Key Findings

Given forecasted regional growth and anticipated increases in activity at San Diego International Airport, SANDAG strongly urges implementation of improved transit connectivity to the airport. Freeway and roadway modifications also should be considered, however these measures alone may not prevent severe congestion on key airport access roadways. A Central Mobility Hub has the potential to provide improved transit connectivity, efficient freeway access, ample room for convenient pick-up/drop-off facilities, a quick and comfortable ride directly to the airport terminals, and to divert a significant amount of traffic away from key airport access roadways.

Policies to divert traffic away from key airport access roadways to a Central Mobility Hub can be analyzed, considered, and implemented over time, as traffic conditions warrant. All of the proposed concepts would meet the project’s goals and objectives as stated; the first two options provide the most potential benefits.

Recommendation

SANDAG recognizes that additional work is required to refine the four potential concepts for further study. Additional planning, modeling analysis, preliminary engineering, and environmental analysis should proceed. Collectively, this additional information will provide the SANDAG Board with more detailed analysis to select a locally preferred alternative.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each option was evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Passenger convenience and ridership
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- Improvement in transit opportunities
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled
- Feasibility
- Cost

STAY CONNECTED

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OFFERING SAN DIEGANS A ONE-TRANSFER CONNECTION TO THE AIRPORT FROM MAJOR DESTINATIONS IN THE REGION

The Time is Now

A world-class region deserves world-class transit connectivity. For decades, San Diego has explored ways to provide better regional connectivity to San Diego International Airport. With future traffic impacts to current San Diego International Airport roads projected to exceed capacity, combined with insufficient ground transit access to the airport, SANDAG has made it a chief priority to identify a solution for a direct transit connection to the airport. One concept that was studied is a direct San Diego Trolley link to the airport, while the other three concepts include a Central Mobility Hub. The Central Mobility Hub concepts would connect the Trolley, COASTER, Amtrak Pacific Surfliner, Rapid transit, local bus, and future transportation services to the airport, offering San Diegans a one-transfer connection to the airport from major destinations in the region.

The alignment of several major regional planning initiatives, including the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority’s Airport Development Plan which includes a rebuild of Terminal 1, the Port of San Diego’s Master Plan Update, and the update of SANDAG’s long range transportation plan (Regional Plan), among others, has created an opportunity for regional leaders to come together and collaboratively review options to improve airport connectivity.

San Diego International Airport is the only major airport in the country without a substantial connection to the region’s transit network.
Direct Transit Options to the Airport

**NAVWAR FACILITY**

Located north of the airport in the Midway community, the 72-acre site is owned by the U.S. Navy, which is currently seeking opportunities to redevelop the site. SANDAG evaluated a hub located here with both an option for a direct connection tunnel under the airport (Concept 1) or an elevated automated people mover, like a monorail (Concept 2).

**CONCEPT 1** features the Central Mobility Hub at NAVWAR, which would be a multimodal transportation center with high-frequency automated people mover service via a direct tunnel to the airport, numerous connections to regional transit lines, and an airport-like curb experience for auto-based travelers. Concept 1 would provide high-speed, non-stop service to the airport via a one-mile tunnel.

**CONCEPT 2** features the Central Mobility Hub at NAVWAR as a multimodal transportation center with high-frequency automated people mover service to the airport, numerous connections to regional transit lines, and an airport-like curb experience for auto-based travelers. A surface or elevated automated people mover station would provide service to the airport via a 3.6-mile surface/elevated route roughly along Pacific Highway, Laurel Street, and Harbor Drive, with intermediate stops at the Rental Car Center and the planned development at Harbor Island East Basin.

**EXPLORING NEW OPPORTUNITIES: AN INTER-AGENCY EFFORT**

To facilitate this exploration, SANDAG convened an inter-agency advisory group known as the Airport Connectivity Subcommittee to lead the discussions and identify potential transportation solutions to improve transit and road connectivity to the airport. The Airport Connectivity Subcommittee, in coordination with SANDAG staff, spent nine months analyzing long-term options including the potential Central Mobility Hub site and connections between the hub and the airport.

SANDAG thoroughly evaluated the current ways people access the airport. Modes of transportation to and from the airport and travelers’ points of origin and final destinations were studied. Based on this study, given the high use of Harbor Drive and Laurel, Grape, and Hawthorn Streets, without new alternative access options, Harbor Drive and adjacent roads will continue to experience heavy congestion and will not be able to accommodate the 40% increase in traffic expected by 2050.

This is a summary of this analysis and staff recommendations.

**Airport Connectivity Subcommittee participating agencies:**

- SANDAG
- San Diego County Regional Airport Authority
- Port of San Diego
- City of San Diego
- Caltrans District 11
- Metropolitan Transit System
- North County Transit District
- County of San Diego

**INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION CENTER**

A 13-acre site between I-5 and Pacific Highway south of Washington Street that straddles the Trolley and train tracks that run through the area, first studied by SANDAG in 2008. SANDAG evaluated an elevated automated people mover from this potential location as well (Concept 3).

**CONCEPT 3** The Central Mobility Hub at the planned Intermodal Transportation Center site would be a multimodal transportation center with high-frequency automated people mover service to the airport, numerous connections to regional transit lines, and an airport-like curb experience for auto-based travelers. In Concept 3, COASTER and Amtrak trains are not expected to add an additional stop at the Central Mobility Hub. An automated people mover station would provide service to the airport via a 2.6-mile surface/elevated route roughly along Pacific Highway, Laurel Street, and Harbor Drive, with intermediate stops at the San Diego International Airport Rental Car Center and the planned development at Harbor Island East Basin.

**TROLLEY EXTENSION**

**CONCEPT 4A + 4B** both feature an extension of the Trolley light-rail system to the planned San Diego International Airport transit station located in walking distance between Terminals 1 and 2. The new track would be a spur extending west from the existing Trolley tracks and would include an additional station at Harbor Island East Basin providing transit access to this planned development. The new alignment would branch from the existing Trolley corridor either via aerial structure near Laurel Street (Concept 4A) or via trench/tunnel below Grape and Hawthorn streets (Concept 4B). To operate the service, MTS would create a new Trolley line extending north to Old Town Transit Center and south to Santa Fe Depot and the 12th & Imperial Transit Center, including all existing intermediate stops.

In the three concepts SANDAG evaluated for a new Central Mobility Hub, two call for redeveloping the Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) site, while the other calls for development of the Intermodal Transportation Center that was identified in the Regional Transportation Plan. SANDAG also studied a San Diego Trolley line extension to the airport spurring from either Laurel Street or Hawthorn Street to the airport. As a comparison, SANDAG also studied a no build option.
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Airport Connectivity Analysis

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SEPTEMBER 2019

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