



September 14, 2015

SANDAG Board of Directors
401 B Street
San Diego, CA

Re: San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan

Dear SANDAG Board Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan (Draft Plan) and thank you to the staff who have worked so hard these past couple of years to complete this draft.

As current Alternates on the SANDAG Board of Directors and City Councilmembers representing the citizens of National City, we believe it is critical to provide feedback and ensure that we at SANDAG focus on environmental and economic sustainability by investing in transportation infrastructure that is faster, more efficient, provides more choices, promotes a healthy environment, and promotes equity in traditionally overburdened communities such as National City. Although the Draft Plan does include projects such as the proposed "Purple Line" Trolley which meets these goals, projects such as the proposed I-5 Widening are more environmentally and economically costly than innovative, transit-focused alternatives. In addition, the Draft Plan in its current form does not reach our proportionate share of state-mandated GHG emission reduction targets.

The proposed "Purple Line" Trolley is an example of an ambitious and innovative mobility project that would promote a healthy environment and economic upward mobility by connecting National City and South Bay communities with Kearny Mesa, one of the region's largest employment centers. We look forward to working with SANDAG to make this project a reality before 2035.

Although the proposed I-5 Widening is being promoted as supporting transit, the project also includes General Purpose Lanes for the entire National City segment that does *not* serve transit. The proposed Rapid Bus (Route 640) would operate on the I-5 Managed Lanes, whose use would be shared by high-occupancy vehicles, and potentially congestion-priced single-occupancy users, therefore limiting the effectiveness of the Rapid Bus, particularly during high traffic levels.

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We request that SANDAG replace the I-5 Widening and Rapid Bus scheduled for completion in 2035 with the Blue Line Express (Route 540), a project that was originally proposed in the previous 2011 Regional Transportation Plan. This is a project that the communities along the I-5 and Blue Line Trolley corridor advocated for in the public hearing process, and one that better promotes environmental sustainability. With the proposed Blue Line Express costing \$391 million and the combined I-5 Widening and Rapid Bus Route 640 costing \$744 million, our request is economically sustainable and would save \$353 million that could be spent on protected bike lanes, sidewalk improvements, smart growth incentives, and other mobility projects throughout the South Bay.

Finally, we ask that SANDAG explore further alternatives to freeway expansions, similar to innovative work underway for SR-94. Those innovative alternatives include converting existing general purpose lanes to managed lanes to accommodate *Rapid* routes and explore the usage of existing right-of-way for transit only lanes.

We stand with our constituents in National City who have asked us to support a San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan that has a more significant movement toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and towards ensuring transportation justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Rios'.

Mona Rios, Councilmember
City of National City

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alejandra Sotelo-Solis'.

Alejandra Sotelo-Solis, Councilmember
City of National City