

Southern California Association of Governments

# Strategic Plan

2024

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# INTRODUCTION

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has a vision for the future of one of the largest and most diverse regions in the world.

The six-county region spans 38,000 square miles, 191 cities and a population of 18 million and counting. For more than 50 years of significant growth and change, SCAG has developed long-range transportation and land use plans that have helped Southern California communities thrive.

Our last Strategic Plan, adopted in 2018, has been key in focusing and guiding the organization in creating innovative solutions, advancing our policy interests, expanding our value-added services, and becoming a workplace of choice. Since its adoption, we have advanced our advocacy, communications and analytical capabilities and built a world-class workforce that will drive success for the region in the coming decade.

A great deal has changed since we last adopted our Strategic Plan in 2018. We have expanded our purview, which now includes a greater focus on economic development and housing, in addition to our transportation and land use planning. We have worked to integrate a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion across our work more fully, and we have engaged substantially in solving regional challenges with a national and global impact. Through this period, we also navigated the complexities and challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw changes in how we operate as an organization and engage our stakeholders.

As we look ahead, we face an ever-growing set of challenges and many emerging opportunities. Delivering in this emerging context requires that we refocus the organization to meet our challenges and capitalize on our opportunities. To understand what's most important, we have conducted a comprehensive assessment with input from various stakeholders. Our resulting strategic plan redefines the key roles we play for the region and the services we provide. It sets forth a fresh set of strategic priorities with objectives and measures to specifically guide our focus, operations and performance as we deliver on our mission to improve the lives of Southern Californians and beyond.

# SCAG Region Snapshot



**191** cities



**15TH** largest economy in the world



**6** counties



**38,618** square miles



**47.6%** of total state population



**18.7M** people in the region



# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

SCAG’s Regional Council comprises 86 leaders from throughout Southern California to guide the work of the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization. We have a unique authority to implement policy direction for the region—and in order to do this effectively, we need the organization to operate smoothly and efficiently.

Despite the region’s complexities, many of Southern California’s local communities face similar challenges—providing adequate housing for residents, building and maintaining infrastructure, and growing the economy. These challenges are complicated and require hard work, as well as thoughtful anticipation of the ever-shifting needs of the region.

As a companion to the recently adopted Connect SoCal 2024 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy, SCAG’s Strategic Plan guides the agency in its day-to-day activities and decisions in its work to plan for a brighter future.

This strategic plan can help SCAG to prioritize and structure activities that focus resources and support our region’s planning efforts and economic success. Through aligning the agency’s work, SCAG can better articulate the types of resources and assistance that will most effectively support jurisdictions in creating and implementing local plans, programs and projects that ladder up to Connect SoCal 2024.

In sum, this plan is an important element in guiding SCAG to effectively use and create resources toward outcomes that benefit the people of our region. The horizon for our work is long, and SCAG remains dedicated to the future of Southern California.

– **Curt Hagman**

SCAG Regional Council President, 2024-25

# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After nearly two years of collaborative work with extensive discussions, deep learning, and reflection, I am delighted to present our updated Strategic Plan.

Our Board members and staff have devoted considerable time and energy to craft a new five-year strategic plan for the agency. A primary aim of this strategic planning process was to educate by first learning from all stakeholders internal and external to SCAG about expectations of this regional agency, and then inform all about the true capacities available to us. This sets the stage to select the most pressing priorities and objectives to guide our work to ensure a continued positive impact in the communities we serve.

Through this comprehensive process, we have identified the following priorities to guide our actions for the next five years:

- Establish and implement a regional vision for a sustainable future.
- Be a cohesive and influential voice for the region.
- Spur innovation and action through leadership in research, analysis, and information sharing.
- Build a unified culture anchored in the pursuit of organizational excellence.
- Secure and optimize diverse funding sources to support regional priorities.

Our goal for this strategic plan has been for it to be a living document that charts a bold course, directing our actions, and measuring our progress. Beyond being a blueprint for optimizing agency effectiveness and efficiency, it serves as an aspirational guide, reminding us of the breadth and reach of our goals for the region.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who engaged in our strategic planning process, from our dedicated employees to our esteemed members, board, and community partners.

We eagerly anticipate keeping you informed about our progress as we take steps to implement the plan, always keeping our focus on our mission: to foster innovative regional solutions that enhance the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive collaboration, visionary planning, regional advocacy, information sharing, and promoting best practices.

Thank you for your continued support as we embark on this journey together.

—**Kome Ajise**

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

To optimize the performance and impact of the agency and with the goal of educating ourselves about the pains and priorities of partners and employees, we embarked on a process designed to help us learn about what matters while ensuring internal and external stakeholders understand SCAG’s commitment to improving the quality of life for residents in Southern California and feel included in the journey to accomplish that goal.

A discovery exercise with broad multi-stakeholder engagement—more than 150 people—was conducted to inform SCAG’s strategic plan.

Discovery focused on understanding SCAG’s internal and external opportunities and challenges and its levers for achieving greater impact.

The discovery process included:

- Interviews with 13 Executive Administration Committee members
- Interviews with 27 SCAG managers
- Focus groups involving ~50 employees
- Roundtable discussions and interviews involving 41 individuals from SCAG partner organizations
- Regional Council survey with 25 respondents

<p>Phase 1: <b>Project Start-Up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background materials review</li> <li>• Project planning</li> <li>• Kickoff meeting</li> </ul>	<p>2022</p> 
<p>Phase 2: <b>Vision</b></p> <p><b>Discovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comprehensive data collection:</li> <li>• Voice of leadership, employees, stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>Winter 2023 / Spring 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop findings report</li> <li>• Facilitate findings and feedback work session</li> </ul> 
<p><b>Vision &gt;&gt; Strategic Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct strategic planning kickoff sessions</li> <li>• Create strategic planning working groups</li> <li>• Facilitate working group planning sessions</li> </ul>	<p>Spring-Fall 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate sessions to build draft Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Refine and complete draft Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Finalize Strategic Plan</li> </ul> 
<p>Phase 3: <b>Implementation Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop implementation plan</li> <li>• Develop change communications plan</li> </ul>	<p>Summer-Fall 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop training to support key changes</li> <li>• Develop metrics dashboard</li> </ul> 

# STRATEGIC PLAN AT-A-GLANCE

This Strategic Plan reflects a purposeful, concentrated effort to create the conditions for SCAG to accomplish its vision and mission with a focused use of expertise and resources. The plan’s activities will result in strategic projects intended to have a catalytic effect on the region, supporting growth and safety for residents of the communities we serve. Anchored in a foundation of organizational vision, mission and values, a set of strategic priorities will guide the direction of SCAG and be supported by specific objectives to be accomplished over the next five years.

<b>Vision</b>	<b>Southern California’s catalyst for a brighter future</b>		
<b>Mission</b>	To foster innovative regional solutions that improve the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive collaboration, visionary planning, regional advocacy, information sharing and promoting best practices.		
<b>Values</b>	<b>Be Open</b> Be accessible, respectful, collaborative and transparent in the work we do.	<b>Lead by Example</b> Lead with integrity and fairness in working to meet the diverse needs of all people and communities in our region.	<b>Make an Impact</b> In all endeavors, effect positive and sustained outcomes that make our region thrive.
	<b>Be Courageous</b> Have confidence that taking deliberate, bold and purposeful risks can yield new and valuable benefits.	<b>Cultivate Belonging</b> Embrace differences, foster equity, champion inclusion and empower all.	
<b>Priorities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Establish and implement a regional vision for a sustainable future</li><li>2. Be a cohesive and influential voice for the region</li><li>3. Spur innovation and action through leadership in research, analysis and information sharing</li><li>4. Build a unified culture anchored in the pursuit of organizational excellence</li><li>5. Secure and optimize diverse funding sources to support regional priorities</li></ol>		

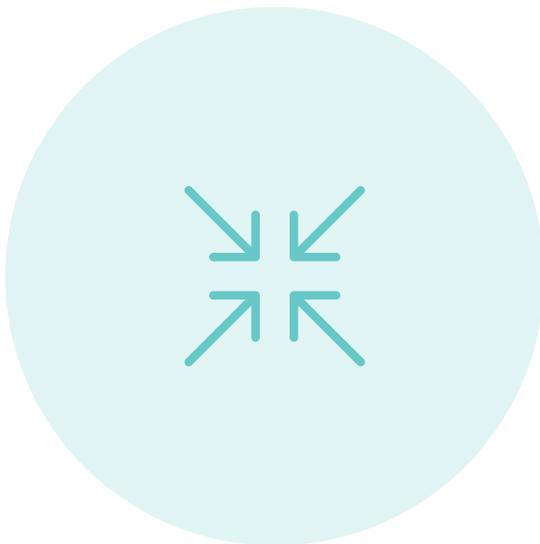
# SERVICES WE DELIVER TO THE REGION

SCAG serves as a vital nexus for collaboration, data analysis and policy coordination, facilitating informed decision-making and fostering consensus among stakeholders in the region. The Strategic Plan helped clarify the agency's many roles, clarification critical to ensure effective coordination and optimize performance to support regional development.



## Planning Organization

- Plan for a better future
- Perform legally required functions as a metropolitan planning organization
- Author the roadmap for Southern California's transportation and mobility
- Be a voice for disadvantaged communities and issues
- Reduce disparities in access to public services
- Create resources that level the playing field (e.g., access to data, grants, resources and tools)
- Embrace expanding role in land use, housing, economics and equity
- Be the model planning agency and council of governments



## Regional Convenor and Capacity Builder

- Convene political, thought and business leaders
- Create the environment for expanded thinking and better decision-making
- Focus on including diverse perspectives and cultivating new ideas
- Bring together voices from throughout the region for information sharing
- Educate members and communities regarding funding and regional issues
- Administer federal and state resources to support implementation of regional initiatives



## Advocate for Members at the State and Federal level

- Drive state and federal initiatives/funding based on local government issues
- Ensure Southern California gets its fair share from the State of California and the Federal government
- Be a single voice to enable collaboration with other entities

## Value-Added Membership Organization

- Maintain and foster a member orientation
- Cultivate the trust and faith of members
- Provide demonstrable value to members
- Raise up and represent disadvantaged communities



## Data and Information Services Resource

- Provide intelligence to benefit members and public stakeholders
- Be the premier and trusted source for data and analysis
- Leverage data and technology to drive decision-making
- Develop tools to support education, policy implementation and change management
- Collaborating to develop new processes, tools and systems through research



## Thought Leader and Policy Maker

- Develop a shared vision for the region
- Focus on developing sustainable and forward-thinking solutions to the region's challenges
- Play a more active leadership role in making policy and providing guidance to members and stakeholders for the region
- Link different groups to broker solutions
- Fund new ideas/programs being developed in the public sector

A sunset scene at Venice Beach, Los Angeles County. The sky is a gradient of pink, orange, and yellow. Silhouettes of palm trees are visible against the bright sky. Two birds are flying in the upper left. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of people and palm trees are visible along the beach.

# Southern California's catalyst for a brighter future

# OUR MISSION

To foster innovative regional solutions that improve the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive **collaboration**, visionary **planning**, regional **advocacy**, information **sharing** and promoting **best practices**.

# OUR VALUES

Our values serve as guiding principles, shaping behavior, decisions and interactions, fostering a cohesive and purpose-driven environment that reflects the agency's culture and identity.

## Be Open

Be accessible, respectful, collaborative and transparent in the work we do.

## Lead by Example

Lead with integrity and fairness in working to meet the diverse needs of all people and communities in our region.

## Make an Impact

In all endeavors, effect positive and sustained outcomes that make our region thrive.

## Be Courageous

Have confidence that taking deliberate, bold and purposeful risks can yield new and valuable benefits.

## Cultivate Belonging

Embrace differences, foster equity, champion inclusion and empower all.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic priorities are core areas of focus that guide organizational actions and resource allocation to ensure the agency's effectiveness, relevance and success in supporting the region's changing needs.

- 1** Establish and implement a regional vision for a sustainable future
- 2** Be a cohesive and influential voice for the region
- 3** Spur innovation and action through leadership in research, analysis and information sharing
- 4** Build a unified culture anchored in the pursuit of organizational excellence
- 5** Secure and optimize diverse funding sources to support regional priorities

# 1

## Establish and implement a regional vision for a sustainable future

Connect SoCal represents our most-up-to-date understanding of the region, along with the policies, strategies and projects to advance the region's mobility, communities, environment and economy. SCAG's vision is to foster an environment for a healthy, prosperous, accessible and connected region for a more resilient and equitable future.

### Objectives:

- 1.1 Lead on regional performance-based planning and programming to target investments toward improving the safety, efficiency, affordability, equity, sustainability and maintenance of the transportation system.
- 1.2 Facilitate corridor and network planning to realize seamless mobility and support implementation of Complete Streets, transit and multimodal integration across the SCAG region.
- 1.3 Partner to implement Transportation Demand Management and Intelligent Transportation Systems solutions to optimize system performance while planning for a connected and automated vehicle future.
- 1.4 Lead the effort to establish stable and sustainable transportation funding.
- 1.5 Provide resources and research to develop, connect, and sustain livable and thriving communities.
- 1.6 Identify solutions through regional planning and local planning programs to address systemic barriers to housing production to meet the needs of the region.
- 1.7 Lead efforts and funding opportunities to foster sustainable land use development across the SCAG region to foster growth while conserving and restoring natural and agriculture lands.



# Establish and implement a regional vision for a sustainable future

### Objectives (continued):

- 1.8 Coordinate with partners to meet federal and state ambient air quality standards and support local and regional climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience activities.
- 1.9 Lead and partner on planning and implementation of clean fuel and clean vehicle infrastructure.
- 1.10 Support a sustainable, efficient and productive regional economic environment that provides opportunities for all people in the region.
- 1.11 Lead regional planning to foster a world-class, coordinated Southern California goods movement system that accommodates growth in the throughput of freight to the region and nation in ways that support the region's economic vitality, attainment of clean air standards and quality of life for our communities.

# 2 Be a cohesive and influential voice for the region

SCAG has the challenge and opportunity of bridging a broad set of stakeholders and priorities at the local, state and federal levels to advance the region's mobility, community, economic and environmental goals. This strategic priority seeks to strengthen our effectiveness by improving communication, creating strong alliances and advocacy, and enhancing our credibility with decision-makers and stakeholders with a cohesive voice.

### **Objectives:**

- 2.1 Build a deep understanding of the needs of all our communities and stakeholders to inform our work.
- 2.2 Facilitate regional dialogue and collaboration on key issues for effective policy development.
- 2.3 Build the agency's credibility as a policy thought leader and strengthen relationships with partners across sectors and all levels of government.
- 2.4 Position SCAG as a leader in legislative advocacy and influence key policy areas.
- 2.5 Ensure members and stakeholders understand the impact of SCAG's work and are empowered to lead on regional issues (e.g., development of board policy issues).

### 3 Spur innovation and action through leadership in research, analysis and information sharing

The increasing complexity of the regional planning process requires cutting-edge research leadership to develop solutions that align actions across disciplines and sectors to achieve shared goals. Therefore, the need to understand the evolving complexity and interconnectivity between broader issues requires SCAG to advance our efforts to research, analyze and share data and tools that enhance local and regional planning work for our members and beyond.

#### **Objectives:**

- 3.1 Ensure SCAG is a trusted source for accurate data and intelligence dedicated to objective analysis of regional plans and assisting local jurisdictions with planning.
- 3.2 Lead in planning research and analysis leveraging cutting-edge tools (e.g. Big Data, AI, Activity Based Model, GIS, Scenario Planning Model, Regional Data Platform) to generate insights to inform regional and local decision-making.
- 3.3 Leverage local planning programs and pilots to reveal local solutions that can be scaled to achieve regional objectives.
- 3.4 Establish models for partnerships internally and with the private sector, universities and Community Based Organizations to leverage the diversity of skills, expertise and experience resident in the region.

# 4 Build a unified culture anchored in the pursuit of organizational excellence

Remain a workplace of choice by prioritizing excellence in every aspect of the organization. Ensure SCAG's values are embedded across the organization's culture, processes, systems and structures. As priorities and resources shift, be a continuous learning organization built on trust, transparency, collaboration and staff engagement.

### **Objectives:**

- 4.1 Cultivate a positive employee experience where all feel valued and inspired to reach their fullest potential.
- 4.2 Utilize internal governance to define, prioritize, and resource operational improvements in support of business objectives, effectiveness and efficiency.
- 4.3 Enhance internal communication, information accessibility and knowledge management.
- 4.4 Leverage effective use of technology to improve efficiency, drive innovation, and optimize collaboration.
- 4.5 Optimize processes for efficient multi-disciplinary ideation and collaboration, from project initiation to implementation and ongoing maintenance.

# 5 Secure and optimize diverse funding sources to support regional priorities

Through good stewardship, ensure our region and SCAG have the funding required to support robust planning, research and project implementation to address the diverse regional priorities identified in Connect SoCal.

### **Objectives:**

- 5.1 Maintain fair, equitable and compliant project selection and funding administration.
- 5.2 Establish recurring revenue to support essential regional needs, including community development and housing initiatives.
- 5.3 Pursue and advocate for new funding opportunities that support member agencies and SCAG.
- 5.4 Preserve and grow existing critical funding sources.
- 5.5 Explore opportunities to develop revenue-generating products and/or services.

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[scag.ca.gov](http://scag.ca.gov)



SALTON SEA, IMPERIAL COUNTY & RIVERSIDE COUNTY



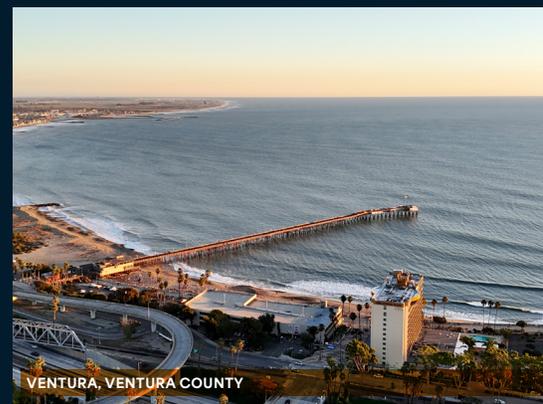
RANCHO PALOS VERDES, LOS ANGELES COUNTY



MALIBU, LOS ANGELES COUNTY



JOSHUA TREE, SAN BERNADINO COUNTY



VENTURA, VENTURA COUNTY