Chapter 1

Executive Summary

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San Diegans love where they live. From the terrific weather to the stunning natural landscapes of the coast, inland valleys, mountains, and desert, our region has a lot to offer. But sometimes it can be tough to get around. Commutes often are congested, and many people have limited access to public transit. Residents want an improved transportation system.

The 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP or the Plan) is the blueprint for a regional transportation system that further enhances our quality of life, promotes sustainability, and offers more mobility options for people and goods.

The 2050 RTP outlines projects for transit, rail and bus services, express or managed lanes, highways, local streets, bicycling, and walking. The result will be an integrated, multimodal transportation system by mid-century.

The Chapters in this document, including the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) in Chapter 3 and all of the appendices, constitute the Plan.

A New Mandate, a Better Future

The vision for our region’s future has evolved, changing from one that pictured steady expansion to the east, to one that placed a greater value on protecting open space, to one that now focuses on a compact urban core where more people live and use fewer resources. Local governments have been working toward this vision for decades.

The 2050 RTP contains a robust transportation network, with a diversity of projects that will provide residents and visitors with a variety of travel choices. The regional transportation network, in conjunction with how local jurisdictions develop land, will provide additional opportunities for walking, biking, getting to work, going to school, shopping, and playing. This Plan, more than
previous ones, improves our region’s network for public transit. It provides more transit choices for today’s and tomorrow’s riders, by improving the existing system and by introducing new access to other areas.

In 2006, Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) was signed into law. It requires California to lower statewide greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. Passed in 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) supports the implementation of AB 32 by encouraging planning practices that create sustainable communities. SB 375 also charged the California Air Resources Board (CARB) with setting regional targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and by 2035. It also calls for California Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), such as the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), also must prepare a SCS. The SCS must show how the region will meet its goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks.

The 2050 RTP and its SCS show that our region will meet or exceed these targets by using land in ways that make developments more compact, conserving open space, and investing in a transportation network that gives residents alternatives to driving alone.

A Vision for Mid-Century

The vision for the 2050 RTP describes a transportation system that:

- Supports a prosperous economy; promotes a healthy and safe environment, including climate change protection; and provides a higher quality of life for all San Diego County residents

- Better links jobs, homes, and major activity centers by enabling more people to use transit and to walk and bike; efficiently transports goods; and provides fast, convenient, and effective transportation options for all people

A Strategy for More Sustainable Communities

The 2050 RTP and its SCS seek to guide the San Diego region toward a more sustainable future by integrating land use, housing, and transportation planning to create communities that are more sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented, and compact.

Planning for future patterns of density, how people get around, and how land is used is really driven by one goal: creating great places to live, work, and play. The path toward living more sustainably is clear: focus housing and job growth in urbanized areas where there is existing and planned transportation infrastructure, protect sensitive habitat and open space, invest in a transportation network that provides residents and workers with transportation options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and implement the Plan through incentives and collaboration.

Although SB 375 went into effect recently, the building blocks of the SCS have formed the foundation of transportation planning in the San Diego region for many years. This planning effort is now focused more sharply on promoting sustainability as our region strives to meet new requirements mandated by SB 375. The building blocks of the SCS include:

- A land use pattern that accommodates our region’s future employment and housing needs, and protects sensitive habitats and resource areas

- A transportation network of public transit, managed lanes and highways, local streets, and bikeways and walkways built and maintained with reasonably expected funding
Managing demands on the transportation system (also known as Transportation Demand Management, or TDM) in ways that reduce or eliminate traffic congestion during peak periods of demand.

Managing the transportation system (also known as Transportation System Management, or TSM) through measures that maximize the efficiency of the transportation network.

Innovative pricing policies and other measures designed to reduce vehicle miles traveled and traffic congestion during peak periods of demand.

Ensuring Social Equity on the Road to Sustainability

Roads, freeways, public transit, and other transportation infrastructure can significantly influence the quality of life for a region’s residents by shaping access to housing, jobs, services, and recreational opportunities. Achieving social equity in the development of a comprehensive transportation system is a major regional goal. It requires making investments that provide all residents—regardless of age, race, color, national origin, income, or physical ability—with opportunities to work, shop, study, be healthy, and play.

Without proper planning and development, transportation systems can degrade the quality of life in communities. The construction of roads, freeways, and rail-transit systems has sometimes placed burdens on many lower income and minority communities. At times, new transportation projects have physically divided communities, resulting in long-lasting social and economic costs. It is important to understand the impacts of transportation investments on our most vulnerable communities in order to better plan for the future.

Promoting social equity and environmental justice in transportation planning requires involvement from a wide variety of communities and stakeholders. To continue improving transportation planning, SANDAG conducted a significantly more robust, regionwide environmental justice analysis for the 2050 RTP. From the beginning, it engaged affected communities in the planning process. SANDAG incorporated their issues and concerns into the design and decision-making process, as well as in the definition of affected communities and the development of indicators to measure the performance of the transportation system. These efforts ensured that low income and minority communities will share in the benefits of transportation investments without bearing a disproportionate burden from the system. The 2050 RTP includes metrics and performance measures to assess how well the Plan’s improvements are distributed in these communities (Chapter 4, Social Equity: Title VI and Environmental Justice).

Paying for the Vision

The Plan is based on current and reasonably available financial resources projected out to 2050. These resources are applied to the estimated capital, operating, maintenance, and rehabilitation costs of the region’s transportation system through 2050. Total revenues estimated for the 2050 RTP are about $213.8 billion (escalated to the year that dollars are expended), including future California High Speed Rail funds. Local funds make up 55 percent of the total revenue, with state and federal funds providing 28 percent and 17 percent, respectively. Revenues are phased in by decade. Projects that are listed in the initial years of the 2050 RTP are the same as those that are either already programmed in the five-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) through FY 2015, or are anticipated to be included in...
future near-term updates of the RTIP. The RTIP is a multi-billion, five-year capital listing of all major highway, arterial, transit, bikeway, and TransNet Program projects.

**Offering More Travel Choices**

Over the past several decades our region has made substantial investments in Trolley, COASTER, SPRINTER, and local bus networks, in addition to investing in our regional highway system. As our region continues to grow, the 2050 RTP considers several new developments. They include the requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; our region’s aging population; increasing patterns of infill and redevelopment in the western third of the region; and the growing emphasis on walking, bicycling, and other forms of active transportation on public health.

The Plan envisions an ambitious and far-reaching transit network that significantly expands the role that transit plays in meeting our region’s needs for mobility. The goal is to create the kind of public transit infrastructure and services offered by “world-class” transit systems.

The Plan’s network for public transit is strengthened by reinforcing and upgrading existing transit services in key urban corridors, and by pursuing new transit projects in the most urbanized areas of our region with a broad combination of transit modes (Figure 1.1).

These improvements include:

- Double tracking the coastal rail corridor to enable more frequent and reliable service on the COASTER and Amtrak
- Enhancements to the existing Trolley system, including a tunnel in downtown San Diego, to increase the frequency of service and add limited-stop, commuter express services
- Double tracking the SPRINTER rail lines to increase the frequency of service and add limited-stop express services
- Adding new Trolley and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines to provide high-quality regional transit connections along high-demand corridors
- Developing a system of high-speed Rapid Bus services in key arterial corridors to supplement local bus services
- Creating a system of high-frequency services on many of the existing local bus routes in urban core areas
- Reintroducing streetcar and/or shuttle/circulator services to improve mobility within downtown areas
- The Plan envisions an ambitious and far-reaching transit network that significantly expands the role that transit plays in meeting our region’s needs for mobility.

As shown in Figure 1.1, new Trolley/SPRINTER lines would connect to more communities. Among the improvements:

- SPRINTER service would be extended to south Escondido
- A north-south Trolley corridor would be developed along the I-805 corridor that would connect University City, Kearny Mesa, Mission Valley, Mid-City, southeastern San Diego, National City, Chula Vista, and San Ysidro
- Intersecting this I-805 Trolley corridor would be three new east-west Trolley lines between University City and Mira Mesa, from Pacific Beach to East County via Kearny Mesa and Mission Valley, and from downtown San Diego to San Diego State
The Goods Movement Strategy of the 2050 RTP considers the growing importance of freight and goods movement to our region’s economic prosperity, and it seeks to balance regional and national freight priorities.

In recent RTPs, the region’s vision for a flexible highway system has been refined. This system serves multiple purposes and different types of travel. It accommodates buses and other transit vehicles, automobiles, the movement of freight, and bicycles. Most of the highway improvements included in the 2050 RTP offer new express or managed lanes that support carpooling, vanpooling, and BRT services. Express lanes also accommodate fee-paying patrons (similar to the FasTrak® system, in which fees support transit services along the I-15 corridor). Figure 1.2 illustrates the Plan’s highway network.

The 2050 RTP also recognizes that the smooth flow of traffic on local streets and on arterials is needed to improve mobility on highways and regional arterial networks. This is especially true where public transit and other alternatives are not as feasible as they are in our region’s urban areas.

Regional facilities and services connect to larger transportation systems beyond the San Diego region’s boundaries (freeways and rail networks in other parts of the state and nation), as well as to local systems of streets, roads, and transit services in our communities.

Freight also is moved on the regional transportation network, and it requires good access and connectivity to local logistics centers and terminals to ensure the efficient movement of goods onto and off the network. The Goods Movement Strategy of the 2050 RTP considers the growing importance of freight and goods movement to our region’s economic prosperity, and it seeks to balance regional and national freight priorities (Chapter 6, Systems Development).

Although the majority of goods are moved by truck, the San Diego region relies on air cargo, maritime, pipeline and rail systems, intermodal centers, and international border crossings.
Figure 1.1
2050 Revenue Constrained Transit Network
October 2011

- High Speed Rail *
- Commuter Rail
- Light Rail Transit (LRT)
- Express LRT
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Peak Period BRT
- Streetcar
- Rapid Bus
- Local Bus

* High Speed Rail alignment based on the California High Speed Rail Authority’s 2055 Statewide Programmatic EIR/EIS preferred route.
Figure 1.2
2050 Revenue Constrained Highway Network
October 2011

Improvements
- Managed Lanes
- Transit Lanes
- General Purpose Lanes
- Toll Lanes
- Operational Improvements
- Freeway Connectors
- HOV Connectors
- Freeway & HOV Connectors

C = Conventional Highway
F = Freeway
HOV = High Occupancy Vehicle
MB = Movable Barrier
ML = Managed Lanes
OPS = Operational Improvements
T = Toll Lanes
TL = Transit Lanes
The Plan also includes a multimodal strategy to improve airport access for cars, shuttles, trucks, and other surface transportation. The goal is to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of existing and planned aviation facilities by using all the transportation infrastructure available.

Making bicycling and walking viable options for everyday travel can increase mobility, reduce greenhouse gases, and improve public health. Implementing the Regional Bicycle Plan (Riding to 2050, The San Diego Regional Bicycle Plan) and the bicycle and pedestrian master plans of local jurisdictions will help in this effort. The 2050 RTP also includes the Safe Routes to School Strategy, which supports communities and schools that promote walking and bicycling to school (see Chapter 6, Systems Development).

Planning in the San Diego region has traditionally been considered as bounded by San Diego County. However, over the years, our perceived borders have expanded. San Diego County has increasingly close ties to its neighboring counties, and to the Republic of Mexico. This challenges us to think of our region as extending beyond our borders. We also are home to 17 tribal governments, each of which is a sovereign nation within our region. Our region’s distinct characteristics present a variety of opportunities and challenges for coordinating transportation planning along our interregional and binational borders.

Making Better Use of What We Have

Reducing traffic congestion, travel times, and air pollution depend on effectively managing the region’s transportation system. Known as Transportation Systems Management, or TSM, the effort is a core component of the 2050 RTP and its SCS. Its goal is to smooth the flow of traffic on streets and highways, eliminate bottlenecks, and enhance public transit. TSM investments in the 2050 RTP enhance today’s transportation network and ensure that future improvements realize their full potential.

Successful management of the transportation system depends on implementing several techniques and incorporating advanced technologies. On-ramp lights that meter the flow of traffic onto freeways, timing traffic signals on key arterial and local streets, tracking public transit vehicles, and keeping travelers informed with message signs on roadways and updates on the Web and telephone all help keep traffic flowing. Transportation planners also are exploring new strategies that employ cutting-edge technology, such as wireless sensors and detection.
movement of goods all have led to mounting congestion on our roadways. These trends challenged our ability to keep pace with growing travel demands and to operate a reliable transportation system.

Improvements to transportation infrastructure require many years and significant resources to complete. However, managing the demand for various forms of transportation, also known as Transportation Demand Management, or TDM, can provide flexible and cost-effective solutions. Typical TDM programs include ridesharing initiatives such as carpooling, vanpooling, and buspooling; promoting alternative work schedules and teleworking; and promoting bicycling, walking, and the use of public transit. These programs reduce the overall amount of travel, making more efficient use of our existing roadways and maximizing the movement of people and goods.

A Public Plan, With Public Input

SANDAG implemented a comprehensive public outreach and involvement program to support the development of the 2050 RTP and its SCS. The 2050 RTP Public Involvement Plan 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 outlined specific activities for communicating with the public throughout the development of the RTP and its SCS. 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.

To engage low income and minority communities early in the planning process, SANDAG established a mini-grant program to focus the SWG directly on their concerns in a timely and meaningful way, and to provide resources so community collaboratives could reach out to their constituents throughout the process.

The goals, strategies, and tactics outlined in the Public Involvement Plan and provided in Chapter 9 and Technical Appendix 6 have guided outreach efforts. These efforts have built awareness of the regional transportation planning process, and identified opportunities for stakeholders to shape our region’s future.

Built with contributions for a wide range of stakeholders and a broad cross section of the public, the 2050 RTP sets a course for how our region can be a healthier, more livable, and more equitable place to live. How we move from place to place – to work, to shop, and to play – shapes much of our quality of life. Let’s implement this Plan for a San Diego region where that quality remains high.