



San Diego Chapter
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Mayor Sanders and Council Members
City of San Diego
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Via E-mail

Re: Reconsidering the I-5 Widening Proposals

Mayor Sanders and City Council Members:

The Transportation Committee of the San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club (SDSC) appreciates the opportunity to communicate with you concerning this important topic.

On July 14th, the Solana Beach City Council allocated \$85,000 to retain a consultant to advise their city on the nearly 1000-page I-5 Draft Environmental Impact Report. This is commendable. Frankly, our climate crisis requires an end to all freeway expansions. Please put this topic on a future city council agenda. Your citizens deserve to be heard on this crucial issue.

If your city should decide to oppose I-5 widening, then your SANDAG representatives would take that position into the Board's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) discussions. SANDAG's new RTP will be adopted next summer.

Additionally, given the grim realities of global warming, SANDAG owes our County voters a new ballot measure to reconfigure our current TRANSNET tax, perhaps shifting roadway expansion money to transit. Therefore please consider also putting this topic on a future city council agenda.

Personal transportation emits 41% of the greenhouse gas (GHG) in our County (Page 4 of <http://catcher.sandiego.edu/items/epic/GHG-On-Road1.pdf.pdf>.) Adding lanes to I-5 would increase our vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and GHG for two reasons. First, it would encourage people to live further from their work, given any fixed condition of development. Second, it would result in more urban-sprawl development. Both effects would increase VMT.

Figure 1 of <http://www.nrdc.org/globalWarming/sb375/files/sb375.pdf> shows that even with cleaner fuels and with mandated California-fleet-average CO₂ per mile levels, we must drive much less than "business as usual". In fact, Table 1, which has been computed based on Figure 1, shows that by 2030 we will need to drive 11% less than we did in the summer of 2009. Why spend \$4.5 billion for more lanes, when we must implement strategies to drive less, to meet our global-warming responsibilities?

Sierra Club transportation policy is at <http://sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/trans.aspx>. It says, regarding freeway expansion:

No limited access highways ("freeways") should be built or widened, especially in urban-suburban areas or near threatened natural areas. High occupancy vehicle (HOV) and high occupancy vehicle/toll (HOT) lanes should come from converting existing highway lanes rather than constructing new lanes.

Congestion can be ended by following the other important strategies described in our national policy. They include the elimination of subsidies to driving and parking, rezoning for "smart (VMT-reducing) growth", improved transit, and support for walking and bicycling.

Table 1, Required Driving Reductions

Driving Reductions Required¹		
<i>California, Assuming Figure 1 & AB32 Targets</i> http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/sb375/files/sb375.pdf		
Year	With Respect to Now²	With Respect to BAU³
2020	-8%	16%
2025	4%	32%
2030	11%	43%
2035	20%	52%

Notes: ²July 1, 2009 ³Business As Usual for the year (Caltrans)

¹AB32 is based on 450 PPM, instead of 350 PPM.
350/450 = 0.78

We need to drive even less than this table indicates.

Specific to our area, an improved and redesigned electric-powered Coaster service would be an appealing and effective method of reducing congestion on I-5. The relief from noise, smog, nitrous oxides, carbon monoxide, particulates, and ozone pollution would also be significant.

The best short-term (within 5 years) methods of ending congestion are to eliminate subsidies to driving and parking. These strategies would properly go into SANDAG's RTP, in its Sustainable Community Strategy. They would increase fairness, while they reduce GHG.

Please advise us if you elect to put these topics on the agenda of a future meeting or if you have any questions about these comments. Thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully submitted,



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Chair of the Sierra Club San Diego Transportation Committee

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**The San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club is San Diego's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization, founded in 1948. Encompassing San Diego and Imperial Counties, the San Diego Chapter seeks to preserve the special nature of the San Diego and Imperial Valley area through education, activism, and advocacy. The Chapter has over 14,000 members. The National Sierra Club has over 700,000 members in 65 Chapters in all 50 states, and Puerto Rico.**

