

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project evaluated in this Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) is the San Diego Association of Governments' (SANDAG) proposed *Amendment to the 2021 Regional Plan* (proposed Amendment) (SANDAG 2023a). The SANDAG Board of Directors (Board) adopted the 2021 Regional Plan on December 10, 2021 (approved Plan). The project location is the San Diego region, shown on Figure 2-1. The San Diego region is coterminous with San Diego County.

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

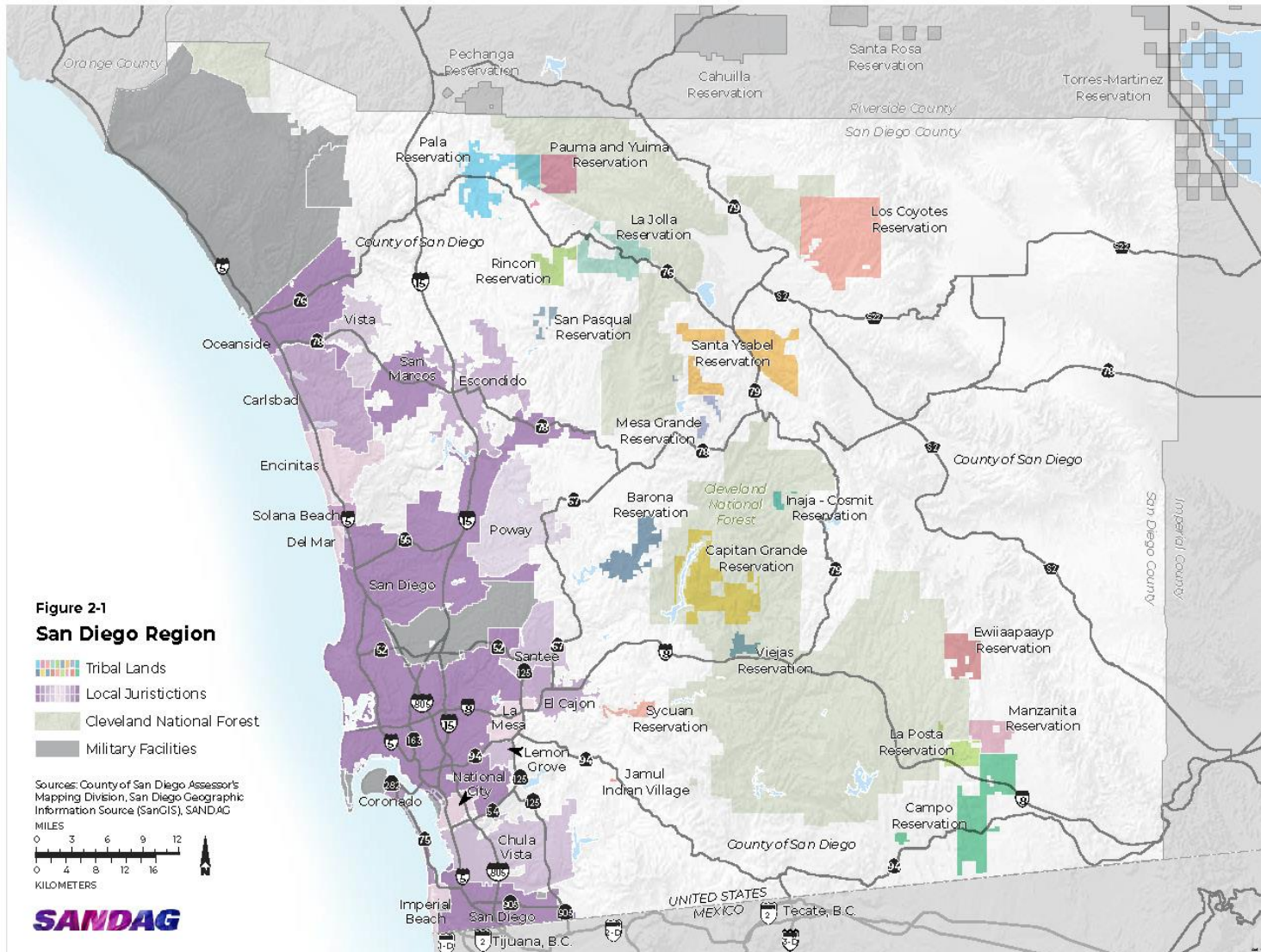
Every 4 years the SANDAG prepares an updated Regional Plan in collaboration with the 18 cities and County of San Diego, along with regional, State, and federal partners. The Regional Plan consists of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), and Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) for the San Diego region. The current Plan, the 2021 Regional Plan was approved in December 2021 by the SANDAG Board of Directors. At the same time, the Board certified the Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the 2021 Regional Plan (State Clearinghouse [SCH] No. 2010041061).

The approved Plan includes the SCS as well as the 5 Big Moves (Complete Corridors, Transit Leap, Mobility Hubs, Flexible Fleets, and Next OS), transportation network improvements, and supporting policies and programs. Further, the approved Plan creates an integrated transportation system throughout the 11 Major Travel Corridors and the Rural Corridors of the San Diego region. The system components in each Major Travel Corridor consist of transportation improvements under each of the 5 Big Moves, enhanced airport connectivity, improved border/ports of entry, and supporting policies and programs. These components are described in further detail in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the approved Plan PEIR. The approved Plan PEIR is available online at <https://www.sandag.org/regional-plan/2021-regional-plan/environmental-impact-report>.

Following adoption of the approved Plan, the SANDAG Board directed staff to prepare a focused amendment to the approved Plan that deletes the regional road usage charge. A road usage charge is a direct user fee whereby drivers pay to use the roadway network, whether the vehicle is powered by gas, electricity, or hydrogen, based on distance traveled or other factors. The proposed Amendment refines the financial strategies in the approved Plan in order to continue achieving the region's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions target set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) without the regional road usage charge. No roadway or transportation network elements of the approved Plan are altered or modified in the proposed Amendment.

After adoption of the approved Plan, staff observed low traffic counts and employment at some large employment location sites and made minor corrections resulting in slight changes to regional employment figures. Staff also fixed a software bug resulting in more accurate traffic volumes on State Route (SR) 11. A full discussion of the activity-based modeling inputs is included in Attachment B, *Air Quality Planning and Transportation Conformity*, to the proposed Amendment.

This SEIR analyzes the potential significant environmental impacts resulting from the proposed Amendment.



2.2 PROPOSED AMENDMENT BACKGROUND

The Vision of the approved Plan is: “A fast, fair, and clean transportation system and a resilient region.” The approved Plan set three primary goals to achieve this Vision:

- The efficient movement of people and goods.
- Access to affordable, reliable, and safe mobility options.
- Healthier air and reduced GHG.

To achieve these goals, the approved Plan used a framework of coordinated land use and transportation strategies:

- **Invest in a reimagined transportation system:** Build a network and fund services that include multimodal roadways; an expanded network of fast, frequent, and low-cost transit; 21st century technology that manages the entire transportation system and connects people to on-demand services; and zero-emission options for vehicles and *micromobility*, which includes small, low-speed vehicles such as e-scooters, bikes, and other rideables that support short trips around a community.
- **Incentivize sustainable growth and development:** Collaborate with local jurisdictions and fund programs to accelerate housing production while also addressing equity, climate resilience, and mobility.
- **Implement innovative demand and system management:** Reduce solo driving and congestion through increased remote work, carsharing, vanpooling, pricing strategies, and parking management programs that leverage partnerships and technology.

The Vision, goals, and strategies identified in the approved Plan remain unchanged for the proposed Amendment to the 2021 Regional Plan.

2.2.1 LEGISLATION RELEVANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Development of the proposed Amendment was guided by federal and State laws and regulations, as well as engagement with the public.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for federal transportation funding, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) requires every Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to conduct long-range transportation planning and develop RTPs. Each MPO must develop at least a 20-year vision and goals plan matched to the unique characteristics of its region. MPOs in areas designated as “nonattainment” or “maintenance” for federal air quality standards must update their RTP every 4 years rather than every 5 years.

Under Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations (23 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 450.324, et seq., Metropolitan transportation planning and programming), an RTP must identify “transportation facilities (including major roadways, public transportation facilities, intercity bus facilities, multimodal and intermodal facilities, nonmotorized transportation facilities, and intermodal connectors) that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions” (23 United States Code [USC] 134(i)(2)). RTP transportation network improvements must be “revenue constrained” (23 CFR 450.324(f)(11)), meaning that the MPO has

specified the public and private funds that are reasonably expected to be available and that are needed to implement the proposed transportation plan.

FHWA federal consultation requirements (23 CFR 450.316) for the proposed Amendment include (1) a process involving the MPO, State and local air quality planning agencies, State and local transportation agencies, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and USDOT; and (2) a proactive public involvement process that provides opportunity for public review and comment by, at a minimum, providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information considered by the agency. Pursuant to 176(c) of the federal Clean Air Act (42 USC 7506(c)) and in consultation with EPA, SANDAG and USDOT must determine that the RTP and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality.

CALIFORNIA REQUIREMENTS

In addition to USDOT requirements, the proposed Amendment is guided by several California statutory requirements.

California Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines

The State statutory requirements for RTPs are found in Government Code Section 65080 et seq., which states that an RTP must contain:

- A Policy Element that reflects the mobility goals, policies, and objectives of the region.
- An Action Element that identifies programs and actions to implement the RTP.
- A Financial Element that summarizes the cost of implementing the projects in the RTP in a financially constrained environment.

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) has issued RTP Guidelines (CTC 2017) to clarify the planning practices needed to meet State statutory requirements for RTPs.

California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 and Scoping Plans

The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill [AB] 32, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006) required CARB to develop and enforce regulations for reporting, verifying, and reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The law requires CARB to adopt rules and regulations in an open public process to achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG reductions.

AB 32 requires that CARB develop a Climate Change Scoping Plan (Scoping Plan) consisting of the main strategies California will implement to reduce statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. It must be updated every 5 years. CARB released its initial Scoping Plan in 2008, with updates in 2014, 2017, and 2022. The 2022 Scoping Plan identifies how California can achieve carbon neutrality and an 85 percent reduction in GHG emissions from 1990 levels no later than 2045, consistent with AB 1279 (Chapter 337, Statutes of 2022).

Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008

To help implement AB 32, the California Legislature passed the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (Senate Bill [SB] 375, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008), one of several steps the State has taken to implement AB 32. SB 375 required CARB to set regional targets for reducing GHG emissions from

passenger vehicle use. In 2018, CARB updated targets for 2020 and 2035 for each region in California governed by an MPO. SANDAG is the MPO for the San Diego region. SANDAG's State-mandated target is to reduce regional emissions of GHGs from cars and light trucks by 15 percent, per capita, by 2020, compared with a 2005 baseline (CARB 2017). By 2035, a 19 percent reduction is required. The Sustainable Communities Act does not require CARB to establish post-2035 targets.

To achieve the targets, SANDAG and other MPOs are required to develop an SCS as a component of the RTP. The SCS is required by Government Code Section 65080(b)(2)(B) to:

- Identify the general location of uses, residential densities, and building intensities within the region.
- Identify areas within the region sufficient to house all the population of the region, including all economic segments of the population.
- Identify areas within the region sufficient to house an 8-year projection of the regional housing need for the region.
- Identify a transportation network to serve the transportation needs of the region.
- Gather and consider the best practically available scientific information regarding resource areas and farmland in the region.
- Consider specified State housing goals.
- Set forth a forecasted development pattern for the region, which, when integrated with the transportation network, and other transportation measures and policies, will reduce the GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks, to achieve, if there is a feasible way to do so, the GHG emission reduction targets approved by CARB.
- Allow the RTP to comply with federal Clean Air Act requirements related to air quality conformity.

Under SB 375, an SCS cannot be interpreted to supersede the land use authority of cities and counties within the region. Chapter 2 of the approved Plan focuses on the SCS; however, components of the SCS are integrated throughout the Regional Plan chapters and appendices. SCS documentation is updated in Attachment A to the proposed Amendment to reflect changes due to removal of the regional mileage-based road usage charge.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), required by State law (Government Code Section 65584[a]), quantifies the need for housing in the region and informs land use planning in addressing identified existing and future housing needs resulting from population, employment, and household growth.

As a council of governments, SANDAG is responsible for overseeing the RHNA process for the San Diego region. SANDAG, in consultation with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), assessed the region's housing needs in four income categories—very low, low, moderate, and above moderate. SANDAG and its member agencies developed a methodology for allocating a share of the RHNA Determination to each jurisdiction. SB 375 requires the RHNA to be integrated with the SCS. The proposed Amendment does not impact the RHNA Plan included in the approved Plan.

Regional Comprehensive Plan for the San Diego Region

California law (AB 361, Chapter 508, Statutes of 2003) governs the contents and process for updating the RCP for the San Diego region. Under AB 361, the RCP must be based on local general and regional plans and integrate land uses, transportation systems, infrastructure needs, and public investment strategies, within a regional framework, in cooperation with member agencies and the public. The RCP must be updated as necessary and be consistent with the RTP. Beginning with the 2015 Regional Plan, the RCP requirements have been integrated with the RTP/SCS in the Regional Plan. RCP documentation is updated in Attachment A to the proposed Amendment.

Public Involvement Strategy for the Proposed Amendment

To support the development of the approved Plan, SANDAG implemented a comprehensive public outreach and involvement program consistent with State and federal requirements. Early in the 2021 Regional Plan development process, SANDAG developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to guide the public outreach program, which was updated in mid-2019. It also describes how to connect with hard to reach communities such as tribal nations and low-income and minority populations. For the proposed Amendment, SANDAG developed a Public Involvement Strategy that identifies public engagement techniques to involve the public and collect input based on the PIP for the approved Plan, including public meetings, social media, visualizations, and other means.

2.2.2 SAN DIEGO REGIONAL GROWTH FORECAST

As described above, after adoption of the approved Plan SANDAG made model corrections. Tables 2-1 and 2-2 show the changes resulting from the model corrections described in Section 2.1, *Project Background*. In addition, minor differences in population across mobility hubs resulted from stochastic allocation by the Series 14 Regional Growth Forecast subregional allocation model. More information on the development of the regional growth forecast can be found in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the approved Plan PEIR.

Table 2-1
Series 14 San Diego Regional Growth Forecast and SCS Land Use Pattern

Year	Population	Housing Units	Jobs
2016	3,309,510	1,190,555	1,646,419
2025	3,470,848	1,288,216	1,762,537
2035	3,620,348	1,409,866	1,922,240
2050	3,746,073	1,471,299	2,087,056
2016–2050	436,563	280,744	440,637
Percent change 2016–2050	13%	24%	27%

Source: SANDAG 2023b.

**Table 2-2
Existing and Forecasted Jobs Growth by Jurisdiction**

Jurisdictions	2016	2025	2035	2050	Increase (2016-2050)	
					Jobs	Percent
Carlsbad	75,846	84,096	91,824	99,450	23,604	31.1%
Chula Vista	72,345	80,946	96,209	113,650	41,305	57.1%
Coronado	26,783	27,225	27,916	28,601	1,818	6.8%
Del Mar	4,675	4,717	4,773	4,842	167	3.6%
El Cajon	48,238	52,646	60,116	68,485	20,247	42.0%
Encinitas	28,495	28,911	29,711	30,419	1,924	6.8%
Escondido	58,830	61,368	65,687	70,404	11,574	19.7%
Imperial Beach	5,542	5,801	6,260	6,714	1,172	21.1%
La Mesa	30,992	32,563	35,105	37,885	6,893	22.2%
Lemon Grove	8,958	9,196	9,578	10,013	1,055	11.8%
National City	42,808	54,563	58,004	61,755	18,947	44.3%
Oceanside	47,233	48,521	50,245	51,149	3,916	8.3%
Poway	35,355	35,549	35,866	36,252	897	2.5%
San Diego	893,140	953,079	1,044,329	1,135,978	242,838	27.2%
San Marcos	40,851	46,054	53,539	61,460	20,609	50.4%
Santee	18,042	18,500	19,038	19,593	1,551	8.6%
Solana Beach	9,833	10,079	10,562	10,994	1,161	11.8%
Vista	44,127	45,276	47,130	49,184	5,057	11.5%
Unincorporated	154,326	163,447	176,348	190,228	35,902	23.3%
Region	1,646,419	1,762,537	1,922,240	2,087,056	440,637	26.8%

Source: SANDAG 2023b.

2.2.3 SB 375 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

As described above, after adoption of the approved Plan SANDAG made model corrections. Tables 2-3 and 2-4 show the changes resulting from the model corrections described in Section 2.1. More information on the SB 375 Sustainable Communities Strategy and general intensification of land uses can be found in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the approved Plan PEIR.

**Table 2-3
Total Population by Mobility Hub**

Mobility Hub Name	2016	2025	2035	2050
Mobility Hub Total	1,453,913	1,658,456	1,875,802	1,988,728
Coastal	172,824	178,738	191,557	198,891
Gateway	318,246	353,913	390,464	394,135
Major Employment Center	253,054	316,411	397,326	431,175
Suburban	392,726	433,436	455,657	488,442

Mobility Hub Name	2016	2025	2035	2050
Urban	317,063	375,958	440,798	476,085
Outside of Mobility Hub Network	1,855,597	1,812,392	1,744,546	1,757,345
Regional Total	3,309,510	3,470,848	3,620,348	3,746,073

Source: SANDAG 2023b.

Table 2-4
Total Jobs by Mobility Hub

Mobility Hub Name	2016	2025	2035	2050
Mobility Hub Total	1,113,785	1,212,986	1,346,519	1,484,618
Coastal	77,375	79,194	82,520	85,840
Gateway	152,981	167,611	192,382	218,904
Major Employment Center	499,003	539,981	600,105	660,362
Suburban	162,358	173,701	191,663	211,942
Urban	222,068	252,499	279,849	307,570
Outside of Mobility Hub Network	532,634	549,551	575,721	602,438
Regional Total	1,646,419	1,762,537	1,922,240	2,087,056

Source: SANDAG 2023b.

2.2.4 GHG REDUCTION TARGETS

In accordance with SB 375, the proposed Amendment must continue to demonstrate that the San Diego region will reduce GHG emissions (GHG emissions for SB 375 compliance are calculated using carbon dioxide [CO₂] emissions) from automobiles and light-duty trucks to achieve, if there is a feasible way to do so, the GHG emission reduction targets approved by CARB. Targets are expressed as percent change in per capita GHG emissions relative to 2005. Consistent with the targets established by CARB, the targets for the San Diego region are a 15 percent per capita reduction in passenger vehicle GHG emissions by 2020 and a 19 percent per capita reduction by 2035. The proposed Amendment would meet the GHG emission reduction targets for 2020 and 2035 established by CARB, as shown in Table 2-5. While CARB does not set targets beyond 2035, SANDAG has provided data in Section 4.3, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, of this SEIR utilizing the same methodology to show continued GHG emission reductions beyond 2035.

Table 2-5
Proposed Amendment Estimated SB 375 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions for Cars and Light Trucks

Target Year	CARB Target	Proposed Amendment
2020	15%	17%
2035	19%	19% ¹

Source: SANDAG 2023a (Section 4, SB 375 and the Sustainable Communities Strategy, of the proposed Amendment).

¹ Consistent with the SCS Evaluation Guidelines, the 18.6% reduction was rounded to the nearest integer (CARB 2019; Appendix D).

2.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The basic project objectives for this proposed Amendment SEIR remain unchanged from the project objectives for the approved Plan PEIR. Those objectives are found in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the approved Plan PEIR. The proposed Amendment has the additional objective of removing the regional road usage charge while continuing to meet State and federal planning requirements, regional GHG reduction targets, and federal air quality conformity standards.

2.4 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed Amendment is limited to the removal of the regional mileage-based road usage charge. It does not amend other aspects of the 5 Big Moves and transportation network improvements. With the exception of pricing, the policy and program areas also remain unchanged for the proposed Amendment. While the approved Plan will continue to assume revenue from the State's implementation of a mileage-based road usage charge, the proposed Amendment does not include a regional mileage-based road usage charge. The proposed Amendment refines the financial strategies in the approved Plan as follows in order to continue achieving the region's GHG target set by CARB.

(1) Removal of the Regional Road Usage Charge: Removal of the regional road usage charge reduces anticipated revenues by \$14.2 billion over the life of the approved Plan.

(2) Delayed Timing of Future Local Sales Tax Revenue: The approved Plan assumes a half-cent sales tax measure following the 2022 election. In 2022, a proposed citizen initiative for a half-cent sales tax measure to help fund the approved Plan failed to qualify for the November 2022 ballot. The proposed Amendment assumes the citizen initiative will be circulated for the 2024 ballot and postpones the revenue generated from the new measure and potential financing opportunities to begin following the 2024 presidential election, rather than the 2022 midterm election. A second assumed half-cent sales tax measure in 2028 has not been changed with the proposed Amendment.

(3) Update to *TransNet* Revenue: The *TransNet* Program is a voter-approved half-cent sales tax for transportation purposes in the San Diego region. It was approved by voters in 2004 and was estimated to generate \$13.0 billion for regional transportation improvements for the remaining years of the measure (2021–2050). On April 22, 2022, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved updated *TransNet* Program revenues based on actual sales tax revenue collections for fiscal year 2022 which are higher than previously anticipated sales tax revenues for fiscal year 2023. The growth rate is applied to the higher base, generating an additional \$2 billion through 2050. Those additional revenues have been included in the updated revenue assumptions.

(4) Federal and State Funding: The revenue assumptions for the approved Plan were developed prior to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), aka Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), being signed into law by President Biden in November 2021. The law authorized \$1.2 trillion for transportation and infrastructure spending with \$550 billion of that figure going toward “new” investments and programs. The historic level of infrastructure investment from the federal and State government in the early phase years of the approved Plan was unknown and underestimated. The federal and State discretionary programs near-term estimates have been updated to assume historical leveraging rates of local *TransNet* revenue.

These changes would result in a net decrease in revenues from \$173 billion identified in the approved Plan to \$165 billion. This revenue would still be sufficient to fund the anticipated \$163 billion of planned transportation improvements included in the approved Plan.

2.4.1 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The approved Plan identified priority actions that SANDAG will undertake to support implementation of the approved Plan. All priority actions would remain unchanged for the proposed Amendment except for priority action 4. Changes to priority action 4 are shown in Attachment A of the proposed Amendment.

2.5 INTENDED USES OF THE SEIR

The basic purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are to inform government decision makers and the public about potential significant environmental impacts of projects, identify ways the impacts can be reduced or avoided, prevent significant avoidable environmental damage through alternatives and mitigation, and disclose to the public the reason that decision makers approved a project that may result in unavoidable significant impacts.

Under CEQA, a lead agency may choose to prepare a supplement to an EIR when substantial changes are proposed that may result in new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects, but only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15163, a supplement to an EIR “need contain only the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised.”

The lead agency is required to consider the information in the previous EIR as revised by the supplemental EIR, along with any other relevant information, in making its decisions on the project approval. SANDAG is the lead agency for the proposed Amendment and SEIR.

2.5.1 AGENCIES EXPECTED TO USE THE SEIR

Lead agencies implementing second-tier land use or transportation projects can use the previously certified approved Plan PEIR, as supplemented by this SEIR, as a first-tier EIR to focus project-specific CEQA documents on project-specific analyses and equally or more effective project-specific mitigation measures. These include but are not limited to cities, the County of San Diego, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and transportation project sponsors.

In addition, CEQA provides several opportunities for further CEQA streamlining for infill projects consistent with the SCS. These opportunities are provided by:

- SB 375 (Public Resources Code Section 21155 et seq.)
- SB 226 of 2011 (Public Resources Code Section 15183.3 et seq.)
- SB 743 of 2013 (Public Resources Code Sections 21099 et seq. and Section 21155.4)

2.5.2 LIST OF PERMITS OR OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Pursuant to 176(c) of the federal Clean Air Act (42 USC 7506(c)), SANDAG and USDOT, in consultation with EPA, must make a determination that the RTP and the RTIP conform to the SIP for air quality. See Attachment B to the proposed Amendment for the conformity analysis.

2.5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Preparation of the proposed Amendment met both federal and SB 375 consultation requirements. See Section 7 and Attachment B of the proposed Amendment for documentation.

Federal consultation requirements (23 CFR 450.316) include (1) a process involving the MPO, State and local air quality planning agencies, State and local transportation agencies, EPA, and USDOT; and (2) a proactive public involvement process that provides opportunity for public review and comment by, at a minimum, providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information considered by the agency.

SB 375 (Government Code Section 65080) requires outreach efforts to encourage the active participation of stakeholders, including affordable housing advocates, transportation advocates, neighborhood and community groups, environmental advocates, homebuilder representatives, broad-based business organizations, landowners, commercial property interests, homeowners associations, and consultation with congestion management agencies, transportation agencies, local agency formation commission, and members of city councils and boards of supervisors.