



RESOLUTION NO. 21-628-1

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS AFFIRMING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY IN THE SCAG REGION AND CALLING ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS TO JOIN TOGETHER TO IMPROVE REGIONAL RESILIENCE AND REDUCE HAZARDS FROM A CHANGING CLIMATE

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WHEREAS, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the largest metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in the United States covering six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura), and serving approximately 19 million people within 197 jurisdictions pursuant to 23 USC § 134 et seq. and 49 USC § 5303 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, SCAG is responsible for bringing Southern California's diverse residents and local partners together with unifying regional plans, policies, and programs that result in more healthy, livable, sustainable, and economically resilient communities; and

WHEREAS, our changing climate represents a threat to the region's economic security, public safety, health and wellness, transportation system, infrastructure, natural systems, and overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS, steadily increasing global temperatures attributable to climate change have heightened the severity, duration, cost and risk of wildfires; are escalating rising sea levels; and are contributing to more frequent extreme weather including intense precipitation, prolonged drought, and excessive heat events; and

WHEREAS, California experienced a record number of dry heat days in 2020 due to a changing climate, and experienced over 6,000 fires that burned millions of acres, making 2020 the largest wildfire season recorded in the state's modern history according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS, economic costs from wildfires include resources involved in fighting the fires, damage to property, health care bills, costs of disrupted business, lost tax revenue, and decreased property values, and are estimated to sum to \$10 billion dollars in 2020<sup>2</sup>; and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fire.ca.gov/stats-events/>; Accessed October 12, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Cowan, Jill. "How Much Will the Wildfires Cost?" <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/16/us/california-fires-cost.html>. Accessed October 12, 2020.

Attachment: Resolution No. 21-628-1 [Revision 1] (Climate Change Action Resolution)

**WHEREAS**, wildfires have a direct linkage to respiratory health, and researchers at Stanford University found that recent wildfire smoke in California resulted in over 1,200 preventable deaths<sup>3</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term exposure to poor air quality exacerbated by wildfires increases vulnerability to those experiencing the most severe COVID-19 outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, a changing climate presents many potential hazards to Southern California residents now and into the future, since roughly 1.8 million people live in very high fire hazard severity zones, over 300,000 people reside in “100-year”<sup>4</sup> flood hazard areas, more than 350,000 residents live in areas estimated to be impacted by three feet of sea level rise (conservatively projected to occur by 2050), and over 6 million people live in areas subject to extreme heat health events; and

**WHEREAS**, heat-related events occurring from 1999 to 2009 resulted in about 11,000 excess hospitalizations in California, and indicators show that the number and intensity of extreme heat-health events will worsen drastically throughout the state by midcentury; and

**WHEREAS**, the recent 2012-2016 drought was exacerbated by unusual warmth and disproportionately low Sierra Nevada snowpack levels, serving as indicators of projected dry spells in future decades where impacts will likely be worsened by increased heat<sup>5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, one-third of the SCAG region’s residents live in areas recognized as disadvantaged communities and are disproportionately vulnerable to shocks and stresses to their resilience, including heightened health risks from worsening air quality and extreme heat, as well as the resulting economic instability from climate hazards, amongst other concerns<sup>6</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, annual costs from climate change hazards are projected to exceed \$113 billion by 2050 – an expense of thousands of dollars per resident in California each year<sup>7</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, climate-safe infrastructure offers sustainable and adaptive solutions that can improve resilience in the face of shocks and stresses caused by a changing climate, and can provide well-paying jobs and workforce training opportunities for local residents since every dollar invested in infrastructure generates more than two dollars in economic output and jobs<sup>8</sup>; and

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<sup>3</sup> Burke, Marshall and Sam Heft-Neal. Indirect mortality from Wildfires in California. <http://www.g-feed.com/2020/09/indirect-mortality-from-recent.html>. Accessed October 12, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Areas known as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) defined as areas that will be inundated by a flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

<sup>5</sup> California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment Summary Report; California Energy Commission; 2019

<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> Paying it Forward: The Path Toward Climate-Safe Infrastructure in California; California Natural Resources Agency; 2018

**WHEREAS**, impacts from climate change in the SCAG region will be most acutely felt by children, seniors, low income populations, communities of color, and residents with unstable economic or housing situations; and

**WHEREAS**, disruptions from a changing climate will impact to varying degrees our region's public health, vulnerable populations, economy, natural resources, built environment, transportation system, housing and water supplies, utility infrastructure and emergency services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Office of the Governor has issued a series of executive orders that seek to address a range of aspirational climate mitigation and adaptation related goals for achieving carbon neutrality; conserving and managing land and coastal waters; supporting robust zero-emission vehicle deployment; providing cleaner energy sources; forging partnerships and taking actions to help achieve these goals; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG has been a leader in advancing the State of California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 known as AB 32 and the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015 known as SB 350, through its implementation of Senate Bill 375 (2008), as well as greenhouse gas reduction programs that advance objectives of Senate Bill 32 (2016), which establish targets for greenhouse gas reductions from all sources in California 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050; and

**WHEREAS**, Southern California will require transformative change across every sector of the economy in order to achieve 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas reduction targets, and building a low-carbon economy requires an early start and continuous progress on decarbonization; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG's most recent long-range plan, Connect SoCal, features strategies that will reduce the region's greenhouse gas emissions and includes goals for the region to adapt to a changing climate, promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats, promote healthy and equitable communities, and encourage regional economic prosperity; and

**WHEREAS**, the Southern California region has successfully adopted a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that has addressed the California Air Resources Board's established per-capita greenhouse gas reduction targets since the enactment of Senate Bill 375 over three quadrennial planning cycles; and

**WHEREAS**, Southern California's natural and working lands – forests, rangelands, farms, wetlands, coast, deserts, and urban greenspaces – sustain the region's economy, help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, support the region's unique biodiversity; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG is developing a Southern California Greenprint that will be a new online regional mapping tool that will highlight the benefits of natural lands, waters and agricultural lands, including access to parks and trails, habitat protection and connectivity, food production and increased resilience to climate change; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG conducted a long-term greenhouse gas reduction analysis for Southern California, i.e. the 2050 Pathways Report, which suggested common areas where local and regional policy actions could focus on decarbonization efforts including energy efficiency, smart growth, and electric vehicles; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG has long recognized innovative planning and local planning projects that best coordinate land use and transportation actions to improve the mobility, livability, prosperity, and sustainability within the region through the Green Region Initiative Sustainability Indicators; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG established the Sustainable Communities Program to fund local jurisdictions' natural resource plans, climate action plans (CAPs), and greenhouse gas reduction programs among other initiatives, and has supported over 200 projects since 2005; and

**WHEREAS**, over 40 jurisdictions in the SCAG region have adopted climate action plans at the local level to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and better prepare their communities for a changing climate; and

**WHEREAS**, in parallel to greenhouse gas reduction efforts, it has become clear the region needs to prepare to increase its resilience and adapt to a changing climate; and

**WHEREAS**, Southern California will need to adapt and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change by implementing strategies and programs at the regional and local level to tackle environmental, social and economic challenges; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG has developed a SoCal Climate Adaptation Planning Guide for local jurisdictions to utilize in identifying vulnerable areas and implementing adaptation strategies to reduce climate related hazards in their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG launched a Climate Talks Outreach Strategies Toolkit for local jurisdictions and community-based organizations to engage with residents and better understand how climate change is affecting local communities; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG's Climate Adaptation Framework includes tools that help the region to work together to plan and prepare for the impacts of sea level rise, extreme heat, increasingly frequent and damaging wildfires, and other climate-related issues; and

**WHEREAS**, SCAG is a founding member of the Governor's Technical Advisory Council for California's Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP), established by

SB 246, (2015) to develop a cohesive and coordinated response to the impacts of climate change across the state; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with Regional Council Resolution 20-623-2, health, socio-economic, and racial equity considerations should be included in regional policymaking addressing climate hazards and SCAG will work in partnership with others to close the gap of racial injustice and better serve our communities of color, and in so doing, serve all the people of the region.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Regional Council of SCAG affirms a commitment to promote regional climate adaptation and resilience, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which represent a threat to the region’s economic security, public safety and health, transportation infrastructure, natural systems, and overall quality of life.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

1. SCAG shall develop a regional resilience framework to help the region plan and prepare for a changing climate, as well as potential near- and long-term disruptions to Southern California, such as earthquakes, extreme weather, drought, wildfires, pandemics and economic shocks.
2. SCAG shall initiate a regional climate planning network that will provide technical assistance for local jurisdictions’ climate planning initiatives – including consensus building exercises and an information hub featuring a framework of effective mitigation strategies for cities and counties to use in climate action plans (CAPs) as well as a library of model policies that collectively foster climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
3. SCAG shall establish partnerships to support local jurisdictions’ climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives, including identifying funding resources to support Climate Action Plans, General Plan Safety Element updates, local hazard mitigation infrastructure financing plans, electric vehicle permitting, urban heat mitigation plans, organic waste reduction plans, wildlife corridor restoration plans, greenway connectivity master plans, among other efforts.
4. SCAG shall develop a regional advanced mitigation program (RAMP) as envisioned in Connect SoCal for regionally significant transportation projects to mitigate environmental impacts.
5. SCAG shall develop a work plan to advance the Accelerated Electrification strategy adopted in Connect SoCal to provide a holistic and coordinated approach to de-carbonizing or electrifying passenger vehicles, transit and goods movement vehicles to go beyond benefits achieved through state mandates alone.

6. SCAG shall evaluate the economic and job creation benefits of climate adaptation and mitigation practices for inclusion in regional planning efforts, and an inclusive economic recovery strategy for Southern California.
7. SCAG shall include climate adaptation and mitigation analysis and strategies in the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS).
8. SCAG shall develop programs and outreach strategies to support near-term adaptation to address regionally significant vulnerabilities in the region and long-term regional resilience planning.
9. SCAG's Planning Director shall report to the EEC on a quarterly basis on the progress of these efforts.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED** by the Regional Council of the Southern California Association of Governments at its regular meeting this seventh day of January, 2021.

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Rex Richardson  
President, SCAG  
Councilmember, Long Beach

Attested by:

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Kome Ajise  
Executive Director

Approved as to Form:

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Ruben Duran  
Board Counsel