

El Cajon Collaborative

Community-Based Outreach Efforts for the Regional Transportation Plan

**Summary Report to SANDAG
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The El Cajon Collaborative was pleased to be a part of SANDAG's efforts to obtain community input related to the development of a Regional Transportation Plan. We found this to be an excellent opportunity for the El Cajon Collaborative to engage with community residents and to gather information from a very diverse group of East County residents, primarily from the El Cajon area. While all the events were held within the city and unincorporated areas of El Cajon, the majority of participants either worked and/or lived in other areas of the region.

Participants were asked for their name, email address, age, ethnicity and the frequency of their use of public transportation. Not every participant provided all of the information requested. Data collected is summarized below:

Total participants: 140

<u>Age</u>		<u>Ethnicity:</u>	
Total responses:	133	Total responses:	125
Younger than 25:	8 (6%)	White:	90 (73%)
25- 40:	37 (28%)	Hispanic:	14 (11%)
41-65:	55 (42%)	Middle Easterner:	1 (<1%)
Older than 65:	33 (25%)	African American:	10 (8%)
		Asian:	2 (2%)
		Other:	6 (5%)

Use of Public Transportation:

Total responses:	127
Never	42 (33%)
Seldom	55 (44%)
Frequently	7 (6%)
Often	23 (18%)

The process for gathering input took two forms: a group process and written survey. The group meetings began with a brief explanation of SANDAG's effort to gather community input for the development of a Regional Transportation Plan, the components of the plan and an appeal for candid, creative and specific responses to a set of questions. Individual questions were posted on flip chart paper around the room; participants numbered off to form small groups and each group was assigned to a question. Groups were then led through a process that allowed each group to spend time at every question and to write comments. This process allowed for everyone to see the comments of the previous groups and to engage in discussion within the groups. Feedback about the process from the participants was very positive.

Meetings were convened with members of the El Cajon Collaborative, members of the East Region Collaborative Network, for parents participating in El Cajon Collaborative's Family Night and one on the campus of Cuyamaca College. A modified group process was used with

three parent groups at Family Night. While not in our original plan, a session was held at the college after college officials participated in the El Cajon Collaborative group and felt that this would be an excellent opportunity for student input.

Due to the positive response about the opportunity to provide input, it was decided to employ a second strategy to collect input. A survey was distributed via the El Cajon Collaborative's email distribution list. The email contained a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey as well as a copy of the *Mobility 2030 Regional Transportation Plan*. A copy of the survey is at the end of this report.

For each question, the responses from the group meetings and the surveys are combined, and are listed below. For the most part, responses are listed as written and without edits. Responses that shared some commonality are grouped together. The observations and opinions of the writer follow the question and precede the bulleted responses.

1. How can the transportation system in San Diego County and especially in East County be improved?

It was interesting that participants needed prompting to consider roads and freeways as part of the regional transportation system planning.

- Extended bus/trolley schedules (earlier in the A.M. and later in the P.M.)
- More Routes
- Make transportation lines go all the way to the Airport.
- More Frequently – Bus & Trolley
- More Bike Lanes (including on campus)
- Trolley to Cuyamaca & Grossmont
- More Pedestrian friendly
- More Park n' Rides
- Alternate Fuels
- Buses need to run regular schedules including weekends (every half hour or more).
- Buses need to go to Grossmont College.
- Buses need to go between Cuyamaca & Grossmont Colleges including weekends.
- Expansion of I8 eastbound in El Cajon.
- East County will benefit from more Smart Growth

- Ask the people who use the system via focus groups/surveys (not professionals who don't and likely won't use it.
- Learn from Europe, Japan, Brazil
- Go to Boston, NYC, DC or London to see how it is done properly – Study other model programs.

- More handicapped seats on trolley
- More lighting at bus/trolley locations (solar)
- More covered bus shelters
- More Security at Bus stops and Park n' Rides

- Buses need to be on time.
 - Incentives to walk & ride bikes.
 - Serve your current ridership well to increase loyalty: The disabled, the elderly, and college students.
 - Bikes, skateboards & surf boards need a place to park them as well as those who carry groceries, small carts & school bags on wheels.
 - Combine mass transit with public service & special needs.
 - Better communication between buses/trolley drivers.
 - Personal Safety
 - Personal comfort – Clean; not in rain nor 100 degree weather
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- Bulk purchase of tickets at a discount
 - Use of debit card
 - Same fees across the board – be able to transfer from 1 bus to another w/out extra fees.
 - Creating new bus stops close to East County High Schools, particularly Grossmont High School to enable students to use public transportation to/from school when school buses are not an option for them.
 - Link bus stops nears high schools with trolley stations on bus lines and incorporate beginning and ending school times to enable students to use public transportation.

2. If you are not a regular user of public transportation, why not? What would need to change in order for you to utilize public transportation on a regular basis?

It was challenging to solicit information about why individuals did not use public transportation. It was as if utilization of public transportation was not only the choice of last resort, but one that was seldom, if ever considered by most participants. While participants had little personal experience with public transportation, almost all had clients or knew individuals who were frequent users.

- Faster Service/Schedules
- Easier way to find Bus Schedules
- More Accessible – Too far
- More frequent arriving
- Security (esp. at night)
- More rural routes
- Integrate w/ school buses
- Frequent & convenient routes
- More accessibility
- Extended hours
- Reduce stigma by marketing to middle-class
- Expand Trolley System
- Lockers at central hubs for belongings
- Shorter travel times – takes too long
- Better connections between bus & trolley system
- Better security at stops
- Flexible work schedule

- Make it as fast as driving yourself
 - Trolleys not stopping at stop lights (by-pass them)
 - Look at other cities, countries and their success with public transit (London)
 - Lower bus fares
 - Some of us have no choice but to use public transportation – result is you get people who can't vote with their feet.
 - The need to get where you want to go all year round.
 - Better time tables, more frequent departures, protection from weather, reliable & dependable.
 - More locations & more express routes
 - Less stops
 - More direct routes
 - Sell tickets at grocery stores and convenient stores – easier to purchase tickets.
 - Many of my clients don't use public transportation because the bus stops are too far away. For examples, 1750 Arnold Way in Alpine 91901 is a Senior Complex. From the most interior apartment, it is +1 mile to the nearest stop
 - It takes too long to get to your destination. The Trolley needs to be faster/more efficient – shorter loading times would increase time efficiency. Compared to other major cities, (BART in SF, The L in Chicago, Subway in NY) our Trolley works in “slow motion” not real time.
 - Takes way too long to get around. No fast easy transportation. I need my car for work. I commute from North County to East County.
 - Provide more buses in areas away from bus stops.
 - Posted schedules at bus stops
 - Students are not regular users because many bus schedules do not coincide with school bell schedules. The arrival times at the stop closest to the school are too late for the child to be in class on time.
 - Changing route schedule times to coincide with bell schedules would help this issue.
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- Friendlier Drivers
 - Cleaner Buses
 - Clean restrooms on stops or buses
 - Safe, clean, efficient system that will take me where I want to go.
 - Go to more places
 - Better marketing to availability
 - More direct non-stop routes to popular areas
 - More trolley lines
 - More cross-over routes for all systems
 - Let vehicles pay their true costs (\$15/gal. gas)
 - Better lighting and more safety precautions
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- Economic Incentives (tax break, monthly drawings)
 - Free for college students, seniors, children, low-income families
 - Discounts for Disabled

- Not to be able to afford a car
- More time in my day
- Move to a higher density area that has good access.
- It would have to be the most convenient option
- More curb to curb services.

3. What types of revenue sources should pay for transportation system improvements (e.g. sales tax, gasoline tax, user fees)?

It was surprising how many individuals were willing to pay for improvements or pay at a higher rate for a premium service (e.g. non-stop ride to a destination).

- Gas tax
 - Freight tax
 - Car sales tax – luxury
 - Increased alcohol and/or cigarette tax
 - Increased hotel/motel occupancy taxes
 - Commercial property tax
 - Sin taxes (gas guzzlers, car accidents)
 - Portion of parking fines to transportation.
 - Paid express lanes.
 - Cost analysis of operational procedures.
 - Keep ½ cent tax.
 - Additional tax on gasoline.
 - ½ cent tax should pay for it all.
 - Tax cars that drive into the city and the \$ goes toward public transportation.
 - Tax the richest people (like prop 63 for transportation)
 - Added tax for new/recreated developments in close proximity to trolley & bus stop.
 - Possibly sales tax should be increased. Also, ADA transportation should consider contracting with senior friendly taxi cabs in order to offer a rider friendly service.
 - High-speed commute along the freeways I15, I8, I805, I5, etc. Have transportation connect along these main corridors.
 - All Taxes.
 - Toll Roads
 - User fees or gas tax is a good idea. See if there is any grant money available, possibly “Safe Routes to School” grant, etc.
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- Commuters from Temecula pay a day use fee
 - Additionally federal funding/ OTS
 - Increase Traffic/DUI fines (percentage goes to public transportation)
 - Drivers License transportation fee
 - Car insurance company donations
 - Places like SeaWorld need to help fund system or give portion of their parking fees to support public transportation lines to service their attraction.
 - Additional Bond issues.

- Assessments to companies who own large trucks (heavy users).
- Shift subsidies from oil companies to mass transit.
- Small but gradual & fair fee on oversized SUVs.
- Pay drivers well.
- Incorporate Customer Service training to all drivers as they are the front face of the system.
- Have large companies give employees money to use public transportation.
- Area tourist attractions to give money to county to fund public transportation improvements.
- Adopt a public transportation charge for events, activities and attractions.
- Have housing developers put in a percentage to cover costs.
- Pay per use HOV lanes.
- Require transportation providers to share vehicles, funding and coordinate centrally services. (taxis and buses)
- Mobile & Exxon's extra billions of profit
- Use of fines from corporate crime (e.g. Enron).

4. What improvements to the transportation system are most needed, or should be completed first?

It was disappointing that the first and often only suggestion for slow moving traffic was to widen the road.

- Run more frequently
- Include more weekends, evenings & holidays
- Improved access online to schedules – too cumbersome
- Awareness of public transportation in schools to students and residents
- Motorcycle/Pedi cabs (from trolley to X)
- More freeway access from areas such as Sorento Valley & South Bay areas.
- Improve services to Cuyamaca college
- Increase service for community events
- County & surface road improvements.
- An extensive, safe, *clean, efficient* public transportation system.
- Better marketing of public transportation system.
- A “just bus” system – bus size match demand (smaller buses for lower occupancy)
- Change fuel to propane – hybrid buses.
- Take people where they need to go – NOW
 - Avocado Plaza (soon to be cut)
 - Grossmont, Cuyamaca Colleges
 - Group home residents
 - Airports
- When buying a bus pass it needs to work on all transportation – rural east county is on a completely different system and bus passes don't work
- Locally buy a half month's bus pass.
- Clarity and concise schedules that are more widely distributed.

- More car pool lanes
 - More lanes on freeways
 - Wider shoulders
 - Wider Bike lanes (door zone) – edge of pavement too to vehicles.
 - Continuation of bike lanes during construction
 - More volunteers located to drive people.
 - The trolley should expand to all areas in the East County with DART services.
 - More buses to Grossmont Center
 - More transportation in rural areas
 - High-speed commute along the freeways I15, I8, I805, I5, etc. Have transportation connect along these main corridors.
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- Employer/government incentives
 - Subsidized costs for children, seniors, students & low-income families
 - Provide incentives to students to increase rider ship
 - Reduce barriers for payment
 - Improved system for easier payment methods
 - Partner with schools & county agencies to multi-fund bus routes.
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- Better attitudes among drivers
 - Leave earlier for Charger games
 - Cleaner bus/trolley more often
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- Better security
 - More comfort
 - Install seatbelts
 - Safety lighting
 - Safer, cleaner and better shelters at all transportation hubs.

5. What information do you want our policy makers to consider when making decisions about the transportation system?

- Tax Incentives to encourage use of public transportation
- DIS incentives for automobiles – fee at sale? At license renewal?
- Dollars spent on public transportation go much farther (pollution reduction, less traffic, etc.)
- Study model systems that work
- Hybrid diesel transport
- Hydrogen fuel cell transport
- Incentives for organizations to buy work cars for employees who take public transportation to work (emergency needs)
- Electric and/or magnetic vehicles
- More in depth cost analysis of operations – make it available to the public.

- More visibility of routes & availability and times between destinations.
 - More routes
 - Building mass transit & non-auto travel a priority over more freeways.
 - They need to understand how big East County is and how expensive costs are, especially for low-income Seniors. Please keep in mind our aging population is expanding and the projections for future need will be exponential. As a society we need to meet that need.
 - Looking at where the funding will come from to continue to meet the growing needs of the population without placing the state/tax payers in debt.
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- Policy makers need to utilize public transportation to see how it works or doesn't
 - Education program aimed at drivers who put make-up on
 - Additional training for drivers
 - Spend more energy on improving transportation less on immigration
 - Listen and HEED, the daily travails of some riders.
 - Smart growth is good and cost effective.
 - Safety of youth waiting at bus stops.
 - Global warming, environmental issues and solutions are important to us citizens.
 - Older neighborhoods have a better infrastructure.
 - Consideration to handicap rides when bus routes are changed – it affects the handicap rides.
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- Provide free passes to employers to help promote employee use (flex. Cars available to employees for emergency use)
 - Public transportation day – no car day(s)
 - Get employers to adopt attitudes/internal policies that accommodate public transportation usage
 - Build more light rail/ put in everywhere accessible
 - How to coordinate bus schedules/times w/ college class schedules.
 - Work together with environmentalists, businesses, residential developers, stakeholders to be more successful.
 - Not enough transportation – takes too long to get anywhere.
 - Consider alternative options for freeway use such as better HOV lanes, more HOV lanes, lanes for motor scooters.
 - Talk with actual consumers that utilize the transit system

6. What questions do you have about the transportation system?

Many participants expressed confusion about whom to go to with their questions and concerns.

- Why is SANDAG an appointed position and not elected?
- Please clarify funding mechanisms
- What is the plan for anticipated county growth? 20-40-60 years from now.
- How often are routes added or improved and does this keep pace with county growth?

- Why don't we have moving sidewalks?
- How did you determine route plan?
- Why is SANDAG not looking at very local community needs? More round-trip circled scheduled transportation.
- Why only large buses on major routes.
- When will we complete 125 South to 94 East?
- Who decided to split the 858 Route? It helps no one who rides.
- Will there ever be paid expressways in SD County?
- Will Spring Valley get bus shelters?
- Issue of public health; health issues for people living in close proximity to freeway.
- Who is in charge of the master plan for freeways and why do they put change lanes on corners? This creates bottlenecks.
- Why is Spring Valley not adequately being served?
- Why did you cut El Cajon off from bus transportation?
- Why is Spring Valley not adequately being served?
- What's in it for the average consumer?
- Who do you consider your clientele? Who do you serve?

7. When a draft of the plan is ready for community input, what are your suggestions for insuring a significant number of individuals have the opportunity to review it and provide input before it is put in final form?

There was a great deal of interest in seeing the draft plan and publicizing its release and promoting public review.

- Publications, i.e. Union Tribune, Daily CA news, Media.
- Public Presentations at community colleges.
- Share on public transit lines in buses & bus stops.
- Online/Website.
- Court the media! Have various impacted constituents give feedback – via blog, media, and presentations.
- Service Organizations & Chambers of Commerce.
- Stick with public recommendations.
- Survey & focus groups at trolley/bus stations.
- Establish community meetings at local libraries, key clubs, Kiwanis, etc.
- Include college voices – student boards/forums.
- Include both high and low density areas.
- Send a survey to every person in SD County.
- HHS Offices
- Jury Duty
- Community Collaboratives
- Faith communities

- Sports events
- Kiosk in Shopping malls
- E-mail and send letters. Post info in Sr Centers and Libraries.
- Print the results in all of the local newspapers.
- Having parents at back to school nights hear about the service
- Preview the plan in many areas of the county.
- Public meetings; highlights of the plan on local news; print and visual media advertising to announce plan and point the public to the manuscript; post manuscript on website; advertise on existing city buses and at bus stops

8. Other Comments

There is interest by school district staff and parents in having the school districts work with SANDAG to implement a shared system of transportation for students. The Grossmont/Cuyamaca College District is particularly interested in increasing student utilization of public transportation and reducing the need for parking on campus.

- Have people pay a day use fee to drive within city for force use of public transportation
- 67/Bradley: correct, add to SANDAG priority to seek federal funding
- Use smaller buses rather than cut bus lines in rural areas
- Rider recruitment & retention for college students
- Better marketing for on-line community ride share board
- Provide door-to-door service for seniors, disabled, etc.
- Employers reduce car allowance and increase public transportation allowance
- Community awareness campaign about public transportation
- Medical center shuttle; i.e. Grossmont, Alvarado
- Community “check-out” cars; to borrow at public transit stops
- More flexicars - \$10/hr cars
- Identify & Support Transit Hubs
- Lower Fare for College Students
- Transit hubs in Spring Valley for bus & shuttle on Sweetwater Road @ Caltrans Offices.
- Extension of Trolley System
- County funded cars to utilize for county/community programs
- Volunteer driver program (provide fuel, liability, car maintenance)
- Need better and more car pool facilities
- Seat belts would help folks feel safer
- Movies/entertainment on trolley & buses
- Integrate senior volunteers with security
- Cleanliness helps convince reluctant riders – as does increased safety.
- More Pedestrian friendly housing & other developments
- Bike paths for community Colleges
- Market Routes to people who live near the Routes.
- Route considerations for senior living centers & mobile home parks in proximity to health care facilities, community centers and grocery stores.

- More Sidewalks
- Safer Public transportation.
- Reimbursement to users of public transportation.
- Free transit areas like Portland Oregon.
- Free rides for needy college students.

- There is an extreme need to enhance the transportation services for our wheelchair bound and ambulatory senior citizens. When it comes to “shuttle transportation” such as CTS Paratransit, it is very difficult for many of the elderly and disabled to tolerate hours in the bus. Many of the elderly would prefer to not go to the doctor if it takes them 1 hour to get to their appt. and another hour to get home. Many just don’t have the stamina. We need to consider ways to individualize services. Is it possible to contract with taxis or other private driving programs? Another need is we need more DART programs to get people to the various transits centers.
- Many people who live in places like Jamul and parts of Alpine cannot get free medical attn in the home (the home visiting physicians who accept Medi/Medi will not travel that far) so they have no choice but to leave their homes for medical appointments. If they can't tolerate public transportation (due to being blind, having dementia, w/c bound, etc.), they need an escort. Paying for an escort is very expensive and often not an option for a disabled client. The client will then fail to get medical care which causes increased burden on the taxpayers in the long run when their health problems become severe and result in institutionalization.

El Cajon Collaborative is appreciative of the opportunity to work with SANDAG and looks forward to future partnership efforts.