JOINT MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

REGIONAL PLANNING TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

AND

CITIES/COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The RPTWG and CTAC may take action on any item appearing on this agenda.

Thursday, June 1, 2006

2 to 4 p.m.

SANDAG Board Room
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101-4231

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AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

• INDEPENDENT TRANSIT PLANNING REVIEW REPORT

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JOINT MEETING
REGIONAL PLANNING TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)
AND
CITIES/COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CTAC)

June 1, 2006

ITEM # RECOMMENDATION

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Members of the Regional Planning Technical Working Group (TWG), the Cities/County Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), and the Independent Transit Peer Review Panel should introduce themselves. TWG Vice Chair Jim Sandoval and CTAC Chair Greg Humora will chair the meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Members of the public will have the opportunity to address the Technical Working Group on any issue within the jurisdiction of the Working Group. Speakers are limited to three minutes each.

REPORTS ITEMS (3)

+3. INDEPENDENT TRANSIT PLANNING REVIEW REPORT (Toni Bates, SANDAG) INFORMATION

The passage of the TransNet extension triggered a commitment to conduct an Independent Transit Planning Review of the transit element of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan to help determine the most effective and cost-efficient service and infrastructure plan for the region. This review process included the hiring of a technical consultant and formation of a Peer Review Panel of transit and land use experts from across North America to help develop the set of issues to be addressed and guide their review. The consultant and peer review panel have met several times over the course of the past year and have completed a report on their findings. The consultant team and peer review panelists will present their findings at this meeting and be available for questions; they will also make a presentation to a joint meeting of the Transportation Committee and Regional Planning Committee at its June 2, 2006, meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETINGS INFORMATION

The next TWG meeting is scheduled on Thursday, June 8, 2006, from 1:15 – 3:15 p.m., and the next CTAC meeting is scheduled on Thursday, July 6, 2006, at 9:30 a.m.

+next to an item indicates an attachment.
Introduction

The passage of the TransNet extension triggered a commitment to conduct an Independent Transit Planning Review (ITPR) of the transit element of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan to help determine the most effective and cost-efficient service and infrastructure plan for the region. This review process included the hiring of a technical consultant and formation of a Peer Review Panel of transit and land use experts from across North America to help develop the set of issues to be addressed and guide their review. The consultant and peer review panel have met several times over the course of the past year and have completed a report on their findings. The consultant team and peer panelists will summarize the findings at this meeting.

Discussion

In February 2005, the Transportation Committee approved an action plan for the Independent Transit Planning Review. This Review included hiring a consultant (Wilbur Smith and Associates) to conduct the technical analysis and the formation of a Peer Review Panel of individuals from outside the San Diego region to bring expert guidance and oversight from transit industry professionals with direct implementation and operating experience. The peer review panel was involved in all aspects of the ITPR process, including participating in the selection of Wilbur Smith and Associates, input on the study process, finalizing the scope of work, and formulating conclusions and recommendations based on the consultant’s work.

The peer review panel is composed of the following individuals:

- **David Mieger, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority** – Mr. Mieger is the Director of Westside Planning and has led the development of both light rail transit (LRT) and bus rapid transit (BRT) projects for the agency.

- **John Bonsall, McCormick/Rankin** – Mr. Bonsall is the former head of OC Transpo, the transit authority in Ottawa, Ontario, where he led development of its bus transitway system. Currently he is with McCormick/Rankin, a consultant firm that has been involved in the development of a number of BRT projects throughout the world.

- **Richard Feder, Pittsburgh Port Authority of Allegheny County** – Mr. Feder serves as Director of Transit Planning and is involved in the planning, implementation, and operations of the agency’s extensive LRT, BRT, and exclusive busway system.
- Phil Selinger, Portland Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon - Mr. Selinger serves as Director of Project Implementation for the agency’s extensive LRT and bus system.

- Linda Cherrington, Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) - Ms. Cherrington serves as Program Manager for TTI’s Transit Mobility Program, which has been involved in several studies involving high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) facilities, BRT, and value pricing; she previously served as Assistant General Manager for the Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority and Chief Executive Officer for LKC Consulting Services in Houston.

- Robert Cervero, University of California Berkeley - Dr. Cervero is professor of City and Regional Planning and is considered a leading expert in transit-oriented development, the land use and economic benefits of transit service, and transit/land use integration

The consultant team and peer review panelists will present their findings at this meeting and be available for questions; they will also make a presentation to a joint meeting of the Transportation Committee and Regional Planning Committee at its June 2, 2006, meeting.

Attachment: 1. Independent Transit Planning Review Executive Summary
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction
In July 2004, the SANDAG Board of Directors adopted the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP). The RCP provided a new framework for integration of local land use and transportation. The RCP established an incentive program to encourage local Smart Growth initiatives coordinated with regional transportation infrastructure investments included in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

In November 2004, 67% of San Diego County voters approved a 40-year extension of TransNet, the region-wide half cent sales tax dedicated to transportation. The TransNet extension provides approximately $14 billion in local revenue to supplement state and federal funding and allows a number of important transportation projects identified in the RTP to advance.

Independent Transit Planning Review Panel
Passage of the TransNet extension included a commitment by the SANDAG Board of Directors to conduct an Independent Transit Planning Review (ITPR) of the public transit system proposed in the RTP. SANDAG’s Transportation Committee endorsed creation of a peer review panel to lead the ITPR. The peer review panel was selected to provide expert guidance to SANDAG so that Smart Growth initiatives emanating from the RCP could be better coordinated with the transit elements of the RTP.

The peer review panel selected by SANDAG was composed of six nationally renowned experts in the integration of public transit and land use. Two were selected from academia, three represented transit agencies and the sixth is a consultant specializing in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The six members of the panel were:

- **David Mieger**, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority,
- **John Bonsall**, McCormick/Rankin,
- **Richard Feder**, Pittsburgh Port Authority of Allegheny County,
- **Phil Selinger**, Portland Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon,
- **Linda Cherrington**, Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), and
- **Robert Cervero**, University of California Berkeley.

Since the panel’s technical expertise and focus was transit and its relationship to land use, the composition of the panel was consistent with SANDAG’s purposes for initiating the ITPR. The panel was not tasked to address matters related to highways and regional mobility, in general. Rather, the purpose of the ITPR was to provide suggestions for updating the transit element of the RTP in 2006-07. The ITPR was a fresh and independent approach, but was conducted internally without a public process. Therefore, it did not have the benefit of input from riders and the community at-large.
The ITPR panel met in several different meetings, in April 2005, July 2005, September 2005, November 2005 and March 2006. During these meetings, the ITPR panel completed several tasks, including:

- Toured key transit corridors,
- Met with SANDAG and Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) staff and working groups,
- Gained background and field knowledge on the scope and intent of the ITPR, and
- Discussed and evaluated the SANDAG long range transit planning and land use initiatives.

Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) was retained to support the Panel’s independent review of SANDAG’s plans. WSA researched issues that were raised by the Panel and facilitated the November 2005 and March 2006 Panel discussions. WSA prepared this report to record issues raised by the panel and to faithfully report the independent panel’s findings, opinions, and suggestions.

Panel Defined Issues
Based on input from the panel, five basic issue-oriented ITPR focus areas were established by SANDAG in July 2005. Specific work tasks were identified for each focus area. These work tasks largely represented specific issues where SANDAG staff desired input from the panel. This ITPR Draft Report is structured around these five focus areas and work tasks as described below.

1. Integration of Regional Transit Vision with Land Use Vision.
   
   - Compare the Mobility 2030 Regional Transportation Plan’s transit element with the emerging Smart Growth Concept map.
   
   - Suggest refinements to the key transit corridors based on: current transit mode shares, updated travel data, existing transit infrastructure, key activity areas, MTS’ Comprehensive Operational Analysis, and NCTD’s Fast Forward plan.
   
   - Research experience with Smart Growth strategies elsewhere, their successes in attracting new riders, institutional barriers that had to be overcome, and financial incentives needed. Discuss their potential application to San Diego.

2. Transit Level of Investment Strategy.
   
   - Refine the Yellow/Red/Blue/Green service concepts in light of current projects, the land use issues from Group 1 Issues, and experience in other cities.
   
   - Develop definitions for different BRT gradations in light of corridor characteristics, speed/transit priorities needed, service frequencies, station spacing, and customer amenities/technologies.
• Evaluate the application, design, and trade-offs of light rail, Managed Lanes, bus guideway, Rapid Bus/enhanced bus investment strategies in light of current Mobility 2030 and Regional Comprehensive Plan goals, existing highway/transit infrastructure, sensitive areas (i.e. open space, habitat areas), financial resources, and capital and operating costs.

• Evaluate the role Smart Growth Opportunity Areas (SGOA) can play in determining the transit level of investment, both in urban and suburban settings.

• Evaluate opportunities for integration of future technologies.

3. BRT and Trolley Operating Cost Model.

• Research BRT cost experience in other North American cities.

• Develop a BRT cost model for the various BRT gradations, calibrated to San Diego costs that factor in the various cost categories, including vehicle maintenance/operations, labor, station maintenance, security, fare collection/inspection, and marketing associated with a BRT operation.

• Evaluate current trolley operating costs to provide comparison with BRT costs.


• Develop operating strategy options for different corridor applications, factoring in land use (densities, Smart Growth opportunities, urban design) and service characteristics (frequencies, span of service, transit markets to be served). Factor in MTS' Comprehensive Operations Analysis and NCTD's Fast Forward service concepts.

• Identify trade-offs between direct (no transfer) transit and trunk/feeder service concepts.

• Evaluate the role of park-and-ride lots and shuttles in enhancing access to regional transit services.

• Apply a reasonable check in terms of matching operating costs for the strategy options with available regional funding for operations.

• Use this information to develop realistic mode-split goals for key transit corridors.
5. Patronage Modeling.

- In conjunction with the update to SANDAG transportation model, evaluate experience in other cities with modeling BRT services.
- Evaluate potential for incorporating market research information into ridership forecasting.
- Identify how, and to what extent, Smart Growth land use should be incorporated in the regional travel modeling process.

Panel Conclusions and Recommendations
The following summarizes conclusions and recommendations developed by the ITPR panel during meetings held in 2005 and 2006. These summary opinions respond directly to the major issues outlined in the previous section. This Executive Summary only briefly touches the many issues studied by the panel. The following are organized into general categories that are not identical to the broad panel issues and tasks, above, nor are they ranked or prioritized in any way. The reader is cautioned that a full understanding of these complex issues cannot be gained from this Executive Summary, alone, and the complete ITPR Report should be consulted for both context and substance.

General Conclusions
- “Software” changes such as behavioral changes, supportive land uses, parking policy, etc. are often a greater determinant of transit system ridership than the “hardware” of building a transportation infrastructure.

- The ITPR panel agrees that the planning process should start with land use, not transportation. However, transit investments can be a key tool to implementing the land use vision.

- Transit investments can help to steer growth into Smart Growth centers/corridors. Highway investment should support (not undermine) livability and transit investment goals.

- The RCP and RTP need to be complimentary and reflect the Region’s true priorities. The RTP should implement transportation policies that reflect the Region’s overall vision and core values established in the RCP. SANDAG appears to be struggling to find the balance between “livability” goals in the RCP and meeting “mobility” needs in the RTP.

- Livability and mobility goals need not conflict if transportation and land use plans are integrated. The SANDAG Smart Growth plan is a start, but its effectiveness is diluted by the effort to apply Smart Growth principles Region-wide. A more effective strategy might be to focus limited resources for Smart Growth incentives
in areas where a more immediate effect could be realized. These same (more urbanized) areas should be better candidates for enhanced transit service linked to Smart Growth land use.

- The “Build out” threshold of an area can be increased and sustained through implementation of Smart Growth principles and through mechanisms such as infill and higher density building. This also sets the stage for livability beyond 2030.

- Transit mode share goals should be set for corridors and sub-areas of the Region where the greatest potential for Smart Growth exists. The resulting transit mode share and land use changes should be monitored by SANDAG to develop a measure of effectiveness for the transit investment.

- Parking policy can play a significant role in influencing transit ridership and developing Smart Growth plans.

- The Downtown region is a key to the success of the regional transportation center. It is the major regional center and should be supported with an efficient, seamless and convenient transit system. Other issues such as capacity, interlining, transit priorities and service levels need to be addressed.

- Considerations should be given to whether or not Downtown San Diego needs its own large, multi-modal transfer station.

- Downtown transit plans should support the recently adopted Downtown Community Plan Update development vision (completed by the Centre City Development Corp.).

- Location of Urban Villages along a corridor should be distributed to ensure that bi-directional travel flows throughout the day.

- There is a certain “self selection” by people who choose to live in communities well-served by transit. The demand for such communities is significant today and will increase in the future because of aging and other demographic trends. It should be possible to identify locations within the Region that have a high potential for future densification, redevelopment, infill, etc., which are also excellent markets for expanded or improved transit service.

- The planning approach should be a top-down effort, starting with creating a good system plan and then bringing the process to the corridor level. Ensuring that a strong critical network is in place to meet modal share is the most important thing.
• Attention to pedestrian circulation and transit access is critically important to success of *Smart Growth* planning and implementation.

• The basis for an efficient and effective transit network is local bus service. Good local service can satisfy essential transportation needs for “transit dependant” populations. Successful local routes with frequent headways and good farebox recovery can be excellent candidates for service upgrades, up to and including BRT. Some of the most successful BRT routes are those that replace or augment successful local bus service.

• Look for one or two “demonstration” or “showcase” projects to create excitement around the transit system and to build political capital. A natural place to start is the “low hanging fruit” opportunities where land use opportunities can be leveraged.

• Don’t use the term “BRT” until the service deserves that title. Experience shows that “branding” is an important component of success. Using BRT on a sub-standard system will just undermine efforts to build public support for BRT.

**Managed Lanes**
The panel took great interest in SANDAG’s plans to implement managed lanes. There was significant variation among panel members on specific conclusions and recommendations, and the following points serve to illustrate this fact.

• The panel noted that the Region’s Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is forecasted to grow approximately 13% faster than the population and that the average freeway speed will increase from approximately 51 mph to 55 mph. The panel recognized that every Metropolitan Planning Organization has a responsibility to plan for Region-wide mobility and a modal balance in the approved RTP. The panel felt that a 38% increase in freeway lane-miles was a highway “heavy” solution to the Region’s future mobility needs and that more emphasis should be given to the balance between highways and transit.

• Having said that, the panel acknowledged that freeways and managed lanes can be used by transit, where available, as multi-modal facilities to serve non-urbanized areas of the Region.

• In addressing the tasks that center on the effectiveness of SANDAG’s *Smart Growth* initiatives and the linkage between transit and land use, the panel felt that, through managed lanes, the current RTP promotes auto-oriented development and makes transit less competitive in serving those markets.

• The full potential of BRT and other bus services operating in the Managed Lane corridors should be maximized by giving priority at congestion bottlenecks within the Managed Lane network and at Managed Lane access/egress points. This is
particularly true when incidents impact traffic flows. By adjusting pricing to maintain free flow conditions and providing priorities at congested times and places, bus use of Managed Lane facilities will be strengthened.

- In general, major transit capital investment (such as stations and park-and-ride facilities) should not be made in the managed lanes that serve less developed areas of the Region. Car pools, express, and feeder bus service should utilize managed lanes; however, the preponderance of transit funding should be applied to corridors that serve higher concentrations of transit riders.

- The I-805 corridor appears to have significant potential for major capital investment and high capacity transit service. This corridor should be studied thoroughly for this purpose during the RTP update.

- Concerning the I-15 Managed Lane BRT concept, the following service options should be investigated to improve this particular facility’s functionality for buses or BRT:
  - Minimize out-of-direction travel for transit users and make transit more visible to the public.
  - Dedicate two of the four lanes to transit and 3-person carpools.
  - Dedicate two of the four lanes to transit and truck lanes.
  - Separate two of the lanes out as a busway, with appropriate design features.
  - Consider a two vs. four lane managed lanes facility.
  - Give priority to buses (and carpools) at access points.

**Mid Coast Corridor**

- The *ITPR* panel supports the re-investigation of alternatives that is taking place for this corridor.

- The UTC portion of the Mid Coast Corridor illustrates where infill, parking management, etc. can support a good transit circulator.

- The panel questions why the BRT mode option with an alignment identical to LRT is being examined. This corridor does not fit well with the strength of BRT, and does not fully exploit the advantages (flexibility, etc.) offered by BRT.

- The Mid Coast evaluation should consider the transit opportunities in the I-805 corridor as well as the potential role of the Coaster.

- The Coaster is existing service that might be altered to meet line-haul demand in this corridor. Other services and modes appear to offer advantages (cost, headways, flexibility) to provide circulation within the UTC area.
• The route configuration with branches at both ends of the transitway (in one of the draft BRT alternatives) appears to maximize the advantages of BRT.

• Natural topographical constraints limit LRT opportunities, and may make BRT a better choice.

• Consider a circulator in the UTC region with fewer Mid Coast trunk line stations.

• Intermediate stations are spaced too far apart and current development densities are too low to support a major capital investment in transit between Old Town and UTC. The corridor has origins and destinations at both ends, but the current land use between these points is not transit supportive. If this can be corrected, and more densification occurs, this corridor could support high capacity transit in the future. Currently, this investment is premature, and transit demand in the corridor can be met more efficiently with high frequency bus service.

• If BRT is selected as the preferred mode, the connection and accommodation of BRT in Downtown San Diego are major issues. Should this service be implemented, it will be important to investigate the construction of an intermodal transfer facility in/near Downtown to connect this BRT corridor with other modes.

Parking Policy
• Parking policy should complement and reinforce Smart Growth. It should reduce incentives to drive by managing both the supply and cost of available parking.

• Generally, there is an inverse relationship between the amount of transit patronage and the amount of destination parking. As the amount of destination parking increases, the tendency to use transit tends to decrease. This should be considered during the RTP update.

• Smart Growth areas can include definitive guidelines for parking including, parking pricing, restrictions, maximums, design guidelines, etc.

• Viable transit needs to be in place to support a more restrictive parking policy. If there are no alternatives to driving, a more restrictive parking policy alone will not be successful in reducing automobile dependency.

• A standard regional parking policy should be incorporated into the seven Smart Growth center definitions.

• Transit Oriented Development (TOD) should not be precluded by putting large parking lots/structures around transit stations. On the other hand, surface parking can be a land banking opportunity to ensure that the land is held for future TOD
opportunities.

- Stop designing parking to provide sufficient space for “maximum events” (i.e. shopping and holidays). Instead, look to innovative programs for lowering parking requirements. For example look to other cities such as Seattle, Portland, Vancouver, etc. One possible way to do this is by instituting parking maximums instead of minimums in the zoning ordinance.

- Examine parking design guidelines to ensure that best practices are being used. Borrow suggestions from other locations where Smart Growth has been a success.

**Transportation Model**

- The SANDAG model is a good state of the practice “engine” that is continuing to receive upgrades.

- The model lacks a discrete BRT mode constant; consequently, BRT performs as if it was LRT. This over-predicts BRT (and transit system) ridership unless all SANDAG BRT service operates with the same parameters and amenities as LRT.

- The regional transportation model may overstate the potential for Smart Growth and infill on Regional land use. Land use inputs to the model should be scrutinized very carefully during the RTP update process to confirm that the true potential for infill is correct.

- Conversely, the model tends to underestimate transit ridership in a “true” TOD area. “Post-processing” adjustments can be made to account for the increased transit ridership that occurs. This can be accomplished during post-processing through application of the “3 D’s” - Density, Diversity and Design (Cervero).

- SANDAG should re-examine the model parameters that are either too lean or too favorable to transit.

- Though it is impossible to upgrade the model in the short term to recognize Smart Growth inputs, the data can use post processing to bring In Smart Growth effects.

- Current capture rates in the model reflect auto-oriented calibration and are therefore too low to predict Smart Growth scenarios.

- Based on professional judgment, the model probably over-predicts future transit ridership if highway congestion is relieved to the extent shown in the model.
Individual Transit Corridors

- More emphasis should be placed on selecting exclusive bus and BRT corridors and busways rather than fitting them into highways. Exclusive bus corridors and busways provide highly visible cues to travelers that options are available to single occupancy vehicle commuting. Exclusive bus facilities tend to be more pedestrian accessible than facilities located in a freeway right-of-way. Since they are more pedestrian accessible they are also more supportive of SANDAG’s Smart Growth goals.

- Look at the possibility of upgrading local streets and Blue Car services for transit solutions, not just at the highway corridors. El Cajon Boulevard is an excellent example of successful local transit service that can be upgraded in phases, leading to a future high capacity BRT corridor.

- Recognize that corridors can be made up of several types of BRT in various segments to make a whole alignment. Look to places like Manchester, England for example.