



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
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2021 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

About SCAG

Founded in 1965, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a Joint Powers Authority under California state law, established as an association of local governments and agencies that voluntarily convene as a forum to address regional issues. Under federal law, SCAG is designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and under state law as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Council of Governments.

The SCAG region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura) and 191 cities in an area covering more than 38,000 square miles. The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans including sustainable communities strategy and growth forecast components, regional transportation improvement programs, regional housing needs allocations, and a portion of the South Coast Air Quality management plans. In 1992, SCAG expanded its governing body, the Executive Committee, to a 70-member Regional Council to help accommodate new responsibilities mandated by the federal and state governments, as well as to provide more broad-based representation of Southern California's cities and counties. With its expanded membership structure, SCAG created regional districts to provide for more diverse representation. The districts were formed with the intent to serve equal populations and communities of interest. Currently, the Regional Council consists of 86 members.

In addition to the six counties and 191 cities that make up SCAG's region, there are six County Transportation Commissions that hold the primary responsibility for programming and implementing transportation projects, programs and services in their respective counties. Additionally, SCAG Bylaws provide for representation of Native American tribes, Air Quality Districts, and the Transportation Corridor Agencies on the Regional Council and Policy Committees.

SCAG's Legislative Program

SCAG maintains a State and Federal Legislative Program, which consists of the Regional Council's positions on policies and legislative initiatives related to SCAG's core planning and policy areas—transportation, air quality, freight/goods movement, housing, environmental impact, sustainability, and economic recovery and job creation—that need the leadership and support of the California State Legislature and Congress to resolve challenges facing the SCAG region.

SCAG's legislative efforts are the product of a committee process whereby the agency's Legislative/Communications & Membership Committee, comprised of elected officials from throughout the region, identifies and recommends specific legislative action for consideration by the Regional Council with respect to state and federal legislation affecting the SCAG region.

The following state and federal legislative principles for 2021 encompass broad, policy-oriented objectives of the agency that build upon long-standing, Regional Council-adopted policies.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Support direct and flexible emergency funding for local governments of all sizes to respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or to backfill tax revenue lost due to the global pandemic.
2. As the homeless population continues to grow in our region, support new federal grant programs to assist cities, counties, and regional collaborations address homelessness challenges through supportive housing models and planning grants.
3. Support increased funding for critical federal programs that local governments depend on, including the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Affordable Housing Tax Credit (AFTC), and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), as well as the creation of new tools to confront the housing affordability crisis and expand economic opportunity for residents in Southern California.

AVIATION

1. Advocate for and seek out funding opportunities from the Federal Aviation Administration, which can help SCAG conduct airport passenger studies, planning activities, and forecasting models.
2. Support legislation that raises and indexes the cap on the passenger facility charge (PFC) giving local airports the option to adjust their user fees to make needed infrastructure improvements to airport facilities and for projects that promote access to the airport.
3. Oppose efforts to divert September 11 Security Fees for uses not related to the nation's aviation transportation system.

BROADBAND ACCESS

1. Support coordinated efforts that would prioritize additional funding and resources for broadband infrastructure, particularly in low-income and rural communities, to bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

ENVIRONMENT & AIR QUALITY

1. Recognizing California's unique air quality challenges, support the authority of the State of California to establish its own tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions standards and zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) requirements.
2. Support grant and formula programs for climate resiliency, EV charging and fueling infrastructure, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

FREIGHT & GOODS MOVEMENT

1. Support increased funding and policy proposals in the surface transportation authorization and annual appropriations bills that maintain and expand transportation infrastructure for key regional goods movement corridors that link freight facilities and systems to the rest of the nation.
2. Support the continuation of, and increased investment in, federal discretionary grant opportunities such as the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) and Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program.
3. Expand the INFRA program to include both competitive and formula-based awards and support increased transparency measures for competitive grant awards. Reestablish the Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS) program for large freight/goods movement projects.
4. Support increased federal freight funding through the establishment of a dedicated freight trust fund so that revenues can be distributed to states and regions that are most impacted by goods movement.

5. Support the creation of programs designed to assist in leveraging technology to improve freight mobility, increase goods movement efficiency, reduce harmful emissions, mitigate negative impacts on disadvantaged communities, and address shifting consumer behaviors (i.e., e-commerce).

PROJECT STREAMLINING

1. Support measures that expedite and streamline both project development and delivery.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Support legislative efforts that further a “Health in All Policies” approach to facilitate equitable health outcomes related to SCAG’s core public health focus areas: accessibility (to healthy food, parks and open space, and other services), affordable housing, air quality, climate resiliency, economic well-being, health equity, physical activity, and safety.
2. Recognizing that climate change, public health, and racial justice, are interconnected, support efforts that invest in and empower communities that will be disproportionately impacted by climate change.
3. Support efforts that fund transit-oriented communities, mixed land uses, green streets strategies, and safe streets so all ages and abilities can maximize opportunities for active lifestyles, have access to essential services, and use transit or non-motorized transportation options.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

1. Support further development and implementation of Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) that are transparent, accountable, and marry the policy goals of the public sector with the financial expertise of the private sector to improve project development and delivery throughout the region, including support of improved P3 design-bid-build and design-build procurement processes.
2. Oppose efforts that would seek to supplant existing transportation funding sources with P3 financing opportunities.
3. Support improved performance standards to measure success, curtail project delays, reduce expenditures, and increase expenditure accountability.
4. Support private activity bonds, debt instruments that raise capital for revenue-generating highway and freight transfer projects, and restore tax exemption for advance refunding bonds, debt instruments that allow an issuer to pay off another outstanding bond in order to allow savings to be reinvested in additional infrastructure upgrades at airports, sea ports, qualified highway or surface freight transfer facilities, affordable housing, and other projects with a clear public benefit.
5. Support efforts to protect the tax exemption of municipal bonds.

PUBLIC TRANSIT & MOBILITY

1. Support efforts that expand public transit projects and service, both bus and rail, in the region to reduce congestion and enhance sustainability.
2. Support federal grant or pilot programs for comprehensive planning that encourages Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities to connect housing, jobs, and mixed-use development with transportation options and broaden eligibility guidelines to include MPOs.
3. Oppose efforts that undermine the authority of states and local governments to enact their own regulations related to autonomous vehicles (AVs).

RACIAL JUSTICE

1. Recognizing that systemic racism continues to create barriers to success for people of color, SCAG seeks to lead and join in legislative efforts that reverse the effects of inequitable policies, processes, and practices as it relates to planning decisions in the region.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION POLICY REAUTHORIZATION

1. Support a long-term surface transportation reauthorization with increased federal funding to provide stable investments into the national infrastructure and transportation system.
2. Continue the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program, which provides dedicated, discretionary funding for projects that address critical issues facing our nation's major freight corridors.
3. Expand eligibility for any planning grant programs in a surface transportation policy bill to include MPOs as eligible recipients.
4. Support a surface transportation reauthorization bill that includes incentive funding to reward self-help jurisdictions. This model recognizes that self-help jurisdictions take risks and make significant local investment while leveraging federal dollars to deliver transportation improvements.
5. Support efforts to increase planning funds that help state and regional governments address impacts associated with climate change, with the goal of making our infrastructure more resilient.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

1. Support a transition to a mileage-based user fee funding mechanism as a replacement to federal gas taxes to provide sustainable funding to meet our nation's transportation infrastructure needs and maintain system management, preservation and resilience. Support measures that protect privacy, promote equity, and guarantee return-to-source. Support modest increases to the federal gasoline taxes to maintain purchasing power.
2. Support sustainable solutions that restore the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund, including expanding tolling options on the interstate highway system and providing support for states willing to research and/or pilot innovative revenue programs.
3. Support innovative financing tools and expand the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program.
4. Support dedicated funding for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and strategies.
5. Support increased investment in the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which is a key funding source for the state's Active Transportation Program (ATP) program.