

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is an evaluation of the environmental effects associated with the adoption and implementation of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan including its Sustainable Communities Strategy (2050 RTP/SCS). For this EIR, “2050 RTP/SCS” means the Draft 2050 RTP/SCS released by the Board on April 22, 2011 (SANDAG 2011) and available for review at [www.sandag.org/2050rtp](http://www.sandag.org/2050rtp). This Program EIR has been prepared by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.), and the Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA (CEQA Guidelines) (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000 et seq.)

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS EIR

SANDAG is required by statute (Government Code Section 65080 et seq.) and by federal regulation (Title 23 United States Code [USC] Section 134) to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) every 4 years for the San Diego region. Passed in 2008, Senate Bill (SB) 375 encourages planning practices that create sustainable communities. SB 375 charged the California Air Resources Board (CARB) with setting regional targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from cars and light trucks by 2020 and by 2035. The bill also requires California Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), such as SANDAG, to prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as part of their RTP. The SCS must show how a region will meet its GHG emissions reduction targets.

SANDAG is the major MPO in the State of California to develop an RTP that includes an SCS (2050 RTP/SCS) under new state mandates outlined in SB 375. The 2050 RTP/SCS seeks to guide the San Diego region toward a more sustainable future by integrating how we use land, develop housing, and plan transportation. The 2050 RTP/SCS also serves as the long-range plan designed to coordinate and manage future regional transportation improvements, services, and programs among the various agencies operating within the San Diego region. Any transportation improvement project receiving federal or state transportation funds must be included in the RTP. By law, an RTP must span a period of at least 20 years into the future. The planning horizon of the 2050 RTP/SCS will be to the year 2050. The 2050 RTP/SCS EIR includes an analysis of impacts for the interim horizon years of 2020 and 2035 in addition to the horizon year of the plan: 2050. The last comprehensive EIR for an RTP was completed for the 2030 RTP by SANDAG in November 2007. A new EIR for the 2050 RTP/SCS is necessary to adequately evaluate significant environmental effects of the plan and to indicate the manner in which such significant effects can be avoided or mitigated.

The purpose of an EIR, under the provisions of CEQA, is “to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided” (PRC Section 21002.1[a]). This EIR is intended to provide information to public agencies, the general public, and decision makers regarding environmental impacts related to the adoption and implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS. Mitigation has been recommended where feasible to reduce or avoid significant environmental impacts identified in the analysis. These mitigation measures, including a description of timing of implementation, agency responsibility, and monitoring requirements, will be described in a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (MMRP) document. Once the EIR is completed, the MMRP will be prepared for consideration along with the proposed project and the EIR in the project approval process.

It is not the purpose of this EIR to recommend either approval or denial of a project. CEQA requires that decision makers balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental risks. Even if

environmental impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable, the 2050 RTP/SCS may still be approved if decision makers determine that social, economic, or other benefits outweigh the significant and unavoidable impacts. A “statement of overriding considerations” would then be required (Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines), stating the specific reasons for approving the project, based on information contained in the EIR and other information in the record.

This EIR represents the best effort to evaluate the 2050 RTP/SCS given its long-term planning horizon. It can be anticipated that conditions will change; however, the assumptions used are the best available at the time of preparation and reflect existing knowledge of patterns and characteristics of development, travel patterns, modes of travel, and technological factors. As previously stated, the RTP/SCS will be updated every 4 years and will continue to rely on the best information available at the time of any future updates. At future stages in planning and implementation of projects included in the 2050 RTP/SCS, a separate, project-specific CEQA evaluation will be prepared by the appropriate project implementation agency(ies).

## 1.2 LEAD AND RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

A lead agency is defined as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project that may have a significant impact upon the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15367). Responsible agencies are defined as those public agencies that propose to carry out or approve a project for which a lead agency is preparing an EIR, and includes all agencies other than the lead agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381).

SANDAG serves as the lead agency with primary approval of the 2050 RTP/SCS. SANDAG is San Diego’s MPO and regional planning agency, composed of the region’s 18 cities and county government, and serves as the forum for regional decision-making. No responsible agencies for this EIR have been identified.

## 1.3 SCOPE OF THIS EIR

The 2050 RTP/SCS EIR is a Program EIR. CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a) defines a Program EIR as an EIR that may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental impacts that can be mitigated in similar ways.

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of projects developed through the stated planning horizon. A Program EIR has several advantages. First, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis. Second, it allows the lead agency to look at the broad, regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15143, a lead agency should limit the EIR’s discussion of environmental effects to specific issues where significant effects on the environment may occur. Implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS may result in significant adverse effects on a number of environmental issue areas. These issue areas are listed below and are the focus of this EIR:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agriculture and Forest Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources and Paleontology
- Environmental Justice

- Geology, Soils, and Minerals
- Global Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services, Utilities, and Energy
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Water Supply

## 1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW AND PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Consistent with the requirements of CEQA, SANDAG conducted an extensive outreach process during the preparation of this EIR to contact affected agencies, organizations, and individuals who may have an interest in the 2050 RTP/SCS. This early and open consultation with the relevant agencies, organizations, and individuals assisted in defining the scope of this EIR as discussed above in Section 1.3.

### Notice of Preparation

SANDAG initiated the EIR scoping process on April 19, 2010, through the circulation of a Notice of Preparation (NOP). The NOP was received by the State Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) at the California Office of Planning and Research on April 19, 2010. The Clearinghouse is responsible for monitoring compliance of state agencies in providing timely responses. The Clearinghouse assigned state identification number SCH No. 2010041061 to this EIR.

The NOP provides formal notification to all federal, state, and local agencies involved with funding or approval of the project, and to other interested organizations and members of the public, that an EIR will be prepared for the project. The NOP is intended to encourage interagency communication concerning the proposed action and provide sufficient background information about the proposed action so that agencies, organizations, and individuals can respond with specific comments and questions on the scope and content of the EIR. A copy of the NOP is provided in Appendix A, as well as all the written responses received during the initial 30-day NOP period. The comment period was extended an additional 30 days to June 18, 2010. These additional comment letters received during the extended comment period are also included in Appendix A.

### Public Scoping and Other Consultation Efforts

Consistent with PRC Section 21083.9, SANDAG held a series of five public scoping meetings throughout the San Diego region to gather further feedback on the scope and content of the environmental information to be addressed in the 2050 RTP/SCS EIR. Attendees included representatives from SANDAG's Regional Planning Technical Working Group, Regional Planning Stakeholders Working Group, and members of the public. SANDAG transcribed minutes from the meeting, which are included in Appendix A.

In addition, SANDAG implemented a comprehensive public outreach and involvement program to support the development of the 2050 RTP/SCS. The 2050 RTP Public Involvement Program is based on the SANDAG Public Participation Plan, which was adopted by the SANDAG Board of Directors in 2009. The 2050 RTP Public Involvement Plan outlines specific activities for communicating with the public throughout the development of the RTP. SANDAG prepared the Public Involvement Plan with input from the general public, the Regional Planning Stakeholders Working Group (SWG), the Policy Advisory

Committees, and the Board of Directors. Parallel to this effort, a tribal consultation work plan was developed. (A detailed discussion of the public participation is provided in RTP/SCS Chapter 9.)

### Comments on the Draft 2050 RTP/SCS EIR

The 2050 RTP/SCS EIR ~~was~~ available for a 55-day public review, which is longer than the minimum review period required by CEQA. It was authorized for release at the April 22, 2011 Board of Directors meeting, and released on June 7, 2011. A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the EIR ~~has~~ been published in local newspapers and mailed to an extensive distribution list, and the EIR ~~has~~ been posted on SANDAG's website (the URL is provided below). SANDAG ~~has~~ filed a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, indicating that this EIR ~~has~~ been completed and ~~was~~ available for review and comment by the public. In addition, Draft EIRs ~~were~~ ~~have been~~ distributed to those who provided comments on the NOP, the SANDAG Board of Directors, managers of all 19 jurisdictions, and public libraries throughout the region. Several public hearings on the proposed 2050 RTP/SCS and the EIR ~~have been~~ ~~were~~ scheduled throughout the San Diego region. Workshops and public hearings ~~were~~ scheduled and held as follows:

- Tuesday, June 7 – Encinitas Community & Senior Center  
1140 Oakcrest Park Dr., Encinitas, 92024
- Wednesday, June 8 – The Joe & Vi Jacobs Center  
404 Euclid Ave., San Diego, 92114
- Thursday, June 9 – Sunrise Community Church  
8805 North Magnolia Ave., Santee, 92071
- Monday, June 13 – Martin Luther King Jr. Center  
140 East 12th St., National City, 91950
- Thursday, June 16 – San Marcos City Council Chambers  
1 Civic Center Dr., San Marcos, 92069

Public hearings also ~~will be~~ ~~were~~ held as part of these regularly scheduled meetings:

- Friday, June 10, 10 a.m. – SANDAG Board of Directors Meeting
- Tuesday, June 21, 4 to 6 p.m. – Regional Planning Stakeholders Working Group (SWG) Meeting

It is anticipated that the Final EIR will be considered for certification at the SANDAG Board of Directors meeting on October 28, 2011, along with the adoption of the 2050 RTP/SCS.

~~The Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (2050 RTP/SCS) was distributed for public review on July 7 2011, initiating a 55-day public review period ending on August 1, 2010. The document was made available online and at SANDAG's office. During this public review period, a total of 1823 letters and emails were received before the close of the public comment period. After the close of the public comment period, 4 more letters were submitted. The document was made available online and at SANDAG's office, the address listed below. Comments on the 2050 RTP/SCS EIR may be made in writing before the end of the comment period (August 1, 2011). Oral comments at the public hearing will also be accepted. Written comments should be mailed or emailed to the address provided below. Following the close of the public comment period, responses to the comments from all letters received on the Draft EIR, including those received after the close of the public comment period, will be prepared, and published as Appendix G, and, together with this EIR, will constitute the Final EIR. Mail comments to the following:~~

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San Diego Association of Governments  
Attention: Rob Rundle, Principal Regional Planner  
401 B Street, Suite 800  
San Diego, CA 92101  
Email: [rru@sandag.org](mailto:rru@sandag.org)

The EIR can be reviewed at the location listed above, as well as online at the following URL: [www.sandag.org/2050rtpeir](http://www.sandag.org/2050rtpeir).

## 1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THIS EIR

This EIR includes an Executive Summary followed by eight separate chapters. The Executive Summary includes a brief project description and summarizes project impacts and mitigation measures. Chapter 1.0 is this Introduction. Chapter 2.0 provides a detailed description of the 2050 RTP/SCS. Chapter 3.0 includes the regional environmental setting, providing a brief overview of physical characteristics of the San Diego region. Chapter 4.0 includes the approach to the environmental impacts analysis and CEQA required disclosures. Subsections of Chapter 4.0 are separated by environmental issue area and include detailed existing conditions, regulatory framework, significance criteria, analysis of project impacts, and mitigation measures designed to reduce significant impacts as necessary. An analysis of cumulative impacts is included in Chapter 5.0. Chapter 6.0 provides an analysis of alternatives to the proposed project. Chapter 7.0 contains other considerations required by CEQA, including growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental impacts, and areas of no significant impact. Chapter 8.0 includes reference information.

Appendices consist of the NOP and written comments received during the NOP period and at the scoping meetings (Appendix A) and technical documents (Appendices B–~~EF~~) included as supporting information to the EIR. These appendices are combined and bound together in a document separate from this EIR. Responses to comments received on the Draft EIR were prepared and have been published as Appendix G. In compliance with PRC Section 21081.6, an MMRP will be prepared as a separately bound document that will be considered in conjunction with the certification of the Final EIR and project approval.

## 1.6 APPROACH TO THIS EIR ANALYSIS

### Level of Analysis

The programmatic nature of the 2050 RTP/SCS necessitates a general approach to the evaluation of existing conditions and potential impacts associated with implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS. As a programmatic document, this EIR presents a regionwide assessment of the impacts of the 2050 RTP/SCS. These impacts are examined for both transportation network improvements, including transportation policies, programs, and action items, as well as regional growth and land use changes through 2050. Because the 2050 RTP/SCS is a long-term document intended to guide actions over 40 years into the future, program-level and qualitative evaluation is involved. Quantitative analyses are provided where applicable with available information. During future stages in planning and implementation of specific transportation improvements identified in the 2050 RTP/SCS, project-specific CEQA documents will be prepared by the appropriate project implementation agency.

### Timeframe

For analytical purposes, the baseline year (existing conditions) examined throughout this EIR is 2010, corresponding with the release of the NOP. While the year 2050 is considered to be the horizon year, future conditions and impacts have also been analyzed for the target years of 2020 and 2035, in addition

to the year 2050. The impact analyses are organized in this manner to disclose the impacts of the 2050 RTP/SCS meeting targets for GHG emission reductions under SB 375. Chapter 4.0 includes a detailed discussion of the organization and approach to the analysis for each section contained in this EIR.