

# plan

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Sustainable Communities Strategy**

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# Sustainable Communities Strategy

## INTRODUCTION

The 2025 Regional Plan's state-mandated Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) aims to create communities that are more convenient, equitable, healthy, and safe for all. It includes an integrated transportation and land use strategy that provides access to economic opportunities and affordable housing for all residents of the San Diego region. The SCS was developed in coordination with the SANDAG Board, hundreds of stakeholders, and input from thousands of residents from across the San Diego region.







## SCS Requirements

The SCS, as required by California Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008) (SB 375), describes how coordinated transportation, housing, and land use will meet the target for reducing per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions set by CARB. The state-mandated target for the San Diego region is a 19% per capita reduction in emissions from cars and light duty trucks by 2035 from 2005 levels. The 2025 Regional Plan achieves a 19.35% reduction in 2035.

While no specific targets were set for the plan’s horizon year of 2050, SANDAG monitors GHG through the life of the Regional Plan. Table 2.1 shows the results we expect when our region invests in a transportation network that provides more options for moving around, implements a planned land use pattern consistent with jurisdictional adopted plans, and supports policies and programs that further reduce GHGs.

**Table 2.1 2025 Regional Plan: Results of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions\***

*\*SB 375 reductions are based on GHG emissions from cars and light trucks measured against the 2005 baseline.*

Average Weekday Per Capita CO <sub>2</sub> Reductions for Cars and Light Trucks from 2005		
Target Year	CARB Target	Anticipated GHG Reduction
2035	19%	19.35%
2050	N/A	19.38%

Source: CARB 2017; SANDAG 2025, Appendix B of the 2025 Regional Plan, Appendix M of the 2025 Regional Plan

SB 375 calls for GHG reductions for specific vehicle classes: cars and light trucks. Other performance metrics related to GHG emissions are addressed in later chapters. While the 2025 Regional Plan addresses GHG and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from a broader range of vehicles (including public transit) than those addressed in SB 375, the SCS Chapter focuses on the requirements of SB 375.

SB 375 requires that MPOs use the most recent planning assumptions which consider local general plans and other factors when developing the SCS. Key components and strategies of this SCS focus on:

- A land use pattern that accommodates our region’s future employment and housing needs and protects sensitive habitats and resource areas
- A complete transportation network of transit, managed lanes, highways, local streets, bikeways, and walkways built and maintained with reasonably expected funding
- Management of our transportation system through measures that maximize efficiency and reduce traffic congestion and VMT during peak periods

The SCS does not regulate or supersede the exercise of land use authority of the region’s cities or the County of San Diego consistent with SB 375 (see Government Code Section 65080[b][2][K]). SB 375 requires SANDAG’s SCS to include a regional land use pattern and to plan for future housing needs. Based on the latest Regional Growth Forecast, the SCS land use pattern is consistent with local jurisdictions’ adopted plans and accommodates the projected changes in population and employment in the region. The SCS land use pattern identifies areas in the region sufficient for housing to meet the required eight-year projection of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA).

The 2025 Regional Plan is based on a revenue-constrained transportation network—a network funded by financial resources expected between now and 2050—and includes projects, policies, and programs.



The Series 15 Regional Growth Forecast is the foundation of the 2025 Regional Plan. It predicts economic and demographic changes through 2050, based on existing local land use plans and policies, reasonably anticipated changes to local plans and policies, and anticipated projects under construction now, or in the near future. It estimates where and how much future growth is likely to occur and serves as the land use pattern for the SCS.

This forecast projects slower population growth than previous forecasts. Despite this, the region's existing housing shortages will continue to drive demand for housing near job opportunities.

The San Diego region has already made progress by planning for and implementing sustainable communities that offer more opportunities for people to walk or bike with development located near transit and existing public facilities (e.g., water and sewer services).

**Sustainable Communities Strategy Land Use Pattern: 2035 Housing and Employment**

- Orange dot: 1 dot represents 50 jobs
- Purple dot: 1 dot represents 50 housing units

Nearly 80% of housing and employment growth is projected to occur in the gray shaded areas by 2035.

Source: SANDAG Series 15 Sustainable Communities Strategy Land Use Pattern

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**SANDAG**

The Series 15 Regional Growth Forecast/SCS land use pattern focuses

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## San Diego Region 2022 | 2035 | 2050

### 2022–2050 GROWTH

**Population: +112,944**  
3.4% increase

**Wage and Salary Jobs: +170,757**  
10.6% increase

**Housing Units: +202,819**  
16.4% increase

### PROJECTIONS 2035

**2035 Population: 3,404,362**

**2035 Wage and Salary Jobs: 1,678,929**

**2035 Housing Units: 1,372,884**

### PROJECTIONS 2050

**2050 Population: 3,400,250**

**2050 Wage and Salary Jobs: 1,782,389**

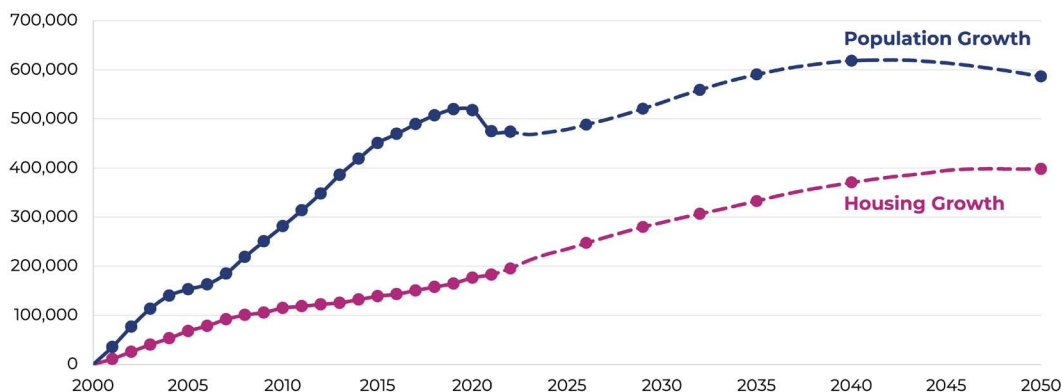
**2050 Housing Units: 1,438,461**



## Housing and Land Use

Housing affordability is a big problem for people across the region, especially for low-income families, older adults, and younger residents. As shown in Figure 2.2, the housing supply has fallen behind the growing population of the San Diego region.

**Figure 2.2 Population and Housing Unit Growth in the San Diego Region 2000–2050**



Source: Appendix F of the 2025 Regional Plan



Increasing the availability and affordability of housing requires a combined local, regional, and state effort. We have already made progress since the last Regional Plan update. Cities across the region have updated their housing elements to align with state housing laws, increasing housing supply and affordability by streamlining the development process and rezoning to allow for a greater variety of uses. The State of California approved legislation that allows for more types of housing, such as duplexes, lot splits, and accessory dwelling units. Other state legislation focuses on reducing the high cost of construction by phasing development impact fees for projects that include deed-restricted affordable housing units. This makes more projects financially feasible by allowing developers to pay their fees when construction is complete instead of upfront. Regionally, SANDAG continued to bridge the gap by aligning housing policies with transportation initiatives. We have sought state and federal housing grants and supported local jurisdictions through the **Housing Technical Assistance Program** funded through the **Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Grants of 2021** programs.



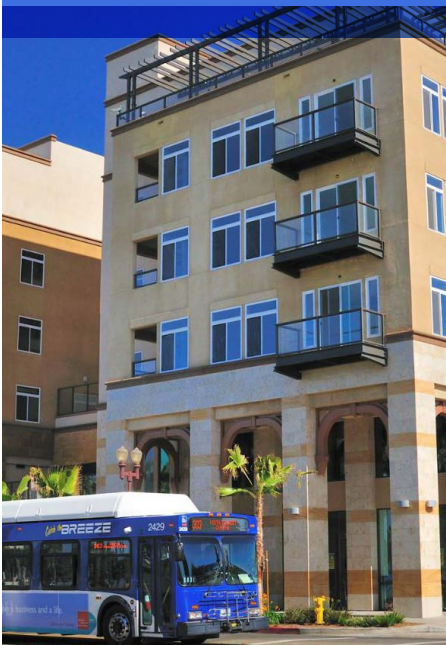
## Accommodating the Eight-Year Regional Housing Needs Allocation

SANDAG is required by state law to complete a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) plan in consultation with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The RHNA helps determine the region's housing needs in four income categories: very low, low, moderate, and above moderate. HCD's RHNA determination requires SANDAG and its member agencies to plan for a total of 171,685 housing units through the 2021–2029 planning period.

The **6th Cycle RHNA Plan** for the San Diego region was adopted by the SANDAG Board of Directors in July 2020. The RHNA allocates housing units to each of the region's cities and the County of San Diego by considering transit availability and the number of jobs in each area. It also adjusts for equity and fair housing and attempts to address patterns of segregation. Each local jurisdiction updated its housing element and zoning codes to accommodate their 6th Cycle RHNA.

The SCS land use pattern is based on the housing elements and local zoning codes of each of the region's 19 jurisdictions. The SCS land use pattern accommodates the 6th Cycle RHNA by including sufficient zoned housing capacity identified in each jurisdiction's housing elements. Based on identified housing capacity and the Series 15 Regional Growth Forecast, the SCS land use pattern projects an additional 202,819 housing units will be built by 2050, surpassing the 6th cycle RHNA planning requirement of 171,685 units. Detailed information is included in Table F.2 of **Appendix F**.

The SCS land use pattern results in nearly **80% of future residential development and employment growth occurring in areas with a high concentration of transportation options**. This furthers the goals of SB 375 by aligning housing growth with future transportation investments and reducing GHG emissions.



### SANDAG's Housing Program

SANDAG continues to support jurisdictions as they create and adopt policies and process improvements to accelerate the development of housing. By leveraging state funding through the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP 1.0 and 2.0) grant program, SANDAG has created avenues for local staff to obtain funding, consultant support, and resources to implement their housing elements.

### Public Involvement Plan

Thousands of residents, community leaders, business professionals, elected officials, and representatives from a variety of groups participated, through an extensive outreach program, in the development of the 2025 Regional Plan and its SCS. The 2025 Regional Plan Public Involvement Plan (PIP) establishes a process and outlines specific activities for communicating with, and obtaining input from, the public throughout the plan development process. The PIP is based on the SANDAG Public Participation Plan adopted and amended (as needed) by the Board of Directors. SANDAG's efforts to involve the public in the development of the 2025 Regional Plan and its SCS have been tracked and recorded to keep a record of the number and types of engagement activities organized and held by SANDAG. Based on the record, SANDAG meets the state of California's public involvement requirements, including informational meetings mandated by SB 375, and federal regulations. The details of these activities can be found in **Appendix J**.

### Effects of Air Pollution

California Assembly Bill 805 (Gonzalez and Fletcher, 2017) (Chapter 658, Statutes of 2017) requires SANDAG's Regional Plan to identify disadvantaged communities and include transportation strategies to reduce pollution exposure within these communities. We gathered input on the mobility needs of various communities throughout the development of the 2025 Regional Plan. **Appendix A, Attachment A1** describes how we defined disadvantaged communities in coordination with the SANDAG Social Equity Working Group and includes strategies in the 2025 Regional Plan that reduce pollution exposure in these areas.



# Integrated Transportation System

The 2025 Regional Plan lays out a strategy for improving mobility and access over the next 25 years guided by the plan's goals for a transportation system that is convenient, equitable, healthy, and safe. The 2025 Regional Plan builds on the currently adopted plan (Amended 2021 Regional Plan). Travel patterns, major employment, and activity center locations have largely stayed the same since the previous plan's adoption. (Find network development details in **Appendix N.**) Extensive public and partner outreach helped identify new and continued projects and programs that will meet local mobility needs. (See **Appendix J** for full details on public outreach.)

The transportation system is categorized into several types of transportation projects—active transportation, Complete Corridors, transit, Flexible Fleets, and transportation system management—along with policies and programs that support the overall system.

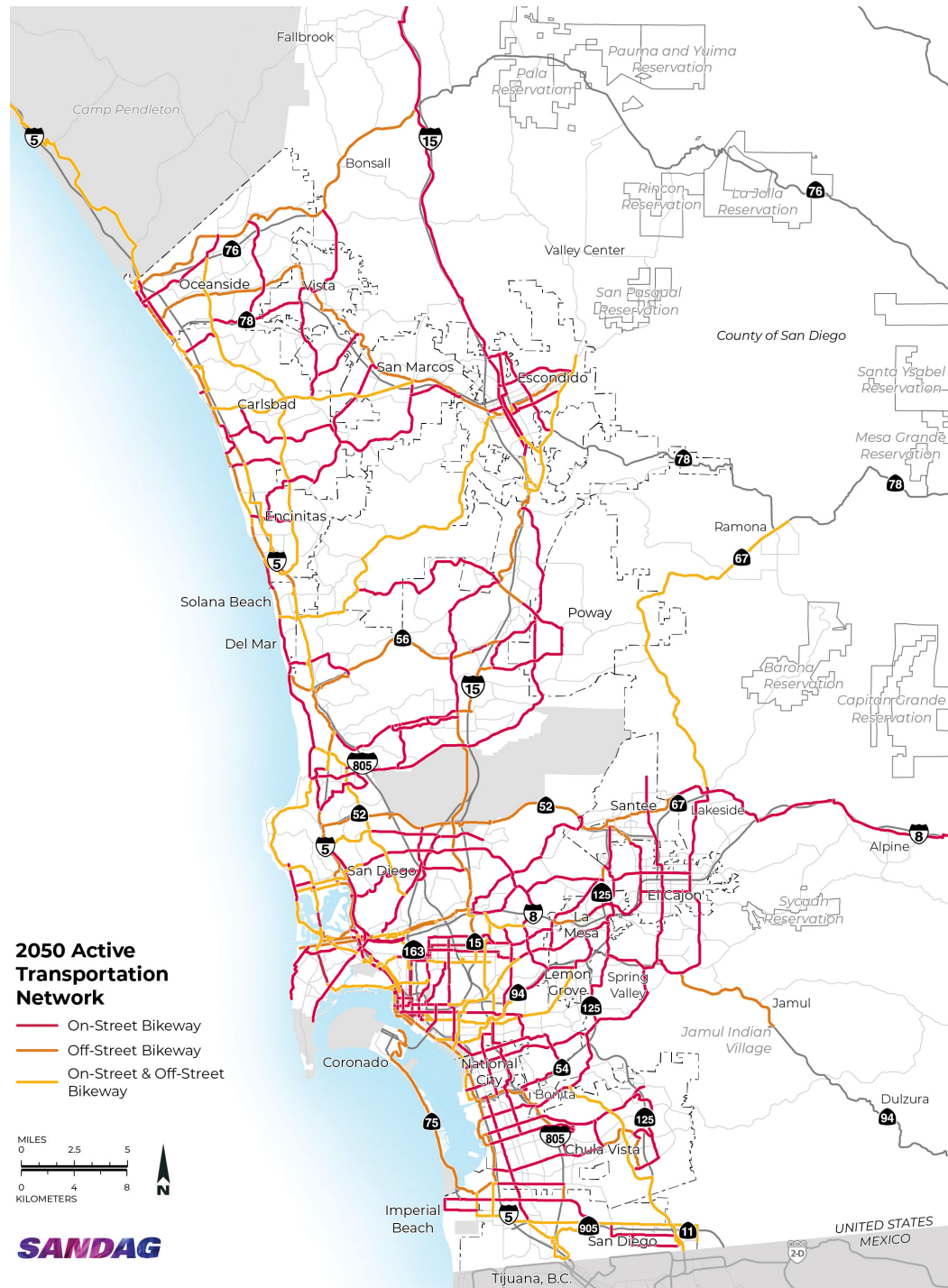


## Active Transportation

Active transportation refers to walking, biking, or using a personal mobility device. It is a critical component of the SCS, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing public health, and improving quality of life. The San Diego region is currently home to 182 miles of existing and in-construction safe active transportation infrastructure, and the 2025 Regional Plan will expand that network to 721 miles by 2050.

SANDAG serves as a forum for bicycle and pedestrian planning activities throughout the region. We have achieved significant advances in active transportation since the adoption of the Regional Bike Plan in 2010 by building facilities throughout the region and allocating funding to advance local projects. The network in the 2025 Regional Plan continues this work by expanding safe spaces for people of all ages and abilities to get around on foot, by bike, and with other personal mobility devices. The active transportation network focuses on connections to transit and neighborhood destinations such as parks, schools, shopping centers, dining, and grocery stores. Further details on active transportation are included in **Appendix K.**

**Figure 2.3 2050 Active Transportation Network**



## Complete Corridors

Complete Corridors accommodate multiple modes of travel including driving, transit, walking, and biking. They include managed lanes that are supported by technology and provide reliable travel times for Rapid Bus. The goal of a Complete Corridor is to provide safe, accessible, convenient, and flexible travel options along commonly traveled routes.

### Managed Lanes and Connectors

In the 2025 Regional Plan transportation network, managed lanes are used to offer priority access to transit, carpools and vanpools, motorcycles, and emergency vehicles. Managed lanes are created by adding new travel lanes within the existing right of way where possible or converting existing travel lanes to maximize existing infrastructure (see Figure 2.4).

### Transportation Technology and Smart Intersection System

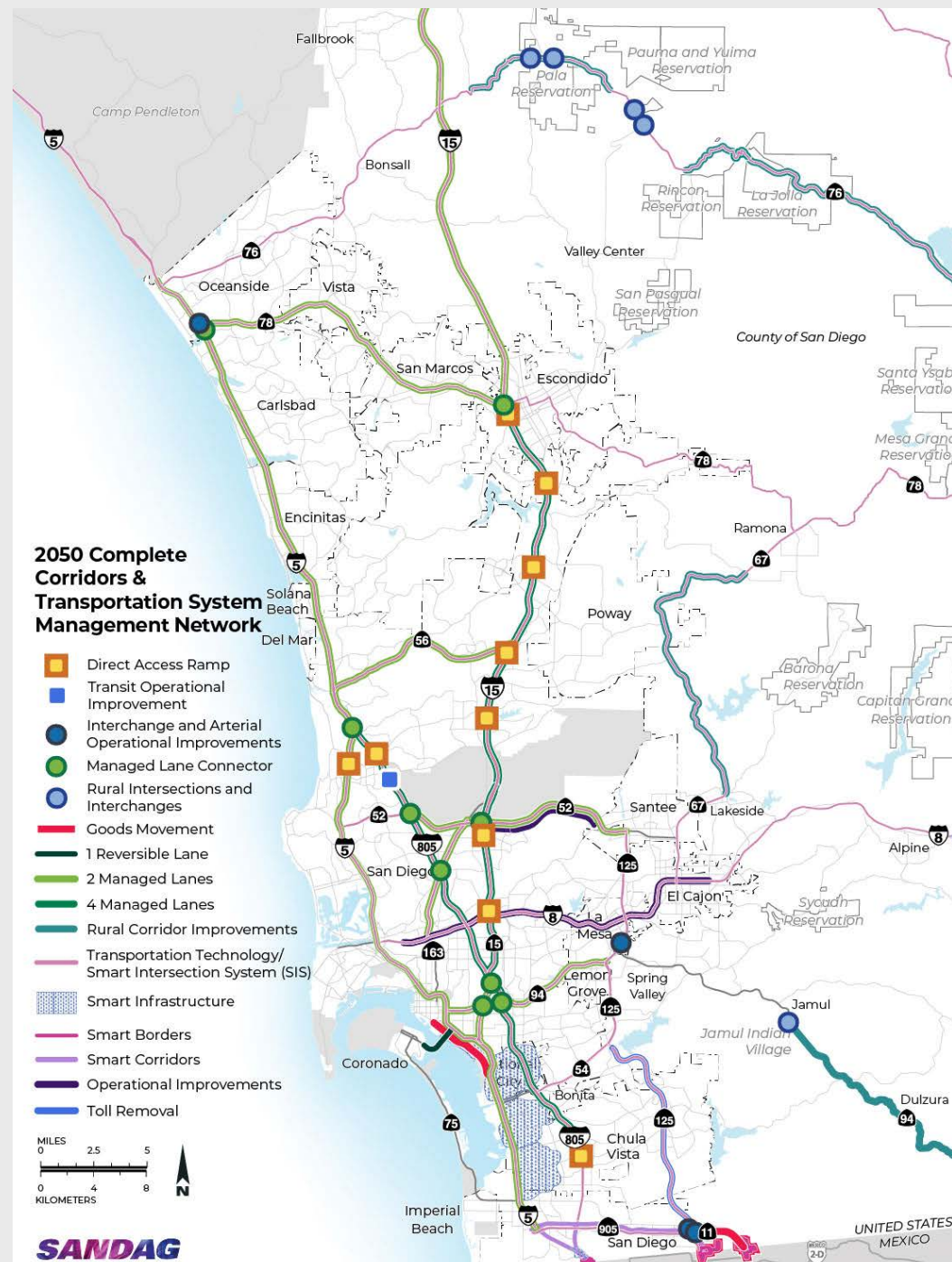
Transportation technology and Smart Intersection Systems enable transportation operators to change how infrastructure and services are used as traffic conditions change. This allows us to maximize existing roadway capacity through technology instead of costly physical infrastructure changes (i.e., widening roadways or building new roadways). Technology can also provide people with real-time travel information to help them decide when, where, and how to travel.

### Rural Corridors

Rural corridors provide people in rural communities, including tribal nations and unincorporated areas, with access to the interstate system, employment opportunities, education, and healthcare. They also facilitate the movement of goods, deliveries, and emergency vehicles. These roadways are improved with a focus on safety, such as facilitating evacuation events, through shoulder widening, curve straightening, intersection improvements, and updated technology features.



**Figure 2.4 2050 Complete Corridors and Transportation System Management Network**





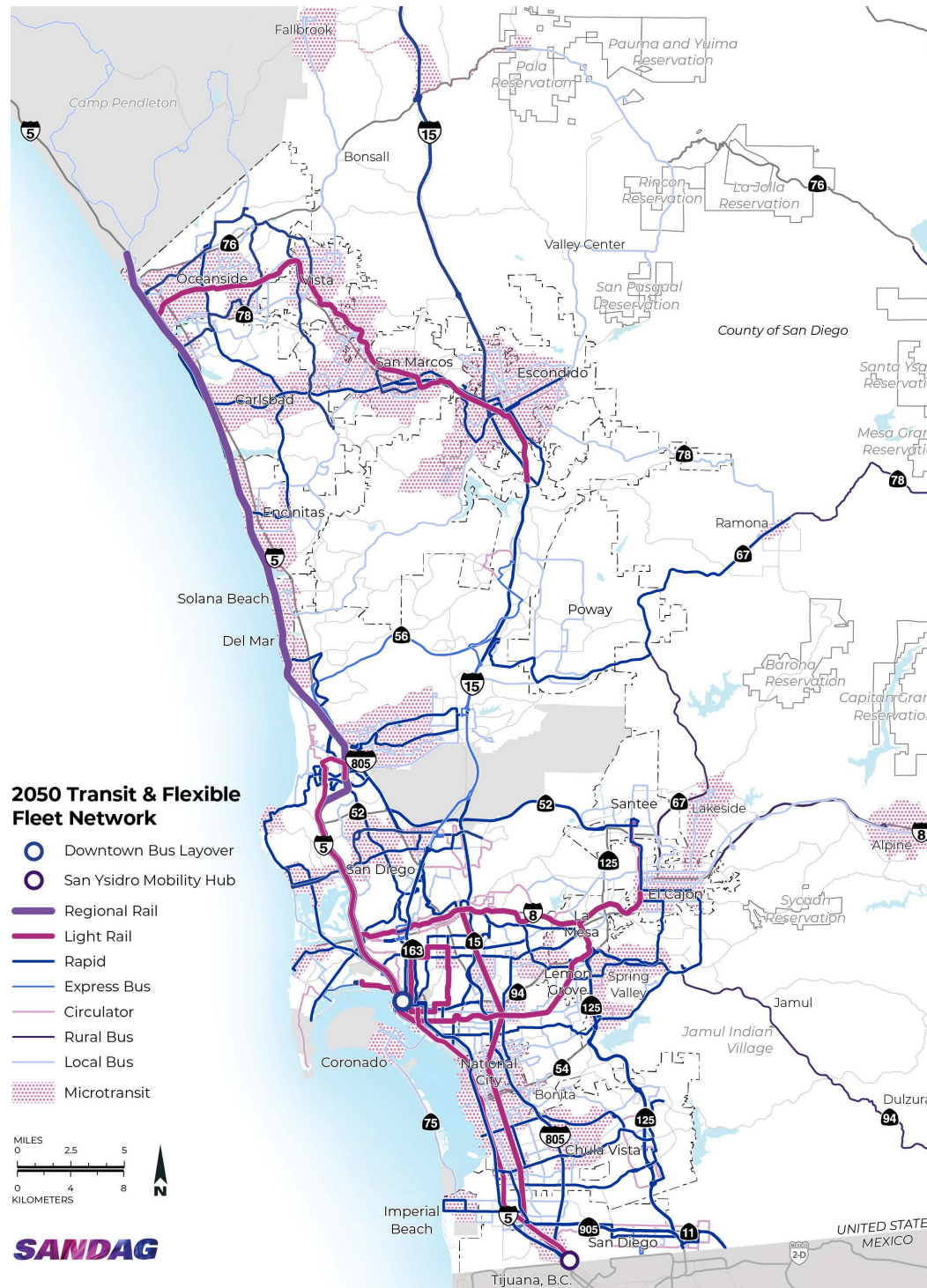
## Goods Movement

The local, interregional, and international goods movement system is essential for supporting businesses and residents. This complex system includes ports, highways, railways, border crossings, airports, and pipelines. Closing gaps in the network strengthens and sustains our diverse economy with minimal impact on the environment. To this end, **SANDAG's San Diego and Imperial Counties Sustainable Freight Implementation Strategy and Freight Gateway Study** examines the most effective policy, technology, and workplace development strategies and reveals how goods move through the region. Additionally, in May 2025, the **Regional Aviation Strategic Plan and San Diego Airport Multimodal Accessibility Plan** were updated for regional consistency. SANDAG continues to partner with agencies such as the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority and the Port of San Diego in their efforts to improve goods movement. Find more details on goods movement in **Appendix A, Attachment A4**.

## Transit





As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, SANDAG is responsible for long-term transit planning for the San Diego region. We work in close partnership with the region's two transit operators: Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD). Figure 2.5 illustrates the region's planned transit and Flexible Fleet networks and included services.

**Figure 2.5 2050 Transit and Flexible Fleet Network**





New and expanded transit services include improvements to regional rail, light rail, streetcar, a variety of bus options, including Rapid, express, local, local circulators, and rural. Regional transit service also integrates with intercity rail for longer distance travel.

-  **Regional rail** includes an upgraded rail service that is faster and more convenient, especially for longer trips.
-  **Light rail** transit includes improvements to existing light rail services and new light rail or streetcar routes.
-  **Rapid Service** is a bus network using special technology and infrastructure to get around traffic. Rapid routes are planned to start services by 2035 as described in **Appendix A**. Rapid amenities may include enhanced shelters, bus guideways, and other transit priority measures.
-  Many existing **bus and rail** services will have **increased frequencies**, meaning they will come more often than they do today.
-  Transit services enable **connections** with intercity rail for **longer-distance travel** beyond the region.

## Flexible Fleets

Flexible Fleets are on-demand, shared transportation services that help people reach their destinations or connect to transit. Rides are typically reserved through a mobile application. Multiple types of flexible fleets exist and serve different needs within communities. Microtransit serves a range of 0.5-4.5 miles, carrying up to 15 passengers. Neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) are a type of microtransit that typically have a service range of 0.5 to 2 miles, carrying up to six passengers. NEVs are permitted to operate on streets with speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less. Flexible Fleets are a key strategy for improving mobility and access through the region, and SANDAG has been collaborating with agencies across the region to expand Flexible Fleet services to reach more users. The 2025 Regional Plan includes 36 service zones.



SANDAG has partnered with local jurisdictions to launch the Carlsbad Connector microtransit, the City of Oceanside's gO'side, and the City of San Diego's Beach Bug NEV programs. Additionally, local organizations have leveraged SANDAG's Flexible Fleets Strategic Plan to secure grant funding for Mid-City GO and Via El Cajon microtransit programs.



## Transportation System Management

We use advanced technology and tools such as freeway ramp meters, dynamic message signs and traffic signal timing to provide real-time information on traffic conditions and coordinate operations at local traffic centers. These systems connect the transportation system and help people move around the region more easily and safely. For example, a Smart Intersection System for the entire region will make traffic flow smoothly, reduce GHG emissions and improve safety and efficiency for emergency vehicles and freight trucks, as well as people who walk, bike and ride transit. A comprehensive system to manage cross-border trips will make travel and trade easier and safer at all ports of entry in our binational region and will reduce vehicles idling for long periods polluting the environment.

### Emerging Technology

Innovative technologies and data analytics continue to reshape the transportation landscape. SANDAG is currently engaged in exploring various emerging technologies such as advanced air mobility.

SANDAG completed its first Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) plan, a foundational understanding of the technology and a toolkit concept to assist local jurisdictions and agencies with initial planning efforts. While AAM will take many years to emerge as a market, SANDAG will work alongside regional partners to ensure readiness for the safe integration of the technology in our long-range plans.

## Chapter 2: Sustainable Communities Strategy







The vision of the Regional Habitat Conservation program is to protect, connect, and respect species and their natural habitats to prevent their extinction in San Diego County.

- **Protect** existing native species through strategic acquisition, management, and monitoring of critical habitat areas identified in the Regional Habitat Conservation Plan.
- **Connect** habitat areas through wildlife corridors and linkages and enhance people's access, where appropriate, to natural areas.
- **Respect** local, native species and habitat. Balance the demands for recreation opportunities with the desire for intact, natural landscapes. Encourage community respect for natural lands through increased public outreach and education. Help the public connect to and deepen their respect for nature, furthering conservation efforts in the region.

## Environment

### Habitat Conservation

The San Diego region is one of the richest biodiversity areas in the United States. The region's diverse topography, geology, and moderate climate, allow the most rare, threatened, and endangered species in the continental United States to live here. Since the last Regional Plan update, SANDAG has worked closely with the Regional Habitat Conservation Taskforce and other partners to develop a vision for the future of habitat conservation in the San Diego region. The Regional Habitat Conservation Vision addresses challenges posed by natural hazards including degradation and loss of habitat, invasive species, and other changes that are driving many species to the precipice of extinction at an increasing rate. The vision sets goals and objectives to protect sensitive habitats and species in San Diego for future generations. **Appendix Q** of the 2025 Regional Plan describes the history and status of the habitat conservation planning efforts in the region and sets forth a vision for future implementation. It also covers the overall goals of the California State Wildlife Action Plan.



### Shoreline Preservation

Shoreline preservation plays a crucial role in enhancing both our environment and economy, and it is recognized as a resource of national importance. The beaches and sea cliffs are integral to the quality of life in this area; when envisioning the region's favorable image, the climate and shoreline are often at the forefront of our minds. Each coastal city within the region, including sections of shoreline that are owned and managed by state and federal authorities, has been impacted by erosion over the past several decades. This ongoing erosion has heightened concerns regarding the anticipated trends of escalating beach loss and property damage in the future.

Over the past quarter-century, SANDAG has established regional sediment management policies, overseen a continuous shoreline monitoring initiative, and executed various projects aimed at preserving local beaches and coastlines. These initiatives hold particular significance for our area, which boasts approximately 70 miles of coastline frequented by both residents and visitors who seek to enjoy the San Diego region's beaches. It has become increasingly evident that California's shorelines are experiencing gradual erosion, exacerbated by development that has reduced the natural sand supply essential for maintaining our beaches.

SANDAG remains committed to providing guidance on shoreline fill policies, beach nourishment, structural stabilization, and other strategies designed to ensure the vitality of our beaches.



