



September 16, 2021

Chair Catherine Blakespear
San Diego Association of Governments
401 B. Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

SUBJECT: Request for SANDAG to perform a fair apples-to-apples comparison of Airport connection alternatives

Dear Chair Catherine Blakespear:

On behalf of Circulate San Diego and the Downtown San Diego Partnership, we are writing to request that SANDAG further evaluate the connection to the San Diego International Airport (Airport) through a Central Mobility Hub located Downtown.

Circulate San Diego, specifically, is focused on creating excellent mobility choices for the region. Both the Downtown San Diego Partnership and Circulate San Diego share mutual goals that aim to create vibrant and healthy neighborhoods as well as contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of Downtown San Diego.

SANDAG is currently analyzing three alternatives to connect rail transit to the Airport. Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 have similar features, including a Central Mobility Hub and a location north of the Airport. Alternative 3 is the only option with a connection south of the Airport in Downtown. Alternative 3 does not include a Central Mobility Hub.

The current set of project alternatives will not allow the SANDAG board, nor the public, to evaluate a fair apples-to-apples comparison. Instead, the choice of alternatives could allow SANDAG staff to recommend that the board dismiss a southern Alternative 3, because it does not offer the same Central Mobility Hub included in Alternative 1 and Alternative 2.

We are requesting that SANDAG add Alternative 4, which would include a Central Mobility Hub located south of the Airport and in Downtown. If a Central Mobility Hub is important for SANDAG's plans, the agency should prepare a fair analysis that compares the northern locations for that facility equally with a location south of the Airport in Downtown.¹

Circulate previously raised concerns about requiring transit riders from Downtown and south of the Airport to travel north, only to double-back to access the Airport.² An image of that route is below.

¹ Presumably Alternative 4 would require a Trolley extension instead of a People Mover, since the People Mover concepts in Alternatives 1 and 2 are for a rail connection on Airport property. However, the specific mode of the connection is probably less important than the routing.

² Circulate San Diego, Letter: Central Mobility Hub Draft EIR – Analyzing for Airline Passenger and Airport Workers, May 28, 2021, available at https://www.circulatesd.org/mobilityhub_eir_comment.

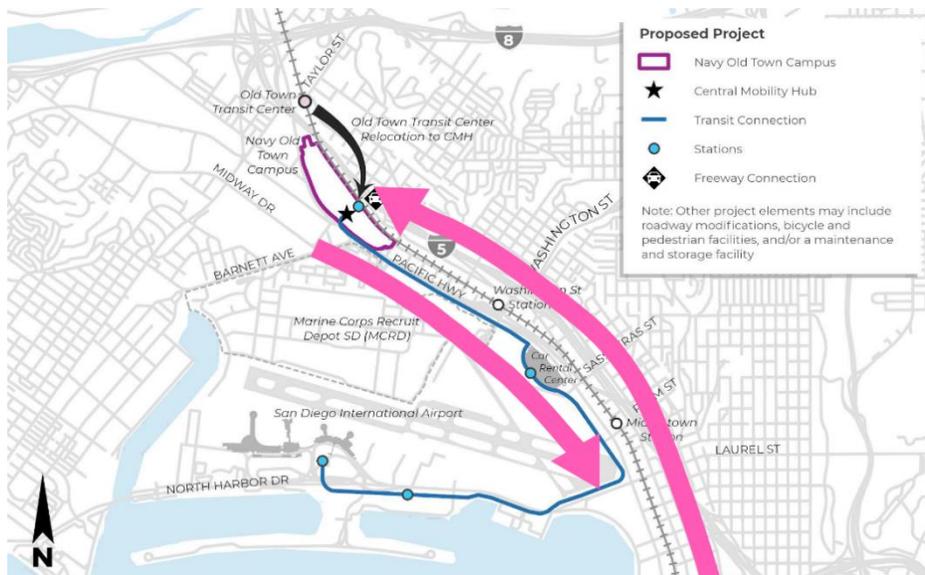


Image: Path of travel for transit riders coming from Downtown and south of the Airport if SANDAG chooses its preferred Alternative 1 for the Central Mobility Hub

We have also provided a grid that illustrates how the current set of alternatives will not provide an apples-to-apples comparison. It also shows how the proposed Alternative 4 will provide a more fair comparison of the relevant project variables.

Project Alternatives	Central Mobility Hub	Location	Mode of Connection
Alternative 1	Yes	Farthest North: NAVWAR Site	People Mover
Alternative 2	Yes	Second-Farthest North: Little Italy	People Mover
Alternative 3	No	Southern: At or near Santa Fe Station	Trolley Expansion
Alternative 4 (Requested)	Yes	Southern: At or near Santa Fe Station	Trolley Expansion

Analysis of this important Airport connection should be compressive and fair. We do not want to pre-judge the outcome, nor should the outcome be pre-decided before a complete analysis is made. We feel that our recommendation will help the SANDAG board and the public evaluate the choices available for the region. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Colin Parent
Executive Director and General Counsel
Circulate San Diego

Betsy Brennan
President & CEO
Downtown San Diego Partnership