

## 3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

This section of the 2024 PEIR describes the existing land use characteristics within the SCAG region, sets forth the regulatory framework that affect land use and planning and analyzes the potential land use impacts that could occur from development of Connect SoCal 2024. In addition, this PEIR provides regional-scale mitigation measures, as well as project-level mitigation measures that can and should be considered and implemented by lead agencies for subsequent, site-specific environmental review to reduce identified impacts as appropriate and feasible.

### 3.11.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### DEFINITIONS

Definitions of terms used in the regulatory framework, characterization of baseline conditions, and impact analysis for land use and planning follow:

- *Agricultural lands.* Land designated for farming; specifically, the production of crops and rearing of animals to provide food and other products.
- *Carbon sequestration.* The ability for natural elements such as forests, soils, and oceans to store carbon instead of releasing it into the atmosphere, preventing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- *Established community:* Refers to a place where there are existing populations of people that have been living in that place for some period of time. The term is used in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines under the land use thresholds of significance.
- *Farmland:* Section 21060.1(a) of CEQA (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000–21177) delineates the consideration of agricultural land to include “prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California,” and is herein collectively referred to as “Farmland.”
- *General plan:* California State Law requires every city and county to adopt a comprehensive General Plan to guide its future development. The General Plan essentially serves as a “constitution for development”—the document that serves as the foundation for all land use decisions. Every jurisdiction’s General Plan includes seven required “Elements” that are mandated by State law; local governments may adopt additional optional Elements to address local priorities and planning goals.
- *Grazing land:* Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen’s Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.
- *Greenfield:* Also known as “raw land,” land that is privately owned, lacks urban services, has not been previously developed, and is located at the fringe of existing urban areas.
- *Land use designation:* A land use classification with associated land use or management policies. Land use designations are applied to specific areas through the county land use planning processes and culminate in the adoption of a land use element to the General Plan. Some land use designations have been established through legislation (e.g., National Forest), while other designations, such as Significant Ecological Areas, have been established through policy or planning processes.

- *Land use element:* The land use element is one of seven mandatory elements of the General Plan required pursuant to General Land Use Law in California.
- *Natural lands.* Biologically diverse landscapes such as forested and mountainous areas, shrub lands, deserts and other ecosystems which contain habitat that supports wildlife and vegetation.
- *Open space:* Generally understood as any area of land or water which, for whatever reason, is not developed for urbanized uses and which therefore enhances residents' quality of life. Each county and city in California must adopt an open space element as part of its general plan. The element is a statement of local planning policies focusing on the use of unimproved land or water for: 1) the preservation or managed production of natural resources, 2) outdoor recreation, and 3) the promotion of public health and safety. Therefore, open space will be defined by each jurisdiction based on their own unique resources and environment.
- *Ordinance:* A law set forth by a governmental authority; a municipal regulation.
- *Rangelands:* Rangelands include any expanse of natural land that is not fertilized, irrigated, or cultivated and is predominately used for grazing by livestock and wildlife.
- *Recreation:* Recreation areas may be composed of one large site or several sites located in proximity that together provide a recreation opportunity at the local and/or regional level. These parks may include areas of significant natural resources, as well as more developed activity sites.
- *Regional housing needs assessment (RHNA):* The RHNA quantifies the existing and future housing need within each jurisdiction of the SCAG region based on household growth projections, access to transit, and access to jobs, with a consideration for disadvantaged communities. Communities then address this need through identifying adequate sites to accommodate their RHNA allocation in the housing elements of their General Plans.
- *Specific plan:* A specific plan is a tool for the systematic implementation of the general plan. It effectively establishes a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area. A specific plan may be as general as setting forth broad policy concepts, or as detailed as providing direction to every facet of development from the type, location and intensity of uses to the design and capacity of infrastructure; from the resources used to finance public improvements to the design guidelines of a subdivision.
- *Subregion:* A total of 15 subregions represent portions of Southern California with shared interests, issues and geography. Subregions play an important role as a conduit between SCAG and local jurisdictions of the region by participating and providing input on SCAG's planning activities. This involvement helps the Regional Council and its committees make better-informed decisions.
- *Urban areas:* Urban Areas in the SCAG region represent densely developed territory, and encompass residential, commercial and other nonresidential urban land uses where population is concentrated over 2,500 people in a given locale.
- *Urban decay:* Physical deterioration of properties or structures that is so prevalent, substantial, and lasting a significant period of time that it impairs the proper utilization of the properties and the structures, and the health, safety, and welfare of the surrounding community. Physical deterioration includes abnormally high business vacancies, abandoned buildings, boarded doors and windows, parked trucks and long-term unauthorized use of the properties and parking lots, extensive or offensive graffiti painted on buildings, dumping of refuse or overturned dumpsters on properties, dead trees and shrubbery, and uncontrolled weed growth or homeless encampments.





## COUNTIES

The SCAG region is composed of six counties: Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura. The Plan's policies and strategies encourage improvement in the jobs-housing balance by focusing new housing and employment in Priority Development Areas (PDAs). A general discussion of the land use patterns is provided for each of the six SCAG counties below:

- **Imperial County.** The nature of land use within Imperial County is linked to its rural beginnings, beginning as a farming community. Imperial County is predominantly an agricultural area (Imperial County 2015). However, pressure of growth from nearby San Diego and Riverside Counties have resulted in a significant population boom. Between 2000 and 2019, the County has seen a 27.5-percent population growth (U.S. Census Bureau 2002; SCAG 2023a), higher than the SCAG region rate of 14 percent (SCAG 2021, 2023a). As such, a primary goal as stated in the Land Use Element of the Imperial County General Plan is to “diversify employment and economic opportunities in the County while preserving agricultural activity (Goal 2).”
- **Los Angeles County.** One of the largest counties in the country, Los Angeles County encompasses approximately 4,083 square miles, consisting of 88 incorporated cities (County of Los Angeles 2022) and an unincorporated area that accounts for more than 65 percent of the total land area of Los Angeles County (County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning 2023). Los Angeles County is further divided into nine SCAG subregions: North Los Angeles County; San Fernando Valley Council of Governments (COG); Las Virgenes Malibu Conejo COG; Arroyo Verdugo; Westside Cities COG; South Bay Cities COG; City of Los Angeles; San Gabriel Valley COG; and Gateway Cities COG. Between 2000 and 2019, the total population of Los Angeles County increased by 5.5 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2002; SCAG 2021, 2023a), which was lower than the SCAG region increase of 14 percent. It is also important to note that 53.4 percent of the total 2019 population of SCAG region is in Los Angeles County (SCAG 2021, 2023a).

The unincorporated areas in the northern portion of Los Angeles County are covered by large amounts of sparsely populated land, and include Angeles National Forest, part of Los Padres National Forest, and the Mojave Desert. The unincorporated areas in the southern portion of Los Angeles County consist of many non-contiguous land areas, which are often referred to as the County's unincorporated urban islands. More than half of the unincorporated area is designated for natural resources. The next largest designation is rural, which accounts for approximately 39 percent of the unincorporated areas, followed by residential, which accounts for approximately three percent of the unincorporated areas (County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning 2022).

The incorporated areas of Los Angeles represent diverse urban, suburban, and rural land use patterns. Generally, the Land Use Element for each incorporated city encourages the retention of the stable residential neighborhoods and promotes growth to locate in neighborhood districts, commercial and mixed-use centers, along boulevards, industrial districts, and in proximity to transportation corridors and transit stations. These are general characterizations, and do not capture all land use types or patterns associated with the 88 incorporated cities that make up Los Angeles County.

- **Orange County.** Between 2000 and 2019, the total population of Orange County increased by 12.1 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2002; SCAG 2021, 2023a), which was slightly higher than the SCAG region increase of 14 percent (SCAG 2021, 2023a). The General Plan assessed that Orange County would experience a steady but declining amount of land available for development. The General Plan projected a significant level of new housing is anticipated to be constructed in the south and eastern portions of the County, while infill and redevelopment are identified in the northern and central regions. Significant commercial and industrial development is anticipated to occur along major transportation arteries (Orange County 2005, 2022).

- **Riverside County.** Between 2000 and 2019, the total population of Riverside County increased by 54.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2002; SCAG 2021, 2023a); much higher than the SCAG region increase of 14 percent. Riverside County adopted the County General Plan that strives to create a high-quality, balanced, and sustainable environment for the citizens of Riverside County and to make Riverside County's communities great places to live, work, and play. Riverside County is the fourth largest county in the State, encompassing approximately 7,400 square miles and extending westward from the Colorado River to within 14 miles of the Pacific Ocean, a stretch of some 200 miles. Riverside County contains diverse geographical features, including deserts, snowcapped peaks, deep valleys, forests, and rich agricultural lands. Set among this rich landscape is a variety of established and/or growing urban, suburban, and rural communities. The diversity of Riverside County offers a variety of living environments such as dense urban cities, suburban enclaves, resorts, rural communities, agricultural communities, equestrian communities, and sparsely populated outposts (County of Riverside 2020).
- **San Bernardino.** Between 2000 and 2019, the total county population increased by 27.2 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2002; SCAG 2021, 2023a); well above the SCAG region increase of 14 percent (SCAG 2021, 2023a). Much of the development in San Bernardino has occurred on unincorporated county land. The General Plan focuses new development in areas where there is infrastructure in place, including potable water, wastewater treatment, roadways, and public services. In addition, new development is focused in areas with low risks from natural and man-made hazards, and with fewer impacts on the natural environment (County of San Bernardino 2020).
- **Ventura County.** Between 2000 and 2019, Ventura County's population growth increase of 12.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2002; SCAG 2021, 2023a) was slightly higher than the SCAG region increase of 14 percent (SCAG 2021, 2023a). Ventura County and cities within the county have developed policies seeking to maintain a balance of protecting agricultural land while providing jobs and housing within a heavily used transportation network. The approach has been to provide urban growth boundaries as a way of channeling development and preserving farmland.

## CITIES

There are 191 cities in the six-county area, including the City of Los Angeles, which is the second largest city in the nation and the largest city in California, and the City of Long Beach, which is among the 50 largest cities in the nation and the seventh largest city in California. Urban centers in the SCAG region exist in the form of clusters, linked by freeways and commercial corridors interspersed with identifiable activity centers. Most existing urban development is found along the coastal plains of Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura Counties, as well as in adjoining valleys that extend inland from the coastal areas. Urban development also has moved into the inland valleys such as the Antelope, San Bernardino, Yucca, Moreno, Hemet–San Jacinto, Coachella, and Imperial Valleys.

Downtown Los Angeles is the largest urbanized center within the SCAG region. Other urbanized areas with substantial density in Los Angeles County include Long Beach, Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, and Pomona. Office-core centers have emerged in Woodland Hills (Warner Center), Universal City, Westwood, around Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), and Century City. In the other five counties within the SCAG region, urban centers exist in the cities of Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Ana, Anaheim, Irvine, Oxnard, and Ventura. Development centers in desert areas include the Lancaster–Palmdale corridor in the Antelope Valley (Los Angeles County); the Hesperia–Victorville corridor in Yucca Valley (San Bernardino County); and the Palm Springs–Palm Desert–Indio corridor in the Coachella Valley (Riverside County). El Centro is the county seat and focal point of activity in Imperial County. There is also substantial activity occurring in Imperial County at the three ports of entry along the border with Mexico.

## LAND USE PLANNING

Many of the key strategies for coping with climate change are linked to land use planning:

- Growth of vehicle-related GHG emissions are influenced by transportation infrastructure.
- Compact development protects ecologically valuable open space and requires less energy and materials to build and operate.
- Reducing GHG emissions from deforestation requires policies to protect woodlands and other valuable carbon sinks. Carbon sinks are natural or artificial reservoirs that remove and store carbon from the atmosphere, thereby offsetting carbon dioxide emissions. Examples include forests, soils, and oceans.
- Land use planning is critical in enabling communities to adapt to sea level rise, more frequent extreme weather conditions, and other climate-related hazards (Sofian, Li, Kusumawardhani, & Widiyani 2015).
- “Smart growth” is a term that covers a range of development and conservation strategies that help protect the natural environment and make communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse. Land use planning is an essential part of any smart growth strategy, and it is especially important when efforts to mitigate GHG emissions and adapt to climate change are needed.

## SCAG ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the federal designation as an MPO, SCAG is designated under California state law as the Multicounty Designated Transportation Planning Agency and COG for the six-county region. Founded in 1965, SCAG is a Joint Powers Authority, established as a voluntary association of local governments and agencies.

As described in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, SCAG serves as the regional forum for cooperative decision making by local government elected officials and its primary responsibilities in fulfillment of federal and state requirements includes the development of the Plan; the Federal Transportation Improvement Program; the annual Overall Work Program; and transportation-related portions of local air quality management plans. SCAG’s other major functions include developing the Regional Transportation Plans/Sustainable Communities Strategies and ensuring programs are in conformity with state air quality plans; periodic preparation of an RHNA; and intergovernmental review of regionally significant projects.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION AND SUBREGIONS

SCAG’s role is to bring stakeholders together and participate in regional planning through collaboration and participation in regional programs and on-going dialogue. SCAG seeks feedback from local elected officials and their staff through 15 subregional organizations that have been recognized by the Regional Council as partners in the regional policy planning process. The subregional organizations represent various parts of the SCAG region that have identified themselves as having common interests and concerns. The subregions vary according to geographical size, number of local jurisdictions, staffing, decision-making structure, and legal status.

Standing committees at SCAG include the Executive Administration Committee, the Transportation Committee, the Community, Economic & Human Development Committee, the Energy & Environment Committee, and Legislative/Communications & Membership Committee. In addition to the standing committees, there are various subcommittees, technical advisory committees, working groups, and task forces that report to the standing committees, while other groups are established on an ad hoc basis to assist with specific projects or address specific regional policy. The Regional Council is SCAG’s governing body. It consists of 86 elected officials,

representing cities, counties, county transportation commissions, transportation corridor agencies, tribal governments, and air districts in the region. The Regional Council has general authority to conduct the affairs of SCAG and directs the actions of the agency throughout the year. Additionally, the Regional Council implements the policy direction provided at the annual General Assembly of the membership, acts upon policy recommendations from SCAG's standing policy committees and external agencies, and appoints subcommittees to study specific programs or issues.

## COUNTY AND CITY GENERAL PLANS

Comprehensive land use planning for the SCAG region is provided by county and city general plans, which local governments are required by state law to prepare as a guide for future development. General plans contain goals and policies concerning topics that are mandated by state law or that the jurisdiction has chosen to include. Required topics are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Other topics that local governments frequently choose to address include sustainability, public facilities, parks and recreation, community design, and growth management, among others. City and county general plans must be consistent with each other. Local jurisdictions implement their general plans through zoning ordinances. Zoning ordinances provide a much greater level of detail including the general plan land use designations and such information as permitted uses, yard setbacks, and uses that would require a conditional use permit (**Map 3.11-1, General Plan Land Use Designations**, shows the general land use designations (consolidated for purposes of consistency and mapping) for the six SCAG member counties and 191 cities in the SCAG region).

## EXISTING LAND USES BY COUNTY

The land use elements of the county and city general plans within the SCAG region generally classify lands in to 35 land use categories (**Table 3.11-2, SCAG Region General Land Use Categories**).

According to SPM data, the Plan would add approximately 50,000 urbanized acres to the region by 2050 (SCAG 2023c). The 35 land use categories noted in Table 3.11-2 are grouped into three Land Development Categories (LDCs) to describe the general conditions in a given area, including urban, compact, and standard LDCs. The following describes the LDCs considered in the Plan (SCAG 2023b):

- **Urban** areas are often found within and adjacent to higher density urban centers. Virtually all 'Urban' growth would be considered infill or redevelopment. The majority of housing units are multifamily and townhome, which tend to consume less water and energy. These areas are typically supported by high levels of transit service, well-connected street networks, and a mix of uses.
- **Compact** areas are less dense than the urban LDC but remain walkable and mixed in use. Compact areas are likely to occur as new growth on the urban fringe or large-scale redevelopments and have a rich mix of housing from multifamily to medium-lot single-family. They are relatively well served by transit but less prevalent around major multimodal hubs. Streets are well-connected and walkable, meaning destinations such as schools, shopping, and entertainment can be reached easily.
- **Standard** areas reflect the auto-oriented development and use-type separation of the American suburban landscape over the past several decades. Densities tend to be lower, land uses are more homogenous, and larger-lot single-family housing comprises the majority of this development form. Standard areas are not typically well served by transit and most trips are made via automobile.



The following paragraphs describe the 35 place types that represent the range of existing and potential development types and patterns within the SCAG region. These are then aggregated into the three LDCs to describe the general development or conditions in the area.

## RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

The residential pattern of the SCAG region is largely shaped by topography. Most residents live in southern parts of Ventura, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino Counties, with the urban form limited by national forests and mountains. In Orange County, residents live near the coast and west of the Cleveland National Forest. Residents also have moved inland to the high desert in northern Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties and the low desert in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys.

The majority of medium- and high-density housing in the region is found in the urban core of the region, in Downtown Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, the South Bay, and the “West Side” of Los Angeles. Large cities, such as Long Beach, Santa Ana, Glendale, Oxnard, and Pasadena, also have concentrations of high-density development in their downtown areas. Several beach communities, such as the Cities of Santa Monica, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, Huntington Beach, and Newport Beach, have high density close to the ocean.

Surrounding suburbs are predominantly low-density housing tracts. Low-density housing expands west into Ventura County, east through southeast Los Angeles County, throughout much of Orange County, and through the western Inland Empire. The resort communities and cities of the Coachella Valley in Riverside County also are built primarily on a low-density scale.

The developing land on the urban fringe, such as the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles County and the Victorville-Hesperia area, Lucerne Valley, and Yucca Valley of San Bernardino County, also are primarily low-density residential. The Imperial Valley in Imperial County is primarily an agricultural region with a growing, yet still relatively small, population that lives in primarily low-density developments. The SCAG region also contains mixed residential and commercial land uses.

The residential category of land uses in the SCAG region includes areas of single-family residences, multi-unit dwellings, and mobile homes. Also included is a mixed residential category that consists of two or more of the aforementioned groups.

### SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

These residential areas are typically made up of detached dwellings, where each structure houses a single-family, located in an urban or suburban setting. (Single-family residential units located in a rural setting are classified under Rural Residential.) These single-family residences are usually served by all utilities, are on paved streets, and are provided with or have access to all urban facilities such as schools, parks, police, and fire stations.

Single-family residential neighborhoods are normally large contiguous areas of residential lots. Some areas have subdivisions or tracts of homes with similar size or architectural design. In these areas the roofs may be similar in shape or color when viewed on the aerial photo. Typically, single-family lots contain landscaped front and back yards, one driveway, and one walkway either to the sidewalk or to the driveway. Some lots may have swimming pools in the back yards. High or low density is determined by the size of the lot on which the residence is located. If an area is under construction, and the residential lots or pads are easily identifiable, then the area can be properly mapped.

**High-Density Single Family Residential.** This category contains single-family detached residential units with an approximate unit density of >8 units/acre. These units are typically found in modern urban and suburban subdivisions.

**Low-Density Single Family Residential.** This category contains single-family detached residential units with an approximate unit density of <3 units/acre. These units may include areas of urban ranch homes or estates. Also included are urban areas where single-family lots have been established but houses have not been built on all of them and are not likely to be built in the near future. The homes are spaced at a density of <2 units/acre. In some situations, a low-density area may be rural in appearance because it was once a rural area but is now within the urban setting or a transitional area.

### MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Multifamily units are attached residences, apartments, condominiums, and townhouses. Multi-family residences are usually served by all utilities, are on paved streets, and are provided with or have access to all urban facilities such as schools, parks, police, and fire stations. Senior citizen apartment buildings are included in these classes. Also included are off-campus university owned housing and off-campus fraternity/sorority houses.

**Mixed Multi-Family Residential.** This category is used when there is a mixture of multi-family uses (duplexes, triplexes, apartments, condominiums, and/or townhouses of any type), none of which is over 2.5 acres in size, and no one type dominates. This situation may occur in older neighborhoods.

**Duplexes, Triplexes, and 2- or 3-Unit Condominiums and Townhouses.** This category is composed of duplexes, triplexes, and 2- or 3-unit condominiums and townhouses that are attached multifamily structures.

Duplex and triplex residences may occur together or mixed with single-family houses in some older neighborhoods. Typically, the multi-unit structure is one story located on a lot approximately the same size as nearby single-family residential lots. There may be minimal landscaping or yard space. On the aerial photo, one may be able to count the driveways, sidewalks, entryway overhangs, chimneys, or air conditioning units corresponding to the number of units in the structure. Some newer duplexes and triplexes occur as 2- or 3-unit structures in complexes as condominiums and townhouses, with common grounds.

**Low-Rise Apartments, Condominiums, and Townhouses.** This category includes multi-family structures of one to two stories and approximately 10 to 18 units/acre. The area consists of either a large single structure or a group of structures, of four or more units each, in a complex with associated common grounds, facilities and parking areas.

Typically, low-rise apartments, condominiums, and townhouses occur together in large contiguous areas since land use is restricted to multi-family zoned areas. However, in some areas one to a few buildings may occur on individual lots in single-family residential neighborhoods. In newer neighborhoods they may appear as a large complex composed of many structures of similar architecture with common grounds and facilities. Some older structures are U-shaped or O-shaped with a swimming pool in the middle. A parking level may be located underneath the living area, in which case it is not counted as a story. Parking for larger complexes may include garages or carports along the periphery of the complex. Low-rise apartments and condominiums are the most common types of multi-family structures in the study area. Also included are off-campus fraternity/sorority houses and senior citizen apartments. Residential units located above first floor commercial in buildings along a commercial strip are considered commercial use. An area mapped as Low-Rise Apartments, Condominiums, and Townhouses may contain an occasional Medium-Rise building.

**Medium-Rise Apartments and Condominiums.** This category includes multi-family structures of three to four stories and >18 units/acre. The area consists of a large single structure or a group of structures, of four or more units each, in a complex with associated common grounds, facilities and parking areas.

Many medium-rise apartments and condominiums in older areas are identified as hotel/apartments. Several may be located next to each other in compact areas. Some may occur as large complexes, composed of many structures of similar architecture, with common grounds and facilities. Medium-rise apartments and condominiums are not as common as low-rise. Senior citizen apartments are included. If an area contains commercial use on the first floor and multi-family residential use on the upper floors, then the area is considered strip commercial. Some older urban core cities contain apartment and condominium buildings predominantly of three, four, or more stories. An area mapped as Medium-Rise may contain occasional Low-Rise or High-Rise buildings. Use of stereoscopic viewing of aerial photos is essential in determining relative height in relation to other structures in the area.

**High-Rise Apartments and Condominiums.** This category includes multi-family structures of five stories or greater and >18 units/acre. The area consists of either a single large structure or a group of adjacent structures with common grounds, facilities and parking areas.

Many high-rise apartments and condominiums occur as single or groups of high residential towers. Parking may be underground or in an adjacent parking structure. Smaller high-rise structures may contain only residential units with no other uses. High-rise residential structures are configured to maximize availability of window access to each individual residential unit. Thus, the building may be long and narrow, or contain narrow lateral wings that provide window access. Senior citizen apartments are included. If an area contains commercial use on the first floor and multi-family residential use on the upper floors, then it is considered High-Rise Apartments and Condominiums.

## COMMERCIAL LAND USES

Across the region, commercial development typically follows transportation corridors. Office development generally locates at the terminals of major transportation features, particularly airports and train stations, or at the intersection of major freeways. Downtown Los Angeles is the historical center of jobs in the region. LAX and John Wayne Airport have considerable office clusters around them. Office buildings tend to cluster around major intersections, including areas such as the “El Toro Y” (intersection of the I-5 and the I-405) and the “Orange Crush” (intersection of I-5, SR-22, and SR-57) in Orange County. The SCAG region also contains some mixed commercial and industrial land uses.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL LAND USES

Institutional land uses, which include large government and private operations, such as military bases, airports, and universities, encompass a considerable footprint in the region. Military operations consume a substantial quantity of land. The 9 active duty military facilities in the SCAG region are listed below (Governor’s Military Council 2023):

- Naval Air Facility El Centro
- Los Angeles Air Force Base
- Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos
- Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach
- March Air Force Reserve Base

- Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow
- Fort Irwin
- Marine Corps Combat Center Twentynine Palms
- Naval Base Ventura County

In addition, land controlled by Edwards Air Force Base, based in Kern County, extends into Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties. The Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range in Imperial and Riverside Counties is also an institutional use that is off-limits to the public.

A substantial quantity of land is dedicated to airports in Los Angeles County. LAX is a major institutional land use prominently located in the County. In the Antelope Valley, a large portion of land is dedicated to airport uses at Palmdale Airport. Bob Hope Airport and Long Beach Airport are the other commercial airports in Los Angeles County. Airports in other parts of the region include Ontario International Airport, Southern California Logistics Airport, and San Bernardino International Airport in San Bernardino County, Palm Springs International Airport and March Inland Port in Riverside County, John Wayne Airport in Orange County, and numerous general aviation airports scattered across the SCAG region.

University and college campuses are located in every county of the SCAG region. The largest are universities in the University of California system (Irvine, Los Angeles, and Riverside) and the California State University system (Channel Islands, Dominguez Hills, Fullerton, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Northridge, San Bernardino, and San Diego-Imperial Valley Campus). In addition, California Polytechnic University at Pomona (one of three polytechnic universities in the California State University system) and the University of Southern California are the other large universities in the region. There are numerous smaller universities and colleges in the region, both public and private, as well as an extensive community college system that spans the SCAG region.

## INDUSTRIAL LAND USES

The main focal points of industrial activity in the region are the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Altogether, these adjacent ports handle approximately 13 percent of the volume imported into the country (USACE 2022). The industrial activity spreads north from the ports along the Alameda Corridor (a 20-mile freight line connecting downtown Los Angeles to the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach) and extends east through the City of Industry and the City of Commerce toward San Bernardino County.

Many manufacturing industries, distribution centers, and warehouses have established businesses in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties (also known as the Inland Empire). This activity has made the Inland Empire a distribution center for the region, state, and nation. Adding to the goods coming by highway and rail through San Bernardino County are goods coming to the county by air through several airports that cater to air cargo, primarily Ontario International Airport. Industrial uses tend to cluster around cargo-handling airports to take advantage of transportation options.

Significant air cargo and associated industrial land uses also are located around LAX. A third port in the region, located in Port Hueneme in Ventura County, is also surrounded with industrial activity.

Along the Mexican border, the three ports of entry in Imperial County have large amounts of commerce going back and forth between the two countries.









### ORANGE COUNTY CENTRAL-COASTAL HCP/NCCP

In the 27 years since the Orange County Central-Coastal HCP/NCCP was completed, numerous regional HCPs have been approved or are in development throughout California. The NCCP program has also expanded to address a broad range of important natural habitats throughout the state (USFWS 1996).

### COACHELLA VALLEY MSHCP

The Coachella Valley MSHCP was adopted in 2008 and preserves over 240,000 acres of natural habitat in the Coachella Valley. This MSHCP protects 27 sensitive plant and animal species. This plan is managed by the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2023).

### DESERT RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP), a part of BLM, was undertaken due to statewide and national concerns regarding habitat fragmentation and loss of habitat for listed and candidate species. The DRECP is a landscape-level plan that streamlines renewable energy development, conserves valuable desert ecosystems, and provides outdoor recreation opportunities. The DRECP was developed by BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the California Energy Commission (CEC), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), collectively known as the Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT). Revisions to the Final Environmental Impact Statement, released in November of 2015, were made as a result of internal reviews, protests, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) public comments and other public feedback (BLM2021). The DRECP is a proposed MSHCP intended to conserve threatened and endangered species and natural communities in the Mojave and Colorado Desert regions of Southern California, while also facilitating the timely permitting of renewable energy projects to help meet the state's goal of providing at least 33 percent of electricity generation through renewable energy by 2020, 50 percent by 2026, and 100 percent by 2045, as well as the federal government's goal of increasing renewable energy generation on public land. As planned, the approved DRECP and associated permits would provide renewable energy developers and entities undertaking DRECP conservation efforts with authorization for the incidental take of certain endangered, threatened, and special-status plant and animal species for covered activities (as defined in the DRECP). Such authorizations would be granted by agencies that are formal participants in the DRECP (CEC 2015).

### CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA PLAN

The California Desert Conservation Area Plan is used to manage BLM-controlled areas. BLM also implements biological resource management policies through its designation of ACECs (BLM 1980).

**West Mojave Plan.** The West Mojave Plan is an amendment to BLM's California Desert Conservation Area Plan. The West Mojave Plan also has a proposed HCP component that, if and when finalized, would provide a program for complying with the federal ESA on private lands within the West Mojave Plan area. Together, the West Mojave Plan and the proposed HCP component would cover over 9 million acres north of the Los Angeles metropolitan area with a purpose of creating a comprehensive strategy to conserve and protect almost 100 sensitive desert species and natural communities (BLM 2006).

## 3.11.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### FEDERAL

#### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ACT, SECTION 4(F) OF 1966 [49 UNITED STATES CODE [USC] SECTION 303]

The Department of Transportation Act was enacted to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside, public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. Section 4(f) requires a comprehensive evaluation of all environmental impacts resulting from federal-aid transportation projects administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Aviation Administration that involve the use—or interference with use—of the following types of land.

- Public park lands
- Recreation areas
- Wildlife and waterfowl refuges
- Publicly or privately owned historic properties of federal, state, or local significance

#### ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973 (16 USC SECTION 1531 ET SEQ.)

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) was established by Congress in order to “provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved [and] to provide a program for the conservation of such ... species.” USFWS administers the FESA, which designates critical habitat for Endangered species. This enables USFWS to carry out its mission to conserve, protect, and enhance the nation’s fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of people. Critical habitat areas cannot be disturbed without permission from the USFWS and other federal agencies, depending on land ownership. The USFWS also manages a system of land and waters for the conservation of wildlife and associated ecosystems. These National Wildlife Refuges are primarily managed for the preservation and protection of unique or important resources and ecosystems. HCPs, established under Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the FESA, are planning documents that provide for partnerships with non-federal parties to conserve the ecosystems upon which listed (and candidate) species depend, ultimately contributing to their recovery. The USFWS requires HCPs as part of an application for an incidental take permit. HCPs describe the anticipated effects of the proposed taking, how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated, and how the HCP is to be funded. HCPs may be prepared on a project level when projects will require the acquisition of an Incidental Take Permit. Regional HCPs may also be prepared in an effort to protect threatened and endangered species during the land use planning process.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT

The Department of Housing and Urban Development Act created the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a Cabinet-level agency. HUD is responsible for national policy and programs that address housing needs in the U.S. HUD is responsible for enforcing fair housing laws. HUD plays a major role in supporting homeownership by underwriting homeownership for lower- and moderate-income families through its mortgage insurance programs.

## **UNIFORM RELOCATION ASSISTANCE AND REAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION POLICIES ACT**

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (42 U.S. Code, Section 4601 et seq.), passed in 1970 and amended in 1987, is intended to provide for uniform and equitable treatment for persons displaced through federally funded or assisted transportation and redevelopment projects that require property acquisition. The act lays out rules for notification, relocation counseling, social services or assistance for disabled residents, and compensation for replacement housing and moving costs. The rules stipulate that replacement housing must be comparable to previous housing in terms of location, size, access to jobs and public facilities, and must be “decent, safe, and sanitary.” The rules apply if federal funds are in any phase of the program or project, even if the property acquisition itself is not federally funded.

## **FEDERAL COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT**

The CZMA ([16 USC 1451–1464](#), Chapter 33; Public Law 92-583, October 27, 1972; 86 Stat. 1280), administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, provides for the management of the nation’s coastal resources, including the Great Lakes. The goal is to “preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, to restore or enhance the resources of the nation’s coastal zone.” The CZMA outlines three national programs, the National Coastal Zone Management Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, and the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP). The National Coastal Zone Management Program aims to balance competing land and water issues through state and territorial coastal management programs, the reserves serve as field laboratories that provide a greater understanding of estuaries and how humans impact them, and CELCP provides matching funds to state and local governments to purchase threatened coastal and estuarine lands or obtain conservation easements.

## **FEDERAL LAND POLICY AND MANAGEMENT ACT, AS AMENDED**

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579) governs how public lands administered by BLM are managed. The FLPMA provides guiding principles for BLM land management including multiple use, sustained yield, and environmental protection. The intent of FLPMA is to ensure that BLM manages public lands so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people for renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

FLPMA addresses topics such as land use planning, land acquisition, fees and payments, administration of federal land, range management, and rights-of-way on federal land. FLPMA has specific objectives and time frames in which to accomplish these objectives, giving it more authority and eliminating the uncertainty surrounding BLM’s role in wilderness designation and management.

## **CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS TITLE 25**

Federally recognized Native American tribes are considered domestic dependent nations. Tribal sovereignty refers to tribes’ right to govern themselves, define their own membership, manage tribal property, and regulate tribal business and domestic relations; it further recognizes the existence of a government-to-government relationship between such tribes and the federal government. In general, state and local governments do not have “civil regulatory” jurisdiction (i.e., land use) on Indian Land, which is land held in trust or restricted status for a tribe.

## **FHWA NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM**

The FHWA National Scenic Byways Program, which was established in Title 23, Section 162 of the United States Code under the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, is a grassroots collaborative effort that designates selected highways as “All American Road” (a roadway that is a destination unto itself), America’s Byways or “National Scenic Byway” (a roadway that possesses outstanding qualities that exemplify regional characteristics).

## **BLM SCENIC AREAS AND BACK COUNTRY BYWAYS**

BLM designates some of its holdings as Scenic Areas and some roadways in remote areas as Back Country Byways. The BLM Back Country Byways Program was established in 1989 and is a component of the National Scenic Byways Program. The counties of San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial in the SCAG region include land with such BLM designations.

## **UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM**

The U.S. Forest Service also has a National Scenic Byways Program, independent from the BLM program, which was established in 1995 under the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 to indicate roadways of scenic importance that pass through national forests. The SCAG region includes Forest Service Scenic Byways in the counties of San Bernardino, Ventura, Los Angeles, and Riverside.

## **STATE**

### **CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT**

The California Coastal Act constitutes the California Coastal Management Program for the purposes of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act (California Coastal Act of 1976; PRC Section 30000 et seq.). The act established CCC, identified a designated California Coastal Zone, and established CCC’s responsibility to include the preparation and ongoing oversight of a Coastal Plan for the protection and management of the Coastal Zone. Each local jurisdictional authority (city or county) with lands within the coastal zone is required to develop, and comply with, a coastal management plan. The Coastal Act requires that any person or public agency proposing development within the Coastal Zone obtain a CDP from either the CCC or the city or county having the jurisdictional authority to issue a CDP. New school construction in portions of the South Los Angeles Unified School District areas could require a CDP. Any construction within the Coastal Zone must conform to the requirements of the California Coastal Act generally, and Chapter 3, Section 6 (Development) specifically. On or near the shoreline, coastal-dependent developments have priority over those uses not dependent on a coastal location (PRC Section 30255). To comply with the Coastal Zone Management Act, localities develop LCPs.

### **NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLANNING ACT, AS AMENDED**

The Natural Community Conservation Planning Act of 1991, as amended in 2003 (California Fish and Game Code Section 2800-2835) established the Natural Community Conservation Planning program for the protection and perpetuation of the state’s biological diversity. CDFW established the program in order to conserve natural communities at the ecosystem level while accommodating compatible land use. An NCCP identifies and provides for the regional or area-wide protection of plants, animals, and their habitats, while allowing compatible and appropriate economic activity. The CDFW provides support, direction, and guidance to participants in order to ensure that NCCPs are consistent with the state ESA.

### **MODERNIZATION OF TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED INFILL PROJECTS SENATE BILL 743**

On September 27, 2013, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 743. To further the state’s commitment to the goals of SB 375 and AB 32, SB 743 adds Chapter 2.7, Modernization of Transportation Analysis for Transit-Oriented Infill Projects, to PRC Division 13, Section 21099. Key provisions of SB 743 include reforming aesthetics and parking CEQA analyses for urban infill projects and eliminating the measurement of auto delay, including level of service, as a metric that can be used for measuring traffic impacts in transit priority areas. SB 743 provides that, “aesthetics and parking impacts of a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project on an infill site within a transit priority area shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment.” This means that, effective January 1, 2014, aesthetics and parking will no longer be considered in determining if a project has the potential to result in significant environmental effects provided a project meets all of the following three criteria:

- a) The project is in a transit priority area;
- b) The project is on an infill site; and
- c) The project is residential, mixed-use residential, or an employment center.

### **CEQA STREAMLINING FOR INFILL PROJECTS SB 226**

The CEQA Streamlining for Infill Projects (SB 226) sets forth a streamlined review process for infill projects and includes performance standards that will be used to determine an infill project’s eligibility for streamlined review. The purpose of SB 226 and updated CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.3 is to streamline the environmental review process by “limiting the topics subject to review at the project level where the effects of infill development have been addressed in a planning level decision or by uniformly applicable development policies.” Residential, commercial and retail, public office buildings, transit stations, and schools are eligible for this streamlining provided they meet the following requirements: (1) are located in an urban area on a site that has been previously developed or adjoins existing qualified urban uses on at least 75 percent of the site’s perimeter; (2) satisfy the performance standards provided in Appendix M of CEQA; and (3) are consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in either a sustainable communities strategy or an alternative planning strategy, with some exceptions.

Under SB 226, some development and transportation projects assumed as a part of the Plan may be eligible to use a streamlined version of the environmental review process.

### **HOUSING ELEMENT LAW**

The Housing Element Law is discussed in detail in Section 3.14, *Population and Housing*.

### **REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The California Legislature developed the RHNA process (Government Code Section 65580 et seq.) to address the affordable housing shortage in California. See Section 3.14, *Population and Housing*, for discussion of the RHNA as well as recent legislation regarding housing.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING (SB 1000)**

State law defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development adoption, implementation, and

enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Signed in 2016 and effective on January 1, 2018, SB 1000 focuses on environmental justice in local land use planning. The primary purpose of SB 1000 is to address the inequitable distribution of pollution and associated health effects in low-income communities and communities of color. In addition, the legislation serves to facilitate transparency and public engagement in local governments’ planning and decision making processes, reduce harmful pollutants and the associated health risks in environmental justice communities, and promote equitable access to health-inducing benefits, such as healthy food options, housing, public facilities, and recreation.

SB 1000, which is codified in Government Code Section 63502(h), requires jurisdictions with disadvantaged communities to either include an environmental justice element in their general plan or incorporate environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives throughout other general plan elements. SB 1000 is triggered when a jurisdiction concurrently adopts or revises two or more general plan elements if there is one or more disadvantaged communities within the jurisdiction. A “disadvantaged community” is an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency as such or that is a low-income area disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that may lead to negative health effects or environmental degradation within its planning area.

Once the law is triggered, a jurisdiction must (1) identify the disadvantaged communities within its planning area, (2) identify objectives and policies to reduce unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities, (3) identify objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process, and (4) identify objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities.

### **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND CLIMATE PROTECTION ACT**

A detailed discussion of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) is provided in Section 3.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*. As discussed in Section 3.8, SB 375 seeks to align transportation, housing, and other land uses to achieve regional GHG emission reduction targets. In addition, SB 375 requires California metropolitan planning organizations to develop a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) as part of the regional transportation plan (RTP), with the purposes of identifying policies and strategies to reduce per capita passenger vehicle-generated GHG emissions. The SCS must:

- Identify the general location of land uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region;
- Identify areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region;
- Identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight-year projection of the regional housing need;
- Identify a transportation network to service the regional transportation needs;
- Gather and consider the best practically available scientific information regarding resources areas and farmland in the region;
- Consider the state housing goals;
- Set forth a forecasted development pattern for the region; and
- Allow the regional transportation plan to comply with the federal Clean Air Act of 1970 (42 USC Section 7401 et seq.).

The forecasted regional development pattern in the SCS, when integrated with the transportation network and other transportation measures and policies, must reduce the GHG from automobiles and light duty trucks to achieve the GHG emission reduction targets approved by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). If the SCS does not achieve the GHG emission targets set by CARB, an Alternative Planning Strategy must be developed to demonstrate how the targets could be achieved. SB 375 also imposes a number of new requirements on the regional housing needs process. Before SB 375, the regional transportation plan and regional housing needs processes were not required to be coordinated.

SB 375 now synchronizes the schedules of the RHNA and regional transportation plan processes. The RHNA, which is developed after the regional transportation plan, must also allocate housing units within the region consistent with the forecasted regional development pattern included in the SCS. Previously, the RHNA determination was based on population projections produced by DOF. SB 375 requires the determination to be based upon population projections by DOF and regional population forecasts used in preparing the regional transportation plan. If the total regional population forecasted used in the regional transportation plan is within a range of three percent of the regional population forecast completed by DOF for the same planning period, then the population forecast developed by the regional agency and used in the regional transportation plan shall be the basis for the determination. If the difference is greater than three percent, then the two agencies shall meet to discuss variances in methodology and seek agreement on a population projection for the region to use as the basis for the RHNA determination. If no agreement is reached, then the basis for the RHNA determination shall be the regional population projection created by DOF.

Existing law requires local governments to adopt a housing element as part of their general plan. Unlike the rest of the general plan, where updates sometimes occur at intervals of 20 years or longer, under previous law the housing element was required to be updated as frequently as needed and no less than every five years. Under SB 375, this period has been lengthened to eight years and timed so that the housing element period begins no less than 18 months after adoption of the regional transportation plan to encourage closer coordination between the housing and transportation planning done by local governments and MPOs. SB 375 also changes the implementation schedule required in each housing element. Previous law required the housing element to contain a program which set forth a 5-year schedule to implement the goals and objectives of the housing element. The new law instead requires this schedule of actions to occur during the eight-year housing element planning period, and requires each action have a timetable for implementation.

## **REGIONAL CONSERVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY PROGRAM**

On September 22, 2016, the Governor signed AB 2087, which created CDFW's Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) pilot program and was amended by SB 103 on July 21, 2017. The program uses a science-based approach to identify conservation and enhancement opportunities that, if implemented, will help California's declining and vulnerable species by protecting, creating, restoring, and reconnecting habitat and may contribute to species recovery and adaptation to climate change and resiliency. The program consists of three components: regional conservation assessments (RCA), RCISs, and mitigation credit agreements (MCA). An RCA is a voluntary, non-regulatory, non-binding conservation assessment that includes information and analyses of important species, ecosystems, protected areas, and habitat linkages at the United States Department of Agriculture ecoregion scale and may include more than one ecoregion. An RCIS is a voluntary, non-regulatory, and non-binding conservation assessment that includes information and analyses relating to the conservation of focal species, their associated habitats, and the conservation status of the RCIS land base. An RCIS establishes biological goals and objectives at the species level and describes conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions that,

if implemented, will contribute to those goals and objectives. An MCA is developed under an approved RCIS. An MCA is developed in collaboration with CDFW to create mitigation credits by implementing the conservation or habitat enhancement actions identified in an RCIS (CDFW 2023a).

## ENHANCED INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING DISTRICTS

Enacted on September 29, 2014, the Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (SB 628; Chapter 2.99 [commencing with Section 53398.50] to Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5 of the Government Code) allows the legislative body of a city or a county, defined to include a city and county, to establish an infrastructure financing district, adopt an infrastructure financing plan, and issue bonds to finance public facilities upon approval by two-thirds of a jurisdiction's voters. Additionally, a city or county is authorized to issue bonds upon approval by 55 percent of the voters, for which only the district is liable; to finance public capital facilities or other specified projects of communitywide significance, including, but not limited to, brownfield restoration and other environmental mitigation; the development of projects on a former military base; the repayment of the transfer of funds to a military base reuse authority; the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of housing for persons of low and moderate income for rent or purchase; the acquisition, construction, or repair of industrial structures for private use; transit priority projects; infrastructure maintenance, and projects to implement a sustainable communities strategy, such as climate adaptation projects. The bill authorizes an enhanced infrastructure financing district to utilize any powers under the Polanco Redevelopment Act.

## LOCAL

### GENERAL PLANS AND LAND USE REGULATIONS

The legal framework in which California cities and counties exercise local planning and land use functions is provided in the California Planning and Zoning Law (California Government Code Section 65000 et seq.) Under state planning law, each city and county is required to adopt a general plan "for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning" (California Government Code Section 65300 et seq.).

The general plan expresses the community's development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private. Government Code Section 65302 requires that a general plan include the following seven elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Government Code Section 65302 requires that environmental justice be addressed as a standalone element or integrated into the goals, policies, and objectives throughout other elements if a community has identified disadvantaged communities within their jurisdiction. Other elements may be included at the discretion of the jurisdiction that relate to the physical development of the county or city. The general plan must be comprehensive and internally consistent. Of particular importance is the consistency between the circulation and land use elements; the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other public utilities and facilities must be consistent with the general distribution and intensity of land used for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public areas, waste disposal facilities, agriculture, and other public and private uses.

### COMMUNITY PLANS, SPECIFIC PLANS, AND MASTER PLANS

A city or county may also provide land use planning by developing community or specific plans for smaller, more specific geographic areas within their jurisdiction. (California Government Code Section 65450). These more

Localized plans provide for focused guidance for developing a specific area, with development standards tailored to the area, as well as systematic implementation of the general plan. Local jurisdictions and private developers may also choose to partner in the development of a master plan that shows an overall development concept that includes urban design, landscaping, infrastructure, service provision, circulation, present and future land use and built form. It consists of three-dimensional images, texts, diagrams, statistics, reports, maps and aerial photos that describe how a specific location will be developed. It provides a structured approach and creates a clear framework for developing an area.

## ZONING

Every local jurisdiction within the region has land use regulations that implement the general plan policies at the level of the individual parcel. The zoning ordinance is the primary land use regulation used to implement the goals and policies of its general plan. Zoning ordinances, which are required to be consistent with the general plan, provide detailed direction related to development standards; permitted, conditionally permitted, and prohibited uses; and other regulations such as parking standards and sign regulations. Zoning ordinances and land use approvals must be consistent with applicable specific plans as well as the general plan.

Local jurisdictions are also required to comply with the Subdivision Map Act (California Government Code Section 66410 et seq.). The Subdivision Map Act sets forth the conditions for approval of a subdivision map and requires enactment of subdivision ordinances by which local governments have direct control over the types of subdivision projects to be approved and the physical improvements to be installed.

### 3.11.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

#### THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

For the purposes of this 2024 PEIR, SCAG has determined that implementation of Connect SoCal 2024 could result in significant impacts related to land use and planning if the Plan would exceed the following significance criteria, in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G:

- Physically divide an established community.
- Cause a significant environmental impact due to conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

#### METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2, *Project Description*, describes the Plan's vision, goals, forecasted regional development pattern, individual transportation projects, and Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies. The Plan aims to increase mobility, promote sustainability, and improve the regional economy. Although land use development is anticipated to occur within the region even without the Plan, the Plan could influence growth, including distribution patterns. To address this, the 2024 PEIR includes an analysis on the implementation of policies and strategies as well as potential projects and evaluates how conditions in 2050 under the Plan would differ from existing conditions (2022).

Impacts to land use and planning were evaluated in accordance with Appendix G of the 2023 CEQA Guidelines. Land use impacts within the SCAG region were evaluated at a programmatic level of detail, in relation to the

General Plans of the six counties and the 191 cities within the SCAG region; and a review of related literature germane to the SCAG region.

A qualitative evaluation of land use impacts resulting from the Plan was conducted with a focus on potential physical impacts on the environment, including direct and indirect impacts. The analysis of land use and planning considered public comments received on the NOP and feedback and discussions at the various public and stakeholder outreach meetings.

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*, Connect SoCal 2024 includes Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies, some of which will effectively reduce impacts in the various resource areas. Furthermore, compliance with all applicable laws and regulations (as set forth in the Regulatory Framework) would be reasonably expected to reduce impacts of the Plan. See CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(B). As discussed in Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*, where remaining potentially significant impacts are identified, SCAG mitigation measures are incorporated to reduce these impacts. If SCAG cannot mitigate impacts of the Plan to less than significant, project-level mitigation measures are identified which can and should be considered and implemented by lead agencies as applicable and feasible.

## IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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### IMPACT LU-1      **Potential to physically divide an established community.**

#### ***Significant and Unavoidable Impact – Mitigation Required***

Physical division of an established community could occur as a result of physical or perceived barriers to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Short-term construction-related impacts could result from disturbances due to construction equipment; these impacts are discussed under other impact categories (e.g., Noise, Aesthetics, and Air Quality). Long-term impacts could result from the completion of new or expanded roadways or transit facilities in existing communities; large scale development with impenetrable edges can also form barriers within communities. Also, if freeway routes, particularly those that occur in rural areas, are widened, they can create a real or perceived barrier to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Freeway segments that would occur in rural areas, including new highway and roadway projects, also have the potential to create physical barriers. Such additions of new roadways or expansion of existing roadways may be perceived as a great distance to cross by a pedestrian (whereas it may not have been perceived as an issue previously), thereby dividing a community. Implementation of transportation projects, and the Plan's emphasis on expanded transit could expand urban uses into undeveloped areas and has the potential to physically divide established communities. For example, an elevated grade crossing may create a physical barrier in some locations.

The policies and strategies in the Plan, such as emphasis on complete streets and TDM strategies, would have less of a potential to divide established communities because they are generally expected to occur in established communities. Further, many of these strategies (i.e., bike lanes, pedestrian access) improve connectivity.

Implementation of the Plan would affect land use patterns and the consumption of currently vacant and open space lands. Implementation of the Plan could result in the conversion of greenfield acres and agricultural land to urban uses as the region grows to accommodate 1.6 million additional households (see Section 3.2, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*, for additional details). As land gets converted from urban or agricultural uses, there is the potential for infrastructure or land developments to divide existing communities. Anticipated significant impacts

include substantial density increases in areas of the region adjacent to transit, or other rights-of-way that could separate residences from community facilities and services, and conversion of vacant lands, including agricultural lands, to transportation infrastructure and residential and commercial development.

Growth under the Plan would not be expected to substantially physically divide any established communities since the majority of projects would generally be infill or redevelopment projects with discrete footprints located within existing urbanized areas. Thus, the likelihood that a project or group of projects in a given area would create conditions that limit mobility and access to necessary goods and services within the community is considered low. Larger or multi-phased projects are typically proposed near the edges of urban centers where adequate vacant land is available for development, or within established campuses or underutilized properties that are already surrounding and constrained by existing urban uses, and thus their construction within these areas would not introduce new, or exacerbate existing, barriers to the availability of goods and services, or the movement of people within established communities in the region.

Transportation projects, including highway and transit extensions and interchange projects, are assumed to have a higher potential to physically divide existing communities since they would involve the creation of new roadways. Highway widening and other projects along established transportation rights-of-way are assumed to have a lower potential to divide existing communities and neighborhoods. However, most transportation projects in the Plan are modifications or expansions (e.g., high-occupancy vehicle lanes, widening) of existing facilities and would have less potential to divide an existing community than new projects.

Nonetheless, because the Plan could result in the location of transportation infrastructure in residential areas and some large-scale development projects could have fenced borders, it is possible that division of communities would occur. As such, impacts are considered significant and mitigation measures are required.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

### SCAG MITIGATION MEASURES

**SMM-LU-1** SCAG shall continue to coordinate with local County Transportation Commissions, Caltrans, and other local jurisdictions when siting new facilities in residential areas to facilitate minimizing future impacts on established communities through cooperation, information sharing, and regional program development as part of SCAG's ongoing regional planning efforts to promote best planning practices.

### PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

**PMM-LU-1** In accordance with provisions of Sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B) of the State CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to reduce substantial adverse effects that physically divide a community, as applicable and feasible. Such measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the lead agency:

- a) Facilitate connections in communities that have been physically divided through land use projects that build upon and improve existing circulation patterns.
- b) Encourage implementing agencies to orient transportation projects to minimize impacts on existing communities by:
  - Selecting alignments within or adjacent to existing public rights of way.

- Design sections above or below-grade to maintain viable vehicular, cycling, and pedestrian connections between portions of communities where existing connections are disrupted by the transportation project.
  - Wherever feasible incorporate direct crossings, overcrossings, or under crossings at regular intervals for multiple modes of travel (e.g., pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles).
- c) Where it has been determined that it is infeasible to avoid creating a barrier in an established community, consider other measures to reduce impacts, including but not limited to:
- Alignment shifts to minimize the area affected.
  - Reduction of the proposed right-of-way take to minimize the overall area of impact.
  - Provisions for bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle access across improved roadways.

### LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As previously discussed, the Plan's Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*) and compliance with existing laws and regulations would reduce impacts; however, given the regional scale of the analysis in this 2024 PEIR, it is not possible or feasible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated. Therefore, this 2024 PEIR identifies SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. At the project-level, lead agencies can and should consider the identified project-level mitigation measures during subsequent review of transportation and land use projects as appropriate and feasible. While the mitigation measures will reduce the impacts related to physically dividing an established community, due to the regional nature of the analysis, unknown site conditions and project-specific details, and SCAG's lack of land use authority over individual projects, SCAG finds that the impact could be **significant and unavoidable** even with mitigation.

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IMPACT LU-2      **Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.**

#### ***Significant and Unavoidable Impacts – Mitigation Required***

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, by 2050, the SCAG region is anticipated to add nearly 2.1 million people with or without the Plan. To accommodate the growth, the Plan includes a growth vision and forecast regional development pattern. The forecast regional development pattern identified in the Plan represents one potential pattern that is consistent with the Plan (see Map 2-8, Forecasted Regional Development Pattern, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of this 2024 PEIR). SCAG does not have land use authority. Lead agencies have the sole discretion to determine whether individual projects are consistent with the Plan.

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, SCAG worked with each local jurisdiction through the Local Data Exchange (LDX) process to identify local land use plans and visions for growth patterns sourced from local jurisdictions and approved projects that each jurisdiction judges to be reasonably foreseeable. SCAG staff developed only one set of regional growth strategies for the Plan's land use pattern that were based on local plans and reflected regional trends and research. As part of the local plans, transportation projects and programs were sourced from the County Transportation Commissions (CTCs) while land use and growth were sourced from local jurisdictions based on local data input, integrating new projects and entitlements at the local level, and discussed

in one-on-one meetings with the majority of local jurisdictions through a 10-month long LDX process (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, to learn more about the Plan's LDX process). As a result, Connect SoCal 2024 is SCAG's first RTP/SCS to not modify local data inputs. The Plan as implemented by local jurisdictions would distribute growth in the region.

The Plan seeks to integrate the forecasted regional development pattern with the transportation network, in response to projected growth and housing needs, changing demographics, and transportation demands. Transportation policies and strategies included in the Plan emphasize system preservation, active transportation, transportation safety, electrification, and transportation demand management measures. Plan policies and strategies aim to focus new housing and job growth in PDAs and minimizing growth in GRRAs (see Maps 2-9, Priority Development Areas, and 2-10, Green Region Resource Areas, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of this 2024 PEIR).

The Plan contains Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies to guide anticipated population, households, and employment growth in the region by 2050. Policies were developed as a result of SCAG's bottom-up planning process outlined in the Plan. This process involved extensive outreach to and input from local jurisdictions, including counties, subregions, and local city planners. In particular, the Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies support the development of local climate adaptation and hazard mitigation plans as well as project implementation that improves community resiliency to climate change and natural hazards; support local policies for renewable energy production and reduction of urban heat islands and carbon sequestration; encourage the integration of local food production into the regional landscape; promote more resource-efficient development focused on conservation, recycling and reclamation; preserve, enhance and restore wildlife connectivity; reduce the consumption of resource areas, including agricultural lands; and identify ways to improve access to public park space.

As stated previously, the development pattern would be supported by transportation investments that emphasize system preservation and enhancement, active transportation, and land use integration, and are generally consistent with local land use plans, goals, and policies calling for higher density, compact, mixed-use development that may be served by transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The Plan's transportation strategies would have less ability to result in conflicts with general plans as they are expected to be implemented in established communities where such strategies are often included at the local level.

While the Plan was developed primarily from assumptions derived from local general plans and input from local governments and transportation agencies, SB 375 does not require local land use policies, regulations, or general plans to be consistent with the Plan. Also, although the transportation projects and policies and strategies in the Plan are generally compatible with county- and regional-level general plans, local general plans may not have been updated since SCAG's last adopted 2020 RTP/SCS. As such, it is likely that there could be incompatibilities with existing general plans in the region.

As noted above, SCAG has no land use authority to adopt, approve, implement, or otherwise regulate local land use plans or transportation projects identified in the Plan. SB 375 specifically provides that a regional transportation plan does not supersede the land use authority of local jurisdictions. In addition, cities and counties are not required to change their land use plans and policies, including general plans, to be consistent with the Plan. Rather, SB 375 requires the projections of a regional land use pattern integrated with the transportation network and the provision of strategies and recommended policies to reduce per capita GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks. Local governments reserve their land use authority and may incorporate, as appropriate, the recommended policies and strategies included in the Plan.

It is possible that some general plans do not include similar policies to those in the Plan because (1) some general plans have not been recently updated (in particular some jurisdictions have not yet updated their general plans to incorporate RHNA requirements), and (2) each jurisdiction is focused on land uses within their authority. As a result, there exists the potential for a local general plan to conflict with SCAG's projected land use pattern. While this conflict would not result in a direct physical impact, physical impacts could occur indirectly as other pressures for increased densities grow in the region. As density increases, consistent with the Plan, these policies and strategies could facilitate higher density in areas not currently planned for such densities (at the local level). As such, there is the potential for inconsistencies between the Plan policies and strategies and local planning documents that could potentially lead to physical environmental impacts.

Conversely, implementation of the Plan and resulting development patterns could result in growth in infill locations within areas with existing infrastructure thereby discouraging re-investment in areas that are less well served by infrastructure – in particular transportation infrastructure. Such areas may include communities located outside of urban centers or rural towns. The lack of investment could lead to a decrease in population, social, and economic activity that could eventually translate into urban decay in underutilized portions of affected communities. The resulting lack of maintenance and investment in areas could create or accelerate physical deterioration of existing land uses in smaller communities throughout the region. If such change, including economic forces, were large enough, the result could be extensive physical deterioration often referred to as urban decay or blight. While not likely, implementation of the Plan could create or accelerate physical deterioration resulting in urban decay in underutilized portions of affected communities.

Implementation of the Plan would also have the potential to result in conflicts with the provisions of applicable adopted HCPs, NCCPs as well as other open space/parklands. Plan policies and strategies seek to reduce conflicts with applicable HCPs, NCCPs and open spaces by focusing new growth in PDAs. However, because some planned transportation projects could occur in or adjacent to lands protected under these plans, there is the potential for a significant impact (see Section 3.4, *Biological Resources*, Impact BIO-6, for further analysis of the Plan's potential to conflict with provisions of an adopted HCP or NCCP).

As previously discussed, there are areas subject to general plans that would be impacted by transportation projects. In addition, since the Plan's planning horizon year is beyond the timeline of many of the most recent general plans, implementation of the Plan's policies and strategies could result in changes to land use patterns as compared to those currently identified in certain general plans. Therefore, there is potential for inconsistencies with general plans as well as regional conservation plans, and as such, impacts would be considered significant and mitigation measures are required.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

### SCAG MITIGATION MEASURES

**SMM-LU-2** SCAG shall continue to use the Intergovernmental Review (IGR) Program as an information sharing tool by providing information to regionally significant projects as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15206 to facilitate consideration of the most currently adopted Connect SoCal 2024. SCAG shall continue to review regionally significant projects submitted to SCAG to include them in the IGR Bi-Monthly Reports that are published on SCAG's IGR Program website at: <https://scag.ca.gov/igr-bi-monthly-report>. For more information on SCAG's IGR Program, please visit: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/programs/Pages/IGR.aspx>.

**SMM-LU-3** SCAG shall continue to support local jurisdictions when they update their general plans at least every ten years, as recommended by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research through the use of the multiple planning and analytical tools provided by SCAG such as the Regional Data Platform and other GIS software. Additionally, SCAG shall continue to facilitate information sharing, such as through the Toolbox Tuesday program to provide webinars on technical information and tools that may be useful for local jurisdictions to assist with their general plan updates, and funding programs, such as Regional Early Action Planning grants and Call for Projects.

### PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

**PMM-LU-2** In accordance with provisions of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15091(a)(2) and 15126.4(a)(1)(B), a lead agency for a project can and should consider mitigation measures to reduce substantial adverse effects that are due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect, as applicable and feasible. When an inconsistency with the adopted general plan policy or land use regulation (adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an impact) is identified, measures may include the following or other comparable measures identified by the lead agency:

- a) Modify the transportation or land use project to eliminate or reduce the conflict; or, determine if the environmental, social, economic, and engineering benefits of the project warrant an amendment to the general plan or land use regulation and process said amendment.

### LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

As previously discussed, the Plan’s Regional Planning Policies and Implementation Strategies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 3.0, *Introduction to the Analysis*), and compliance with existing laws and regulations would reduce impacts; however, given the regional scale of the analysis in this 2024 PEIR, it is not possible or feasible to determine if all impacts would be fully mitigated. Therefore, this 2024 PEIR identifies SCAG and project-level mitigation measures. At the project-level, lead agencies can and should consider the identified project-level mitigation measures during subsequent review of transportation and land use projects as appropriate and feasible. While the mitigation measures will reduce the impacts related to potential lack of consistency with land use plans, policies, and regulations, due to the regional nature of the analysis, unknown site conditions and project-specific details, and SCAG’s lack of land use authority over individual projects, SCAG finds that the impact could be **significant and unavoidable** even with mitigation.

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Connect SoCal 2024 is a regional-scale Plan comprising a regional growth forecast and land use pattern, policies and strategies, and individual transportation projects and investments. At this regional-scale, a cumulative or related project to the Plan is another regional-scale plan (such as Air Quality Management Plans within the region) and similar regional plans for adjacent regions. Because the Plan in and of itself would result in significant adverse environmental impacts with respect to land use, these impacts would add to the environmental impacts of other cumulative or related projects. Mitigation measures that reduce the Plan’s impacts would similarly reduce the Plan’s contribution to cumulative impacts.



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