

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

SANDAG

The San Diego region is home to 3.35 million residents who live in 18 incorporated cities and unincorporated areas of the County of San Diego. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is the regional agency that connects people, places, and innovative ideas by implementing solutions with our unique and diverse communities. We are committed to creating a San Diego region where every person who visits, works, and lives can thrive. With oversight by a Board of Directors – made up of elected officials from the 18 city councils and the County Board of Supervisors – SANDAG works on a wide array of projects, programs, and initiatives that support the region's economy and protect our environment and quality of life. This report highlights some of SANDAG's accomplishments during 2021.

Click on each project's title for more information.



A special thank you to our stakeholders, the community, and our transportation partners, Caltrans, MTS, and NCTD for their collaboration during 2021 on several of the projects and programs listed in this report.

2021 REGIONAL PLAN

After years of analysis, public engagement, and research, the first draft of the 2021 Regional Plan was released in May 2021 for review and comment. In August 2021, SANDAG released a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2021 Regional Plan and the proposed final 2021 Regional Plan and final EIR were published on November 30, 2021.

SANDAG held numerous workshops, webinars, public meetings, and community engagement activities to educate the public about the Plan. In total, nearly 17,000 comments were received.

After extensive public feedback and public policy discussion, the SANDAG Board of Directors adopted the final 2021 Regional Plan and certified the EIR at its meeting on December 10, 2021.

The 2021 Regional Plan provides a vision for our future that leverages the latest technologies, meets all state and federal requirements, addresses traffic congestion and roadway safety, and improves social equity. While the Plan includes improvements 30 years into the future, SANDAG will immediately start working to advance projects, including but not limited to:

- Opening the new Otay Mesa East Port of Entry and Smart Border Management System
- Relocating the LOSSAN rail corridor off the bluffs
- Advancing the Central Mobility Hub to provide direct transit connections to the San Diego International Airport
- Blue Line Express
- Purple Line
- Regional Vision Zero action plan and policy
- Digital Equity Action Plan



MID-COAST TROLLEY EXTENSION

The Mid-Coast Extension of the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley is one of the largest transportation infrastructure projects in the history of the San Diego region. Construction began in the fall of 2016 and was completed on time and within budget in the fall of 2021. The UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley, operated by the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), now extends service from Downtown San Diego 11 miles north to the University community. The extended line serves Mission Bay, the VA Medical Center, UC San Diego, Westfield UTC, and other major employment and activity centers. This project has expanded the region's Trolley system so that it now provides a one-seat ride from the U.S./Mexico Border all the way to the University community – with stops at several communities in between.

The Mid-Coast Trolley Extension showcases SANDAG's ability to plan, build, and deliver large-scale infrastructure projects by leveraging local funds to secure additional funding from state and federal sources. This major investment in regional transportation is the result of decades of planning, engineering, design, and construction – made possible through SANDAG's collaborative regional planning process.

In November 2021, SANDAG and MTS were presented with the first-ever Mid Coast Award from Circulate San Diego, created to honor the Mid-Coast Trolley Extension. The award recognized the project for its transformational impact on the San Diego region.





SR 11/OTAY MESA EAST PORT OF ENTRY

SANDAG and Caltrans have been working closely with federal, state, and local governments in the United States and Mexico to develop a new land port of entry east of the Otay Mesa border crossing. In May 2021, the team completed the first segment of the new diverging diamond interchange – the first of its kind in the San Diego region. Following this milestone, dignitaries from both countries joined together in June to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that expresses their commitment to open the new port of entry by 2024. The team also initiated a new investment grade Traffic & Revenue study, which will guide the development of a bonding package.

SANDAG and Caltrans received the 2021 WTS San Diego County Innovative Transportation Solutions Award for SR 11 Segment 2A and Segment 4 South County Trade Corridor Project.

In December 2021, the team celebrated the completion of connectors from southbound SR 125 to eastbound SR 11 and SR 905. These connectors now provide travelers with direct access from East County to Otay Mesa.





DEL MAR BLUFFS STABILIZATION

In late February 2021, a bluff collapse just south of 4th Street in Del Mar resulted in a slowdown of train traffic through Del Mar. SANDAG and the North County Transit District (NCTD) worked quickly to ensure safety and reliability along the line, for the region and the entire Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor, all while simultaneously exploring a long-term strategy to move the tracks off the bluffs. Emergency repairs included installing steel support columns into the bluffs to protect the tracks, rebuilding the bluff slope from the bottom up, installing sea walls to protect the toe of the bluffs, and installing drainage infrastructure to prevent further erosion. This project was awarded Project of the Year by the American Public Works Association (APWA) in the disaster/emergency category. Work began in March 2021, and it is continuing. Heavy construction tasks are expected to be completed in early 2022.





CENTRAL MOBILITY HUB

The Central Mobility Hub is envisioned as a mixed-use, multimodal transportation center that connects all current and future modes of transportation and provides a direct link between San Diego International Airport and the regional transit system.

In April 2021, SANDAG initiated an environmental review for the project, which is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A Notice of Preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was released to begin a 30-day public scoping period, during which the public could submit comments on the project, suggest alternatives, and raise issues to address in the EIR. SANDAG received significant public input and is now preparing technical studies to support the consideration of the proposed project at several potential alternatives: The Navy Old Town Campus site, the Intermodal Transportation Center site, the Port of San Diego site, a Downtown San Diego Civic Center site, and a Trolley connection to the airport.



Regional Bike Plan Early Action Program (EAP) Budget Amendment

At the SANDAG Board of Directors meeting on September 24, 2021, the Board approved a Fiscal Year 2022 budget amendment for the EAP, reallocating \$2.3 million to the budget and accepting \$16.3 million in grant funds to help deliver regional bikeway connections.

Rose Creek Bikeway

The Rose Creek Bikeway project was completed in May 2021, filling a two-mile gap in the Coastal Rail Trail between the Rose Canyon Bike Path in University City and the Rose Creek Bike Path in Pacific Beach. This project was selected to receive a Merit Award in the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) California 2022 Engineering Excellence Awards.

Inland Rail Trail

Phase 2 of the Inland Rail Trail was completed in January 2021, adding three miles of multi-use path along the NCTD SPRINTER rail line through parts of unincorporated San Diego County and the City of Vista. This project received a 2021 APWA Honor Award in the Sustainability/Green category and the 2021 WTS San Diego County Alternative Modes and Active Transportation Award.

Georgia – Meade and Landis Bikeways

The Georgia – Meade and Landis Bikeway projects are anticipated to open to the public in early 2022. Accomplishments this past year include the construction of neighborhood traffic circles, buffered bike lanes, and many other traffic-calming features along the project corridors in the North Park and Mid-City neighborhoods.

Fourth and Fifth Avenue Bikeways

The Fourth and Fifth Avenue Bikeways project is anticipated to open fully to the public in early 2022. Accomplishments this past year include the construction of separated bikeways, buffered bike lanes, and many safety improvements for people who walk, bike, and roll in Hillcrest, Bankers Hill, and Downtown San Diego.

Pershing Bikeway

Construction of the Pershing Bikeway is expected to begin in early 2022. The project will connect North Park and Downtown San Diego with separated biking and walking paths. Final design of the project concluded in 2021. The project was advertised for construction in the summer and the contract was executed in the fall.

Bayshore Bikeway

In 2021, SANDAG advertised the Bayshore Bikeway – Barrio Logan segment for construction and reviewed and evaluated bids. The project will stretch 2.5 miles along Harbor Drive between Park Boulevard and 32nd Street, connecting two existing segments of the Bayshore Bikeway. Construction is expected to begin in 2022.



BUILD NCC

In mid-2021, Phase 1 of the SANDAG and Caltrans I-5 North Coast Corridor (Build NCC) Program broke ground on four miles of new carpool/HOV lanes on I-5, from Palomar Airport Road in Carlsbad to SR 78 in Oceanside. In May 2021, APWA awarded Build NCC its Project of the Year. The APWA recognized Build NCC for environmental sustainability efforts, in particular the San Elijo Lagoon Restoration Project which enhances tidal flows and creates improved coastal wetland habitats for wildlife that depend on the lagoon. The start of 2022 also marks the groundbreaking of the San Dieguito Lagoon Restoration Project in Del Mar.

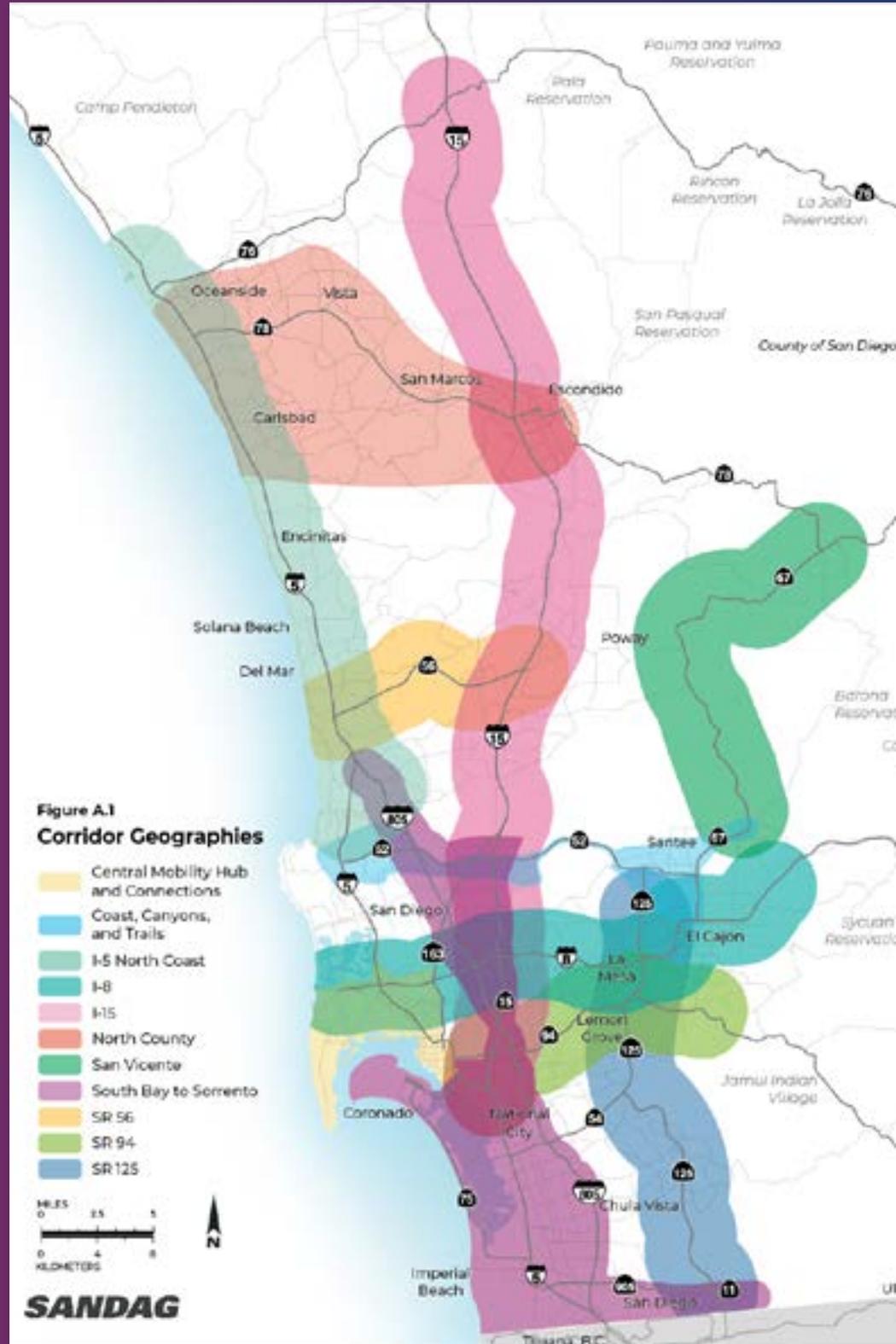
A new bike and pedestrian bridge, anticipated to be completed in April 2022, will be suspended below the reconstructed San Elijo Lagoon highway bridge and above the east basin channel and will connect Manchester Avenue to more than seven miles of trails. A new Multi-Use Facility at Manchester Avenue, providing EV charging, bike docking stations, and San Elijo Lagoon trail information, is scheduled for completion in late 2022.

Build NCC crews are expected to complete 13 miles of carpool/High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-5 in 2022, between Lomas Santa Fe Drive in Solana Beach and Palomar Airport Road in Carlsbad.

COMPREHENSIVE MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR PLANS

SANDAG and Caltrans are now developing their first five Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plans. Each corridor plan evaluates all modes of travel and all transportation facilities along a defined corridor – which can include highways and freeways, parallel and connecting roadways, transit (bus, bus rapid transit, light rail, intercity rail, etc.), pathways, and bikeways.

Corridors cover wide and diverse areas of the San Diego region, including the North County Corridor; the San Vicente Corridor; the Coast, Canyons, and Trails; the Central Mobility Hub and its Connections; and South Bay to Sorrento Valley. In 2021, all five corridor teams engaged with the public to gather feedback through public meetings, surveys, and comment forms. Each corridor team held lively public meetings, stakeholder advisory groups, and community roundtables to ensure that the plans include feedback directly from people who use the corridors. The Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plans are scheduled to be completed during the summer of 2022.



DIGITAL EQUITY

In January 2021, the SANDAG Board of Directors adopted a resolution committing to bridging the digital divide. As a first step toward achieving this goal, SANDAG formed the Regional Digital Divide Taskforce consisting of representatives from public agencies, internet service providers, and non-profit organizations that are actively working to bridge the digital divide. The Taskforce worked collaboratively to develop the Regional Digital Equity Strategy and Action Plan.

In May 2021, SANDAG, Caltrans, and the County of San Diego partnered to identify \$7 million in funding to install fiber with the planned Caltrans SR 67 Pavement Rehabilitation project, which will fill a critical gap in the region's fiber network.

As 2021 comes to a close, the San Diego region is set to receive the largest investment statewide for broadband infrastructure improvements from the California Department of Technology. This is thanks in large part to partnership between SANDAG and Caltrans, work on the 2021 Regional Plan, and the efforts of the SANDAG Regional Digital Divide Taskforce to study the digital divide and develop a Digital Equity Strategy and Action Plan.

REQUEST FOR INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS

In November 2021, SANDAG invited interested innovators, entrepreneurs, service providers, and mobility experts to submit innovative concepts for transportation "Connector" services that advance the transformative vision for transportation shaped by the SANDAG Draft 2021 Regional Plan's 5 Big Moves.

In 2022, SANDAG will evaluate how well Connector concepts advance the goal of a transportation system that is faster, fairer, and cleaner for everyone. The top three proposers will be awarded a \$50,000 stipend to further develop their concept and present their conceptual designs to a panel of experts. Ultimately, one or more firms will be selected to enter a partnership agreement where SANDAG and partners will pursue funding, plan, design, and build the Connector services.



EL PORTAL UNDERCROSSING

In October, SANDAG and the City of Encinitas celebrated the halfway mark in construction on the El Portal Undercrossing project, which will provide pedestrians and cyclists with a new connection between Vulcan Avenue and N. Coast Highway 101. SANDAG crews have installed bridge foundations and set the new rail bridge and will continue installing retaining walls and drainage infrastructure through this winter. The El Portal Undercrossing is expected to be completed in spring 2022.

BUS ON SHOULDER CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED

During the summer of 2021, construction for the Bus on Shoulder (BOS) project was completed. This project allows South Bay Rapid buses (Route 225) to use the freeway shoulder during weekday peak travel times. This helps maintain transit schedules and support system reliability.

Crews on the project made modifications to freeway ramps and repaved sections of the shoulders to prepare for MTS buses. These buses are operated by specially trained drivers and equipped with innovative technology so they can operate safely on freeway shoulders during heavy traffic congestion. Sensors embedded on project buses will provide bus drivers with audio and visual alerts – a first for vehicle-to-infrastructure technology in the San Diego region. Driver training on Route 225 launched in December 2021, with the official project launch anticipated in early 2022. Shoulders will remain available during the pilot project for law enforcement, emergencies, and incident management.

I-805 CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

During the summer of 2021, crews completed construction for the I-805 Corridor Enhancement Projects, which included five new sound wall segments as well as bridge and safety improvements at the Sweetwater River Bridge. The enhancements span more than three miles along I-805, from just north of East Naples Street in Chula Vista to State Route 54 (SR 54) in National City. Improvements totaling \$63 million are helping to alleviate congestion, improve traffic flow, and enhance the quality of life for residents who live along this segment of the I-805 corridor. In June 2021, Caltrans and the cities of Chula Vista and National City celebrated the project's completion.



REGIONAL EQUITABLE HOUSING EFFORTS

On October 22, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved the creation of the Regional Equitable Housing Subcommittee (REHS), a temporary subcommittee to lead discussions and identify voluntary, innovative, and incentive-based approaches that address housing needs throughout the San Diego region.

In November 2021, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved the Housing Incentive Program and released two calls for projects for up to \$6 million total:

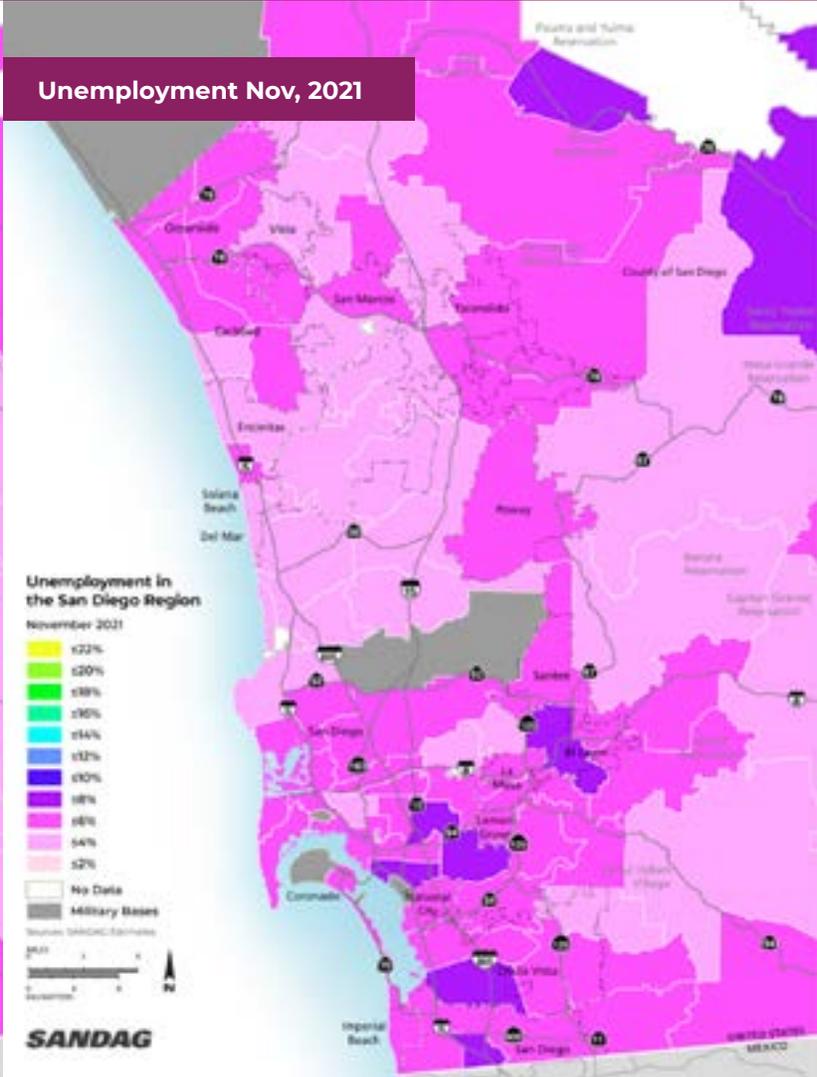
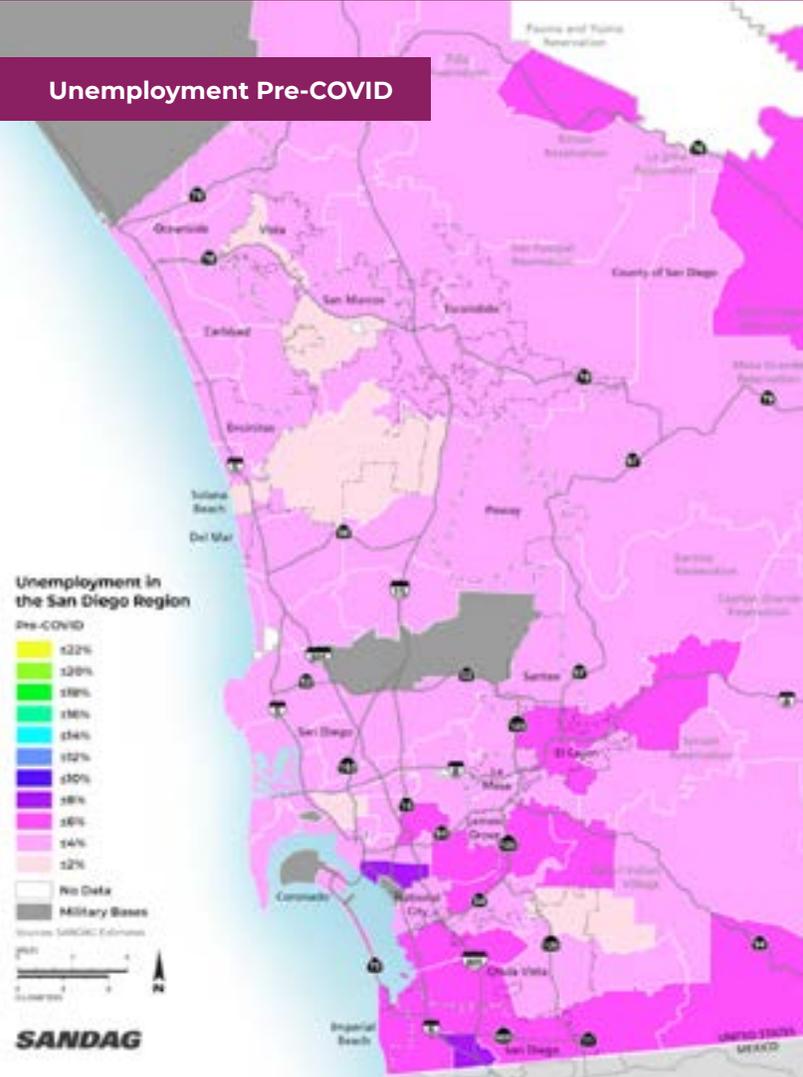
\$3 million through the Housing Acceleration Program, a new grant program funded through the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant program, which is focused on housing acceleration and smart growth.

\$3 million through the TransNet Smart Growth Incentive Program for planning efforts that encourage mobility hub planning in smart growth areas or employment centers, and strengthen the connections between housing and transportation.

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

In January 2021, the SANDAG Board of Directors unanimously adopted the following statement expressing its commitment to equity:

“We hold ourselves accountable to the communities we serve. We acknowledge we have much to learn and much to change; and we firmly uphold equity and inclusion for every person in the San Diego region. This includes historically underserved, systemically marginalized groups impacted by actions and inactions at all levels of our government and society. We have an obligation to eliminate disparities and ensure that safe, healthy, accessible, and inclusive opportunities are available to everyone. In 2021, SANDAG will develop an equity action plan that will inform how we plan, prioritize, fund, and build projects and programs; frame how we work with our communities; define how we recruit and develop our employees; guide our efforts to conduct unbiased research and interpret data; and set expectations for companies and stakeholders that work with us. We are committed to creating a San Diego region where every person who visits, works, and lives can thrive.”



UNEMPLOYMENT/ECONOMIC REPORTS

In October 2021, SANDAG unveiled an interactive data tool that highlights key findings related to unemployment during 2021 in the San Diego region. The tool is updated monthly and allows policymakers, businesses, and members of the public to gain a better understanding of the impact of the pandemic on unemployment in the region in real time.

GRANT PROGRAMS

In 2021, nine SANDAG-funded grant projects were completed throughout the region, including the City of Vista's Paseo Santa Fe Smart Growth Incentive Program project, which received an APWA award for Project of the Year, and the City of Oceanside's enclosed bike parking facility. The City of San Diego also completed the 14th Street Pedestrian Promenade Demonstration Block, completing the first phase of a linear park connecting East Village and Barrio Logan to City College. Many more projects that received funds in past years moved forward with planning and construction.

On October 25th, 2021, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved and released the TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program 10th Cycle of Land Management Grants Call for Projects. The Board allocated \$2.4 million in funding for the 10th cycle of Land Management Grants.

The TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program funded the restoration of the San Elijo Lagoon, which was completed in the fall of 2021.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REPORTS AND FLASHES

Over the past year, the SANDAG Criminal Justice Clearinghouse prepared several reports for policymakers, law enforcement, and prevention and treatment professionals. These reports provide essential information on public safety and public health, crime data, and crime-reduction strategies being implemented countywide.



SANDAG ICOMMUTE PROGRAM

The SANDAG iCommute program replaced old mechanical bike lockers and added 100 new electronic bike parking spaces in FY 2021. During the pandemic, SANDAG launched a new Telework Assistance Program and worked with area employers to develop and/or improve their telework policies to offer employees more options for working at home.

TRANSNET UPDATE

During the past two years, public agencies across the nation have braced for budget shortfalls related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. SANDAG has closely monitored tax revenues from TransNet, the region's half-cent sales tax that voters approved for transportation improvements. During FY 2021, revenue was 9.2% higher than in FY 2020. In March 2021, SANDAG refinanced 2014 Series A bonds at lower interest rates, saving more than \$22 million for the region's taxpayers. These bond deals also support cashflow needs, providing more than \$130 million for the TransNet major corridor program. The FY 2022 SANDAG Program Budget includes an investment of about \$613 million in TransNet funding for major capital projects throughout the San Diego region.