
News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2021

Contact: Steve Lambert, The 20/20 Network
(909) 841-7527/ steve@the2020network.com



SCAG affirms climate change crisis, commits to series of step to safeguard region's environment, economy, public health and quality of life

Los Angeles – The nation's largest metropolitan planning organization on Thursday formally affirmed the climate change crisis in Southern California and committed to a series of actions to mitigate the growing threat that greenhouse gas emissions pose to the region's environment, economic security, public health and quality of life.

The Regional Council of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) unanimously adopted a resolution to promote climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience across a six-county region that's home to more than 19 million people. This includes developing a 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."

Thursday's action clears the way for the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization to initiate a regional climate planning network and partnerships that will provide technical assistance and additional support to local jurisdictions for their climate action initiatives.

Other commitments include:

- Development of a regional advanced mitigation program (RAMP) for regionally significant transportation projects, as outlined in SCAG's most recent regional transportation plan, Connect SoCal.
- Moving forward with the Accelerated Electrification strategy adopted in Connect SoCal to provide a "holistic and coordinated approach" to decarbonizing or electrifying passenger transit and freight vehicles to go beyond the benefits achieved through state mandates alone.
- Incorporating the economic and job-creation benefits of climate action as part of an inclusive recovery strategy for Southern California.

"We've seen, just in the past year, very real manifestations of climate change, from raging wildfires to extreme weather. This has exacted a heavy price – to our health, to our economy, to the air we breathe, to a quality of life that has never faced a more serious threat," said SCAG President Rex Richardson, Vice Mayor of Long Beach. "Today's action signals to our region that the time to act is now."

In 2020, California experienced a record number of dry heat days and more than 9,000 fires that burned millions of acres. It was the largest wildfire season in the state's modern history, linked to more than 1,200 preventable deaths due to respiratory health impacts and with damages in excess of \$10 billion.

According to the resolution adopted Thursday, roughly 1.8 million people within the SCAG region live in very high fire hazard severity zones, more than 300,000 people reside in "100-year" flood hazard areas,

more than 350,000 live in areas estimated to be impacted by three feet of sea level rise projected to occur by 2050, and more than 6 million people live in areas subject to extreme heat health events.

In addition, one-third of residents live in areas recognized as disadvantaged communities – disproportionately vulnerable to the health risks from worsening air quality and extreme heat, as well as the resulting economic instability from climate hazards.

“Change won’t come quickly. It’s not going to turnaround in a year or two. At our very best, we can’t reverse what we’ve done as human beings, but we might be able to mitigate it to sustain life as we know it,” said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, who serves as chair of C40 Cities, a network of the world’s largest cities committed to addressing climate change.

Garcetti praised the SCAG region for its leadership in addressing climate change, and urged other cities to join in a collaborative effort known as [Cities Race to Zero](#), a global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while building a strong, inclusive economic recovery. “I hope today we’ll collectively build on the great work SCAG and SCAG cities have done to commit to taking action,” he said.

Said Kome Ajise, SCAG’s Executive Director: “Climate-change mitigation and adaptation planning have become more pressing with each passing year as the SCAG region experiences extreme climate-related health, safety and economic impacts from intensified wildfires, flooding and mudslides from torrential rainstorms and sea level rise, and unusually high temperatures. The sustainable and adaptive solutions we’re committing to will help safeguard our region – and the more than 19 million people we represent – now and into the future.”

###

About SCAG

SCAG is the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and over 19 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.