
Event Recap: 2026 Regional Conference and General Assembly

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Event Recap

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The 2026 Regional Conference and General Assembly, the region's largest gathering of elected and industry leaders, took place in Palm Desert on May 7-8. Highlights from the event included:

Keynote Speaker: Suneel Gupta

International bestselling author and visionary entrepreneur Suneel Gupta's keynote address explored one of the most urgent questions facing leaders today: How do we stay energized and effective when the world around us feels increasingly heavy? Suneel shared practical strategies for sustaining energy, protecting purpose, and leading with clarity in turbulent times.

Aligning Land, Capital, and Infrastructure for Sustainable Communities

Southern California's housing crisis requires holistically addressing systems of housing production by effectively aligning land availability, financing, and utility capacity to turn housing goals into reality. Panelists from municipal leadership, finance, and technical consulting demonstrated how integrated regional resources help communities bridge the gap between planning and implementation.

Harnessing Southern California's Mega-Events to Accelerate Southern California's Mobility

Mega-events like the 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games present a unique opportunity for Southern California to accelerate mobility improvements, strengthen regional coordination, and highlight local communities globally. Panelists discussed the scale of games-related travel demand and the governance structures guiding regional planning efforts, highlighted resources and coordination that support cities and local partners, and shared how communities are leveraging the LA28 Games to advance mobility projects and improve experiences for residents and visitors.

Strategies for Planning, Building, and Funding Resilient Infrastructure

As Southern California faces intensifying shocks and stressors, jurisdictions are undertaking the critical work of planning and implementing resilient infrastructure that can support daily needs and withstand future disruptions. This panel explored how to assess infrastructure vulnerabilities, identify priority projects, and strengthen community resilience.

Forecasting the Future of an AI-Fueled Economy

AI technologies are generating high valuations and economic output while reducing the need for positions that have been pathways to stable, well-paying white-collar careers. However, AI will also create more high-demand positions over the next two years that can help to offset job losses. How can AI and AI tools be leveraged in the public sector to promote data-driven decision making, capacity building, and increased efficiency and cost savings?

The Future of Regions: Innovating Institutions for a New Era

The forces reshaping communities demand adaptive, forward-thinking public institutions, yet many agencies remain constrained by structures designed for a different time. This plenary session brought together innovative leaders to explore how regional leadership, bold collaboration, and renewed institutional vision can unlock new pathways to progress.

Sustainability Awards

During the event, **SCAG honored nine innovative projects** across the six-county region during the 2026 Sustainability Awards ceremony at the 2026 Regional Conference and General Assembly.

SCAG presented its top award, the “**Outstanding Achievement in Sustainability**,” to the city of Riverside's Vehicle Miles Traveled Mitigation Bank Pilot Program, an innovative, first-in-county initiative that provides developers with a streamlined, low-cost option to fully mitigate vehicle miles traveled impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Student Showcase

SCAG also [awarded three Southern California students](#) with cash prizes for the 2026 Student Showcase. The SCAG Student Showcase challenges students to create posters and StoryMaps that illustrate the possibilities of open data to tell compelling stories, provide insights, and showcase plans and projects.


President's Report

2025-26 SCAG Regional Council President Cindy Allen shared the “2025-26 President’s Report” while closing out her term at the 2026 Regional Conference and General Assembly. The “2025-26 President’s Report” provides [a detailed account of SCAG’s accomplishments](#) since Allen stepped into the role of Regional Council president in May 2025. SCAG also screened a video highlighting President Allen’s leadership of the SCAG Regional Council at the event.

Save the Date

We look forward to seeing you at next year’s event. Save the date for May 6-7 at the JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa in Palm Desert, California, and stay tuned to [SCAG News](#) for event updates.



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