
News Release

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SCAG Opens 2019 Regional Conference With Laser Beam Focus on Improving Transportation Safety in Communities Across the 6-County Region

Palm Desert, Calif. – Public education, planning and designing safer streets and closer collaboration with law enforcement are keys to reducing a growing number of fatalities and serious injuries from traffic collisions throughout Southern California, experts said Wednesday.

Appearing at the Traffic Safety Leadership Symposium, sponsored by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), experts in planning, safety and urban design said more needs to be done to make roads safer for everyone who walks, bikes and rides.

Overall, more than 1,500 people die and 136,000 are injured in collisions in Southern California each year. Most of those collisions (71%) occur on local streets – not freeways.

The sheer size of the SCAG region – six counties, 191 cities and 19 million people – heightens the need for greater planning and coordination when it comes to safe roadways, experts said. Each day, 270 collisions occur on streets within the region.

Safe streets and roadways will be a key element of Connect SoCal, SCAG's 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. The agency has established a goal of reducing traffic fatalities by 3% per year, reducing serious injuries by 1.5% and eliminating traffic deaths by 2050.

For the past several years, SCAG also has sponsored Go Human – a community outreach and advertising campaign throughout the six counties with the goal of reducing traffic collisions and encouraging people to walk and bike more.

“Considering how fast we’re growing as a region – another 4 million people in the next 25 years – making all of our streets and roadways safer is something we simply have to address,” said Alan D. Wapner, an Ontario City Councilmember and President of SCAG. “There is no simple answer, but through collaboration, careful planning and a commitment to public education, we can achieve the goals we have set.”

Wednesday's Traffic Safety Leadership Symposium was designed to help local leaders better identify ways to make their communities safer. Topics included public education campaigns and outreach strategies, designing safer streets through planning and the role of elected officials in improving safety.

Among the key findings that were presented:

- The top contributing factor of all collisions is unsafe speed. Speed is also the critical factor in the severity of collisions. Nine out of 10 pedestrians will survive being struck by a vehicle traveling up to 25 mph. At 50 mph, the survival rate drops to 2.5 of every 10 pedestrians.
- Between 2000 and 2015, the SCAG region grew by 2.3 million people while adding 2.1 million household vehicles. This increase in vehicle ownership has contributed to a decline in per capita transit ridership, worsening road congestion and increased collisions.
- Low-income communities are disproportionately impacted when it comes to traffic safety. Streets in disadvantaged communities represent two-thirds of Southern California’s “High Injury Network” (HIN) – the 1.5% of roadways in the region that account for 65% of all fatalities and serious injuries. Contributing factors include higher densities and overcrowded housing conditions, planning and enforcement issues, inadequate infrastructure and funding, and the need for greater civic engagement.

“Addressing equity issues is one of the most significant transportation-safety challenges we have as a region,” said Rex Richardson, a Long Beach City Council Member and a representative on SCAG’s Regional Council. “By looking at more equitable approaches to enforcing traffic laws, incorporating equity into long-range transportation planning, partnering with law-enforcement agencies and better educating our communities on traffic safety, we can begin to make a significant difference.”

The Traffic Safety Leadership Symposium opened SCAG’s 2019 Regional Conference & General Assembly – a three-day conference attracting 900 innovators and policy leaders from across Southern California.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG’s regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.