COMMITTEE ON BINATIONAL REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (COBRO)

The Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) may take action on any item appearing on this agenda.

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

3 to 4:30 p.m.

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

Staff Contact: Héctor Vanegas
(619) 699-1972

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

• DRAFT OTAY MESA-MESA DE OTAY BINATIONAL CORRIDOR STRATEGIC PLAN

• REPORT ON THE CITY OF TIJUANA’S SUBCOMMITTEE ON BINATIONAL AFFAIRS

MISSION STATEMENT

The Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) will advise the Borders Committee of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) concerning both short- and long-term binational related activities, issues, and actions; provide input regarding binational border-related planning and development; and identify ways to assist and coordinate with existing efforts in the binational area. The COBRO will serve as a working group to the SANDAG Borders Committee to facilitate a better understanding of the binational border-related issues and needs of the California-Baja California region.
Welcome to SANDAG! Members of the public may speak to the COBRO on any item at the time that the Committee is considering the item. Please complete a Speaker's Slip which is located in the rear of the room and then present the slip to Committee staff. Also, members of the public are invited to address the Committee on any issue under the agenda item entitled Public Comments/Communications. Speakers are limited to three minutes. The COBRO may take action on any item appearing on the agenda.

This agenda and related staff reports can be accessed at www.sandag.org under meetings on SANDAG’s Web site. Public comments regarding the agenda can be forwarded to SANDAG via the e-mail comment form also available on the Web site. E-mail comments should be received no later than noon, two days prior to the COBRO meeting.

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ITEM # | RECOMMENDATION
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1. | WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
+2. | MEETING SUMMARY
   Summary of February 6, 2007, meeting.
3. | PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER COMMENTS
   Each speaker is limited to three minutes.
+4. | UPCOMING EVENTS
+5. | REPORTS (Items 5 - 7)
   DRAFT OTAY MESA-MESA DE OTAY BINATIONAL CORRIDOR STRATEGIC PLAN (Elisa Arias and Ron Saenz, SANDAG, and IMPLAN Staff)
   IMPlan and SANDAG staff will present the Draft Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan. This draft Plan describes the implementation status of Early Actions and proposes additional transportation, economic development, housing, and environmental conservation strategies. Input and comments from the Committee members and the public will be requested. Written comments on this Draft Plan are due no later than April 6, 2007.
6. | REPORT ON THE CITY OF TIJUANA’S SUBCOMMITTEE ON BINATIONAL AFFAIRS (Councilmember Edgar Fernández, City of Tijuana)
   This oral presentation will provide information on the City of Tijuana’s Subcommittee on Binational Affairs, which was created in May 2006, within the framework of the City’s Municipal Development Plan. SANDAG has been invited to be a member of this Subcommittee.
7. | BINATIONAL PLANNING CONTACTS GUIDE FOR THE SAN DIEGO - BAJA CALIFORNIA REGION (Hector Vanegas, SANDAG)
   This Binational Contacts Guide of groups and agencies involved in binational border-related planning issues was presented last year to COBRO and the Borders Committee. An updated electronic version has been prepared and is available to the public through SANDAG’s Web site.
8. **NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION**

   The next meeting of the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities will be held on Tuesday, April 3, 2006, at 3:00 p.m.

+ next to an item indicates an attachment
1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Tuesday, February 6, 2007, Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) meeting was called to order by Chair Paul Ganster. The meeting was held at SANDAG.

Members present were: Paul Ganster, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias (IRSC); Ricardo Pineda & Lydia Antonio, Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego; Cindy Gompper-Graves, South County Economic Development Council; Arnold San Miguel, Bi-State Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (BTTAC); Sergio Pallares, Caltrans; Gustavo Pérez, City of Chula Vista; Gary Brown, City of Imperial Beach; Larry Van Wey, City of San Diego; Yolanda Walther-Meade, Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad; Tatiana Suro, Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce; Angelika Villagrana & Viviana Ibañez, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce; Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Megan Jones, County of San Diego; Thomas Currie, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce; Clay Phillips, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve; James Snider, Customs and Border Protection.

Advisory Members present were: Lisa Dye, Federal Highway Administration; Anne McEnany, International Community Foundation.

2. MEETING SUMMARIES

Angelika Villagrana, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, entertained a motion to approve the November 2, 2006, COBRO meeting summary. Gustavo Perez, City of Chula Vista, seconded the motion. The meeting summary was approved.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS

Steve Otto, San Ysidro Business Association, gave an update on the San Ysidro Mobility Plan (SYMP) Phase I, a community based transportation plan sponsored through a Caltrans grant. Mr. Otto mentioned SYMP's goal is to work towards completing a comprehensive plan for the San Ysidro region.

Cindy Gompper-Graves, South County Economic Development Council (SCEDC), provided an update on the Cross-border Terminal project. At a meeting last week, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA) agreed to conduct further studies which include a marketing analysis and feasibility study of a Cross-border Terminal. A letter of support from the Mexican federal government was requested by the Airport Authority Board prior to initiating the study. Ms. Gompper-Graves thanked the Mexican Consulate in San Diego for helping to secure this letter.
Ricardo Pineda, Mexican Consulate in San Diego, mentioned that the letter from the Mexican government will be arriving soon.

Angelika Villagrana, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, announced that border crossing cards for Mexican citizens are valid in the U.S. for 30 days. U.S. Senator John Cornyn (Texas) has introduced legislation which will extend their right to stay for up to six months. Angelika asked whether SANDAG could endorse this type of legislation.

Hector Vanegas, SANDAG, suggested consideration for this type of endorsement would come through SANDAG’s Executive Committee.

Clay Phillips, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, pointed out the creation of the California Biodiversity Council’s “Biodiversity Along the Border” committee last September 2006. The committee met for the first time last January at the Tijuana Estuary Visitor Center. At this meeting the Committee formed two groups; the first focused on implementing the Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative and the second focused on opportunities for creating sediment basins, a community sewage treatment plan, conservation easements and cleanup of trash and tires.

Chair Ganster distributed a white paper titled ‘Security Development and the Environment in the U.S.-Mexico Border.’ This was the theme of the Southwest Consortium for Environmental Research and Policy and Center of Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) conference held in Washington, D.C., on January 30, 2007. In addition the Good Neighbor Environmental Board, a federal advisory panel advising the Congress and President, will release a report on the interaction of the environment and security issues in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Tatiana Suro, Otay Chamber of Commerce, invited COBRO members and the public to attend the Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce’s 20th Anniversary Dinner, which will be held on February 16, 2007, at the Holiday Inn on the Bay.

4. UPCOMING EVENTS

A report was provided for the upcoming events.

5. APPOINTMENT OF ANGELIKA VILLAGRANA (SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE) TO REPRESENT COBRO AT BORDERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Chair Ganster mentioned that normally the COBRO Chair or Vice Chair attend the Borders Committee meetings. Due to attendance conflicts, neither the Chair nor Vice Chair are able to attend these meetings. As a result, Angelika Villagrana, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, has agreed to attend the Borders Committee meetings on behalf of COBRO.

The Chair pointed out the importance of maintaining the connection between COBRO and the Borders Committee and encouraged COBRO members and the public to attend.

6. MOBILE SEMINARS – CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Hector Vanegas, SANDAG, invited members to participate in the upcoming Mobile Seminars, which will be held on February 27 and March 27. The first seminar will be held in San Diego and the second one in Tijuana. Hector pointed out the importance of reserving a seat early as space is limited.

*A copy of this presentation is available upon request.*

Dr. Michael White, Conservation Biology Institute, made a presentation on the Binational Environmental Impacts Associated with the U.S. Government’s Constructed and Planned Security Fencing along the U.S.-Mexico Border. This presentation was made to the Environmental Protection Agency’s Good Neighbor Environmental Board meeting in the summer of 2006.

Dr. White mentioned his presentation looks at impacts from the triple fence at the Western end of the border region in San Diego County. This area is located in the California Floristic Province. According to Conservation International, the California Floristic Province is an ecologically/geographically hotspot, which also includes the Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative study area.

Dr. White pointed out that existing Border Patrol trails, foot traffic, and other disturbances have degraded habitat quality in the border. Some of the potential impacts from the border fence project include: loss of vegetation communities; impacts to listed species; loss of portions of the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) preserve areas; and degradation of groundwater and ocean water in California. In addition, some indirect impacts include: increased erosion and sedimentation; increased light; increased potential for exotic plants, and severing of habitat connectivity.

Some potential biological benefits from the border fence include: border patrol road closures/confined vehicle use areas; reduced disturbance from trail creation/use; reduced trash; and reduced population growth. In addition, with the construction of the border fence, 85 miles of roads will be closed, which could provide possible revegetation of those roads.

Finally, Dr. White pointed out that the biggest threat to biological resources in the area is habitat loss from development. This development is connected to a certain extent to increased population and unplanned growth.

Chair Ganster thanked Dr. White for his presentation. In addition, Dr. Ganster pointed out the erosion problem at the area known as the old Soccer Field near the San Ysidro Port of Entry and Cañon Zapata some years ago was alleviated with an enhanced border fence.

Clay Phillips, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR), thanked the Conservation Biology Institute for their efforts in the region. Mr. Phillips also pointed out that since the implementation of the enhanced border the TRNERR has experienced few cases of human immigration and human disturbances.

Anne McEnany, International Community Foundation (ICF), asked whether any members or other stakeholders are monitoring the appropriation and documenting best practices for the border fence currently being constructed.
Dr. White responded that the Nature Conservancy's government affairs department is currently monitoring appropriations and other practices.

Ron Saenz, SANDAG, added that within the context of the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Plan, SANDAG is exploring the opportunity to conserve habitat corridors in areas located in Mexico just east of Otay Mesa.

Janet Fairbanks, California Biodiversity Council, inquired about any organization looking at the comprehensive approach from the federal government.

8. OTAY MESA-MESA DE OTAY BINATIONAL CORRIDOR EARLY ACTION: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE STATE ROUTE 11 AND EAST OTAY MESA PORT OF ENTRY FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

* A copy of the presentation is available upon request.

Sergio Pallares, Caltrans, introduced the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Early Action as an effort between Caltrans and SANDAG, with collaboration from the Federal Highway Administration and Customs and Border Protection.

Elisa Arias, SANDAG, mentioned that SANDAG, on behalf of Caltrans has undertaken the Financial Feasibility Study of State Route (SR) 11 and East Otay Mesa (EOM) Port of Entry (POE).

The main objective of the study is to determine the financial feasibility of SR 11 and the EOM POE as toll or fee-based facilities.

The four analytical models developed were a border crossing demand model, POE and toll toad diversion models, toll revenue model, and a financial model. Caltrans and SANDAG established an expert peer review panel, which included Federal, State, local, and academic organizations from both sides of the border.

Total capital expenses for SR 11 and the POE are estimated at $519 million dollars and $27 million dollars for total annual operation and maintenance (O&M) expenses.

The baseline financial feasibility scenario includes toll revenue applied to SR 11 Capital and Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Costs. The following scenarios were mentioned:

Scenario 1: Toll revenue applied to Baseline Scenario plus EOM POE Capital Costs.
Scenario 2: Toll revenue applied to Scenario 1 plus EOM POE O&M Costs, and
Scenario 3: Toll revenue applied to Scenario 2 with EOM POE O&M Costs after 30 years.

The preliminary conclusions included:

1. SR 11 toll road and EOM POE is a potentially a good investment provided sufficient external resources are available for POE capital and O&M costs.
2. SR 11 cannot be considered without the EOM POE.
3. With traditional debt finance, there would be minor default risks in early years.
4. The project would need grant or financing mechanisms with back-loaded debt service/repayments (possibly low-interest TIFIA loan).
Some of the next steps include:

- Working with Congressional and State delegation to obtain necessary approvals to toll and/or fee the new border crossing and SR 11;
- Assess economic benefit (travel time savings, safety) and social equity;
- Conduct similar toll evaluation for the Otay II POE in Tijuana and connecting roads;
- Explore potential non-toll revenues to make up revenue shortfalls, especially in POE O&M costs; Pursue funding for SR 11 from the Trade Corridors Improvements Fund (Proposition 1B);
- Explore dedication of right-of-way for SR 11 and POE.

Caltrans will complete the environmental clearance both for the road and the POE footprint. Caltrans also will conduct a feasibility study to confirm the functionality of the EOM POE (e.g. mixed passenger or vehicle/truck crossing). Finally, a presidential permit from the federal government is necessary for the EOM POE.

Chair Ganster asked whether the Consultant or expert panel looked at the possibility of not requiring the facility in the next 30 years. For example in the European Union there are many facilities that were removed after the unification.

Elisa answered that neither Consultants nor expert panel examined that possibility.

Anne McEnany, International Community Foundation, asked on what audience projections the toll fee ($7) is based from both sides of the border.

Elisa responded that one of the elements for setting the toll rates is the value of time and the benefits that people would accrue with shorter waits.

Elsa Saxod, SAXOD Enterprise, inquired whether SENTRI holders would be required to pay the toll fee.

Elisa responded that SENTRI holders would be required to pay. However, the fee would be less for SENTRI holders.

Elsa Saxod pointed out recent discussions with the trucking industry. They have been outspoken about not paying more money to cross the border. Elsa asked whether the Truck industry was invited to participate in discussions.

Elisa responded that studies showed hourly costs for the trucking industry varying from $50 to $70 an hour which suggests that a $50 fee would be reasonable.

Gustavo Perez, City of Chula Vista, asked whether fees were based on today’s dollars or if it would cost more in the future.

Elisa responded that the toll rates were based on today’s dollars. The EOM POE is expected to open in 2015 and construction is expected to begin in 2012.
Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, asked whether it is legal to charge a toll in order to cross the border and would legislation only necessary from the U.S. side?

Elisa responded that it is not legal to charge a toll at this time. However, one of the next steps addresses collaboration with the legislature both at the state and federal level to allow toll charges. Currently, Caltrans does not have the authority to toll SR 11. More studies will be conducted in seeking approvals to build the facility as fee based or tolled, not necessarily as a fee to cross the border. No other constraints from the Mexican side are known.

Ricardo Pineda, Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego, pointed out possible approval constraints in terms of the Port of Entry, but not for the State Route.

Gary Brown, City of Imperial Beach, asked whether someone looked at a model of spreading the cost throughout all the POEs.

Elisa responded that they anticipate benefits at the other POEs from the reduction in crossing times through the existing POEs.

Cindy Gompper-Graves, SCEDC, asked whether all the models only looked at crossing the border from Mexico into the U.S. A potential problem may arise as a result of the U.S. VISIT program; where longer lines are created when going into Mexico. She asked whether models could be run again to look at cost effectiveness when this problem arises.

Elisa responded that all models were developed for northbound crossings only. However, southbound tolls may be explored in the future.

Ricardo Pineda, Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego, asked whether trade impacts were analyzed.

Elisa responded that estimates are fairly conservative in terms of diversion and the existing POEs would continue to operate without tolls. SANDAG is not assuming considerable diversion to the new POE. However, there will be sufficient revenues to help pay for the facility.

7. NEIGHBORING SAN DIEGO AND TIJUANA REGION FACT SHEET

Cindy Gompper-Graves, SCEDC, introduced a fact sheet that gives a general overview of the San Diego and Tijuana region.

The document includes facts about trade, border crossings, and other data. This Committee is asked to review and provide other criteria if necessary.

10. SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE’S TASK FORCE ON BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Elsa Saxod, SAXOD Enterprise and Chair of the International Committee (IC) for the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, made an introduction on the IC’s task force on border infrastructure.

Elsa pointed out the importance of the SCEDC’s efforts on the Cross-border Terminal and COBRO’s issues regarding the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan.
The goal of the IC is to concentrate efforts and try to bring a broader business community into the border infrastructure discussion. In addition, the IC will analyze where some of the funding will come from. The IC believes this can be achieved through a private-public partnership by demonstrating there are business opportunities for businesses.

With over 3,000 members, the IC expects to educate members of the Chamber on border infrastructure projects and the potential for attracting business partners on this idea. The IC Subcommittee on Border Infrastructure would like to partner with COBRO and exchange information.

Currently, Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, sits in the International Committee and Subcommittee on Border Infrastructure and serves as a liaison between the International Committee and COBRO.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

The Chair pointed out the interest of other organizations in having the next COBRO meeting held in Tijuana.

Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, commented on the importance of having a quorum.

Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, pointed out the significance of having the meeting in Tijuana. In addition, he suggested that perhaps the group could meet for lunch.

Viviana Ibañez, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, added that if the COBRO meets in Tecate, she could host a reception afterwards in Tecate.

Anne McEnany, ICF, added if COBRO has explored the possibility of using video conference for members in Mexico.

Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, commented that has not been explored. However, the South County Regional Education Center has the capabilities.

Chair Ganster suggested to plan to have the next meeting in Tijuana, SANDAG staff will notify members of the exact location.

The next COBRO meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 6, 2007 at 3:00 p.m.
UPCOMING EVENTS

WHAT: José Cuervo Tequila Talk: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano
WHEN: Thursday, March 1, 2007
WHERE: Hojel Hall of the Americas Auditorium, Institute of the Americas
MORE INFO: Isabel Escalle, (858) 453-5560 Ext. 122, or Isabel@americas.org

WHAT: Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce: e-Manifest Seminar
WHEN: Thursday, March 8, 2007
WHERE: South Bay Fish and Grill
MORE INFO: Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce at (619) 661-6111

WHAT: San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce: Congressional Luncheon
WHEN: Friday, March 16, 2007
WHERE: Holiday Inn On the Bay
MORE INFO: San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce at eventregistration@sdchamber.org or (619) 544-1331

WHAT: 2nd Mobile Seminar “Cross Border Collaborative Planning for Otay Mesa”
WHEN: Tuesday, March 27, 2007
WHERE: Tijuana (TBA)
MORE INFO: Héctor Vanegas, hva@sandag.org or (619) 699-1972; or ava@sandag.org

WHAT: 21st Forum Fronterizo The Life Sciences: A New Path to Prosperity for California and Mexico
WHEN: Thursday, March 29, 2007
WHERE: San Diego Marriot Hotel & Marina
MORE INFO: Mexico Business Center; Viviana Ibañez at (619) 544-1362
DRAFT OTAY MESA-MESA DE OTAY BINATIONAL CORRIDOR STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In June 2006, the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor: Draft Early Action Plan was presented to the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) and the Borders Committee for discussion. The Draft Early Action Plan also was released for public review and comment. Comments received were addressed and, on September 5, 2006, COBRO recommended the Borders Committee approve the draft final Early Action Plan. The Borders Committee approved the Early Action Plan on September 8, 2006. Subsequently, on September 22, 2006, the SANDAG Board of Directors also approved the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Early Action Plan.

Since then, staff from Tijuana’s Municipal Planning Institute (IMPlan) and SANDAG, in collaboration with Caltrans District 11 and the Secretariat of Infrastructure and Urban Development (SIDUE), have been working with other stakeholders to initiate the implementation of the proposed early actions. In addition, several new transportation, economic development, housing, and environmental conservation strategies have been identified in the Draft Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan.

DISCUSSION

The Draft Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan includes a summary of progress towards the implementation of early actions and outlines next steps. It also includes additional strategies to address issues identified by stakeholders in transportation, economic development, housing, and environmental conservation. New strategies for the binational study area proposed in the Draft Strategic Plan are outlined below:

- Evaluate economic benefits of the proposed East Otay Mesa-Otay II Port of Entry.
- Evaluate the potential for extension of the South Bay Bus Rapid Transit service to the proposed East Otay Mesa POE along State Route 11.
- Conduct an environmental baseline assessment to identify legal mechanisms for habitat conservation in Mexico and compile available data on biological resources associated with foreseeable impacts of the proposed State Route 11 and the East Otay Mesa Port of Entry.
- Implement the Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) for cross-border bus operators as a pilot program at the San Diego-Tijuana land Ports of Entry.
- Support the implementation of technologies to measure cross-border wait times of northbound commercial vehicles at the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Commercial Port of Entry.
• Collaborate with the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority in the upcoming market demand study of a cross-border terminal connection between Otay Mesa and Tijuana International Airport.

• Explore the consolidation of employment clusters through the establishment of business service centers such as science and technology parks.

• Collaborate with the City of San Diego on smart growth planning efforts in the Otay Mesa Community Plan update.

• Collaborate with IMPlan and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) on sharing resources, planning techniques, and strategies as they relate to Smart Growth planning.

• Explore opportunities to implement Smart Growth planning in the Mesa de Otay and Alamar River areas.

• Support the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District’s efforts to implement the SmartWay Transport project.

The Draft Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan will be released for a 30-day public review and comment period on March 6, 2007. In addition, the Draft Strategic Plan is scheduled to be presented to the Borders Committee at its meeting on March 23, 2007 and to the City of Tijuana’s Subcommittee on Binational Affairs on March 28, 2007.

Next Steps

After addressing comments received, the Draft Final Strategic Plan is anticipated to be presented to COBRO in May 2007. Afterwards, both the Borders Committee and the SANDAG Board of Directors will be asked to approve the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan for planning purposes. The City of Tijuana’s and the State of Baja California’s approval processes also will be followed.

Implementation of selected actions included in the Strategic Plan will be pursued by IMPlan, SANDAG, and other stakeholders through activities in each agency’s annual work programs. SANDAG also will seek funding to advance proposed new strategies.

Additionally, SANDAG proposes to hold meetings among appointed members of COBRO, the Borders Committee, and the City of Tijuana’s Subcommittee on Binational Affairs to follow-up on implementation status of the strategies included in the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan. These meetings would take place annually, or more frequently if needed. The first meeting is anticipated in summer 2008.

Key Staff Contact: Elisa Arias, (619) 699-1936, ear@sandag.org