regional Greenprint, a strategic web-based conservation tool to help cities, counties and transportation agencies make better land use and transportation infrastructure decisions and to conserve natural and farmlands, which has a focus on maintaining habitat connectivity.** In addition, the Plan's natural lands strategies will improve natural corridor connectivity by encouraging and facilitating research, programs and policies that identify, protect and restore natural habitat corridors, especially where corridors cross county boundaries.
- Page 1936 – Mention of Greenprint in Letter from Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (does not mandate creation of Greenprint)



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May 25, 2021

Building Industry Association of Southern California (BIASC)
24 Executive Park, Suite 100
Irvine, CA 92614

RE: SCAG Response to May 12 Letter on SoCal Greenprint

Dear Ms. Coronado and Messrs. Bartlett, Montejano, Rodriguez, Monville and Mr. LaMotte:

Thank you for meeting with us on May 4 and participating in dialogue about the SoCal Greenprint. We agree that continued engagement with stakeholders, such as BIASC, is essential in developing the SoCal Greenprint. Listening to stakeholder concerns is a necessary component of addressing the region’s housing and transportation needs.

We are in receipt of your May 12, 2021 letter and appreciate the issues you raised. Accordingly, we would like to address some of your concerns and clarify elements of the Greenprint tool in light of our prior conversations and in the spirit of continuing our dialogue.

First, it is important to emphasize that when SCAG’s Regional Council adopted the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (Connect SoCal), it included a “Core Vision” for the entirety of the SCAG region. This vision centers on maintaining and better managing our transportation network for moving people and goods, while also expanding mobility choices by locating housing, jobs, and transit closer together and increasing investment in transit and complete streets. The Core Vision can be realized by focusing on achieving Connect SoCal’s ten goals, which center on our economy, mobility, environment, and healthy/complete communities. One of the ten explicit goals is to “promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats.” Additionally, Connect SoCal includes specific strategies intended to support implementing the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). These strategies include promoting more resource efficient development focused on conservation, recycling, and reclamation; preserving, enhancing, and restoring regional wildlife connectivity; and reducing consumption of resource areas, including agricultural land. Further, the Greenprint platform approach is described as a “Next Step” to developing a regional

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- Energy & Environment
David Pollock, Moorpark
- Transportation
Sean Ashton, Downey

Attachment: SCAG Correspondence to the Building Industry of Southern California (SoCal Greenprint Background & Status Update)

conservation strategy on page 22 of the Connect SoCal Natural & Farm Lands Conservation Technical Report.¹

The timely development, completion, and use of a “Greenprint” is also a required mitigation measure in Connect SoCal’s Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). We would like to draw your attention to SCAG Mitigation Measure Agricultural Resources G-2(SMM AG-2) on page 4.0-2, which was not included among the mitigation measures listed in your correspondence. SMM AG-2 expressly requires development of a Greenprint and this measure, in its entirety, states:

“SCAG **shall develop** a Regional Greenprint, which is a strategic web-based conservation tool that provides the best available scientific data and scenario visualizations to help cities, counties and transportation agencies make better land use and transportation infrastructure decisions and conserve natural and farmlands. SCAG **shall use** the Greenprint to identify priority conservation areas and work with CTCs to develop advanced mitigation programs or include them in future transportation measures by (1) funding pilot programs that encourage advance mitigation including data and replicable processes, (2) participating in state-level efforts that would support regional advance mitigation planning in the SCAG region, and (3) supporting the inclusion of advance mitigation programs at county level transportation measures.” (Emphasis supplied.)

We understand there may be concerns about the inclusion or labeling of Connect SoCal growth scenario “constraints” data layers in the Greenprint tool. To clarify and hopefully alleviate this concern, let me be clear that neither the Connect SoCal consolidated Absolute or Variable Constraints layers will be included in the tool, nor will the Connect SoCal Growth Forecast be included. SCAG will draw data for the SoCal Greenprint from existing information developed and shared through local, regional, state, federal, and other open data sources. As a result, such data compilation in the SoCal Greenprint is not intended to constitute "significant new information" as defined by CEQA. Per your suggestion to account for lands approved for development, SCAG is considering including a data layer from the Connect SoCal Entitlements Database, which reflects feedback from jurisdictions as recently as 2020. This is a data element that SCAG anticipates updating on a regular basis leading up to the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), and we could use your feedback on the potential inclusion of this information in the Greenprint tool.

SCAG appreciates your ongoing engagement in the development of the Greenprint tool. We want to ensure this tool is useful to the region and our stakeholders, including all of those within the building industry. Therefore, we welcome your continued participation in dialogue and encourage you to attend upcoming stakeholder engagement activities, such as the 4th Advisory Committee meeting to be held in late June. Moreover, thank you for the time spent on this project since the fall of 2019, when representatives from your organization made themselves available for a series of interviews, participated in two quarterly Advisory Committee meetings for the project (held in

¹ For clarification, the Natural & Farm Lands Conservation Technical Report is the background and guiding document for Connect SoCal’s conservation strategies and is analogous to the appendices that were included in the 2016 RTP/SCS. It is an integrated component of the Connect SoCal plan.

December and March), and engaged in a “rapid assessment” exercise to review options for data configurations and themes for the project. We look forward to continuing our discussions on the Greenprint and hope that the items we have described above will facilitate further collaboration. As we continue to refine the tool and consider potential user interface elements with diverse stakeholders, it would be worthwhile for us to meet again to provide you an update and seek further input. SCAG staff will be in touch with you in the near future to arrange a mutually convenient time to engage in a technical discussion.

Sincerely,



Kome Ajise
Executive Director, SCAG



June 9, 2021

Sent via Email

Southern California Association of Governments Regional Council
900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017
rey@scag.ca.gov

RE: Building Industry Association of Southern California’s March 15th Letter to Mr. Kome Ajise

Dear Regional Council,

The Center for Biological Diversity (“Center”) in coalition with Abundant Housing Los Angeles are writing in response to the Building Industry Association of Southern California Inc. (“BIASC”)’s comments on the SoCal Greenprint project articulated in the March 15th letter to SCAG’s Executive Director, Kome Ajise. Contrary to BIASC’s opinion, SoCal Greenprint as an essential tool for sustainable land-use planning and a critical component of government transparency.

To preserve our native species and protect community health, the region needs a strategic conservation mapping tool that highlights the benefits of natural lands, waters, and agricultural lands, including access to parks and trails, habitat protection and connectivity, clean water, clean air, food production, and increased resilience to climate change.

The SoCal Greenprint tool will help planners, conservation practitioners, developers, infrastructure agencies, and other stakeholders integrate the protection of habitat and open space into land use and infrastructure plans and *avoid potential litigation* by identifying and assessing environmental issues early in the planning process. This will streamline site selection for more infill affordable housing and prevent additional sprawl development that destroys habitat, increases community risk of wildfire, escalates regional air pollution and pulls taxpayer dollars away from current communities.

Below we address the misguided and unfounded claims of BIASC.

I. Protecting open space is an essential component of transportation planning and thus SB1 funds can and should be used to fund the SoCal Greenprint database.

Transportation planning is the backbone to regional planning and thus it must take into account the long-term sustainability of a region. Climate mitigation, access to open space, and biodiversity preservation are all critical components of urban planning and must be accounted for in the

transportation planning process. BIASC’s assertion that the protection of open space does not fall under the purview of transportation planning appears to be based on the assumption that regional planning should be conducted in siloed manner without consideration for impacts on open space and biodiversity. This position is inconsistent with expert opinion and general practice, as SCAG’s very purpose is to provide an intersectional lens across all areas of regional planning to ensure decisions meet multiple topical goals.

Specifically, transportation planning needs to account for very high fire hazard risk, to address the region’s stated commitments to addressing the climate crises, protecting habitat and safeguarding human health. Any new development in a very high fire hazard severity zone has the potential to cause a significant impact, as described in the numerous scientific studies referenced in the Center for Biological Diversity’s recent report, “Built to Burn: California’s Wildlands Developments Are Playing with Fire” (the “Wildfire Report”).¹ In addition, as the Wildfire Report notes, even homes built to current standards still are not fireproof, and thus it is imperative that regional planners use the state determined wildfire hazard zones to determine where new development, including transportation, can and cannot be built.

In addition, protecting access to open space is an essential component of community health and wellbeing and thus, should be a factor in determining transportation infrastructure. Ensuring the protection of open space is equally important for people. Open space has been vital to many communities during the pandemic and provided essential community spaces for safe socially distanced gatherings. This reaffirms the need for continued preservation and increased access to ensure all community members experience the physical and mental health benefits of nature. Native landscapes help us regulate our climate, purify our air and water, pollinate our crops and create healthy soil (Lawler et al., 2014). In addition to the direct benefits from access, preservation of our native habitats and the species that rely on them is critical to our long-term health and wellbeing (Martin et al., 2020).

Finally, protecting wildlife connectivity in the region is essential to preserving native biodiversity, mitigating against the climate crisis and prioritizing human health. It is widely recognized that the continuing fragmentation of habitat by humans threatens biodiversity and diminishes our (humans, plants, and animals) ability to adapt to climate change. In a report for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), world-renown scientists from around the world stated that “[s]cience overwhelmingly shows that interconnected protected areas and other areas for biological diversity conservation are much more effective than disconnected areas in human-dominated systems, especially in the face of climate change” and “[i]t is imperative that the world moves toward a coherent global approach for ecological connectivity conservation, and begins to measure and monitor the effectiveness of efforts to protect connectivity and thereby achieve functional ecological networks” (Hilty et al., 2020).

II. The public has a right to data that will help them make informed decisions about land use planning.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is our state’s landmark environmental law, and its fundamental goal is to foster informed decision making in matters that may effect the

¹ Center for Biological Diversity, “Built to Burn: California’s Wildlands Developments Are Playing With Fire” (Feb. 2021), available at <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/urban/pdfs/Built-to-Burn-California-Wildfire-Report-Center-Biological-Diversity.pdf>.

environment.² BIASC asserts that “these Greenprint assessments can be elevated into “significant new information” to empower project opponents to file still more CEQA litigation.” BIASC is essentially asserting that a full and transparent picture of the impacts of the project is an undesirable outcome. BIASC’s position should be recognized for what it is: an attempt to subvert state law and longstanding precedents requiring the public and decision-makers to be fully apprised of a project’s potential impacts on the environment. CEQA was enacted to ensure community health and wellbeing are prioritized throughout the land use planning process. To fight against the dissemination of environmental health information to the communities impacted promotes a culture of environmental injustice in the name of private development profit.

In addition, the creation of publicly funded databases that are accessible to the general public is not new. CalEnviroScreen is a great example of public agencies providing data to communities to help inform policy decisions. The SoCal Greenprint is just another database that can help decision makers as well as community members in the drafting of land use policies that best promote a region’s goals. How local governments, advocates and community members utilize this tool to achieve specific targets is entirely discretionary. In short, the public and decision makers should not be deprived of this data simply because the BIASC is concerned it could result in decisions that do not necessarily support BIASC’s desires.

III. CEQA helps ensure projects consider environmental factors.

While BIASC argues that more publicly available information on environmental factors could lead to more CEQA lawsuits and “this could, unintentionally, further exacerbate the housing crisis in Southern California,” multiple studies, including by the California State Senate Environmental Quality Committee, BAE Urban Economics, and the California Department of Justice, have concluded that CEQA is not a key impediment to development. To the contrary, CEQA promotes smart, sustainable development by ensuring that new market-rate and affordable housing are safe and healthy, acting as a key tool for decision-makers and community members to ensure new projects incorporate all feasible measures to reduce their contribution to climate change, and provide an orderly process for addressing conflicts about proposed developments.

We support the speedy construction of homes near mass transit and jobs, affordable to people at all income levels, without displacing existing renters or segregating our population. To effectively address the housing crisis, we need planning tools, like SoCal Greenprint, that help regional decision makers select the areas that are best for development, while protecting our natural and open space to ensure we do not exacerbate the climate crisis when solving our affordable housing crisis.

In addition to the environmental benefits of infill development, people should not have to leave their own communities to find affordable housing. Sprawl development pulls resources away from existing communities and forces lower income people to commute long distances to their jobs and schools. We must address historic inequities to ensure that all neighborhoods have sufficient public and private investment and that requires investing in existing communities by building up not out.

IV. Conclusion

SoCal Greenprint sets a framework for these important discussions and ensures that policy makers have all the data they need to make informed land-use planning decisions. The Center and

² *Laurel Heights Improvement Assn. v. Regents of University of California* (1988) 47 Cal. 3d 376, 402

Abundant Housing LA, support continued investment in this tool to ensure our region builds a sustainable and equitable future together.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Reid-Wainscoat
Campaigner
Center for Biological Diversity

Leonora Camner
Executive Director
Abundant Housing LA

CC:

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References

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Lawler, J. J., Lewis, D. J., Nelson, E., Plantinga, A. J., Polasky, S., Withey, J. C., ... & Radeloff, V. C. (2014). Projected land-use change impacts on ecosystem services in the United States. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(20), 7492-7497.

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June 18, 2021

Hon. Clint Lorimore
President
Southern California Association of Governments
900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017

RE: Need for a Special Hearing on the SoCal Greenprint

Dear President Lorimore:

As a local elected official and SCAG representative, the undersigned do hereby join the April 1, 2021 request of San Bernardino Supervisor Curt Hagman for a Special Hearing on the SoCal Greenprint, made and acknowledged by SCAG Staff at the Regional Council Meeting on that date.

Although discussions on the SoCal Greenprint are continuing, we understand little to no progress has been achieved in addressing the concerns raised by not only the Building Industry Association of Southern California, but also by a broad coalition of the business interests that empower the economic vitality of our region. Proceeding with a program that has engendered such a diverse engagement would be inappropriate without further information for our elected leadership.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the SoCal Greenprint, originally approved as a consent calendar item with no debate, be brought back to the Regional Council for reconsideration. Further, in an effort to increase transparency and accountability, we request the SoCal Greenprint developmental process be paused until a hearing on this matter can be held. If this program has potentially deleterious impacts on housing and infrastructure, and in light of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment demands recently placed on communities, we cannot in good faith continue to see it proceed without additional clarifications.

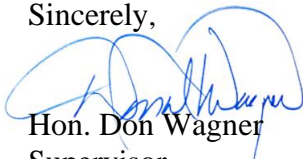
With this understanding, we request that you, as President of SCAG, call a Special Regional Council Meeting on the SoCal Greenprint to ensure this process is being conducted in a transparent, equitable and appropriate manner. We, the undersigned, are seeking specific clarification on the following issues:

1. Address the use of SB 1 Funds for the creation of an online conservation tool. SB 1 was approved to “rebuild California by fixing neighborhood streets, freeways and bridges in communities across California” and to target “funds toward transit and congested trade and commute corridor improvements.” How does a no-bid contract to the Nature Conservancy comply with these provisions?


2. Address and resolve the identified ways in which the current SoCal Greenprint will create “significant new information” enabling an incredible new scope of CEQA challenges to be filed against municipally approved Housing Elements and projects.
3. Identify the “development constraints” this SCAG document will endorse and secure relevant stakeholder input followed by Regional Council approval of limitations that will curtail locally approved projects.

Unless all concerns with the current iteration are brought to light, there is significant risk that the Regional Council of SCAG could unwittingly contribute to local-control usurpation and an inadvertent increase on the burden of meeting regional housing need requirements. As these are concerns of paramount interest to many of the leaders across the Southern California Region, we appreciate your attention on this matter and hope that you will heed our call for a special hearing.

Sincerely,




Hon. Don Wagner
Supervisor
County of Orange



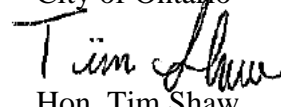
Hon. Curt Hagman
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of San Bernardino

Larry McCallon
Hon. Larry McCallon
Mayor Pro Tem
City of Highland

Alan Wapner
Hon. Alan Wapner
Mayor Pro Tem
City of Ontario



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City of Wildomar