

SCAG ECONOMIC SUMMIT ENGAGED REGIONAL LEADERS TO ADDRESS GROWING INDUSTRIES

On Dec. 6, 2018, approximately 300 civic and business leaders attended the Ninth Annual Southern California Economic Summit, "Exponential Growth, Exponential Future," co-hosted by SCAG and the Southern California Leadership Council. The event provided a status report on the state of Southern California's economy, with news that unemployment is at near pre-Great Recession lows, not to mention education, and income and poverty trends are all moving in the right direction. In keeping with the conference theme, the two panels for the day included a spirited discussion from key industry representatives on how innovation is changing their respective fields, as well as the rapid societal changes brought about by new transportation technologies. The summit also heard from featured speakers Garrett Reisman, former NASA Astronaut and Senior Advisor at SpaceX, and former California Governor Gray Davis. Full economic reports and photos from the event are available on the Economic Summit website at scag.ca.gov/EconomicSummit.

CONNECT SOCAL UPDATE

The official website is now live for Connect SoCal, SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. The newly launched page, connectsocial.org, offers a clear and user-friendly way to get updates about the ongoing process of building the plan. Throughout the year, staff will be engaging the board and policy committees on emerging issues and major new policy areas. Beginning in February and through April, we will host a series of Joint Policy Committee meetings to provide members with a greater understanding of the Plan, why we are developing it and how it is important for the region. The schedule includes:

- **February Meeting: Who are we planning for?** Better understanding of economic and demographic trends and their impacts is fundamental to developing a meaningful, relevant plan.
- **March Meeting: Where will we grow?** Regional-level thinking will be essential as we work to balance resource conservation, housing demands and economic expansion while adapting to a rapidly changing climate.
- **April Meeting: How will we connect?** Anticipating mobility needs for everyone, aligning future investments with emerging technologies and continuing to improve air quality are central priorities.

SCAG also released a Notice of Preparation for the Connect SoCal plan's Program Environmental Impact Report. A 30-day public comment period will be held from Jan. 23 to Feb. 22, and SCAG will be hosting two scoping meetings at our downtown Los Angeles office on Wednesday, Feb. 13. Webcast and videoconference options are available for both meetings. For the latest details on the plan's development, visit connectsocial.org.

SCAG DELEGATION PREPARES FOR SACRAMENTO

A delegation of Southern California leaders is gearing up for SCAG's annual Sacramento Advocacy Trip, taking place on February 13, 2019. SCAG's delegation will meet with a bipartisan group of state lawmakers to lobby on behalf of the region. This year's trip will focus on issues such as California Environmental Quality Act Modernization, Redevelopment/Tax Increment Financing, and lobbying for funding for SCAG's housing programs. Meetings with numerous members of the Transportation and Housing committees of both chambers have been confirmed. The trip will also be an opportunity for the delegation to meet with newly-elected Assembly Members and Senators and share some of SCAG's core principles and priorities.

CALIFORNIA MPOs RESPOND TO CARB'S SB 150 REPORT

On Jan. 15, in a rare sign of unity, the state's 18 MPOs (including SCAG) collectively submitted a comment letter to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in response to a proposed update to the Sustainable Communities Strategy Program and Evaluation Guidelines. SB 150 requires CARB to prepare a report to the California State Legislature starting in 2018, and every four years thereafter, to discuss progress related to SB 375 implementation. [The first report](#), which was released in November 2018, generally "includes the fundamental finding that California is not on track to meet greenhouse gas reductions expected under SB 375." The joint letter from all of the state's MPOs notes the difficulty in identifying critical land use and transportation policies to reduce per capita GHGs and improve mobility "against a backdrop of worsening affordability for many California residents." It is further noted that CARB, to date, has determined that each of the MPOs' RTP/SCSs, if implemented "would meet the applicable GHG emission reduction targets. The letter is [available](#) online.

STATE SUES HUNTINGTON BEACH FOR NON-COMPLIANT HOUSING ELEMENT

On Jan. 25, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) filed a lawsuit against the City of Huntington Beach, alleging that the city is avoiding its statutory obligations under state housing law by not moving to increase affordable units in the city. Specifically, HCD is suing to force the City of Huntington Beach update its housing plan (officially "Housing Element") to bring it into compliance with state law. The city has had a non-compliant Housing Element since 2015, and in 2016 the city council elected not to approve an amended plan that would have brought the city into compliance. The lawsuit represents the first case filed under AB 72, a law enacted in 2017 which allows the state to take legal action against jurisdictions that do not have compliant housing plans.

NEW UPDATES TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT ADOPTED

On Dec. 28, the California Office of Administrative Law adopted a comprehensive revision of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Prompted by Senate Bill (SB) 743, adopted in 2013, the updated CEQA guidelines include changes related to analyzing transportation impacts, guidance on using regulatory standards and clarification on tiering and exemptions, among other things. SB 743, which was designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote multi-modal transportation networks, requires a change for one of CEQA's key metrics. Transportation impact analyses, which have previously focused on maintaining a certain "level of service," will now prioritize reducing "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT), which is the amount of automobile travel attributable to a project. The VMT metric will become mandatory statewide as of July 1, 2020, although lead agencies have the option to comply earlier. On Friday, March 1, Portland State University will conduct the workshop, "[Shifting from Maintaining LOS to Reducing VMT: Case Studies of Analysis and Mitigation for SB 743 Implementation](#)," at SCAG's main office in downtown Los Angeles. The course will also be available for remote participation via webinar. Additional workshop details and registration information is available on the event web page at bit.ly/2TzS1KL.

FUNDING UPDATE: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

This past fall, SCAG called for regional applications for the Sustainable Communities Program and received a total of 61 applications, 36 for active transportation planning and 25 for sustainability planning. The recommended project list will be considered by the SCAG's Regional Council in March. Sustainability planning projects are anticipated to kick-off this summer, while the active transportation planning projects will begin toward the end of 2019. Upon approval from the Regional Council, SCAG will be reaching out to all successful applicants to determine a more exact timeline for their project.

FUNDING UPDATE: STATE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

On Jan. 30, the California Transportation Commission adopted recommendations for the statewide portion of the 2019 Active Transportation Program (ATP) funding cycle. The SCAG region has been awarded funding for 23 projects totaling approximately \$137 million (representing 62% of the statewide funding recommendations). The ATP was created to encourage active transportation and improve safety for people who walk or bike throughout California, and funding from an ATP grant initially launched SCAG's *Go Human* campaign in 2015. For the regional portion of the ATP, SCAG will recommend funding awards for an additional \$92 million in collaboration with the county transportation commissions. The staff-recommended Regional ATP will be considered for approval by the Transportation Committee on March 7, 2019 and Regional Council on April 4, 2019.

SCAG PARTNERS WITH BIRD FOR “GO HUMAN” CAMPAIGN

SCAG’s award-winning [Go Human](#) traffic safety campaign has expanded to include safety messaging for scooters through a partnership with [Bird](#), a leader in last-mile electric scooter mobility. Ads reminding riders to wear helmets and ride in bike lanes rather than sidewalks appeared in Culver City, West Los Angeles and Santa Monica through the month of November. As new mobility options like e-scooters become increasingly available throughout Southern California, *Go Human* is working to ensure that safety messaging is targeted to include those new modes. SCAG wants to remind people of several general safety tips for drivers and e-scooter riders alike, such as: Drivers should give people on e-scooters at least three feet of room on the road; drivers should be vigilant and look out for e-scooter riders, just as they should for people biking and walking; e-scooter riders should wear a helmet; and people on scooters should ride in bike lanes or in the street near the curb, not on sidewalks. For more details, including statements from SCAG President Alan Wapner and Bird Senior Vice President Rebecca Hahn, read the [full press release](#).

2019 FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM APPROVED

On Dec. 17 SCAG received federal approval for the 2019 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), and accompanying transportation conformity determination for the 2019 FTIP. The FTIP is a federally mandated list of transportation investment priorities in Southern California, developed and maintained in cooperation with Caltrans, county transportation commissions and public transit operators. The 2019 FTIP includes approximately 2,000 projects representing an investment of \$34.5 billion in the region over a six-year period. Inclusion in the FTIP signifies project sponsors can move forward with state and federal environmental review or project funding allocation, and it is also an indicator of how the region is moving forward in implementing the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 RTP/SCS). For more information about the 2019 FTIP, visit ftip.scag.ca.gov.

SCAG HOSTS DATA ANALYSIS BOOT CAMP FOR CITY AND COUNTY STAFF

In late January, SCAG partnered with Data + Donuts, the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles to present the inaugural “School of Data LA,” a two-day conference and training for data analysts, systems analysts and project managers within the SCAG region. The special event brought together more than 150 professionals for a set of workshops and seminars designed to improve practical skills in analysis and programming. The curriculum covered the skills and vocabulary needed to confidently navigate the world of data – everything from documenting metadata, to navigating systems, to managing predictive analytics projects. The goal is to build a community of data literacy, thereby leading to better service in government. You can find more information on the Data + Donuts website at datadonuts.la/.

SCAG HOSTS CENSUS-PREP WORKSHOP FOR LOCAL AGENCIES

In Jan. 24, SCAG hosted the 2020 Census Participant Statistical Areas Program. This program represents the only opportunity prior to the 2020 Census for regional planning agencies and local governments to review and update the selected statistical areas. The Census Bureau uses the statistical areas defined for the 2020 Census to tabulate data for the American Community Survey throughout the decade. The Los Angeles Regional Office of the U.S. Census Bureau presented details on the program and engaged participants from counties and local jurisdictions across the region to submit their input.

SCAG HOSTS DISCUSSIONS AT NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES CONFERENCE

SCAG was proud to be a sponsor of the National League of Cities City Summit in downtown Los Angeles in early November. The annual conference was attended by over 3,000 civic leaders from across the nation, and featured speakers such as Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, journalist Maria Shriver, Esri CEO Jack Dangermond and many others. SCAG played host at a number of events, including a Thursday mobile workshop, “From K-Town to the Walk of Fame: Transit-Oriented Development Along Metro’s Red Line.” Kome Ajise, SCAG’s Director of Planning, discussed the role of an MPO and our work with cities in identifying opportunities to encourage housing along high quality transit. At a panel discussion titled, “Making Room for Innovation on City Streets,” Interim Executive Director Darin Chidsey presented on SCAG’s Future Communities Framework, which sets a regional vision to advance Open

Data along with more robust tools for cities to analyze/utilize data in their planning work. Tied to the Future Communities program is a [new funding opportunity](#) for member jurisdictions that are interested in implementing projects like fleet telematics, Internet of Things applications, route optimization and Mobility as a Service pilots to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

STAFF SHARES RESEARCH WITH CONFERENCES ON TRANSPORTATION, DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS

In early January, several SCAG staff attended the Transportation Research Board's 98th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. The Annual Meeting is a gathering where over 10,000 professionals, academics and leaders from around the world share transportation research and best practices. In addition to bringing home lessons to apply to SCAG's work on the upcoming Connect SoCal plan, SCAG planners also presented original research. Kevin Kane of SCAG's Research and Analysis department presented a technical paper titled, "Analyzing an Employer-Based Trip Reduction Program's Potential for Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction in Southern California" and Tom Vo, also of the Research & Analysis department, presented a poster showcasing innovative data visualizations titled "What Happened to Our Transit Usage? An Exploratory Application to Investigate the Impacts of Demographics, Built Environments, and Commuting Patterns on Transit Usage." Tom Vo also hosted the inaugural meeting of the Viet Transportation Professional Association (Viet-TPA), a group he co-founded.

On Jan. 18, Kevin Kane represented SCAG at the Westside Urban Forum's monthly meeting on a panel titled, "How many Angelinos? L.A.'s changing demographics and the 2020 Census." While issues surrounding the citizenship question, funding cuts and cybersecurity risks have raised concern for Census 2020, understanding and articulating demographic trends remains as important as ever for planners, particularly in Southern California. John Cho presented at the 2019 Integrated Energy Policy Report Lead Commissioner Workshop on California's Economics and Demographics Outlook focusing on demographic and economic trends in Southern California.