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## CHAPTER 1

# A Bold New Vision for the 2021 Regional Plan



**S**an Diego Forward: The 2021 Regional Plan has reimagined our transportation system using a planning process informed by data and deep knowledge of local communities across our region. For the first time, the 2021 Regional Plan incorporates five transformational strategies known as the 5 Big Moves.



These interdependent strategies are designed to address the greatest transportation and mobility challenges that we face: safety and traffic congestion, social inequities, and state and federal requirements to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution. The 2021 Regional Plan details how policies and investments in the transportation system, including infrastructure investments, technological advances, programs, and services, can work together to enhance our ability to meet our biggest challenges and create a better region for future generations.

# 5 BIG MOVES 1 INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

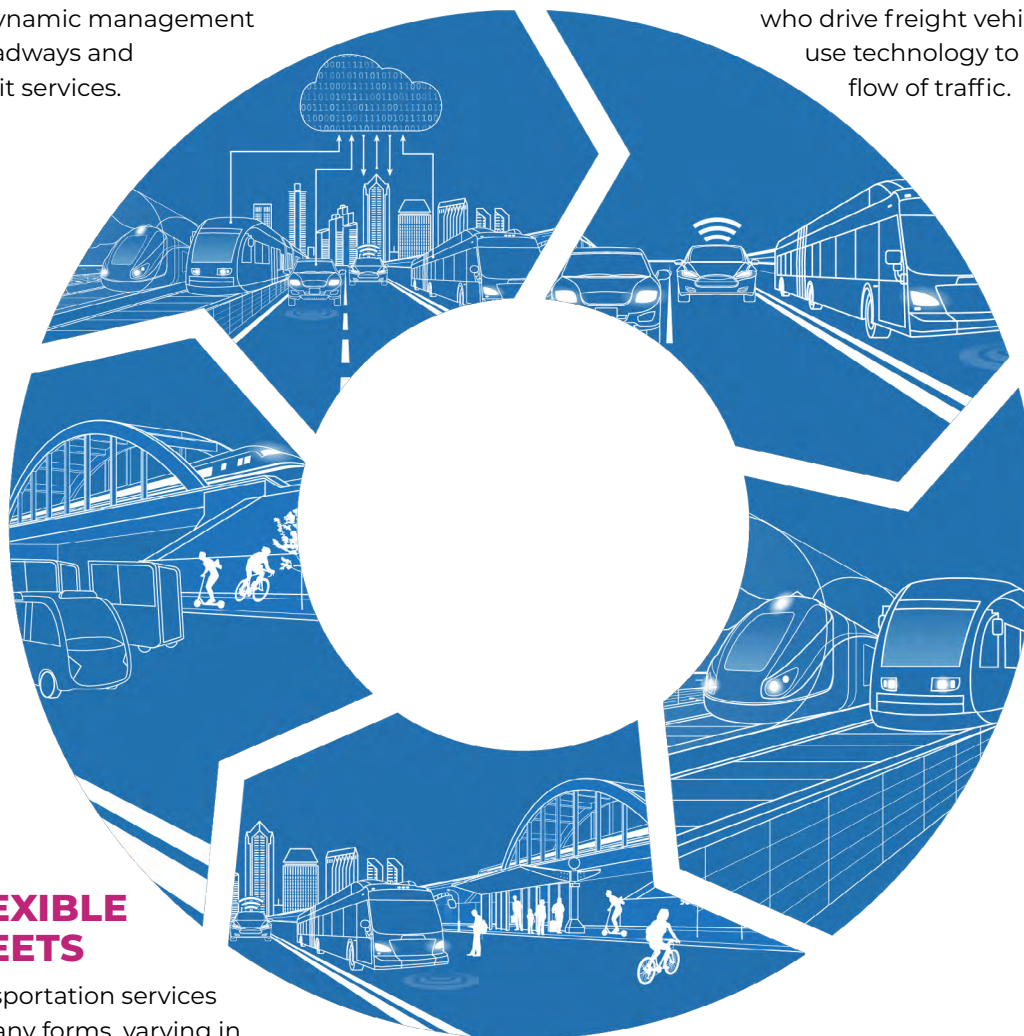
The success of the 2021 Regional Plan will rest on the successful implementation of the 5 Big Moves. They are:

## NEXT OS

The underlying technology that allows people to connect to transportation services and a digital platform that allows for dynamic management of roadways and transit services.

## COMPLETE CORRIDORS

Roadways that offer dedicated, safe space for everyone, including people who walk, bike, drive, ride transit, and use Flexible Fleets, as well as those who drive freight vehicles. Complete Corridors use technology to dynamically manage the flow of traffic.



## FLEXIBLE FLEETS

Transportation services of many forms, varying in size from bikes to scooters to shuttles, that offer first- and last-mile connections to transit and alternatives to driving alone.

## TRANSIT LEAP

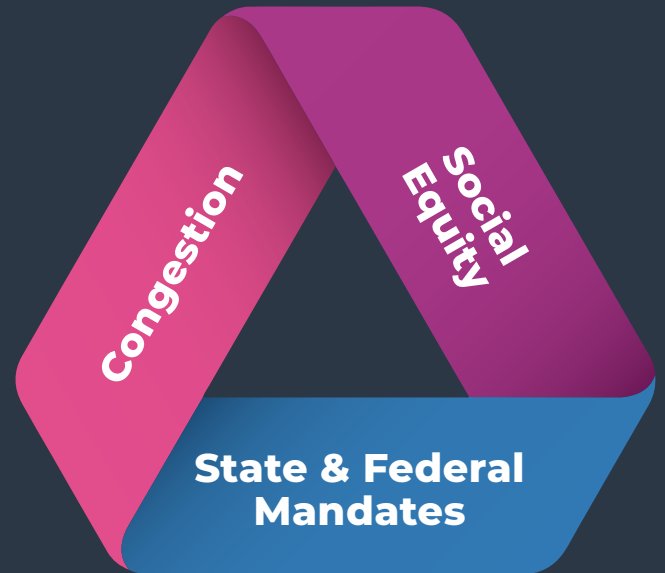
A complete network of fast, convenient, and reliable transit services that connect people from where they live to where they want to go.

## MOBILITY HUBS

Vibrant centers of activity where transit and on-demand travel options, supported by safe streets, connect people with their destinations and businesses with their customers. Mobility Hubs are also planned to accommodate future growth and development.

# THE CHALLENGES

Our region faces three primary challenges that are impacting our quality of life today and that will threaten our ability to play a leading role in our nation's next era of economic innovation. These challenges, as we have mentioned, are congestion, social equity, and federal and state mandates for reducing GHG emissions and air pollution.



**A few key statistics point to the urgent need to reimagine our regional transportation system so that we can tackle these pressing challenges:**

**41%**

of GHG emissions come from passenger cars and trucks

**80%**

of commuters drive alone to and from work, worsening congestion during peak commute hours



only **12%**



of low-income residents currently live within a half-mile of a commuter rail, light rail, or Rapid transit stop



almost **25,000** people were killed

while walking in the U.S. between 2016 and 2019, making these 4 years the deadliest since 1990



Scientists estimate that climate change will cause sea levels to rise **2.5 ft.**

above 2018 levels by 2050.

**Wildfires, heat waves, and droughts will grow in frequency and intensity.**

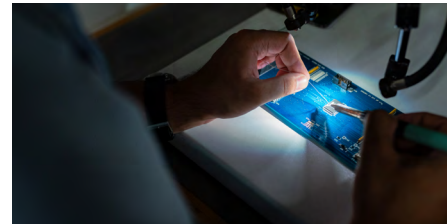


# A NEW ERA OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

***A new era of economic opportunity is dawning, and the San Diego region is poised to lead***

The San Diego region faces big challenges, but it is also entering a period of great opportunity. A new era of economic innovation promises exciting advances in biotechnology, renewable energy, cybersecurity, and automation that will change the way people live around the world. Our region can play a leading role in these fields when individuals who live here can connect, collaborate, and create.

More than ever, our region's future prosperity will depend on mobility – the ability of people to travel quickly and easily from communities where they live to centers of innovation where they work. La Jolla, Sorrento Valley, the South Bay, and other areas where companies and talent congregate are places where prosperity will be created and sustained well past 2050. These places are attractive to innovators, and they will continue to be drawn to our region because key measures of a high quality of life—personal mobility, affordability, and widely shared opportunities for advancement—are present and supported.



## ***How increased mobility can improve life in our region***

While increased mobility will be vital for our innovation economy, it will also be essential to the overall quality of life for everyone who lives here regardless of their background. Enhanced personal mobility allows us to attend to basic needs: pursuing an education; obtaining health care; accessing shopping, dining, and entertainment; getting to and from work; and caring for our families. Mobility needs to be widely accessible, affordable, easy to use, and tailored to a person's individual needs. In short, mobility must be viewed as a basic human right.

Our vision for a transformed regional transportation system is centered on the fundamental idea that increased personal mobility can help drive future economic prosperity regionwide, create opportunities for advancement for more people across our region, and improve the overall quality of life for everyone. Of all the households in our region, 35% of them (equal to roughly 1.1 million people) earn less than \$45,000 annually and are considered low-income. Owning and operating a vehicle in San Diego County is a significant expense and typically costs more than \$10,000 per year.<sup>1</sup> The 2021 Regional Plan offers multiple choices for affordable transportation, on demand and when and where people want it—essential requirements for upward economic mobility.

To realize our vision, we need to reimagine what true mobility means and what it requires. Our 20th-century car culture, where driving alone dominates over public transit, carpooling, and other forms of shared rides, will not help us achieve our 21st-century goals: reducing congestion and improving safety, meeting state and federal mandates for reducing GHG and air pollutants, making a more socially equitable region, and improving the overall quality of life for everyone.



<sup>1</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology, H+T Affordability Index. <https://htaindex.cnt.org>



## OUR UNIQUE REGION

***Natural treasures,  
a compelling history,  
a rich diversity of  
peoples and  
cultures, and a  
dynamic binational  
economy***

The San Diego region enjoys a special place on the North American continent. Located in the southwest corner of the United States, it is graced by a Mediterranean climate and a spectacular 70-mile coastline that stretches from the Mexican border in the south to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in the north. Coastal bluffs and an intricate network of shallow canyons, rivers, wetlands, bays, and lagoons sculpt the coastal topography. Inland valleys and hills blanketed with chaparral and oak give way to mountains that rise more than 5,000 feet above sea level before dropping precipitously into Anza Borrego Desert, where the largest state park in California protects a stark and beautiful landscape.

While grappling with suburban sprawl, traffic, and other challenges that many metropolitan areas face, planners have worked hard to preserve and protect the region's natural beauty. With development concentrated in coastal regions, inland, mountain, and desert lands remain largely untouched. Intelligent planning at the coast, meanwhile, has preserved a network of natural corridors for wildlife and native vegetation to thrive. Weather and beautiful landscapes draw Californians all over the state outdoors, and San Diegans in particular love to live outside, whether hanging out at the beach or catching a wave offshore, hiking and biking in the hills behind their neighborhoods, camping at Palomar Mountain or in the Cuyamaca Mountains near Julian, or stargazing in the desert.



## **Our region’s Native American heritage**

People have been drawn to the region’s natural beauty and pleasant climate for millennia. Humans have inhabited the San Diego region for at least 12,000 years. Today, the Kumeyaay, Cupeño, Cahuilla, and Luiseño comprise the four most prominent ethnic groups of Native Americans that span the region. There are 18 federally recognized tribes with jurisdiction over 19 reservations in San Diego County—the most in any single county in the United States.

Before Europeans arrived, Native Americans thrived here by harvesting food from the sea; maximizing resources in inland, mountain, and desert landscapes throughout the year; and establishing close bartering relationships among different geographic groups to sustain themselves. Some of our region’s most prominent roadways found their origins in ancient trade routes connecting tribal groups. Native tribes developed their own astronomy, mastered the botanical characteristics of native plants, and developed novel ways to store water, food, and other resources. Their deep connection to the natural environment sustained them over thousands of years and characterizes many aspects of their culture today. Conservation efforts by individuals, advocacy groups, government agencies, businesses, and other organizations in our region have often found their inspiration in our region’s Native American culture and history. Governmental agencies, meanwhile, have increasingly sought the partnership and knowledge of tribal communities to better plan for development and increased mobility, conservation, equity, and environmental sustainability.

## **A binational region like none other**

The San Diego region’s history would never be complete, or its potential fully realized, without the invaluable and indispensable influence of our shared border with the United States of Mexico—*Estados Unidos Mexicanos*—and the close ties between the San Diego and Tijuana metropolitan areas. For many people in the U.S. and Mexico, crossborder travel is essential for visiting friends and relatives, shopping, receiving medical care, working, vacationing, and going to school.

The historic, familial, cultural, linguistic, culinary, and educational connections between people on both sides of the border have grown stronger by the economic ties that bind us. Today, Mexico is California’s number one trading partner, fueling commerce and economic opportunity throughout a binational region that encompasses the Tijuana and San Diego metropolitan areas.

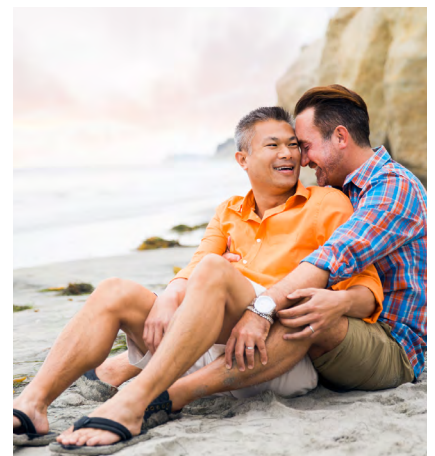
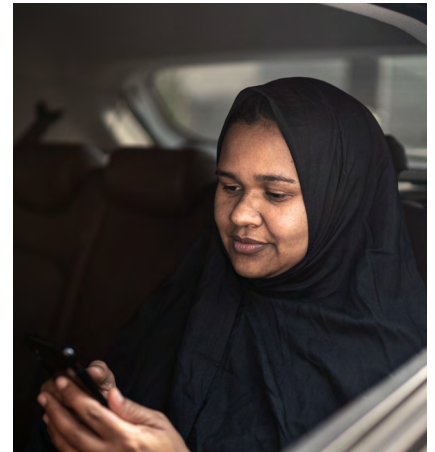
In 2019, more than **90% of California–Mexico trade** was moved by truck across the international border, and more than **\$42 billion worth of goods** passed through the Otay Mesa–Mesa de Otay Port of Entry alone.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, TransBorder Freight Data

## Focus on Equity

As with many areas across the country, inequities created at all levels of government in the past have left a lasting impression on communities today. Systemic racism, the practice of redlining, and the taking of tribal lands by settlers have resulted in inequities throughout our region. In developing and implementing the 2021 Regional Plan, SANDAG has a responsibility to listen to the communities we serve, prioritize equitable solutions in the transportation system, and analyze the burdens and benefits of this system for historically underserved communities.

In the 2021 Regional Plan, historically marginalized communities include people with low incomes, seniors, people with disabilities, communities of color, and federally recognized Native American tribes. Coordination with community-based organizations and tribal governments throughout the planning process has resulted in a Regional Plan that can guide our region toward a more inclusive and equitable future.







## PLANNING FOR THE REGION'S FUTURE

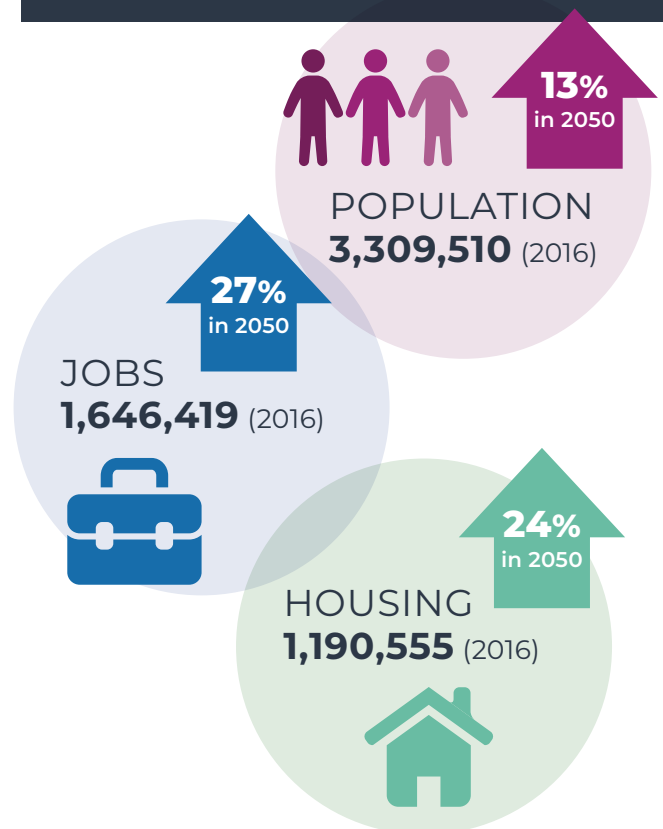
By 2050, we anticipate that 3.7 million people will be living in the San Diego region, about 13% more than today. With this population growth, we expect there will be a need for 440,000 more jobs and 274,000 more homes by 2050. Figure 1.1 shows forecasted population, job, and housing growth for the San Diego region.

Our population is aging and growing more diverse. From 2016 to 2050, nearly 60% of our population growth will be among those who are 75 years old and older. By 2050, people of color will comprise 60% of our total population.

One of the major goals of the 2021 Regional Plan is to develop a safe, equitable, and accessible system that improves everyone's access to basic needs, opportunities, and major destinations. Basic needs include access to retail, parks, and healthcare, while opportunities include access to job centers and educational institutions. While the places and communities that make the San Diego region special are here to stay, we know that this increase in people and jobs means that we will have more people living in and moving around the region. Therefore, we must address existing issues while planning for the future.

Figure 1.1

### Forecasted Growth in the Region 2016 to 2050



# REGIONAL PLAN VISION AND GOALS

Given the challenges, anticipated growth, and opportunities that technology can provide to transform our region, the 2021 Regional Plan is guided by a Vision and three primary goals.

The 2021 Regional Plan provides a framework for meeting these goals with coordinated land use and transportation planning strategies. Implementation actions related to projects, policies, and programs will confirm SANDAG's commitment to fully realizing the strategies in the 2021 Regional Plan.

Land use and transportation system decisions influence our ability to achieve each goal:

## ***The efficient movement of people and goods***

Providing people with alternatives to driving frees up more roadway space for individuals who need to drive and transport goods. Managing the system with the latest technology can make traffic smoother, prioritize non-solo driving, and create a safer environment for everyone. Congestion today primarily occurs during peak periods, during which 80% of commuters drive alone and only 3% take transit.

With the 2021 Regional Plan implemented, commuters will be offered compelling alternatives to driving alone. By 2050, this could result in 13% of commuters using transit (up from 3% today) and a substantial decline in commuters driving alone to work (from 80% today to 62% in 2050).<sup>3</sup>

## ***Access to affordable, reliable, and safe mobility options***

It takes both land use and transportation planning to fix historic inequities created at all levels of government and prioritize improved access to basic needs and economic opportunities for people with the least access.

2021 Regional Plan performance results show a threefold increase in social equity focused populations (people with low incomes, people of color, and seniors) living within a half-mile of a commuter rail, light rail, or *Rapid* transit stop. Currently, only 25% of low-income residents can access the region's largest employment centers (Sorrento Valley, Kearny Mesa, and Downtown) in 30 minutes via transit. With the 2021 Regional Plan implemented, that percentage will increase to 42% by 2050.

## ***Healthier air and reduced GHG emissions***

Reducing our reliance on the automobile as a primary mode of transportation requires that safe, affordable, and convenient alternatives are available. It also requires that people can access their jobs and other destinations by taking shorter trips. This can be achieved by focusing growth and development in the region's urbanized areas, where there are existing and planned transportation options.

The 2021 Regional Plan reduces per capita GHG emissions from cars and light duty trucks to 20% below 2005 levels by 2035, exceeding the region's state mandated target of 19%. The 2021 Regional Plan also meets federal air quality conformity requirements.

## VISION

***A fast, fair, and clean transportation system and a resilient region.***

## GOALS

***The efficient movement of people and goods***

***Access to affordable, reliable, and safe mobility options for everyone***

***Healthier air and reduced GHG emissions regionwide***

***The 2021 Regional Plan is organized around the following hierarchy:***

## VISION

This describes the desired future for the San Diego region and guides the 2021 Regional Plan.

## GOALS

These are broad statements of desired outcomes that guide the development of the 2021 Regional Plan's strategies and performance measures.

## STRATEGIES

Projects, policies, and programs developed to achieve the 2021 Regional Plan's goals are organized around three core strategies: a reimagined transportation system, sustainable growth and development, and innovative demand and system management.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

These are specific steps taken to bring projects, policies, and programs to reality, and each one supports the 2021 Regional Plan's defined strategies. There are ten Priority Implementation Actions, and each one has near-term and continuing actions that support their full implementation. Projects, policies, and programs are phased from now to 2050. Each one has an estimated cost, and their collective impacts are reflected in the performance measure results.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix T: Network Development and Performance

# 2021 REGIONAL PLAN CONTENTS

The 2021 Regional Plan is a 30-year plan that considers how we will grow, where we will live, and how we will move around the region. It combines the Regional Transportation Plan, Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), and Regional Comprehensive Plan.<sup>4</sup> As such, the 2021 Regional Plan must comply with specific state and federal mandates. These include an SCS, per California Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008) (SB 375), that achieves GHG emissions–reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board; compliance with federal civil rights requirements (Title VI); environmental justice considerations; air quality conformity; and public participation.

## Key State goals, policies, and Executive Orders considered in the 2021 Regional Plan:

- SB 375 and SCS Program and Evaluation Guidelines
- California Assembly Bill 805 (Gonzalez Fletcher, 2017): Identification of disadvantaged communities, inclusion of strategies to reduce pollution exposure in those communities, and use of a skilled and trained workforce
- 2017 Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations<sup>5</sup>
- California Transportation Plan 2050
- California Senate Bill 32 (Pavley, 2016): Reduce GHG emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030
- EO B-55-18: Carbon Neutrality by 2045
- EO S-3-05: Reduce GHG emissions 80% below 1990 levels by 2050
- EO N-79-20: 100% zero-emission vehicle sales by 2035
- EO N-82-20: Conserve at least 30% of California’s land and coastal waters by 2030



<sup>4</sup> This Regional Plan includes the mandatory policy, action, and financial elements required for the development of regional transportation plans– in addition to the SCS as identified in California Government Code Section 65080 and detailed in Chapter 2 and various appendices. The Regional Plan also includes the elements required by numerous other policy documents and regulations, such as the Regional Comprehensive Plan (Public Utilities Code Section 132360 et. seq) and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). Given the interrelated nature of these requirements, they are integrated into various chapters of the Regional Plan.

<sup>5</sup> The 2017 Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines for Metropolitan Planning Organizations includes both federal and state requirements for preparing Regional Transportation Plans.

## CHAPTER 1

### ***A Bold New Vision for the 2021 Regional Plan***

Describes our region's challenges, discusses anticipated growth in the San Diego region, and outlines the Regional Plan's Vision and Goals

## CHAPTER 2

### ***Sustainable Communities Strategy – A Framework for the Future***

Describes the Regional Plan SCS – the package of projects, policies, land use strategies, and programs that will achieve our Vision and Goals

## CHAPTER 3

### ***Paying for the Regional Plan, Forming Partnerships and Taking Action, and Monitoring How the Plan Performs***

Describes the planning, investments, actions, and partnerships needed to implement the 2021 Regional Plan, and the metrics that will be used to monitor implementation and performance over time

## APPENDICES

***A: Transportation Projects, Programs, and Phasing***

***B: Implementation Actions***

***C: Air Quality Planning and Transportation Conformity***

***D: Sustainable Communities Strategy Documentation and Related Information***

***E: Performance Monitoring***

***F: Regional Growth Forecast and Sustainable Communities Strategy Land Use Pattern***

***G: Public Involvement Program***

***H: Social Equity: Engagement and Analysis***

***I: Tribal Consultation Process for San Diego Forward: The 2021 Regional Plan – Communication, Cooperation, and Coordination***

***J: Megaregion and Borders Planning and Collaboration***

***K: Regional Housing Needs Assessment Plan***

***L: Active Transportation***

***M: Progress on Near-Term and Continuing Actions***

***N: SANDAG Federal Congestion Management Process***

***O: Federal System Performance Report***

***P: Travel and Tourism***

***Q: Transportation Security and Safety***

***R: Stormwater and Resilience***

***S: Travel Demand Modeling Tools***

***T: Network Development and Performance***

***U: Cost Estimation Methodology***

***V: Funding and Revenues***

***W: California Coastal Trail Technical Memoranda and 2021 Technical Addendum***

***X: 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Projections for the San Diego Region***

***Y: Goods Movement Planning and draft 2021 San Diego and Imperial Counties Freight Gateway Study Update***

***Z: California State Wildlife Action Plan***

***AA: Regional Habitat Conservation Vision***

***BB: Regional Aviation Strategic Plan and San Diego Airport Multimodal Accessibility Plan***

***CC: The 2020 Coordinated Plan***

***DD: 2021 Regional ITS Architecture Update Technical Memorandum/Primer***

***Glossary***

