SANDAG

ON THE MOVE:
INNOVATIVE TRANSIT PRIORITY SOLUTIONS FOR COMPLETE STREETS

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Fast, safe, reliable, and accessible bus service is essential for helping all San Diegans reach work, school, and daily destinations. However, large-scale bus improvement project can take many years to implement and come with significant costs. Riders consistently express a desire for improvements that can be felt today.

Quick-build projects—also known as tactical transit—offer a pathway to address this gap. Quick builds are low-cost, flexible, and can typically be delivered within 12 to 24 months. They use paint, signage, modular bus platforms, and other rapid deployment tools to improve speed, safety, and accessibility while testing concepts that may later be scaled into permanent capital projects.

On the Move: Innovative Transit Priority Solutions for Complete Streets is a collaborative effort between SANDAG, Caltrans District 11, the City of San Diego, Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), and North County Transit District (NCTD). Funded by a Caltrans Planning Grant, this project identifies key corridors, develops a toolbox of quick-build strategies, pilots near-term designs, and creates a roadmap for implementation.

Purpose and Objectives

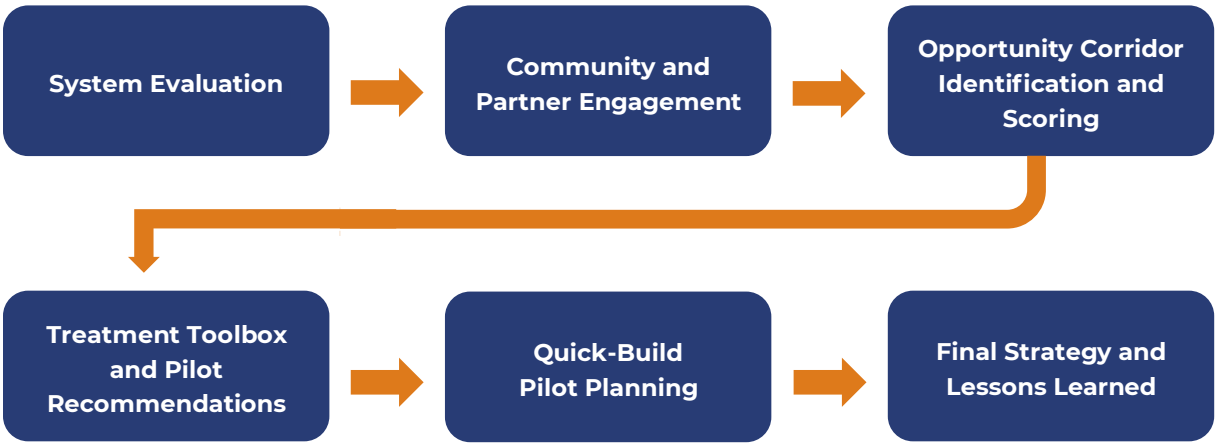
This study was designed to answer one key question: How can the San Diego region accelerate meaningful improvements to bus service while preparing for long-term capital improvements?

The objectives were to:

- Identify corridor improvement opportunities across the region that would benefit most from quick-build interventions.
- Develop a treatment toolbox and cost inventory that connect corridor challenges with practical solutions.
- Design and plan two quick-build pilots identified through the corridor evaluation for near-term implementation.
- Create implementation guidelines and a funding roadmap to help agencies replicate successes across the region.

Methodology

This study is structured to guide partners through a phased planning and implementation process that addresses near-term transit needs and long-term mobility goals. This approach ensures a strategy that is community-informed, data-driven, and focused on accelerating transit improvements across the San Diego region.



The stuy is organized to guide the reader through the stages of the planning and project implementation process:

Chapter 1: System Evaluation and Corridor Improvement Opportunities

An initial set of 22 corridors were identified through collaboration with key partners. Corridors were scored using ten criteria weighted by partner input:

Scoring Factor	Metrics Used
Safety	Vision Zero Safety Focus and Systemic Safety Networks; pedestrian/cyclist collision rates
Ridership	Stop and route-level data from the San Diego region automatic passenger counter
Delay	Peak vs. off-peak speed differentials
On-Time Performance	Timepoint adherence
Transit Propensity	Zero-car households and Title VI geographies
Accessibility	Walkscore/walkability index
Priority Facilities	Schools, elderly facilities, rail hubs within 1/2-mile
Roadway Characteristics	Lane-mile, presence of bikeways
Jurisdictional Complexity	Number of cities, districts, and agencies along the corridor
Community Plans	Inclusion as a transit priority in adopted local plans

From this scoring, Broadway (Downtown) and Northern Oceanside emerged as the highest-potential corridors for this study, and advanced to pilot design.

Chapter 2: Engagement Strategy

The project team conducted more than 20 structured engagement activities with partners, including:

- Project Development Team meetings with City of San Diego, MTS, NCTD, and Caltrans
- Workshops with SANDAG working groups, Policy Advisory Committees, and the Transportation Committee
- Community-based organization outreach sessions, including input from Casa Familiar, City Heights CDC, El Cajon Collaborative, and others
- Community meetings

Recurring themes included the urgent need for safety and lighting, greater availability of shelters and seating, improved reliability through interventions such as queue jumps and signal coordination, and the importance of equity in focusing improvements in historically underserved communities.

This chapter highlights how partners and community engagement shaped the project and describes strategies for continued engagement through project implementation.

Chapter 3: Transportation Assessment and Recommendations

This chapter translates the corridor evaluation into a set of actionable strategies. The project team developed a Treatment Matrix that links common challenges, such as delay hotspots, pedestrian safety risks, and poor stop accessibility, with a menu of quick-build solutions.

The toolbox spans a range of interventions, from low-cost measures like restriping lanes, consolidating stops, or adding shelters, to more robust options such as queue jumps, bus bulbs, and modular curb extensions. It also highlights context-sensitive approaches, including shared bus-bike lanes or peak-hour bus-only lanes, that address transit needs while working within limited right-of-way. Each treatment profile includes considerations for cost, implementation, and lessons learned from local and national examples.

By pairing corridor conditions with scalable solutions, the treatment toolbox equips agencies with a practical framework rather than one-size-fits-all upgrades.

Chapter 4A: Quick Build Pilots

This chapter includes conceptual designs for the two highest-potential corridors identified through the scoring process.

Broadway (Downtown San Diego): Broadway is the region's primary transit artery, carrying more than 40 buses per hour during peak periods and serving both local and Rapid routes. The corridor faces significant congestion, high dwell times, and safety concerns for both pedestrians and cyclists. The pilot design proposes bus-priority lanes, pedestrian curb extensions, bicycle lanes or shared markings, and signal timing improvements. These treatments are designed to reduce delay, enhance safety, and provide a model for how quick-builds can advance the goals of the Downtown Mobility Plan.

Northern Oceanside: includes two key intersections along Mission Avenue, serving NCTD's highest-ridership route (Route 303) and additional Breeze routes. The pilot designs propose queue jumps, relocated far-side stops, improved crosswalk visibility, and bus-only lane segments to help buses bypass congestion. These changes aim to improve travel times and safety while reflecting community preferences for less disruptive, lower-cost interventions

Together, these pilots demonstrate how quick-builds can be deployed in very different contexts—dense, transit-rich Downtown San Diego and auto-oriented Northern Oceanside—while responding to unique local conditions.

Chapter 4B: Quick-Build Implementation strategy

This chapter provides a practical roadmap for agencies to move from planning to delivery of quick-build projects within 12 to 18 months. The roadmap draws on lessons learned from technical analysis, engagement, and local case studies such as the El Cajon Boulevard Busway.

Key elements include:

- Project initiation pathways: operator-led (responding to delay or safety issues), jurisdiction-led (corridor improvements), or SANDAG-led (pilots for future Rapid projects).
- Roles and responsibilities: jurisdictions typically serve as leads, operators provide service planning and performance data, SANDAG supports funding opportunities, planning, and coordination.
- Feasibility assessment: screen projects for right-of-way availability, regulatory alignment, staff capacity, and community support.
- Funding strategy: bundle quick-builds with roadway maintenance or utility project to minimize incremental cost; pursue ATP Quick-Buil Pilot, Clean California, and other sources where applicable.
- Design and installation: select treatments from toolbox, coordinate across city departments, and pursue expedited permitting where possible.
- Monitoring and evaluation: track performance indicators such as travel time, on-time performance, ridership, safety incidents, and community satisfaction. Pilots should be treated as iterative, with flexibility to adjust designs in the field.
- Path to permanence: successful pilots can transition to long-term infrastructure when they demonstrate measurable performance improvements, community support, and alignment with regional mobility goals.

Conclusion

On the Move demonstrates that meaningful transit improvements can be delivered in San Diego within months, not decades. By pairing systemwide analysis with targeted pilot projects, and by providing agencies with a practical roadmap, the study positions the region to act quickly while informing long-term investment. With Broadway and Northern Oceanside serving as testbeds, and a strong framework for implementation, the region is prepared to deliver a more reliable, safe, and equitable transit system, while building trust by showing that change is possible now.