



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1700, Los Angeles, CA 90017  
T: (213) 236-1800 www.scag.ca.gov

# 2023 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

## About SCAG

Founded in 1965, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a Joint Powers Authority under California state law, established as an association of local governments and agencies that voluntarily convene as a forum to address regional issues. Under federal law, SCAG is designated as a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and under state law as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Council of Governments.

The SCAG region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura) and 191 cities in an area covering more than 38,000 square miles. The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans, including sustainable communities strategy and growth forecast components, regional transportation improvement programs, regional housing needs allocations, and a portion of the South Coast Air Quality management plans. In 1992, SCAG expanded its governing body, the Executive Committee, to a 70-member Regional Council to help accommodate new responsibilities mandated by the federal and state governments, as well as to provide more broad-based representation of Southern California's cities and counties. With its expanded membership structure, SCAG created regional districts to provide for more diverse representation. The districts were formed with the intent to serve equal populations and communities of interest. Currently, the Regional Council consists of 86 members.

In addition to the six counties and 191 cities that make up SCAG's region, there are six County Transportation Commissions that hold the primary responsibility for programming and implementing transportation projects, programs, and services in their respective counties. Additionally, SCAG Bylaws provide for representation of Native American tribes, Air Quality Districts, and the Transportation Corridor Agencies on the Regional Council and Policy Committees.

## SCAG's Legislative Program

SCAG maintains a State and Federal Legislative Program, which consists of the Regional Council's positions on policies and legislative initiatives related to SCAG's core planning and policy areas— transportation, air quality, freight/goods movement, housing, environmental impact, sustainability, and economic recovery and job creation—that need the leadership and support of the California State Legislature and Congress to resolve challenges facing the SCAG region.

SCAG's legislative efforts are the product of a committee process whereby the agency's Legislative/Communications & Membership Committee, comprised of elected officials from throughout the region, identifies and recommends specific legislative action for consideration by the Regional Council with respect to state and federal legislation affecting the SCAG region.

The following state and federal legislative principles for 2023 encompass broad, policy-oriented objectives of the agency that build upon long-standing, Regional Council-adopted policies.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Support direct and flexible emergency funding for local governments of all sizes to respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or backfill tax revenue lost due to the global pandemic.
2. As the population of unhoused individuals and families continues to grow in our region, support new federal grant programs to assist cities, counties, and regional collaborations address homelessness challenges through supportive housing models and planning grants.
3. Support increased funding for critical federal programs that local governments depend on, including the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Affordable Housing Tax Credit (AFTC), and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), as well as the creation of new tools to confront the housing affordability crisis and expand economic opportunity for residents in Southern California.
4. Support programs and legislation that provide more options for emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing options to address the homelessness crisis.

## AVIATION

1. Advocate for and seek funding opportunities from the Federal Aviation Administration, which can help SCAG conduct airport surface transportation passenger studies and planning activities.
2. Support legislation that raises and indexes the cap on the passenger facility charge (PFC), giving local airports the option to adjust their user fees to make needed infrastructure improvements to airport facilities and for projects that promote access to the airport.
3. Oppose efforts to divert September 11 Security Fees for uses unrelated to the nation's aviation transportation system.

## BROADBAND ACCESS

1. Support coordinated efforts that would prioritize additional funding and resources for broadband infrastructure, particularly in low-income and rural communities, tribal lands, and community anchor institutions to bridge the digital divide exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Support collaboration between the federal, state, regional, and local levels of government, including MPOs and regional broadband consortia, to expedite access to broadband infrastructure funding, streamline project permitting, and achieve economies of scale.
3. Support funding for studies that determine broadband opportunity zones that support shovel-ready last-mile projects or evaluate broadband's potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).
4. Support legislative efforts that promote the integration of broadband, land use, and transportation planning, and support legislative efforts that provide transportation agencies access to the middle-mile network to bolster the deployment of intelligent transportation systems.

## AIR QUALITY, ENVIRONMENT, & WATER

1. Support regional equity in funding allocations to ensure Southern California receives its fair share of grant and formula programs pertaining to climate resiliency, EV charging and fueling infrastructure, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Factors to consider include population, need (cumulative impacts), higher relative risks for natural hazards, opportunity for improvement, and other quantifiable measures.
2. As zero-emission and alternative fuel vehicles and supporting infrastructure are deployed, including but not limited to electric, hydrogen, and natural gas, advocate for policies that take a life-cycle approach. For electric vehicles, in particular, support policies that ensure proper battery reuse, recycling, and disposal.

3. Building upon SCAG's work to accelerate the electrification of the vehicle fleet, support efforts that provide funding for electric and alternative fuel vehicle planning, permit streamlining, purchases, and charging/refueling infrastructure, with a focus on public investment in areas that would otherwise be neglected, such as multi-unit dwellings, rural areas, and low to middle-income neighborhoods.
4. Support legislative efforts that provide increased resources for water infrastructure, including investments in repairs, modernization, storage, and enhancements to the region's aging water infrastructure that can serve the Southern California region's needs and ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and resiliency of the region's water systems.
5. Support programs that increase the affordability of water for low-income customers. Support the distribution of federal funds at the state level through an equity lens, such that Southern California communities receive their fair share of funding based upon population, opportunity, and other quantifiable measures.
6. Support additional flexibility in the use of federal resources to support integrated planning and technical assistance from MPOs for groundwater resources and associated infrastructure along with transportation, land use, energy, stormwater, and air quality.

## FREIGHT & GOODS MOVEMENT

1. Support increased funding that maintains and expands transportation infrastructure for key regional goods movement corridors that link freight facilities and systems to the rest of the nation.
2. Support increased transparency measures for competitive grant awards.
3. Support increased federal freight funding through the establishment of a dedicated freight trust fund so that revenues can be distributed to states and regions that are most impacted by goods movement.
4. Support the creation of programs designed to assist in leveraging technology and data to improve freight mobility, establish public-private partnerships, increase goods movement efficiency independently and through shared-use corridors, reduce harmful emissions, mitigate negative impacts on disadvantaged communities, and address shifting consumer behaviors (i.e., e-commerce).
5. Support funding strategies that strengthen the federal commitment to the nation's goods movement system, recognizing both the pivotal role that the SCAG region plays in domestic and international trade and, consequently, the disproportionate impacts carried by Southern California.

## PROJECT STREAMLINING

1. Support measures that expedite and streamline both project development and delivery.
2. Support legislative streamlining and simplification of regulatory review processes, permitting and oversight at the state and federal level, as well as increased coordination among state and federal agencies.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Support legislative efforts that further a "Health in All Policies" approach to facilitate equitable health outcomes related to SCAG's core public health focus areas, as included in the Connect SoCal: accessibility to healthy food, parks and open space, and other services, affordable housing, air quality, climate resiliency, economic wellbeing, health equity, physical activity, and safety.
2. Recognizing that climate change, public health, and racial justice are interconnected, support efforts that invest in and empower communities that will be disproportionately impacted by climate change.
3. Support efforts that fund transit-oriented communities, mixed land uses, green streets strategies to reduce extreme heat and emissions exposure, and safe streets so all ages and abilities can maximize opportunities for active lifestyles, have access to essential services, and use transit or non-motorized transportation options.

4. Recognizing the link between public health, mental health and homelessness, support funding for navigation centers, housing options, and outreach efforts, to address the needs of the unhoused.

## PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

1. Support further development and implementation of public-private partnerships (P3s) that are transparent, accountable, and marry the policy goals of the public sector with the financial expertise of the private sector to improve project development and delivery throughout the region, including support of improved P3 design-bid-build and design-build procurement processes.
2. Support private activity bonds, debt instruments that raise capital for revenue-generating highway and freight transfer projects, and restore tax exemption for advance refunding bonds, debt instruments that allow an issuer to pay off another outstanding bond in order to enable savings to be reinvested in additional infrastructure upgrades at airports, seaports, qualified highway or surface freight transfer facilities, affordable housing, and other projects with a clear public benefit.
3. Support efforts to protect the tax exemption of municipal bonds.

## TRANSIT & RAIL

1. Support efforts that expand public transit and passenger rail projects and services in the region to reduce congestion and enhance sustainability.
2. Support legislative efforts that incentivize the implementation of Mobility as a Service (MaaS), which integrates transportation services into a single mobility platform that encourages mode shift and fosters sustainable travel choices.
3. Support federal grant or pilot programs for comprehensive planning that encourages transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities to connect housing, jobs, and mixed-use development with transportation options and broaden eligibility guidelines to include MPOs.
4. Oppose efforts that undermine the authority of states and local governments to enact their own regulations related to autonomous vehicles.
5. Support new funding and planning opportunities for EV infrastructure and programs for private vehicles and public transit fleets to ensure electric vehicle coordination across regions. Programs should focus on increasing mobility and minimizing transportation costs for low-income households.

## RACIAL JUSTICE

1. Recognizing that systemic racism continues to create barriers to success for people of color, SCAG seeks to lead and join in legislative efforts that reverse the effects of inequitable policies, programs, processes, and practices to address the legacy and impact of past planning decisions in the region.

## SURFACE TRANSPORTATION POLICY & FUNDING

1. Support increased federal funding to provide stable national infrastructure and transportation system investments.
2. Expand eligibility for any planning grant programs to include MPOs as eligible recipients.
3. Support incentive funding to reward self-help jurisdictions. This model recognizes that self-help jurisdictions take risks and make significant local investments while leveraging federal dollars to deliver transportation improvements.
4. Support efforts to increase planning funds that help state and regional governments to increase infrastructure resiliency and address climate change impacts.
5. Support a transition to a mileage-based user fee funding mechanism as a replacement to federal gas taxes to provide sustainable funding to meet our nation's transportation infrastructure needs and

maintain system management, preservation, and resilience. Support measures that protect privacy, promote equity, and guarantee return-to-source. Before a transition period, support adjustments to the federal gasoline taxes to maintain purchasing power.

6. Support sustainable solutions that restore the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund, including expanding tolling options on the interstate highway system and providing support for states willing to research and/or pilot innovative revenue programs.
7. Support new dedicated funding for transportation demand management (TDM) programs and strategies.
8. Support increased investment in the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which is a key funding source for the state's Active Transportation Program (ATP).

## TECHNOLOGY & DATA

1. Support funding for Smart Cities plans and initiatives, which aim to reduce GHG impacts, deploy systems that allow for efficient water and energy usage, safer roadways, and highways.
2. Support a technology-neutral position when promoting alternative fuel and vehicle types.
3. Secure funding to support the coordination among state agencies, MPOs, and other governmental entities to collect and share data, which reflects emerging technologies, mobility choices, land use collaboration, and regional conservation opportunities.
4. Building upon SCAG's work to accelerate the electrification of the vehicle fleet, support efforts that provide funding for electric and alternative fuel vehicle planning, permit streamlining, purchases, and charging/refueling infrastructure, with a focus on public investment in areas that would otherwise be neglected, such as multi-unit dwellings, rural areas, and low to middle-income neighborhoods.