

## CONNECT SOCAL UPDATE

On May 7, the Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal for federal transportation conformity purposes only. On June 8, SCAG received a letter from the United States Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) finding that Connect SoCal (the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy) has demonstrated air quality conformity. The letter, which signifies a joint approval of Connect SoCal from both the FHWA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), is a major milestone for SCAG, indicating that Connect SoCal meets all requirements of the federal Clean Air Act. The conformity determination ensures that the region's 4,000 transportation infrastructure projects in the plan can be approved and/or funded, as needed, without delay by our federal partners. Many thanks to our partner agencies (FHWA, FTA, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Caltrans) for their expedited review and approval.

For state purposes, SCAG has delayed the transmittal of Connect SoCal to the California Air Resources Board (ARB) for up to 120 days in accordance with the Regional Council's action on May 7 due to concerns about missing entitlements and a desire to examine potential impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the plan. Following up on that action, SCAG has engaged local jurisdictions on correcting the issue of missing entitlements. We also created a survey to gather input on the short-, medium- and long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the plan. A listening session also took place on June 24 to gather additional input from partners and stakeholders on how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact local jurisdictions. Additional stakeholder meetings will be schedule to provide further opportunities to provide feedback. For updates on Connect SoCal, [please visit ConnectSoCal.org](https://www.connectsoocal.org).

## DEMOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP ADDRESSED CHALLENGES FOR 2020 CENSUS AND IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HOUSING AND ECONOMY

Thank you to our event speakers and everyone who joined us for the 31st Annual Demographic Workshop. The event was co-hosted by SCAG and the University of Southern California (USC) Sol Price School of Public Policy over two sessions via videoconference—one on Thursday, June 11, and the other on Thursday, June 18—due to the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing together over 500 attendees. The event theme, "Accelerating Planning to Catch Up to 21st Century Demographics," encompassed a range of discussions that provided new research findings and expert insights on responding to demographic changes across the region and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first session, *The Changing Demographic Outlook and Housing Trends*, provided an update on the latest in demographic trends including migration, fertility, and aging, as well as their implications on regional planning as we begin a new decade. The second session, *Impact of COVID-19 on Housing and Economy*, included a keynote speech by Chris Porter, Chief Demographer at John Burns Real Estate Consulting, a 2020 Census update by James T. Christy, Assistant Director for Field Operations at the U.S. Census Bureau, and a panel discussion on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both sessions closed with applied roundtable discussions.

We thank our key program partners: the U.S. Census Bureau, California Department of Finance's Demographic Research Unit, and California Department of Housing and Community Development. To view presentations and photos from the event, [please visit the Demographic Workshop page on the SCAG website](#).

## STATE ADVOCACY SUPPORTS LOCAL EFFORTS TO MEET REGIONAL HOUSING NEED GOALS AND STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

SCAG formally submitted a letter on June 8, addressed to Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) and Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) requesting deadline extensions on Housing Element submissions and Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) Grants Program applications. Draft budget trailer bill language indicates early support for extending the LEAP deadline for local cities and counties. Regarding Housing Element submissions, housing element updates are due in October 2021. The letter, which was also jointly signed by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), asks for a six-month extension for housing element updates in order to give local jurisdictions flexibility as they balance more immediate concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Copies of the letters were provided to members of the budget and housing committees of both chambers and shared with COGs in the region.

The state budget was another focus of SCAG's advocacy efforts. Letters were submitted to Senate Budget Committee Chair Holly Mitchell (D-Los Angeles) and Assembly Budget Committee Chair Phil Ting (D-San Francisco) expressing support for the legislature's increased allocation of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act funding for cities and counties, and to establish a floor allocation of \$50,000 per city. Additionally, SCAG expressed support for AB 617 Implementation funding, which brings air monitoring to a more localized level, and asked for the program to be prioritized in light of reduced cap-and-trade auctions in May 2020.

## SCAG UNVEILS COVID-19 VULNERABILITY INDICATORS DASHBOARD

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's severe and unprecedented implications on a wide range of areas that SCAG plans for, including public health, transportation, housing, public finance, and the economy, [SCAG has published an interactive dashboard](#) that includes indicators of potential vulnerability to COVID-19 for each of the 191 cities and six counties in the region. This datasets provide a wide range of variables related to economic, social, health, and housing vulnerability indicators. The dashboard was presented and well received by the attendees at the SCAG 31st Annual Demographic Workshop.

The purpose of the indicators is to provide context and insightful information for local jurisdictions and stakeholders to better understand the impacts of the pandemic through data. The comprehensive list of vulnerability indicators is made up of slightly more than 70 variables from various sources from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, California State Controller's Office, InfoUSA, and the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee/Department of Housing and Community Development.

## JUNE TOOLBOX TRAINING SESSION FOCUSES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE STRATEGIES FOR COVID-19 RECOVERY

On June 23, SCAG hosted a Toolbox Training webinar, "Resetting the Economic Development Table after the COVID-19 Slowdown," which focused on how communities around the region can make economic development and land-use decisions that can create momentum for investment and revenue opportunities. Kosmont Companies provided a presentation on how best to leverage state and federal assistance to create the economic development tools and legislation necessary for revitalization. To view recordings and access presentations from this event and prior Toolbox Trainings, [please visit the SCAG website](#).

## SCAG TO PARTNER WITH USC ON INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SCAG has established the first partnership with the USC Spatial Sciences Institute to host a summer internship program with three graduate and two undergraduate students. Under this program, the interns will primarily assist in performing geospatial dataset development, data visualization and geoprocessing, as well as conducting research and data analysis. To maximize their time at SCAG and to develop a broad and comprehensive skillset, it is expected that they will work primarily on three regionally significant projects such as the Annual Land Use Development, Regional Parcel Data Enhancement, SCAG Data/Map Application Development projects.

## **SAN GABRIEL VALLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP-LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE**

SCAG Executive Director Kome Ajise gave a presentation at the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership's Legislative Action Committee on the agency's recently released "[Potential Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in the SCAG Region](#)" white paper. A discussion of the data and information used in the development of the paper was also provided. The committee is made up of business representatives from the San Gabriel area, but also includes larger businesses like Southern California Gas Company, Southern California Edison, Union Pacific, and Kaiser Permanente. The committee also hears from legislative staff members regularly and has elected officials participate. The presentation concluded with a round of questions regarding the data in the white paper and future predictions.