

Chapter 9

From the Ground Up: A Comprehensive Public Involvement Program that Generated Input from Stakeholders Throughout San Diego County

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2050 Regional Transportation Plan

From the Ground Up

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) implemented a comprehensive public outreach and involvement program to support the development of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP or the Plan) and its Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The 2050 RTP Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is based on the SANDAG Public Participation Plan, adopted by the SANDAG Board of Directors on December 18, 2009, per Government Code Section 65980(b)(2)(E).

Developing the Public Involvement Plan

The PIP established a process and outlined specific activities for communicating with the public throughout the RTP development process, per Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(F) (see Technical Appendix 6).

SANDAG developed the PIP with input received from the general public, Regional Planning Stakeholders Working Group (SWG), Regional Planning Committee, Transportation Committee, and the Board of Directors. Parallel to this, a tribal consultation work plan was developed (see Appendix C).

The goals, strategies, and tactics outlined in the PIP guide outreach efforts to build awareness of the regional transportation planning process and to identify opportunities for stakeholders to shape the region's future. The plan also describes SANDAG efforts to gather input on developing priorities and project selection criteria, as well as transportation networks, funding alternatives, how to meet greenhouse gas emissions targets, and other elements of the 2050 RTP. These efforts were coordinated during regular collaborations with the Regional Planning SWG and recipients of community-based outreach grants. The PIP also guided efforts to

gather input from individuals, organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders in the development of the 2050 RTP.



The Public Involvement Plan guides outreach efforts to build awareness of the regional transportation planning process and identify opportunities for stakeholders to shape the region's future.

Goals

The following broad goals were established to guide the outreach process.

- Raise awareness of the 2050 RTP as the region's updated blueprint for a transportation system that enhances our quality of life and meets our mobility needs for the future
- Stimulate dialogue about the transportation challenges facing the San Diego region
- Provide the public with opportunities to offer input on the 2050 RTP and its SCS, a new feature of the 2050 RTP required by state climate change legislation

- Develop and incorporate into the plan realistic solutions that address the diverse mobility needs of the region’s residents, visitors, and business people
- Build public support for transportation improvements outlined in the 2050 RTP

Objectives

The following measurable objectives contributed to accomplishing the goals of the outreach process.

- Gather input from a wide variety of individuals, organizations, agencies, and local governments throughout the 2050 RTP development and decision-making process
- Provide timely and accessible public information about the proposed policies and plans contained in the 2050 RTP to a broad range of regional stakeholders
- Make public information accessible in a variety of formats and languages, using easy-to-understand language and concepts, and a variety of media including innovative visualization techniques
- Hold public workshops and meetings that foster meaningful dialogue and result in effective and inclusive decision-making
- Consider public input at each decision-making milestone in the development of the 2050 RTP
- Meet or exceed local, state, and federal guidelines and requirements for involving the public in the development of the RTP

Strategies

Pursuing the following strategies helped achieve the goals and objectives outlined above.

- Establish a clear project identity to convey information about the 2050 RTP, its SCS, and other RTP elements
- Develop materials on the RTP and other components using easily understood language
- Develop a marketing campaign to build awareness and gather public input
- Regularly involve public stakeholders in the process to foster understanding and agreement on issues related to the development of the 2050 RTP
- Communicate in a variety of ways to keep the public up-to-date on the development of the 2050 RTP, including through presentations; one-on-one and small group meetings; public workshops; written materials; online communications; social media; and the news media



- Provide the public with up-to-date information about the 2050 RTP on a regular basis through presentations, Web site and online communications, written materials, and news
- Provide information and notices on the 2050 RTP, public workshops, and other events to the SANDAG Board and Committee members so they can share information with their constituents and stakeholders
- Document and address public comments received during the public involvement process
- Provide information to the public about the 2050 RTP development process and promote opportunities for input and comments
- Provide information to decision-makers on the comments received throughout the public involvement process
- Assess the effectiveness of the PIP as key phases conclude (i.e., following workshops or the release of draft documents), to evaluate how strategies are working and what enhancements could be made

Community-Based Outreach

To help ensure that public input for the 2050 RTP reflected the diversity of the San Diego region, SANDAG partnered with community-based organizations in Communities of Concern to ensure that local voices were heard. The goal of the Community-Based Outreach Mini-Grant program is to engage and encourage diverse, inclusive, and active public participation from stakeholders in specific communities who traditionally are not involved in regional public policy planning. These stakeholders include low-income households, seniors, minorities, people with disabilities, and other groups.

Through a competitive bid process, SANDAG awarded grant funding to eight community-based organizations to conduct outreach. This outreach was coordinated with other public involvement activities by SANDAG to help prepare the RTP, update the SANDAG Public Participation Plan, and develop other regional initiatives.

Each organization that received a grant appointed one representative to serve as a member of the Regional Planning SWG. The following community-based organizations worked on this outreach and involvement effort:

- Able-Disabled Advocacy
- All Congregations Together
- Casa Familiar
- Chula Vista Community Collaborative
- El Cajon Community Collaborative
- Friends of Adult Day Health Care Centers
- Linda Vista Collaborative
- San Ysidro Business Association

Each group conducted outreach using strategies and techniques to reach residents and stakeholders in the communities they serve. A summary of the reports, public input, and comments from the community-based organizations is included in Technical



Appendix 6. This input was used to help develop the project evaluation criteria, performance measures, environmental justice analyses, network scenarios, and other elements of the 2050 RTP.

Public Workshops/ Public Hearings

Spring 2010 Public Workshops

In spring 2010, SANDAG held five subregional public workshops to provide information and gather input for the development of the 2050 RTP (Table 9.1). These workshops provided the public with information on the Urban Area Transit Strategy and transportation networks, the Notice of Preparation for the 2050 RTP Environmental Impact Report (EIR), and the greenhouse gas target setting process, which is a requirement of Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008) (SB 375).

Members of the Regional Planning SWG and community-based organizations helped structure the workshop format and assisted with outreach by serving as workshop co-hosts.

Spring 2011 Public Workshops/ Public Hearings

To secure input on the Draft 2050 RTP and SCS, SANDAG conducted five combination public workshops/public hearings and two additional public hearings at regularly scheduled SANDAG meetings (Table 9.2). While SB 375 required two public hearings for public input following the release of the Draft 2050 RTP and SCS, SANDAG held seven hearings to maximize opportunities for public input.

Staff considered the feedback from the spring 2010 public workshops in developing the format for the 2011 outreach. E-mail notification was very successful in building awareness of the public workshops/hearings and the public comment period. The workshop format was discussed at a SWG meeting and feedback was incorporated into the format and activities scheduled. For example, SWG members recommended including access to the Envision 2050 visualization tool at the workshops. A computer station was set up so participants could view the Envision 2050 tool at the workshops.

Table 9.1 – 2050 RTP/SCS Public Workshops – Spring 2010

Date	Time	Location
April 26, 2010	4 to 7 p.m.	Escondido City Hall 201 North Broadway Escondido
April 27, 2010	4 to 7 p.m.	Loma Verde Recreation Center 1420 Loma Lane Chula Vista
April 28, 2010	4 to 7 p.m.	Tri-City Medical Center Wellness Center 6250 El Camino Real Carlsbad
May 3, 2010	4 to 7 p.m.	Bayside Community Center 2202 Comstock Street San Diego
May 6, 2010	4 to 7 p.m.	Ronald Reagan Community Center 195 East Douglas Avenue El Cajon

Table 9.2 – 2050 RTP/SCS Public Workshops and Hearings – Spring 2011

Date	Time	Location
June 7, 2011	4 to 7 p.m.	Encinitas Community & Senior Center 1140 Oakcrest Park Drive Encinitas
June 8, 2011	4 to 7 p.m.	The Joe & Vi Jacobs Center 404 Euclid Avenue San Diego
June 9, 2011	4 to 7 p.m.	Sonrise Community Church 8805 North Magnolia Avenue Santee
June 13, 2011	4 to 7 p.m.	Martin Luther King Jr. Center 140 East 12th Street National City
June 16, 2011	4 to 7 p.m.	San Marcos City Council Chambers 1 Civic Center Drive San Marcos
Draft 2050 RTP and SCS Public Hearings		
June 10, 2011	10 a.m.	SANDAG Board Meeting 401 B Street San Diego
June 21, 2011	5 p.m.	Regional Planning Stakeholders Working Group Meeting 4050 Taylor Street San Diego

All workshops were conducted in an open house format where participants were invited to attend at any time during the workshop; review maps, displays, and information; ask questions of staff; complete comment cards; or speak to a bilingual English/Spanish transcriber to have their comments recorded. The public hearings were officiated by a SANDAG Board member. Transcriptions were produced and provided to the SANDAG Board of Directors and Policy Advisory Committees, as well as provided to the general public.

In total, more than 160 participants attended the workshops. While many comments were received at the workshops/hearings, staff encouraged participants also to access the other tools to provide feedback.

Public Outreach Activities

Public outreach activities, including meetings, presentations, community events, personal contacts, notices, and newsletters, were tracked and recorded to document the wide range of efforts that SANDAG employed to communicate with people throughout the region during the development of the 2050 RTP. These activities are included in table format in Technical Appendix 6.

The Public Involvement and Outreach Activities, included in table format in Technical Appendix 6, list 2050 RTP elements that have been presented since spring 2009 at meetings of the SANDAG Board of Directors, Policy Advisory Committees, Regional Planning SWG, and other working groups and community organizations. These meetings were promoted on the SANDAG Web site, and notices for them were distributed to

opt-in e-mail lists. Key milestones are featured at www.sandag.org/news.

These activities also included outreach to affordable housing advocates, transportation advocates, neighborhood and community groups, environmental advocates, builder representatives, broad-based business organizations, landowners, commercial property interests, and homeowner associations (see Technical Appendix 6). Through the 2050 RTP Speakers Bureau, presentations were made to groups representing these interests in order to disseminate information and provide opportunities for input and feedback. In addition, regular communications via newsletter, invitations, and e-mail provided ongoing updates and information on the 2050 RTP development process and how to get involved.

Through the Board of Directors, Policy Advisory Committees, Technical Working Groups, Stakeholder Working Groups, and other meetings and workshops, SANDAG consulted with agencies responsible for land use, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation (see Technical Appendix 6).

SANDAG placed advertising in 17 print and online publications to promote the spring 2011 public workshops/public hearings schedule. Public input opportunities and the meeting schedule also were promoted on all MTS and NCTD bus, trolley, and rail vehicles in the region. E-mail blasts were distributed to more than 10,000 subscribers, and the SANDAG Facebook page promoted the workshops and public input opportunities. Extensive press coverage was garnered in local and regional newspapers and on television news broadcasts. See additional advertising and notification activities in table format in Technical Appendix 6.

SANDAG promoted several methods by which the public could submit comments on the 2050 RTP, SCS, EIR, and other elements. They include an online form in English and Spanish; printed comment form in English and Spanish; e-mail at: 2050rtp@sandag.org; a toll-free telephone number at (877) 277-5736; a fax number at (619) 699-1905; and U.S. mail or delivery to SANDAG.

Nearly 200 presentations (see Technical Appendix 6) were made between April 2009 and September 2011 throughout the region at business and community organizations. These included chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, taxpayer advocate groups, community collaboratives and community planning groups, local jurisdictions and agencies, trade associations, and other organizations.

A table included in Technical Appendix 6 details the general public involvement planning process that supports the development of the 2050 RTP, and it identifies activities that comply with SB 375 requirements. The tribal consultation process for the 2050 RTP was carried out in a parallel time frame, but it followed a government-to-government framework.

As with other stakeholder groups, input was sought from tribal nations on each step of the process that led to the selection of the Revenue Constrained Transportation Scenario, which forms the basis of the 2050 RTP, including:

- Goals/Objectives
- Project Evaluation Criteria
- Performance Measures
- Travel Times in Corridors

- Sustainable Communities Strategy
- Alternative Scenarios

With input from the Tribal Working Group, the SANDAG Board on June 11, 2010, approved the 2050 RTP Project Evaluation Criteria. These incorporate tribal lands into the overall set of criteria for transit and highway corridors and connectors, as well as the movement of goods.

This effort is summarized in the Government-to-Government Framework with Tribal Nations section of Chapter 6 and detailed in Appendix C.

Public Opinion Survey

SANDAG conducted a public opinion survey in June 2010. The survey provided answers to a number of questions to provide input for the development of the 2050 RTP. Among them: What are residents' priorities when it comes to building more transportation infrastructure, improving transit, and preserving open space? How should the region pay for new infrastructure? Are residents aware of new

legislation mandating a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks?

SANDAG hired True North Research to conduct a regionwide telephone survey that asked residents about transportation system priorities, gauged awareness of new legislation mandating a reduction in greenhouse gases, and gathered information on what methods the public supports to reduce greenhouse gases from cars and light trucks. The information in the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan: Public Opinion Survey Report (see Technical Appendix 6) helped SANDAG make critical decisions about the 2050 RTP, its SCS, transportation networks, funding priorities, and other transportation infrastructure initiatives.

A total of 1,200 registered voters in the San Diego region were selected using stratified random sampling. This sample of people provided statistically reliable estimates for the region as a whole, as well as within six planning areas (North County West, North County East, North City, Central San Diego, East County, and South County). The study employed a strategic oversample by planning area to balance the statistical margins of error associated with estimates at the planning area level. SANDAG used the survey results to stimulate additional public policy discussions and provide background data to use for developing the 2050 RTP.

The survey results are posted at www.sandag.org/2050rtp.

Public Input Questionnaire

To support the development of the 2050 RTP, SANDAG also developed a public input questionnaire in English and in Spanish that was available online and in print from June to September 2010.



SANDAG distributed printed copies of the questionnaire at community meetings, and to various stakeholders interested in contributing to the development of the 2050 RTP. An online version of the questionnaire was posted on the SANDAG Web site. Information about answering the questionnaire was posted on the SANDAG Web site, distributed in the rEgion and RTP e-mail newsletters, provided at RTP workshops, and disseminated through community-based outreach. Announcements about the questionnaire also were featured in local and regional newspapers. The public input questionnaire contained the same questions as the RTP public opinion phone survey, with a few modifications so it could be converted to online and printed formats. More than 2,600 community members completed the questionnaire. Only one response per computer was allowed. The public input questionnaire was not designed to be representative of everyone’s opinions, but rather to serve as a forum for public involvement.

While the questionnaire had the same questions as the statistically valid RTP public opinion telephone survey, the sampling process for the two surveys was quite different. Therefore, the results are different. The RTP public opinion telephone survey was designed to be representative of the region’s population. Randomly sampling the population (as was done for the telephone survey) is a scientifically valid way to ensure that the survey results truly represent the views of a majority of residents in the San Diego region. In contrast, people who choose to complete a questionnaire (known as self selection) typically have stronger opinions than the public as a whole. However, the questionnaire did ask more questions about transportation infrastructure and funding priorities than the telephone survey. A report

on the public input questionnaire is posted at www.sandag.org/2050rtp.

RTP Video

A three-minute video, entitled “Our Region. Our Future” and produced in English and Spanish, was designed to engage viewers in the discussion about the region’s future plans for communities, transportation, employment, the economy, and the environment. The video provides an overview of the work, strategies, forecasts, and public input that are serving as guides for the region’s vision through the year 2050.

The 2050 RTP video provides an overview of the work, strategies, forecasts, and public input that are serving as guides for the region’s vision through the year 2050.

Visualization Tool

An interactive Web-based visualization tool – called Envision 2050 – was launched in May 2011 following the release of the Draft 2050 RTP and its SCS. The tool visually demonstrated the priorities, investments, transportation system, and other key elements and concepts in the Draft 2050 RTP. The tool also included a Web-based form in English and Spanish for members of the public to submit public comments.



Public Input on the Draft 2050 RTP

Throughout the development of the 2050 RTP, information was provided and public input gathered on various elements of the Plan. They included infrastructure priorities, performance measures, criteria, networks, and funding priorities. As part of this initial development process, public input and feedback were provided to the Policy Advisory Committees and the Board of Directors so this input could be considered during all stages of the decision-making process.

The PIP guided public outreach efforts to gather input on the 2050 RTP, its SCS, and the Draft 2050 RTP EIR. The Regional Planning SWG and community-based organizations provided strategic input and recommendations that SANDAG followed to provide information and obtain public comment on all elements of the 2050 RTP. Following are key accomplishments from the public outreach effort for the 2050 RTP.

Results

- Successfully outreached to partners and stakeholder networks to build awareness of the 2050 RTP and SCS
- Nearly 200 presentations were provided to groups and organizations throughout the county
- Meeting notifications, updates, and informational e-mail blasts were delivered periodically to more than 10,000 subscribers
- Nearly 2,600 visits were made during an 8-week period to the Envision 2050 Web site (www.envision2050sd.com) – an interactive visualization tool that demonstrated the networks and elements of the Draft 2050 RTP and SCS

- Enhanced participation and input from college students, community-based organizations, transportation advocates, transit riders, environmental groups, taxpayer advocates, and others are included in Technical Appendix 6
- A dedicated Web site at www.sandag.org/2050rtp is regularly updated with information, meetings and workshops, and opportunities to provide public input and comments
- Key documents are translated into Spanish and bilingual Spanish/English staff are available at public workshops, hearings, and other meetings
- Nearly 4,100 comments were received on the Draft 2050 RTP and SCS

The following actions support the Plan’s Public Involvement Chapter recommendations:

Public Involvement	
Actions	Responsible Parties
1. Continue to use the SANDAG Public Participation Plan to guide efforts to provide information and gather input as 2050 RTP programs and projects are implemented.	SANDAG
2. Implement a process for ongoing collaboration with community-based organizations and other stakeholders in SANDAG programs and projects.	SANDAG, community based organizations, and other stakeholders
3. Track, assess, and report on public outreach and involvement efforts that supported the development of the 2050 RTP and SCS.	SANDAG
4. Follow industry best practices and consider using emerging media, trends, and practices as the 2050 RTP progresses.	SANDAG

