



TO: Circulate San Diego Board Members

FROM: Colin Parent, Policy Counsel

DATE: May 20, 2016

SUBJECT: Status Update on the Transit and Active Transportation Components to SANDAG's proposed 2016 Ballot Measure.

I. Introduction:

The Circulate San Diego board is planning to decide whether the organization will support or oppose the proposed 2016 SANDAG ballot measure. The board plans to gauge their support primarily on the basis of whether there is sufficient funding for transit and active transportation, and whether the measure will advance those types of projects.

Circulate San Diego sought to advance transit and active transportation through advocacy related to SANDAG's 2015 Regional Plan. We undertook that advocacy understanding that SANDAG might defer any such improvements until they could be incorporated into a ballot measure for 2016.

Below is an analysis on to what extent the proposed ballot measure improves upon the 2015 Regional Plan, with respect to transit and active transportation.

II. Elements of the SANDAG Ballot Measure that are superior to the 2015 Regional Plan:

A. The ballot measure includes 11 percent more funding for transit than 2015 the Regional Plan.

The 2015 Regional Plan assumes a quarter-cent sales tax over 30 years. The ballot measure allocates 42 percent of a half-cent sales tax over a 40 year period. The result is roughly 11 percent more funds for transit in the ballot measure, as compared with the 2015 Regional Plan.¹

The longer time frame will likely mean a longer term of guaranteed operations funding. However, the smaller percentage of the measure dedicated to transit may result in fewer capital projects that can be incorporated into the measure.

¹ Circulate San Diego, Anatomy of a Ballot Measure, (May 11, 2016), page 9, available at <http://www.circulatesd.org/anatomyofaballotmeasure>.

B. The ballot measure includes \$540 million more for active transportation than the 2015 Regional Plan.

For active transportation, the ballot measure dedicates a full three percent, or \$540 million in new funding not already in the 2015 regional plan. By increasing funding by \$540 million for active transportation, all but \$10 million of SANDAG's entire currently-unfunded active transportation network is likely to be completed.²

C. The ballot measure secures COASTER double tracking and SPRINTER enhancements into 2020.

The ballot measure secures the COASTER projects to 2020, which were already planned for 2020 in the 2015 Regional Plan.³ The measure also accelerates SPRINTER improvements to 2020, which were programmed for 2035 in the 2015 Regional Plan.

D. The ballot measure identifies a variety of transit projects to prioritize and accelerate.

In addition to financial data, the text of the Final Draft Plan specifies several "Priority Corridors" for each sector of the county.⁴ They include:

- Purple Line (San Ysidro to Kearny Mesa; \$4.4B capital, \$304.2M operations)
- COASTER (double tracking and "State of Good Repair" improvements; \$616M capital)
- Sorrento Valley Station (relocation/grade separation; \$247M capital)
- Blue Line (service enhancements; \$350M for both Orange and Blue Line operations)
- Orange Line (service enhancements; \$350M for both Orange and Blue Line operations)
- Rapid 640 (San Ysidro to Downtown, Old Town, and Kearny Mesa; \$95M capital, \$30M operations)
- Rapid 638 (Iris Trolley Station - Otay Mesa; \$10M capital, \$32.9M operations)

E. The ballot measure satisfies a number of the requests made by Circulate during advocacy for the 2015 Regional Plan.

A number of projects in SANDAG's ballot measure were those advocated for advancement by Circulate San Diego in our efforts on the 2015 Regional Plan.⁵ They are listed below, with their status in the 2016 ballot measure.

² Circulate San Diego, *supra* note 1 at page 8.

³ *Id.* at page 11.

⁴ *Id.* at page 11.

⁵ Circulate San Diego, Policy Letter: Comments on SANDAG's 2015 Draft Regional Plan (July 15, 2015), available at http://www.circulatesd.org/2015_regional_plan_comments.

<u>2015 Regional Plan Advocacy for Acceleration</u>	<u>2016 Ballot Measure</u>
Orange Line Trolley Frequency Enhancements	Funded and prioritized
Blue Line Trolley Frequency Enhancements	Funded and prioritized
Construction of the 562 Trolley line (“The Purple Line”)	Funded and prioritized
Del Mar Fairgrounds Permanent Seasonal Rail Platform	Funded and prioritized
Rapid 550 Construction	Funded but not prioritized
Safe Routes to Transit Retrofits at Existing Stations	Funded but not prioritized (Not funded at all in 2015 Regional Plan)
Active Transportation Retrofits at Freeway Interchanges	Funded but not Prioritized (Not funded at all in 2015 Regional Plan)
Enhancing the Smart Growth Incentive Program	Not funded in either 2015 Regional Plan or 2016 Ballot Measure

- F. Added revenue from the ballot measure will increase SANDAG's bonding capacity to accelerate capital components of transit projects.

One of the major criticisms of SANDAG’s funding strategies thus far has been that substantial numbers of transit projects are delayed far into the future. New revenue presents SANDAG with a variety of tools to effectively advance transit construction, especially by creating more bonding capacity for capital construction.⁶

- G. The ballot measure identifies \$500 million in operation subsidies to pay for advancing transit.

The ballot measure contains a line item in the Transit Operations sections of the expenditure plan listing \$500 million that can be used to pay for the operations components of any transit projects that are accelerated.⁷

⁶ Circulate San Diego, Blog Post: Quality of Life: How a Quality of Life measure can advance transit and active transportation projects (November 3, 2015), available at http://www.circulatesd.org/how_a_quality_of_life_measure_can_advance_transit_and_active_transportation_projects.

⁷ Circulate San Diego, *supra* note 1 at page 7.

- H. The \$500 million for advancing transit is more than enough to fund accelerating every Priority Corridor transit project at least by 15 years.

According to the operations subsidy figures released for the SANDAG ballot measure, all of the transit projects are expected to go online around 2035, except for the COASTER and SPRINTER projects, which are expected to come online in 2020.⁸

However, the ballot measure provides \$500 million to advance projects that are within the Priority Corridors program. The annual subsidy needs for the combined transit Priority Corridors projects, if advanced equally, total \$31.8 million.⁹ The \$500 million fund would therefore allow each of these projects to be advanced 15 years, or before 2020.

However, it is likely that certain projects, especially the Purple Line, will require more engineering and matching grant funds, and cannot be feasibly advanced before 2020, despite sufficient funding. This means that there is actually more money than is necessary to advance the Priority Corridors projects.

III. **Areas where ballot measure needs improvement regarding transit and active transportation:**

- A. The ballot measure lacks commitments on timelines for transit advancements.

While the ballot measure does provide sufficient funding to dramatically advance a variety of transit lines, it does not make any specific commitments to timelines for advancing projects in their Priority Corridors program.¹⁰

SANDAG could address this problem by committing to complete some or all of the transit projects in the Priority Corridors program within a certain time frame. As an example, the proposed 2016 ballot measure in Los Angeles identifies an initial list of projects it plans to complete within 15 years of passage.¹¹ As detailed above, there is already sufficient funding in the measure to advance such projects. If SANDAG fails to receive adequate matching funds to build on committed timelines, a two-thirds vote would be required to further delay those Priority Corridor projects.

- B. SANDAG has not committed to only advancing Priority Corridors in a manner that reduces greenhouse gasses, though SB 375 sets some limits on advancing more highways.

SANDAG provides no guide for how it will balance the transit and highway projects in the Priority Corridor program. The terms of the measure would not specifically prevent SANDAG from advancing only the highway projects in the Priority Corridors, and none of the transit. SANDAG could address this

⁸ *Id.* at page 13. See also the electronic appendix associated with the Circulate San Diego white paper.

⁹ *Id.* See the final tab in the electronic appendix.

¹⁰ *Id.* at pages 12-13.

¹¹ Los Angeles Metro, Proposed Ballot Measure Language, Attachment A, available at http://boardsecretary.metro.net/2016/03_March/RBM%20Item%204.1.pdf#page=17.

deficiency by amending the ballot measure to provide that the projects advanced in the Priority Corridors program must result in a net decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite the broad flexibility for SANDAG in the proposed measure, SB 375 operates as a constraint external to the text of the ballot measure. SB 375 requires that SANDAG's sustainable communities strategy reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions from light-duty and passenger vehicles through coordinated land use and transportation planning.

SB 375 provides SANDAG with broad flexibility to meet its 2035 emissions targets. SB 375 could permit expanded highway construction by SANDAG, if it were paired with sufficient offsetting reductions before 2035. However, SB 375 would not permit SANDAG to add so much highway construction that it failed to meet the California's 2035 greenhouse gas reduction goals.

C. The Priority Corridors program does not include any funding for advancing active transportation funding.

While the proposed ballot measure does provide \$540 million for active transportation, it does not include those projects in the Priority Corridors program.¹² While the Priority Corridors program provides only limited assurance for when transit projects will come online, SANDAG offers even less commitment to front-loading funds for active transportation.

IV. **Conclusion:**

With some important caveats, the ballot measure satisfies a substantial number of the requests made by Circulate San Diego during our advocacy on the 2015 Regional Plan. This represents a fairly clear victory for our efforts to influence SANDAG, and it is consistent with our expectation that SANDAG would delay changing their Regional Plan in 2015, in favor of making changes through a 2016 ballot measure.

The SANDAG ballot measure provides ample funding to advance transit, and provides significant new funding for active transportation. However, it also does not definitively commit to advanced timelines for transit and active transportation projects. SANDAG has a limited amount of time to address these continuing deficiencies with their proposed ballot measure.

¹² *Id.* at pages 12-13.