



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
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2023 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 2023 encompass broad, policy-oriented objectives of the agency that build upon long-standing, Regional Council-adopted policies.

Policy Statement

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) seeks to work in partnership with the State on locally tailored solutions to address issues of regional and statewide concern.

Because of our region's rich diversity, we recognize that one size rarely fits all. With over 150 city councilmembers, mayors, and county supervisors serving on SCAG's Regional Council and policy committees, we believe that the 19 million people of the SCAG region deserve to be represented at the local level and that the best solutions to pressing public policy issues are made in collaboration with the elected officials closest to the people.

SCAG supports legislative efforts that provide funding, resources, and tools that help our region's 191 cities, six counties, six county transportation commissions, and other member and partner organizations implement locally tailored solutions that address our specific needs and meet statewide policy goals. We support efforts that promote the use of our local knowledge from our lived experiences and oppose efforts that would discount or exclude our important contributions.

The guiding ethos of the points below reflect SCAG's belief that local levels of government need additional tools and resources to achieve the positive outcomes associated with the policy goals we share with the State.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

1. Support increased funding to the State's Active Transportation Program (ATP) to provide the resources necessary to implement Active Transportation strategies in Connect SoCal.
2. 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 active transportation modes.
3. Support legislation that empowers local agency control and design standards where local streets cross state right-of-way.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOUSING PRODUCTION

1. Advocate for a major expansion and investment in the Infill Infrastructure Grant Program, which provides funding for infrastructure improvements that support infill housing development and prioritizes projects near access to transit, in proximity to the essentials of life, and implements sustainable land-use strategies that achieve our greenhouse gas reduction goals.
2. Support the establishment of new incentives that serve as a motivating force for local communities to approve new housing development in the face of opposition.
3. Support the restoration and expansion of tax increment tools to build affordable housing stock, improve public transit, adapt to a changing climate, 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.
4. 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.

5. Advocate for the consistency within state law, the sometimes-competing demands contained within SB 375, and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).
6. Advocate for stronger coordination and flexibility between the California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) and local jurisdictions to realize shared housing production goals, particularly for the development and implementation of local housing elements.
7. Advocate for specific opportunities that allow cities and counties to share or trade RHNA allocations as a tool to facilitate effective planning for and development of housing in an equitable and collaborative manner.
8. Maintain active participation in the Department of Housing and Community Development and Office of Planning and Research's stakeholder engagement process to improve the development of the regional housing need allocation and regional methodology.
9. Advocate for funding programs and guidelines that support regional equity to accommodate the SCAG region's 6th Cycle RHNA allocation of 1.34 million units.
10. While providing local jurisdictions with additional tools and funding, preserve local authority to address housing production, affordability, and homelessness challenges.
11. Support programs and legislation that expand the capacity to preserve both naturally occurring affordable housing as well as affordable housing with expiring covenants.
12. Support programs and legislation that provide more options for emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing options to address the homelessness crisis and oppose efforts to withhold these funds from local jurisdictions.

BROADBAND ACCESS

1. Support coordinated efforts that would prioritize additional funding and resources for broadband infrastructure, particularly in low-income and rural communities, tribal lands, and community anchor institutions to bridge the digital divide exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Support collaboration between the federal, state, regional, and local levels of government, including MPOs and regional broadband consortia, to expedite access to broadband infrastructure funding, streamline project permitting, and achieve economies of scale.
3. Support funding for studies that determine broadband opportunity zones that support shovel-ready last-mile projects or evaluate broadband's potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).
4. Support legislative efforts that promote the integration of broadband, land use, and transportation planning, and support legislative efforts that provide transportation agencies access to the middle-mile network to bolster the deployment of intelligent transportation systems.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

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 greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals.
2. Support programs that provide the resources, including staff capacity, necessary for communities to prepare for the consequences of a changing climate and rebuild from resulting natural disasters.
3. In collaboration with other MPOs and stakeholders, explore potential improvements 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.

4. Support the investment of General Fund and GGRF resources for urban greening, healthy soils, carbon sequestration, context-sensitive forest health, and fire prevention activities.
5. Support the preservation of net-GHG-reducing agriculture with a focus on economic development, local food production, and supply.
6. Promote the integrated planning for land use with water supply and quality.

CONGESTION REDUCTION

1. Support new sources of dedicated funding for transportation demand management (TDM) programs and strategies at the regional, county, and local levels.
2. Support legislation that would provide new funding sources for existing strategies or develop new strategies for reducing congestion caused by school trips.
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.

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Support the State in the rollout of the Community Economic Resiliency Fund (CERF) program such that the SCAG region's population is reflected equitably in the allocation of grant funds.
2. Support identification of new and ongoing funding sources for economic and workforce development centered on inclusive growth, support for small businesses, family-supporting jobs, access to capital, and entrepreneurship.
3. Support the establishment of a new California State University campus in the City of Palm Desert (Coachella Valley) to increase educational and economic opportunities in the SCAG region.
4. 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.
5. Support efforts to expand access to homeownership, particularly for first-time homebuyers and communities of color.

FREIGHT & GOODS MOVEMENT

1. Recognizing both the pivotal role that the SCAG region plays in domestic and international trade and, consequently, the disproportionate impacts carried by Southern California, support increased funding to the Trade Corridors Enhancement Program (TCEP) to preserve and maintain transportation infrastructure for key regional goods movement corridors that link freight facilities and systems to the rest of the nation.
2. Support the creation of programs designed to assist in leveraging technology and data to improve freight mobility, establish public-private partnerships, increase goods movement efficiency independently and through shared-use corridors, 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 modernize the Ralph M. Brown Act to increase public participation, keep up with emerging technology, and allow local government agencies flexibility in conducting official meetings through virtual format.

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. 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.
4. Support efforts to improve the implementation of SB 743's vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analysis provisions, including: (a) more comprehensive CEQA guidance on quantifying VMT mitigation measures, (b) determining whether a specific mitigation action independently serves to decrease VMT (additionality), (c) assessing (and accounting for) any unintended consequences on housing development, (d) implementing regionally-based VMT mitigation mechanisms, and (e) establishing project-specific design considerations to reduce VMT within the context of the State's unique and diverse landscapes.
5. Support legislative streamlining and simplification of regulatory review processes, permitting and oversight at the state and federal level, as well as increased coordination among state and federal agencies.

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, as included in the Connect SoCal: accessibility (to healthy food, parks and open space, and other services), affordable housing, air quality, climate resiliency, economic wellbeing, health equity, physical activity, and safety.
2. Support statewide and county efforts to collect public health-related data 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 to reduce extreme heat and emissions exposure, and safe streets so all ages and abilities can maximize opportunities for active lifestyles, have access to essential services, and use transit or active transportation options.
5. Recognizing the link between public health, mental health and homelessness, support funding for navigation centers, housing options, and outreach efforts, to address the needs of the unhoused.

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, programs, and practices to address the legacy and impact of past 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, connected autonomous vehicles, aviation, maritime, commerce, and micro-mobility devices that both improve transportation accessibility, efficiency, and capacity and reduce environmental impacts.
2. Support funding for Smart Cities plans and initiatives, which aim towards reducing GHG impacts, deploy systems that allow for efficient water and energy usage, safer roadways and highways.
3. Support energy resilience policies that minimize the impact that electric vehicles have on the power grid, such as encouraging bi-directional charging, making on-site energy storage available, and using smart metering to maximize the use of renewable energy sources.
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5. Support a technology-neutral position when promoting different fuel and vehicle types while considering local conditions and engaging with stakeholders to determine technology needs.
6. Secure funding to support the coordination among state agencies, MPOs, and other governmental entities to collect and share data, which reflects emerging technologies, mobility choices, land use collaboration, and regional conservation opportunities.
7. Encourage the California Public Utilities Commission and support legislation related to Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), motorized scooters, and bike-share systems that ensure 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, while maintaining anonymity and privacy of the individual user.
8. As zero-emission and alternative fuel vehicles and supporting infrastructure are deployed, including but not limited to electric, hydrogen, and natural gas, advocate for policies that take a life-cycle approach. For electric vehicles, support policies and plans that consider life-cycle analysis and prioritize proper battery reuse, recycling, and disposal.
9. Building upon SCAG's work to accelerate the electrification of the vehicle fleet, support efforts that provide funding for electric and alternative fuel vehicle planning, permit streamlining, purchases, and charging/refueling infrastructure, with a focus on public investment in areas that would otherwise be neglected, such as multi-unit dwellings, rural areas, and low to middle-income neighborhoods.

TRANSIT & RAIL

1. Support legislative and budgetary efforts that expand public transit and passenger rail projects, operations, and maintenance, a critical social service that supports Connect SoCal's congestion reduction and sustainability goals.
2. Support legislative efforts that incentivize the implementation of Mobility as a Service (MaaS), which integrates transportation services into a single mobility platform that encourages mode shift and fosters sustainable travel choices.
3. Support state grant or pilot programs for comprehensive planning that encourage transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities to connect housing, jobs, and mixed-use development with transportation options and broaden eligibility guidelines to include MPOs.

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. Protect all existing and new transportation funding sources from borrowing, use for any purpose other than transportation, or new conditions on the distributions of funds that reprioritize transportation projects.
2. 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.
3. Support regional equity considerations for any funding source to ensure Southern California receives its fair share of funding based upon population, opportunity, and other quantifiable measures corresponding with the funding source.
4. 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.
5. 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.

WATER

1. Support an "all of the above" approach to the State's drought and water shortage emergency, including: (a) improving water efficiency and reuse, (b) enhancing water systems' health and resilience, (c) developing new water supply and storage, and (e) supporting investments in water infrastructure, efficiency, and conservation practices that support the region's economic and population growth and foster planning for the region's housing needs identified in Connect SoCal.
2. Support legislative efforts that reduce barriers and create efficiencies to development and provide increased resources for water infrastructure, including investments in repairs, modernization, storage,

and enhancements to the region's aging water infrastructure that can serve the Southern California region's needs and ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and resiliency of the region's water systems.

3. Support programs and state and federal investments that increase the affordability of water for low-income customers. Support the distribution of federal funds at the state level through an equity lens, such that Southern California communities receive their fair share of funding based upon population, opportunity, and other quantifiable measures.
4. Support additional flexibility in the use of state resources to support integrated planning and technical assistance from MPOs for water resources and associated infrastructure along with transportation, land use, energy, stormwater, and air quality.