The 50-10 Transit Plan:
A World Class Transit System for the San Diego Region

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Executive Summary

The vision for our region’s future has evolved, changing from one that pictured steady expansion to the east, to one that placed a greater value on protecting open space, to one that now focuses on a compact urban core where more people live and use fewer resources. Local governments have been working toward this vision for decades. (SANDAG April 2011 Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan p. 1-2)

Achieving this vision would result in enormous benefits for the San Diego region. Unfortunately, however, the fine words in SANDAG’s Draft 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) are not adequately supported by the agency’s actions. For many decades, the SANDAG’s approach to planning the region’s transportation network has been almost exclusively automobile-oriented. The current RTP would continue SANDAG’s past policies of expanding the region’s highway system, and, even though the RTP would provide some modest increases in transit investment, this investment would be spread out over a 40-year period.

Consequently, consistent with past SANDAG policy, the current RTP promises a complete automobile network—one that will serve any possible trip in the region. In contrast, the region’s transit network, as envisioned by SANDAG, will remain woefully deficient in both coverage and quality of service.

Partly due to such inadequate planning, the San Diego region is in a transportation crisis. Roadway congestion wastes time and energy, tailpipe pollution causes environmental and health problems, and our dependence on foreign oil continues to grow. Road building must now be put on hold while the region directs its resources toward developing a comprehensive transit system.

As an alternative to SANDAG’s RTP, the 50-10 Transit Plan would initiate a transformation in the region’s transportation system and land use patterns. The premise of the Plan is quite simple: fifty years of transit improvements would be implemented over the next decade. This comprehensive, integrated transit system initially would be constructed within the region’s urban core, while also including the Sprinter and the Coaster.¹ At the same time, the Plan calls for halting any new freeway and/or tollway construction until the transit system is fully functional. An equally critical element of the Plan calls for a modification of the TransNet program to re-prioritize transit over highway projects.

The 50-10 Plan would largely implement the transit capital projects already planned in the urban core for the 2050 RTP. The Plan also promotes a land use pattern that increases residential development densities within the urban core. Thus, the Plan would foster two main goals: (1) to make transit time competitive with the automobile within the urban core; and (2) to create neighborhoods that are close to needed services and amenities.²

The benefits of the 50-10 Transit Plan, compared to the 2050 RTP, include: shorter automobile trips on average, reduction in transportation costs and traffic congestion, more housing and transportation choices, many more walk and bicycle trips, and improved public health and overall quality of life. The enormous resource and demographic challenges facing our region, indeed facing the world, require that we act now to reach these goals. To delay implementing a transit-first policy is tantamount to not acting at all.

¹ The urban core consists of the geographical area comprising the San Diego Trolley Ring and National City.

² The Portland, Oregon-based real estate firm Gerding Edlen describes such neighborhoods as “20 minute living,” for everything residents need is within 20 minutes of their homes. http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?a=246917&c=46822
The 50-10 Transit Plan in a Nutshell:

- Compact, walkable development has enormous environmental, public health and economic benefits
- Achieving compact, walkable development requires world-class transit system
- Developing world-class transit system requires that almost all transportation investment be dedicated to transit over the next decade\(^3\)
- Diverting funds to further expand roadway capacity undermines both the transit system and the land use objectives
- A two-thirds vote by the SANDAG Board of Directors is required to prioritize transit projects over highway expansion in Transnet.

1) Introduction

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a respected trade association of land use and real estate development disciplines. In June 2010, ULI released its Senate Bill 375 Impact Analysis Report, which reviewed the expected economic impacts of California’s pioneering S.B. 375.\(^4\) The summary of this report states:

\(\text{SB 375 requires Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) to include the SCSs [sustainable communities strategies] and be internally consistent, and thereby better align transportation, housing, and land use planning as part of the plan to reduce transportation emissions. Regions have broad freedom to design SCSs that align those plans and reduce emissions. The SCSs are expected to respond to SB 375 by:}\)

- Promoting compact development patterns located near transit;
- Coordinating between the location of employment and housing;
- Supporting transit use;
- Concentrating economic activities into existing communities; and
- Incorporating a mix of housing types.

This, in turn, is expected to produce:

- Shorter commutes, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction, and congestion relief;
- Reduced greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions and air pollution;
- Less fossil fuel consumption;
- Greater conservation of farmlands and habitat;
- Opportunities for more housing choices for all economic segments of the population including anticipated population and employment growth;
- Reduced infrastructure costs;
- Higher quality of life; and
- Greater certainty for the development community.

Adopting the 50-10 Transit Plan will maximize these benefits in the San Diego region by effecting a transition to a multi-modal future as quickly as possible. In contrast, following the recommendations of SANDAG’s RTP would perpetuate a business-as-usual future and the benefits described in the ULI report would not be realized.

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\(^3\) The 50-10 Plan acknowledges that deficiencies causing unsafe highway conditions may need to be corrected. Safety-related highway improvements cannot, however, be used as a pretext for expansion in highway capacity.

The sections of this report generally follow the framework of the ULI report. Section 2 focuses on the importance of compact development in achieving a wide range of benefits. Section 3 provides a sketch of what a world class transit system would look like in the San Diego region, and how that transit system would build on current regional planning efforts. Section 4 discusses how TransNet funding can be redirected. Section 5 describes why SANDAG’s analysis tools are inadequate to evaluate the benefits of the 50-10 Transit Plan. Section 6 describes the benefits of the 50-10 Transit Plan.

2) The Benefits of Compact Development

The draft 2050 RTP states:

*The forecasted growth in housing is projected to increase by approximately 33 percent, by about 388,000 additional units, totaling 1.53 million homes in 2050. Of the 388,000 units, nearly 85 percent are expected to be multi-family homes. Over 80 percent of all homes in 2050 are projected to be located within the UATS [Urban Area Transit Study] boundary (Figure TA 7.3).*

*The region is also projected to experience an increase of approximately 500,000 jobs over the next 40 years, resulting in a total of nearly two million jobs in 2050. Of the two million total jobs, over 85 percent are projected to be located in the UATS study boundary in 2050 (Figure TA 7.4).*
The Vision California project, funded by the California High Speed Rail Authority in partnership with the Strategic Growth Council, is developing two new modeling tools – the “Urban Footprint” map-based model and the “Rapid Fire” spreadsheet-based tool – to formulate and compare scenarios for how California can accommodate growth. The Vision California project has estimated that there are enormous benefits to higher density development. As shown in the table below, “compact” development results in less than half as much auto travel as “standard” development, and “urban” development results in only about one fifth as much auto travel as “standard”.  

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A fundamental problem in the 2050 RTP is that it takes credit for the benefits of more compact development while assuming that such a future will be achieved regardless of what transportation system is provided – whether auto-oriented, transit-oriented or a mix of the two. In reality, developers, home buyers and renters, and business owners are all strongly influenced by transportation investments. Investments in freeways have encouraged sprawl. This phenomenon has resulted in a vicious cycle whereby sprawl causes high traffic growth leading to more freeway investments leading to more sprawl. The RTP is in error when it assumes that compact development can be achieved with continued investments in suburban freeways. Accordingly, the agency is taking credit for benefits that will result from compact land use that will not result if the RTP is followed.

For many years, SANDAG and Caltrans have over invested in highways while under investing in transit. Consequently, the region has an extensive highway system but an incomplete transit system. Without a comprehensive, well-integrated transit system, public transportation has been unable to meet the region’s transportation mobility needs. The 50-10 Plan would break this cycle by authorizing the funds for a transit system that is capable of replacing travel by the automobile.
While San Diego ultimately needs a comprehensive regional transit system throughout the region, the 50-10 Plan, would begin by building out a complete transit network within the urban core. Transit investments in the urban core will encourage compact and urban development. This will result in a virtuous cycle whereby transit investments encourage transit-oriented development, boosting transit ridership, and encouraging more transit investments. There will be many benefits that may not be readily apparent at the outset. For example, the story below shows how better regional transit results in large public and private savings in parking costs and a much more vibrant urban life.

A Tale of Two Cities – Los Angeles and San Francisco

For a downtown concert hall, Los Angeles requires, as the minimum, 50 times more parking spaces than San Francisco allows as the maximum. These different priorities help explain the very different parking arrangements for Louise Davies Hall (home of the San Francisco Symphony) and Disney Hall (home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic). San Francisco built Louise Davies Hall with no parking garage, while Los Angeles completed Disney Hall’s 2,188-space, $110 million parking garage three years before it had raised the $274 million needed to start building the 2,265-seat Disney Hall itself.

Los Angeles County borrowed the money to finance the $50,000-per-space parking garage, with the debt to be repaid from the expected revenues. Because the garage was completed in 1996, but Disney Hall did not open until 2003, parking revenues fell far short of the debt payments for seven years. As a result, the county had to subsidize the garage from general revenues at a time when it was nearly bankrupt...

The difference in parking policy helps explain why almost everyone prefers downtown San Francisco to downtown Los Angeles. After a concert or theater performance in San Francisco, people stream out onto bustling sidewalks where all the restaurants, bars, bookstores, and flower shops seem to be open and busy, and where it is a long walk to your parking space, if you even drove. In Los Angeles, the sidewalks are empty and threatening at night. Even a spectacular new concert hall does not help to create a vibrant downtown if every concertgoer drives straight into its underground garage and feels the sidewalks a block away are unsafe.

From Shoup, Donald. The High Cost of Free Parking, p. 160-161, Chicago: Planners Press, 2004

The public strongly supports compact transit-oriented development as shown in a recent county-wide survey.
3) Development-Oriented Transit

If compact, transit-oriented development is favored by the public, why hasn’t it been occurring? The simple answer: lack of transit service. The 50-10 Transit Plan is necessary to achieve the compact land use future assumed in the RTP. This Plan can be considered the inverse of transit-oriented development, i.e., “development-oriented transit.” SANDAG and other regional planning agencies often lament that they do not have land use planning authority but are subject to the decisions of developers’ residential and business location choices. In fact, SANDAG does have an enormous influence on land use through its transportation investments, but has failed to use that power for the region’s good. Instead, the agency has continued to expand freeway and highway capacity, which projects have resulted in more and more sprawl development.

Transit-Oriented Development: A Conundrum

Transit-oriented development will be successful only with the existence of adequate public transit. Yet, highway-oriented development needs only a road to be successful. Highway-oriented development quickly becomes the default. While no agency can afford to run empty buses, no one ever complains about an empty highway. Thus, developers won’t build transit-oriented development until there is transit service, while transit agencies won’t provide service until there is sufficient demand. So land use developers flock toward highway sites, where they don’t have to contend with this uncertainty. By implementing transit, especially in the urban core, developers will have an incentive to build compact, walkable development.
Adoption of the 50-10 Transit Plan will result in a complete transit network for the urban core that:

- Is high quality, frequent and serves most regional trips,
- Is accompanied by walk and bicycle infrastructure investments,
- attracts travelers in all income groups,
- promotes transit-oriented development patterns, and
- will operate within a decade or sooner.

The transit projects included in the 50-10 Transit Plan would be generally consistent with the transit projects proposed for implementation over a 40-year period in the 2050 RTP. They include service improvements for the Trolley, Coaster, Sprinter and development of new light rail and streetcar lines in the urban core. The difference between the 50-10 Plan and the 2050 RTP is that the former (1) would fund several of the most important transit projects within 10 years, and (2) any future roadway expansion would be postponed until after a complete high-quality transit network is established in the region’s urban core. The 50-10 transit system would be designed to achieve, at minimum, the transit mode share goals identified in the 2050 RTP, but would achieve them much earlier than 2050. These mode share goals are shown in the adjacent figure, which overlays important transit corridors on top of the draft RTP Figure TA7-7. (Note: The Coaster is identified as the blue line, while the red lines show the light rail system).
The transit projects identified in the draft 2050 RTP serve as the core of the 50-10 Plan. Additional effort will be required to flesh out a complete transit system; this effort is beyond the scope of this report. Focusing too early on specific transit projects too often leads to “analysis paralysis,” as projects move on and off project lists while the roadway system continues to be expanded. These analyses are often unsatisfactory because transit projects cannot achieve their full potential without a comprehensive system that makes transit a practical alternative to driving for a large share of regional trips. The intent of this report, then, is to focus on the “big picture.” It proposes a critical change in the timing and implementation of transit: a complete transit system must be implemented first within the urban core; SANDAG would then build a comprehensive system from that initial program.

Accordingly, the concept of “transit before highways” is the critical component of the 50-10 Plan. While SANDAG is proposing, in the 2050 RTP, to fund transit simultaneously with highway expansion, this approach to regional transportation is doomed to fail. In addition to the land use considerations discussed above, substantial increases in highway capacity significantly undermine transit patronage, since the presence of traffic congestion is an incentive to transit usage. Moreover, we are aware of other transportation planning agencies’ empty promises when it comes to future transit funding. For example, in the early 1990s, the Atlanta region included major rail transit expansions in its long-term transportation plan, including construction of a new comprehensive commuter rail system. However, these projects were in the “out years” of the long-range plan and the focus of studies only in the initial years. Not surprisingly, none of these projects were ever constructed, and they have since been omitted from recent plans. In fact, because of the large roadway investments and resulting sprawl over the past 20 years, providing transit to the Atlanta region has become even more difficult than it was two decades ago.

Without a commitment to the 50-10 Transit Plan, the Atlanta scenario is the likely outcome for the San Diego region. Roadway expansions will proceed forward now. Planning studies will be done for transit, but those projects will be postponed into the future. Meanwhile, sprawl development will continue its outward march, making the implementation of a comprehensive transit solution that much more difficult.
SANDAG promotes its “Hybrid” scenario in the 2050 RTP as balanced. However, such a balanced plan has little support in the general public, as shown by the following 2010 countywide survey.\(^6\)

Voters’ Preferences between Expanding Public Transit or Roads and Highways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The expansion of public transit, including buses and rail</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The expansion of roads and highways</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both/Neither/Don’t Know</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Key Findings from Recent Countywide Survey on Climate Change”, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associate, prepared for the San Diego Foundation, September 14, 2010.

Instead, a majority of respondents favor the expansion of public transit over road expansion or a mix. The public is not supporting the “balanced” approach— they want to get the transit system built. Because of the past emphasis on roadway expansion, directing 100 percent of capital funding to transit is what is needed for balance.

4) A Dramatic Shift In Transportation Is Not Possible Without Modifications in Transportation Funding Priorities.

Building a fully functional, regional transit network is impossible without a long-term revenue source. The region has a revenue source. The problem is that it is targeted at the automobile.

The TransNet extension, a regional half-cent sales tax for transportation that was approved by more than two-thirds of San Diego County voters in 2004, runs to 2048.\(^7\) This tax is expected to raise $32 billion to help fund transportation projects.\(^8\) Most of these projects, however, are strictly highway-oriented. Accordingly, SANDAG currently proposes to use TransNet to fund major highway expansion projects along I-5, I-8, I-15, I-805, SR-52, SR-54, SR-56, SR-67, SR-SR-76, SR-78, SR-94, and SR-125.

Importantly, TransNet is not locked in stone. The measure allows flexibility in the event of changing technology, new priorities, or other factors during its 40-year term. The San Diego region has clearly experienced a dramatic change in

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\(^6\) SANDAG’s “Hybrid Transportation Scenario” contains a variety of multi-modal projects with an emphasis on “Fusion” and “Highway Emphasis” scenarios. Draft 2050 RTP, Technical Appendix 7, page TA 7-71. The “Fusion Scenario” includes an emphasis on new public transit services (rail and bus), highway improvements (bottleneck relief and new lanes), and increased frequencies to existing transit routes. Id., page TA 7-57.

\(^7\) The initial 20-year TransNet program was initially approved by voted in 1987.

\(^8\) The projected TransNet revenue is calculated in year of planned expenditure. 2050 RTP/SCS DEIR, page 4.16-15.
priorities since the TransNet ballot measure was drafted in 2004. Specifically, global climate change, escalating energy costs, long commutes, and concern about dependence on foreign oil are causing the public to demand alternatives to the private automobile.

With a two-thirds vote, the SANDAG Board can add, delete or change (with the exception of those policies or projects that must be resubmitted to the voters) the timing of projects from TransNet. Our current situation requires such a change.

Finally, it is important to recognize, that while TransNet was passed by the voters, they were not given the opportunity to choose between transit or freeways. They were simply offered a form of “congestion relief” that promotes highway expansion. A more accurate assessment of the voters’ preference would have been to give them a choice between the two methods of transport, as was done in a recent poll conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associate. When given the choice, voters overwhelmingly preferred transit over freeway expansion.

**A New Gimmick: Highways Funding Transit**

The RTP focuses on constructing a network of managed lanes. SANDAG claims that certain of the fees charged for use of these lanes would be used to fund transit. This approach is misguided for two reasons. First, the revenue from these tolls will be far less than what would be required to pay for the construction of the new managed lanes themselves. Second, the construction of additional roadway capacity, including managed lanes, serves to undermine rather than support transit ridership. It is impossible to implement effective transit in areas of low density sprawl, and buses running in express lanes will attract a very small share of total regional travel. The small amount of revenue that may be earmarked for transit service will not begin to compensate for the harm to the region’s transit system. Accordingly, the 50-10 Transit Plan calls for spending all of the capital investment on transit now.
5) **SANDAG’s Tools Are Inadequate to Evaluate the 50-10 Transit Plan**

SANDAG relies on a computer simulation model to evaluate the outcome of the RTP. This model has serious deficiencies making it almost useless for modeling future transit ridership.\(^9\) As shown in the figure below, SANDAG’s modeling shows there is only a minor difference in future transit ridership between a transportation alternative that emphasizes transit compared to one that emphasizes highway expansion.

![Modeled 2050 Transit Ridership](image)

Similarly, the SANDAG computer model estimates that automobile travel would be almost identical across these alternative scenarios.

![Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per Person per Weekday](image)

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A primary cause of this model insensitivity is the extremely exaggerated emphasis on income in the model’s transit assumptions. SANDAG assumes that higher income people will not use transit, despite contrary data for the SANDAG region and for regions with higher-quality transit systems. The adjacent graphic shows the transit mode share for residents’ work trips in three California counties. As shown, higher income residents are slightly less likely to use transit for commuting, especially in San Diego County, which has the poorest transit system of the three counties.

Nevertheless, the SANDAG model assumes that income produces a much greater effect on transit use. The figure below shows the San Diego County data from the figure above (grouped by the three model categories) along with SANDAG’s modeled transit shares for 2008 and 2050.

As shown, SANDAG greatly exaggerates the importance of income today and then expands that differential to a highly unrealistic level in the future, as compared to the data shown for other California regions. In 2050, SANDAG presents the low income transit share as 10 times that of the high income share, even though only small differences exist in San Francisco and Alameda Counties today.

The non-work trip transit share for high income travelers in the SANDAG model is even smaller—only 0.2 percent—despite the assumption that billions of dollars would be spent to upgrade rail [and other transit] in high income areas in the San Diego region. These assumptions about “high income” residents dominate the 2050 results because the model presupposes, based on optimistic economic assumptions, that 73% of all trips will be made by “high” income residents.
In summary, SANDAG is relying on a crude and unrealistic modeling tool to evaluate the 2050 RTP transportation alternatives. Modeled transit ridership is based almost entirely on income. The modeling assumes that lower income residents have a propensity to use transit even if service is relatively poor. The modeling also assumes that lower income residents will become much less prevalent in the future. At the same time, the modeling assumes that high income residents are increasing in numbers and that these residents will not use transit even if it is high quality. According to SANDAG, then, the level and quality of transit service have little consequence on overall transit ridership. Consequently, SANDAG lacks a valid tool for evaluating its own proposed RTP, let alone the 50-10 Transit Plan. It is essential that the flaws in SANDAG’S modelling be corrected so that the 50-10 Transit Plan can be evaluated properly.

6) Benefits of the 50-10 Transit Plan

Adoption of the 50-10 Transit Plan will result in the following benefits, based on criteria articulated in the ULI report (excerpted above):

**Shorter commutes, reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and congestion relief**

The 50-10 Plan’s investment in public transit will achieve these benefits through encouraging a more compact and walkable land use future.

The Vision California report, discussed above, describes three general land use futures for the state of California: (A) Trend Growth, which represents a future based on past market trends, development patterns and transportation investments, (B) Mixed Growth which combines past and future patterns of growth and investment, and (C) Smart Growth, which aggressively meets the shift towards compact growth with corresponding investments in transit infrastructure.

The Report concludes that Trend Growth is not likely to continue due to dramatic shifts in the economy. Instead, Mixed Growth is likely to occur due to “changing demographics and lifestyles, trends in construction, the undersupply of compact units on the market, and projected energy price increases.” Notably, the Mixed Growth scenario assumes that “growth will be supported by transportation investments that balance roadway and transit infrastructure, and a move towards planning for compact development by regions and cities.” This “Mixed Growth” approach exactly summarizes the SANDAG RTP because it attempts to balance traditional demand for freeway expansion simultaneously with demand for transit infrastructure.

But how does a community achieve Smart Growth, the optimal planning objective? Accordingly to ULI, “significant investments in transit and other infrastructure will be made to support smart growth.” The Vision California “Smart Growth” approach thus contemplates aggressive transit investment to strengthen and lead future trends while abandoning past development patterns. The 50-10 Transit Plan is designed to foster this vision for Smart Growth.

The Vision California graphic (reproduced on p. 4 of this report) shows that Mixed Growth will result in much less growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) than Trend Growth, and Smart Growth will result in even less VMT growth. The figure below applies the Vision California data to the SANDAG region. Using direct calculations from the Vision California the blue columns show about half as much VMT per person for new residents in the Smart Growth future as compared with the Trend Growth future. The red columns make a very conservative assumption that this regional transformation will not change the behavior of those living in residences that exist today; in other words, they will continue to generate 25.7 VMT per person per day, (according to the RTP).
As this graphic shows, the Mixed Growth future is not sufficient to lower VMT per person. Instead, it would increase from today’s value of 25.7 percent. In contrast, the RTP assumes (due to optimistic land use assumptions) that VMT per person will drop in the future with the RTP. These decreases in VMT are not realistic if the highway expansion projects identified in the RTP are implemented.

With the extremely conservative assumption discussed above, regional VMT would be 12.4% less in 2050 in the Smart Growth future (i.e., the 50-10 Transit Plan) than in SANDAG’s Mixed Growth scenario. This is because the Smart Growth scenario will result in more walk and bike trips, more transit trips, and shorter auto trips. The actual reduction in VMT is likely to be considerably greater because the multimodal infrastructure and new multimodal behavior will have far-reaching effects on older neighborhoods as well.

Despite the large scale nature and expense of the highway expansion program contemplated by the 2050 RTP, it would not result in reduced congestion compared to today’s congestion levels. It would not even result in less future congestion than if the 50-10 Transit Plan were followed with no highway expansion.10 This may seem counterintuitive but an analogy might help. Expanding roadways is equivalent to fighting a weight problem by buying larger pants. Clearly, one must address the weight problem directly by reducing calorie intake. As illustrated in the box below, the 50-10 Transit Plan addresses the highway congestion problem directly by getting cars off the road; it does not contemplate filling more roads with wider roads with more cars.

10 The RTP does increase freeway lane miles by more than 12.4% but adds little capacity to the larger arterial and local roadway system. No trip begins or ends on a limited access highway. The impacts of implementing the RTP would include greatly increased congestion on the arterial and local roadway system. Yet these impacts are seldom disclosed or analyzed in freeway project EIS/EIR documentation.
The Futility of Widening Highways

In the Chicago area, one particularly bad bottleneck on the Eisenhower Expressway, referred to as the “Hillside Strangler,” was improved at a cost of $140 million. According to many local sources, the congestion at that particular location improved, but the traffic bottleneck only shifted to adjacent areas. In fact, “the commute time from the suburbs to the Loop, via the Eisenhower and its extension, is one hour - exactly what it was before the Hillside Strangler was repaired.”

The Boston Globe reported that the $15 billion invested by the state and federal taxpayers for the “Big Dig” increased mobility on the expanded roadway. “But most travelers who use the tunnels are still spending time in traffic jams – just not in the heart of the city, where bumper-to-bumper was a way of life on the old elevated artery.” The Globe documented no apparent overall travel time savings; rather, it reported a number of trips where travel times have increased, including one case where peak period travel time has doubled from 12 minutes to 25 minutes.

Reduced greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions and air pollution

The 12.4 percent reduction in VMT would translate into a similar reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and criteria air pollutants.

Less fossil fuel consumption

The 12.4 percent reduction in VMT would translate into a similar reduction in gasoline consumption. At $4/gallon, the region is currently spending approximately $5.6 billion per year on automobile fuel. 12.4 percent of that would be $700 million in savings for the region’s households, a similar number to annual capital expenditures in the RTP.

Greater conservation of farmlands and habitat

As shown to the right, Vision California estimates that the Smart Growth future will involve less than half as much additional land consumption as the Mixed Growth future. The impacts in San Diego County would be similar to those shown statewide. (Note: C1 and C2 are two slightly different Smart Growth scenarios that both involve the same land consumption.)

**Parks for People – Not for Cars**

There is a current debate in San Diego about Balboa Park. There is widespread agreement that cars should be removed from the plaza outside the San Diego Museum of Art, which was a key concept in the 1989 Park Master Plan. The problem with the proposed solution is that it is too auto-centric, for it emphasizes a new roadway and a new parking garage, both of which would be very costly and create undesirable new impacts on the park. The real solution must focus on getting people in and out of the park rather than accommodating automobiles. The 50-10 Transit Plan is intended to address this need. It will increase transit access to Balboa Park, and walking and bicycling will become the primary modes of transportation within the Park, thus allowing a much improved park ambiance.

**Opportunities for more housing choices for all economic segments of the population**

The draft RTP states:

> The number of people aged 65 and older is expected to increase by 143 percent. The number of people older than 85 is projected to increase by 214 percent. This increase in the region’s older population will require the development of neighborhoods that are more walkable and have a variety of services that meet daily needs. (p. 3-15)

The ULI report states:

> The number and type of housing units delivered to market in California over the past 20 years have not kept up with demand or population growth rates. Due to strong demand, the state has one of the highest-priced housing markets (both for-sale and rental) in the nation, causing a higher percentage of households to allocate a significant portion of their incomes to housing. Compact developments can provide the type of units that appeal to first-time renters and buyers and empty nesters, who are currently underserved.

The 50-10 Transit Plan provides the best platform for addressing these housing issues.

**Reduced infrastructure costs**

The Vision California report states:

> Increased land consumption leads to higher costs for local and sub-regional infrastructure, as new greenfield development requires significant capital investments in new local roads, water and sewer systems, and parks. Conversely, growth focused in existing urban areas takes advantage of existing infrastructure and capitalizes on the efficiencies of providing service to higher concentrations of jobs and housing. When comparing Scenario A1 to Scenarios C1 and C2, local and sub-regional infrastructure cost savings add up to more than $4,000 per new household by 2050.

Applying the Vision California infrastructure numbers to the SANDAG region, it is evident that going beyond Mixed Growth to Smart Growth would save well over $1 billion between now and 2050.
Higher quality of life

The 2050 RTP includes a vision of a more sustainable, livable future:

The Plan envisions most of these new jobs and homes situated in environmentally sustainable communities that are more conducive to walking and bicycling. They also will have more access to public transit. (p. 1-2)

The Plan envisions an ambitious and far-reaching transit network that significantly expands the role that transit plays in meeting our region’s needs for mobility. The goal is to create the kind of public transit infrastructure and services offered by “world-class” transit systems. (p. 1-5)

Yet, as discussed in this report, SANDAG’s Plan will fall far short of achieving this vision.

Conclusion

By prioritizing public transit, the 50-10 Transit Plan would result in long-term sustainability for the San Diego region. The longer we wait to commit to transit as a significant source of the region’s transportation, the more difficult it becomes to achieve such a system. With each additional highway expansion project comes an increase in suburban sprawl. As sprawl development continues its outward march, it becomes less and less feasible to serve this sprawl with effective public transportation. We can wait no longer to reverse this dangerous cycle; the region must implement a comprehensive transit network now.