



2024

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# FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

# SCAG'S FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRI

## CRITICAL SCAG REGION UPDATES

### South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) 2019 Contingency Measure Plan Update

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On February 2, 2024, the U.S. EPA proposed a disapproval of South Coast AQMD's 2019 Contingency Measure Plan (Plan). The Plan, which covers all of Orange County and urban areas within Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, identifies that 64 percent of the needed emission reductions would originate from federally-regulated sources (e.g., ships, locomotives, aircraft and ocean-going vessels) subject solely to federal control, and proposes the federal government take responsibility for them.

Should the full disapproval be finalized as proposed, the U.S. EPA action would set in motion a 24-month highway sanction clock, prompting the development of a federal air plan in the South Coast Air Basin with no current pathway for the sanction clocks to stop. This would have the potential to impact up to tens of billions of dollars' worth of nonexempt highway projects, preventing them from receiving federal

approval or funding to move forward, while infringing on critical aspects of regional transportation planning, programming and project delivery, including the ability to deliver key transportation-related infrastructure improvements and upgrades needed ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and LA 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.

SCAG and Southern California's six county transportation commissions urge the U.S. EPA to work with state and local air regulators, transportation planning partners and SCAG to find alternatives to disapproving the Plan, in full or in part, by recognizing, taking action and delivering its fair share of emission reductions from federal emissions sources.

Additionally, SCAG urges the Congress to provide funding to assist the U.S. EPA in addressing these federal emissions sources.

### Highways to Boulevards Regional Study Update

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In 2022, the late U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) and U.S. Senator Alex Padilla (D-California) demonstrated exemplary leadership by securing \$480,000 in Community Project Funding for SCAG's Highways to Boulevards Study.

Through the study, SCAG will identify opportunities to reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting or mitigating transportation facilities, such as highways or railways, that create barriers to community connectivity, including mobility, access and economic development. Additional study goals include:

- Offering a path for communities to reknit by removing, retrofitting or mitigating transportation facilities to better serve their communities.
- Providing a framework to identify and evaluate potential transportation facilities to reconnect communities and provide more multi-modal travel options.
- Focusing on facilities that intersect with Priority Equity Communities.
- Positioning the region to compete for federal funds.

The study area includes the entire six-county SCAG region.

SCAG created the Highways to Boulevards Regional Study Project Advisory Committee to help shape the study's vision, goals and methodology for identifying corridors for future conceptual design. The group, comprised of staff from cities, counties and councils of governments, held its first meeting on January 30, 2024. SCAG will engage stakeholders from across the region through April 2025.

SCAG expresses our gratitude for this critical funding that helps us achieve our equity and mobility goals.

# PRIORITIES

SCAG maintains a Federal and State Legislative Platform, which consists of the Regional Council's positions on policies and legislative initiatives related to SCAG's core planning and policy areas—community, economy, environment, and mobility— and which need the leadership and support of Congress and the California State Legislature to resolve challenges facing the SCAG region.

The following are SCAG's five top priorities for the 118th Congress:

## 1 Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing)

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PRO Housing is a competitive grant program providing funding to local and regional governments for the identification and removal of barriers to affordable housing production and preservation. The program was created by Congress in FY 2023 and received \$100 million in the FY 2024 budget. Additionally, it was included in the President's FY 2025 budget with a request for up to \$100 million. Long term, Metropolitan Planning Organizations need increased federal partnership to conduct regional housing planning to address housing needs for all economic segments of the community.

## 2 Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP)

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The ATIIP provides funding for pedestrian and bicycle facilities that strategically connect active transportation networks to the essentials of everyday life. It was authorized under the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and serves a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing public health, and making a community a more enjoyable place to live, work and play. The program is subject to appropriations and received \$45 million in FY 2023.

## 3 Healthy Streets Program (HSP)

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The HSP provides funding for cool and porous pavements and to expand tree canopies to address urban heat islands, improve air quality and reduce stormwater runoff. It was authorized under the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and likewise serves a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving public health, increasing quality of life for community members, and making a community more resilient to a changing climate. The program is subject to appropriations and has yet to receive funding.

## 4 Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

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The ACP is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) benefit program that provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for low-income households and up to \$75 per month for households on tribal lands. Created under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law with an initial investment of \$14 billion, the program has stopped accepting new enrollments due to lack of funding. The President's FY 2025 budget includes a supplemental request for \$6 billion to continue this critical program. SCAG received a \$500,000 grant from the FCC in March of 2023 to conduct outreach and encourage participation in the ACP. These outreach efforts are on hold until the ACP receives additional funding.

## 5 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games

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The 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games will require a regional approach to address the transportation infrastructure opportunities and challenges the games will present to our region, with venue locations confirmed throughout Southern California. Funding is needed to support capital infrastructure, clean fleet initiatives, security planning, and transit and roadway operations in a manner that is regionally equitable to prepare Southern California to host the games.

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## 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.

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.

SCAG is governed by an 86-member board of directors known as the Regional Council whose membership includes local and county elected officials. 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.

In addition to the six counties and 191 cities that make up the SCAG region, SCAG works in partnership with six county transportation commissions that hold the primary responsibility for programming and implementing transportation projects, programs and services in their respective counties.



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