

Chapter 3.0 Environmental Setting

The San Diego region includes three general physiographic regions: coastal, montane, and desert. The highest population densities are found in the western third (coastal) of the region where topography and mild coastal climatic conditions have attracted intensive development. Consequently, existing transportation infrastructure is most concentrated and diverse in the populated coastal areas in order to meet the needs of the greatest number of people.

The proposed 2030 RTP provides the planning foundation for transportation improvements taking into consideration the San Diego region as well as outside the region's boundaries. The area supports an existing network of freeways, expressways, regional arterials, transit corridors, regional bus and rail transit corridors, bikeways, commercial and general aviation facilities, seaport facilities, and ports of entry at the United States-Mexico border. These facilities serve the region's 18 local jurisdictions and the County's unincorporated areas, as well as interregional and international commuting.

The largest proportion of major transportation facilities is located in the western third of the region to best serve the largest and fastest growing population areas. This includes the following major freeway and expressway system:

- Interstate 5 (I-5)
- Interstate 8 (I-8)
- Interstate 15 (I-15)
- State Route 15 (SR 15)
- Interstate 805 (I-805)
- State Route 52 (SR 52)
- State Route 54 (SR 54)
- State Route 56 (SR 56)
- State Route 67 (SR 67)
- State Route 75 (SR 75)
- State Route 76 (SR 76)
- State Route 78 (SR 78)
- State Route 79 (SR 79)
- State Route 94 (SR 94)
- State Route 125 (SR 125)
- State Route 163 (SR 163)
- State Route 188 (SR 188)
- State Route 209 (SR 209)
- State Route 241 (SR 241)
- State Route 274 (SR 274)
- State Route 282 (SR 282)
- State Route 905 (SR 905)

An existing trolley network serves the I-5 corridor from the Old Town station, near the intersection of I-8 and I-5 south, through downtown San Diego to the United States/Mexico border. A bayside loop extends easterly around downtown to El Cajon and Santee. In addition, an easterly service line extends from Old Town through the Mission Valley/I-8 corridor to the area near Mission San Diego de Alcalá, just east of the stadium. This service line connects to La Mesa via San Diego State University creating an east county loop.

The region also is served by two passenger railroad operators. Amtrak provides intercity rail services connecting San Diego to the rest of the nationwide system. The NCTD operates a commuter rail called the Coaster, between Oceanside and downtown San Diego. There also are two freight operators, the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) and the San Diego and Imperial Valley Railroad (SDIV). The BNSF and the SDIV railroads transport rail freight in the San Diego region. BNSF maintains a freight easement over the 62 miles of coastal mainline and the 20-mile branch line between Escondido and Oceanside. The BNSF also interchanges freight with the SDIV and with the U.S. Navy. The SDIV Railroad is a Class II Carrier or “short-haul” railroad. It has been the freight operator on the San Diego & Arizona Eastern (SD&AE) Railway since 1984. In 2001, Carrizo Gorge Railway took over operations between Tijuana and Tecate, Baja California. Commuter and local bus service is provided throughout the region, including high-volume service to the north county, central, and south bay/border areas. Regional corridor bikeways are primarily aligned in conjunction with major transportation corridors and are supported by an extensive feeder network and local streets.

San Diego International Airport-Lindbergh Field, located on the north side of San Diego Bay and approximately 2 miles northwest of downtown San Diego, is the major commercial airport in the region. The region also is served by a total of 11 general aviation airports, 4 military airports, 27 civil heliports (7 on public airports), and 8 military helicopter facilities (4 on military airports).

The general aviation system includes the following: (1) Montgomery Field, (2) McClellan Palomar Airport, (3) Gillespie Field Airport, (4) Ramona Airport, (5) Brown Field Municipal Airport, (6) Oceanside Municipal Airport, (7) Borrego Valley Airport, (8) Fallbrook Community Airpark, (9) Jacumba Airport, (10) Agua Caliente Springs Airport, and (11) Ocotillo Airport. The four military airports in the region include (1) Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Camp Pendleton, (2) MCAS Miramar, (3) Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island, and (4) Imperial Beach Naval Outlying Field.

The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority is the regional government entity with jurisdiction over all airport planning. In addition, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority operates San Diego International Airport (SDIA). The RTP addresses long-term ground access improvements to Lindbergh Field.

Ocean cargo and cruise ship facilities are located on San Diego Bay, providing facilities necessary for the transfer of goods to and from the region via cargo vessels and for an expanding cruise industry.

Maritime commerce is carried out at two marine terminals located on San Diego Bay – the 10th Avenue Marine Terminal in the City of San Diego and the National City Marine Terminal at 24th Street. Together, the two marine terminals handle approximately 2.5 million tons of cargo annually.

The San Diego region shares a common international border with the municipalities of Tijuana and Tecate in the State of Baja California, Mexico. Three ports of entry serve the region: San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, and Tecate. San Ysidro is the busiest land port of entry in the western hemisphere. It is the region's primary gate for auto and pedestrian traffic in both directions.

Commercial truck traffic uses the Otay Mesa and Tecate ports of entry. In 2001, more than 750,000 trucks crossed the United States/Mexico border. It is estimated that about 30 percent of trucks have a final destination outside San Diego County (SANDAG 2006a). The Otay Mesa port crossing has 100 bays for handling truck inspections and also serves autos and pedestrians. Truck, auto, and pedestrian traffic uses the same facility at Tecate. The Otay Mesa crossing is the busiest commercial crossing along the California-Baja California border. The existing ports of entry infrastructure is already taxed and trade growth is expected to increase border traffic. Short-term improvements at the Otay Mesa port of entry are under evaluation to alleviate congested conditions. A fourth border crossing is planned to the east of Otay Mesa to improve vehicle and commercial truck congestion.

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