

SCAG Energy and Environment Committee June 5, 2025 meeting Report

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At the June meeting the SCAG EEC focused three information items:

1. Connect SoCal 2024: Implementation Strategies Update

In April 2024, the Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal 2024, SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). Connect SoCal 2024 included Implementation Strategies which identify ways SCAG will Lead, Partner, or Support other responsible parties. A report was provided on the progress to date of these implementation activities for which methods vary from collaborative policy leadership, research, or resource roles

The plan identifies a series of outcomes including increased transit ridership; an emphasis on Priority Development Areas that bring housing, jobs, and mobility options closer together; safe and efficient goods movement; and streets that prioritize people and safety. Staff provided the first Implementation Strategies Update to the Policy Committees in November 2024.

2. Connect SoCal 2024: Sustainable Communities Strategy Acceptance and Target Updates

On May 7, 2025, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) notified SCAG staff that they have accepted SCAG's determination that the Connect SoCal 2024 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy achieves the greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets set by CARB. This affirms the work by SCAG to integrate land use planning with transportation policies and investments to achieve statewide climate goals. However, the prolonged review process leading up to CARB's acceptance underscores the issues raised by SCAG about the need to revisit the SB 375 framework to better focus on implementation.

3. Water Resolution White Paper

In 2022, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council adopted a Water Action Resolution that called for regional collaboration "to address the region's water challenges and catalyze opportunities to ensure a clean, safe, affordable, and reliable water supply for the region."¹ Connect SoCal 2024, SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, advances the priorities set forth in the resolution. Namely, the plan's Climate Resilience policies and implementation strategies promote priorities such as sustainable water management, integrated housing and water use planning, and nature-based solutions.

In response to the Water Action Resolution, SCAG developed the Water Resolution White Paper, which provides a preliminary scan of major water management challenges in the region and promising strategies to address them. This helps inform SCAG's future efforts to support member jurisdictions with addressing the region's most pressing water management issues. Findings are based on a combination of desk research and interviews with 22 stakeholders from across the region. More specifically, SCAG spoke with the following types of entities reaching the following geographies:

Stakeholder Types:

- State water agency (1)
- Groundwater management agency (1)
- Water districts, including wholesalers and retailers (6)

- Public works/flood control district (2)
- Regional conservation authority (1)
- Community-based organizations (11)

Geographies Reached:

Findings in this white paper are organized into five sections that align with five indicators for water equity: Reliable, Clean and Safe, Affordable, Accessible, and Resilient.

Water is central to the future growth of the SCAG region. SCAG estimates that there will be an additional two million people living in the region by 2050 (as compared to 2019), and that the region will need additional housing to address current shortages and future need.⁴ Some counties are also experiencing major growth in water-intensive industries due to the mining of local resources such as lithium.⁵ With increased population, housing production, and industrial growth, agencies overseeing housing development, land use planning, and water management will need to coordinate to ensure that water supply and conveyance infrastructure can keep pace with growing demand.

Due to the number of water management entities in the region, increased collaboration within and across counties will require careful coordination. The six-county SCAG region contains hundreds of water agencies—including regulatory agencies, public and private utilities, groundwater management agencies, flood control districts, and more. These agencies are tasked with ensuring that there is an adequate supply of clean water and with managing runoff. Water purveyors rely on a variety of water sources—from imported water from the State Water Project and the Colorado River to groundwater from local aquifers. Water portfolios differ between counties, but also within counties and across local water districts, adding to the complexity of the water management network. Despite this complexity, there is not a unifying, regional vision for water management. This points to an opportunity for regional collaboration.

Meanwhile, water managers are dealing with ongoing and nascent challenges to water reliability, quality, affordability, accessibility, and resilience that require more collaboration and funding to advance integrated strategies. Climate change threatens both imported and local water resources, increasing the uncertainty of the water supply and, at times, requiring coordination across district and county lines to distribute water to areas in need. Water agencies also must grapple with varied histories of industrial pollution and groundwater over-extraction, which affect the viability of some local water sources and require new technologies to mitigate their impacts. Many local jurisdictions are looking to strategies that can address polluted runoff while also storing water during extreme wet periods for use in dry ones—a cycle that is expected to become more frequent with climate change. Lastly, some districts are also in the process of updating their water conveyance infrastructure to replace aging pipes and improve network resilience to seismic and climate hazards. To address these challenges, additional funding will be required. In particular, the \$3.8 billion in funding dedicated to drought, flooding, and water supply in the recently approved State Proposition 4 presents an opportunity for Southern California agencies to collaborate to secure sizable funds for the region.⁶ SCAG's focus on regional coordination and its strength as a convener position the agency to support collaboration among the numerous planning and water management entities working to address these multi-faceted issues in the region. The report reviewed the challenges detailed above and identified existing strategies. The full report can be read on the SCAG website.