



Proposed Final

2025 COORDINATED PLAN



NOVEMBER 2025

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Coordinated Plan Overview	1
Key Considerations	1
Chapter 1: State, Federal, and Regional Requirements	1.1
Plan Context	1.1
Chapter 2: Transportation Assessment of the San Diego Region	2.1
Public Transportation	2.1
Intercity Transportation	2.12
For-Hire Transportation and Transportation Network Companies	2.13
Shared Mobility Services	2.14
Transportation Demand Management	2.19
Specialized Transportation	2.20
Access to Key Destinations	2.21
Regional Emergency Preparedness Efforts	2.27
Public Transit Performance Evaluation	2.27
Specialized Transportation Grant Program Performance Evaluation	2.44
Consolidated Transportation Services Agency Performance Evaluation	2.50
Costs of Various Transportation Services	2.63
Chapter 3: Community Outreach and Public Involvement	3.1
Public and Partner Involvement	3.1
Outreach Efforts	3.1
Outreach Event Timeline	3.6
Chapter 4: Needs Assessment	4.1
Survey Findings	4.1
Access to Fixed-Route Transit and Paratransit	4.9
Current Specialized Transportation Services	4.20
Estimated Unmet Transportation Demand	4.24
Other Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations	4.24
Transportation Accessibility	4.25
Service Gaps	4.25
Chapter 5: Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations	5.1
Relationship with the Regional Plan Vision and Goals	5.1
Coordinated Plan Goals	5.1
Strategies and Recommendations	5.2

Tables

Table 2.1: Transit and Paratransit One-Way Fares	2.9
Table 2.2: COASTER One-Way Fares by Zone	2.9
Table 2.3: COASTER Fare Zones by Station	2.9
Table 2.4: Transit Day Pass Prices	2.10
Table 2.5: Transit Monthly Pass Prices	2.10
Table 2.6: Annual Ridership by Transit Service Type	2.30
Table 2.7: Passengers per Revenue Mile by Transit Service Type	2.30
Table 2.8: Passengers per Revenue Hour by Transit Service Type	2.31
Table 2.9: Revenue Hours per Employee by Transit Service Type	2.32
Table 2.10: Farebox Recovery Ratio by Transit Service Type	2.34
Table 2.11: Operating Cost per Passenger by Transit Service Type	2.34
Table 2.12: Operating Cost per Revenue Hour by Transit Service Type	2.35
Table 2.13: Average Speed by Transit Service Type	2.36
Table 2.14: On-Time Performance by Transit Service Type	2.37
Table 2.15: MTS Service Availability	2.39
Table 2.16: NCTD Service Availability: Housing Units within 1/4 Mile of a Transit Stop.....	2.40
Table 2.17: Average Weekday Load Factor, MTS Minority Routes, January 2024	2.42
Table 2.18: Average Weekday Load Factor, MTS Non-Minority Routes, January 2024	2.42
Table 2.19: Average Weekday Load Factor, NCTD Minority Routes, January 2024	2.42
Table 2.20: Average Weekday Load Factor, NCTD Non-Minority Routes, January 2024	2.43
Table 2.21: Funding Awarded and Units Delivered by STGP Cycle	2.47
Table 2.22: Cost per Trip by Service Type	2.48
Table 2.23: CTSA Functions and Performance Measures.....	2.57
Table 2.24: Cost per One-Way Trip by Service Type.....	2.64
Table 3.1: Survey Distribution and Completion	3.3
Table 3.2: Number of Surveys Completed by Age Group and Disability Status	3.3
Table 3.3: Age of Rider Focus Group Participants.....	3.5
Table 3.4: Disability Status of Rider Focus Group Participants.....	3.5
Table 3.5: Outreach Event Timeline.....	3.6
Table 4.1: Forecast Older Adult Population Change, 2022 to 2035	4.9
Table 4.2: Population of People with Disabilities and People with Low Incomes, 2022	4.12
Table 4.3: Population by Age and Transit Service Area, 2022	4.17
Table 4.4: Population in MTS Weekday Service Area by Age, 2022	4.18
Table 4.5: Population in MTS Saturday Service Area by Age, 2022.....	4.18
Table 4.6: Population in MTS Sunday Service Area by Age, 2022.....	4.18
Table 4.7: Population in NCTD Weekday Service Area by Age, 2022	4.19
Table 4.8: Population in NCTD Saturday Service Area by Age, 2022	4.19

Table 4.9: Population in NCTD Sunday Service Area by Age, 2022	4.19
Table 5.1: Service Gaps and Goals	5.2
Table 5.2: Data Sharing and Collaboration Strategies and Recommendations	5.4
Table 5.3: Awareness and Information Strategies and Recommendations	5.7
Table 5.4: Transportation Coordination Strategies and Recommendations	5.9
Table 5.5: High-Quality Transportation Strategies and Recommendations	5.14
Table 5.6: Operator Stability Strategies and Recommendations	5.18

Figures

Figure 2.1: MTS Access Service Area	2.3
Figure 2.2: NCTD LIFT Service Area.....	2.6
Figure 2.3: Median Wait and Ride Time by Flexible Fleet Service Area	2.17
Figure 2.4: Total Flexible Fleet Rides and Passengers by Month.....	2.18
Figure 2.5: Total Number of Flexible Fleet Passengers by Hour of Day, Military time (e.g. 16 = 4 PM).....	2.18
Figure 2.6: Vanpool Counts and Revenue Miles, 2019-2024	2.19
Figure 2.7: STGP Applications Requested Vs. Awarded, Cycles 8-12	2.48
Figure 2.8: Requested Funding by STGP Project Type, Cycles 8-12	2.49
Figure 2.9: Requested Funding by Agency Type, Cycles 8-12.....	2.49
Figure 2.10: Number of Referrals Provided by FACT by Quarter	2.58
Figure 2.11: Number of CAM Meetings Hosted by FACT by Quarter.....	2.58
Figure 2.12: Number of Hits on the FACT Website by Quarter	2.59
Figure 2.13: Number of Hits on the “Find a Ride” Page on FACT Website by Quarter	2.60
Figure 2.14: Number of Agencies in FACT Provider Database by Quarter	2.60
Figure 2.15: Number of Agencies in FACT Provider Database Contacted by Quarter as a Percentage	2.61
Figure 2.16: Number of Funding Applications Submitted by FACT in the Past Year, as Reported by Quarter	2.62
Figure 3.1: Postcard Distribution by Census Block Group	3.2
Figure 4.1: Modes Used in the Past Month, Age 65+ and/or Disability.....	4.1
Figure 4.2: Frequency of Missed Trips, Age 65+ and Disability	4.2
Figure 4.3: Transportation Solutions, Age 65+ and/or Disability	4.3
Figure 4.4: Transportation Challenges, Age 65+ and/or Disability	4.4
Figure 4.5: Information Source, Age 65+ and Disability	4.4
Figure 4.6: Awareness of Specialized Transportation, Disability Only.....	4.5
Figure 4.7: Importance of Various Factors in Making it Easier to Get Around, Age 65+ and/or Disability.....	4.6
Figure 4.8: Vehicle Features Needed to Get Around, Disability Only	4.7
Figure 4.9: Household Income Status, Age 65+ and/or Disability.....	4.7

Figure 4.10: Travel Mode by Household Income Status	4.8
Figure 4.11: Reason for No Travel by Household Income Status	4.8
Figure 4.12: San Diego Region Older Adults Aged 65 and Older, 2022	4.10
Figure 4.13: San Diego Region Older Adults Aged 65 and Older, 2035	4.11
Figure 4.14: San Diego Region People with Disabilities, 2022	4.13
Figure 4.15: San Diego Region People with Limited Means, 2022	4.14
Figure 4.16: San Diego Region Transit Service Area Map	4.15
Figure 4.17: San Diego Region Weekday Transit Network, 2022	4.16
Figure 4.18: San Diego Region Saturday Transit Network, 2022	4.16
Figure 4.19: San Diego Region Sunday Transit Network, 2022	4.17
Figure 4.20: STGP Public Demand-Response Service Areas Operating in February 2024	4.21
Figure 4.21: STGP Client Demand-Response Service Areas Operating in February 2024	4.22
Figure 4.22: STGP Service Areas of Projects Awarded in Cycle 13	4.23

Appendices

[Appendix A: Public Involvement](#)

[Appendix B: Transit Route Statistics and Historical Data](#)

[Appendix C: Regional Service Implementation Plan](#)

[Appendix D: Social Service Transportation Inventory](#)

[Appendix E: Transportation Development Act Performance Indicators](#)

[Appendix F: Funding](#)

[Appendix G: Implementation](#)

[Appendix H: Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

Executive Summary

Coordinated Plan Overview

The 2025 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) is a five-year roadmap for improving mobility in San Diego County. The Coordinated Plan is focused on fixed-route transit and specialized transportation and designed to implement the goals and policies in the Regional Plan, the long-range plan for transportation, land use, housing, and the environmental needs of the San Diego region.

Along with the evaluation of transportation services, the Coordinated Plan establishes a unified regional strategy to provide transportation to older adults, people with disabilities, and people with limited means. While there is currently a range of transportation services available to these population groups, gaps in service remain due to geography, limitations in transit service, funding constraints, eligibility, knowledge, and training. A primary purpose of the Coordinated Plan is to identify those unmet needs and to recommend strategies for filling the gaps. This allows SANDAG to use current funding tied to the Coordinated Plan more effectively, and it positions SANDAG and partners to compete for funding to implement recommendations that aren't currently funded.

Key Considerations

The Coordinated Plan combines the federal requirement in 49 U.S.C. 5310 for a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, the state requirement for transit operations performance monitoring through the Transportation Development Act (TDA), and the regional requirement in SANDAG [Board Policy No. 018](#) for a Regional Short-Range Transit Plan into one document. The Coordinated Plan facilitates the distribution of local funding for our region's Specialized Transportation Grant Program (STGP), including the federal program Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), which can fund services in the region's urbanized areas, and the TransNet Senior Mini-Grant (SMG) program, which can fund services in both urban and rural areas across the entire region. Developing a plan consistent with applicable federal, state, and local requirements ensures the availability of funding for specialized transportation providers in the San Diego Region.

This update to the Coordinated Plan included an emphasis on research into the region's older adults and people with disabilities. This was achieved by conducting a scientific survey of these populations to provide an assessment of transportation needs. SANDAG also held focus groups of transportation providers and riders. SANDAG convened a Project Development Team with MTS, NCTD, and the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTS) staff and presented to key advisory groups and committees, such as the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). Conducting this outreach revealed the need for greater coordination among transportation providers, a responsibility of the CTSA. SANDAG researched other CTSA's across California to identify other agency practices and opportunities for improvement.

Based on the Transportation Assessment, Outreach, and Needs Assessment, we have identified five primary service gaps:

- Older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes have limited awareness of what transportation services are available to them due to a lack of information
- Public agencies do not coordinate to consistently collect and analyze data on transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes
- Transportation resources could be better coordinated and more efficient
- Fixed-route transit could be improved to better serve older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes
- Funding available for transportation providers and coordinators is limited

To address these gaps and shortcomings directly, the following goals are proposed for the Coordinated Plan:

- Clear, understandable, and readily available information about transportation options from transportation providers, coordinators, and public agencies
- Available, usable, and shareable data that is collected efficiently to support planning efforts and improve mobility options
- Coordinated and efficient use of transportation resources
- Convenient, accessible, safe, and comfortable transportation services
- Financial and operational stability for transportation providers and coordinators

Achievement of the Coordinated Plan goals will require several actions, referred to collectively as strategies and recommendations. The strategies are paired with an implementation approach that outlines the initial steps needed to successfully implement the strategy and identifies SANDAG's role as well as the key roles anticipated for other partners.

Coordinated Plan Chapters

The Coordinated Plan is composed of the following chapters and includes all elements that are federally and regionally required:

Chapter 1: State, Federal, and Regional Requirements – provides an overview of the plan, its regulatory requirements, and the agencies and organizations responsible for implementation.

Chapter 2: Transportation Assessment of the San Diego Region – an assessment of the San Diego region's public, private, and nonprofit providers and available transportation services as required by federal guidance.

Chapter 3: Community Outreach and Public Involvement – an overview of the outreach that was conducted as part of the development of the Coordinated Plan.

Chapter 4: Needs Assessment –an assessment of transportation needs for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. It includes results from the Coordinated Plan Survey and another SANDAG survey that identifies transportation patterns, challenges, and solutions

Chapter 5: Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations – goals, strategies, recommendations, and implementation approaches intended to address the service gaps identified in **Chapter 4**. This includes the identification of transportation coordination strategies to improve the efficiency of available services. It also includes how SANDAG plans to monitor and implement the strategies and recommendations and highlights the important roles of transit operators and the CTSA in enhancing effectiveness and efficiency. The chapter also identifies priority projects for future STGP funding cycles.

Chapter 1: State, Federal, and Regional Requirements

Plan Context

The 2025 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) is a five-year roadmap to improve mobility in San Diego County, focused on people who depend on these services. The Coordinated Plan addresses fixed-route transit and specialized transportation services and it's aligned with the goals and policies in the Regional Plan, the long-range plan for transportation, land use, housing, and the environmental needs of the San Diego region.

This Coordinated Plan identifies transportation needs from a passenger perspective and outlines strategies to meet those needs. As required by federal mandate, it focuses populations that are more likely to rely on public transit and specialized transportation, including:

- Older adults: Individuals age 65 and older
- People with disabilities: Individuals who because of illness, injury, age, congenital conditions, or other impairments require special design or support to use public transportation
- People with limited means or low incomes: Individuals with household incomes at or below the 200% federal poverty line

The plan fulfills federal, state, and regional requirements in a single, streamlined document. It supports SANDAG's state-mandated transit performance monitoring and assists the region's transit operators, Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit (NCTD) – San Diego Railroad, identify and address any gaps or needs for regional transit network.

The Coordinated Plan also prioritizes projects for funding through the region's Specialized Transportation Grant Program (STGP), serving as a resource to existing and future specialized transportation providers in San Diego County.

Federal Requirements

In 2005, The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users included the first requirement for a "locally developed, Coordinated Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Plan." All subsequent federal surface transportation bills have since maintained the Coordinated Plan requirement.

Under the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides formula funding to state and local governments through the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program. Section 5310 aims to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding transportation mobility options by funding human service transportation typically provided by nonprofit organizations when public transportation services are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate. To be eligible for funding, projects must be included in the Coordinated Plan.

Per federal requirements, as outlined in Federal Circular 9010.7 H, the Coordinated Plan must include:

- An assessment of available transportation services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and nonprofit) ([Chapter 2](#))
- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs, and older adults ([Chapter 4](#))
- Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery ([Chapter 5](#))
- Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified ([Chapter 5](#))
- Where less than 100% fleet accessibility for demand-response service is anticipated, a demonstration of how the requirement for equivalent service will be met (Not applicable)

The Coordinated Plan is required to be developed and approved through a process that includes participation by seniors; individuals with disabilities; representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers; and other members of the public. ([Chapter 3](#))

State Requirements

The TDA of California provides 0.25% of the state sales tax for operating and capital support of public transportation systems and non-motorized transportation projects. As the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), SANDAG is responsible for the allocation of TDA funds to the region's public transit operators. Per California Public Utilities Code (CPUC) Section 99244, a transit operator's allocation can only increase over the prior year if the region's transportation planning agency determines that the operator made a reasonable effort to implement the productivity improvement recommendations adopted after the last TDA triennial performance audit and to show desirable productivity. This reasonable effort determination is made by the SANDAG Board of Directors as part of the annual TDA allocation process. To assist in this evaluation, SANDAG staff analyze three-year data trends and ask MTS and NCTD to state how they have addressed the audit recommendations in the prior year. The Coordinated Plan includes similar performance monitoring and can be used to identify additional productivity improvement recommendations for the transit operators to implement using their TDA funding allocations.

Regional Requirements

The Coordinated Plan fulfills the SANDAG requirement for a Regional Short-Range Transit Plan by providing a five-year blueprint of how the transit concepts described in the Regional Plan are to be implemented.

SANDAG [Board Policy No. 018](#) outlines the following requirements that are included in the Coordinated Plan:

- Establishes the goals and objectives for short-range transit services and human services transportation ([Chapter 5](#))
- Defines the existing transit and human services transportation system ([Chapter 2](#))
- Sets the framework for a transit operations performance monitoring program as required by the TDA and a monitoring program for human services transportation as defined by the FTA ([Chapter 2](#))
- Identifies transit and human service gaps and deficiencies ([Chapter 4](#))
- Evaluates existing transit and human services transportation services and programs ([Chapter 2](#))
- Establishes parameters for short-range (0-5 years) new and revised service development, as well as regionally significant and all other service adjustments ([Chapter 5](#) and [Appendix C](#))
- Defines a methodology for evaluating proposals for new and revised service ([Chapter 5](#) and [Appendix C](#))
- Identifies and prioritizes regional and subarea transit planning studies ([Chapter 5](#) and [Appendix C](#))
- Evaluates and prioritizes new and revised services for implementation, including the adoption of an annual Regional Service Implementation Plan ([Chapter 5](#) and [Appendix C](#))

The Coordinated Plan also facilitates the distribution of regional funding for senior transportation programs through the SMG program, which was created through the extension of TransNet, the regional half-cent sales tax administered by SANDAG. To enhance and promote coordination, all projects funded by the SMG program must be consistent with the Coordinated Plan.

Implementing Agencies and Organizations

SANDAG prepares the Coordinated Plan in collaboration with other partners, including transit agencies, specialized transportation providers, and the region's consolidated transportation services agency (CTSA). MTS and NCTD are the San Diego region's transit agencies with service areas in the southern and northern portions of the region, respectively. Social service transportation providers can include private companies, nonprofit organizations, regional transportation assistance programs, and governmental or quasi-governmental social service agencies. For this Coordinated Plan, the term "specialized transportation" encompasses both the transportation services offered by social service agencies and non-profits in addition to MTS Access and NCTD LIFT paratransit provided by the region's transit agencies. Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT) is the region's designated CTSA. The purpose of the CTSA is to promote the consolidation of specialized transportation through functions identified in the Social Service Transportation Improvement Act such as centralized dispatching, combined purchasing of necessary equipment and supplies, centralized maintenance, centralized administration to eliminate duplicative administrative tasks, and consolidation of existing sources of funding. All these partners have a role in implementing the changes and improvements recommended in the Coordinated Plan.

Chapter 2: Transportation Assessment of the San Diego Region

This chapter provides an assessment of the San Diego region's public, private, and nonprofit providers and available transportation services as required by federal guidance. Subsequently, the chapter assesses the performance of the transportation system as required by TDA and SANDAG [Board Policy No. 018](#). In addition, the chapter evaluates how SANDAG's STGP and CTSA are working to provide and coordinate transportation services for the region's older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

Public Transportation

Fixed Route Transit and Paratransit

There are two transit operators in the San Diego region: MTS and NCTD. Both agencies offer fixed-route service on buses and trains on a variety of routes, some of which are designed to serve shorter-distance local trips and others more oriented towards longer-distance travel across the region.

In addition, both agencies offer Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) complementary paratransit services. The ADA prohibits discrimination and establishes equal opportunity and access for persons with disabilities. To this end, the ADA establishes several principles by which the transit operators must abide. The ADA mandates that transit operators provide paratransit services for trips beginning and ending within a three-quarter mile radius of regular fixed-route services. Paratransit is unique in that it provides origin-to-destination service for those unable to reach a fixed-route transit stop or station due to a qualifying disability. The ADA allows transit providers to offer pick-up times for paratransit services up to one hour before or after the requested travel time to ensure efficient service. Paratransit fares cannot exceed twice the full fare for regular fixed-route services. Additionally, the ADA allows for a personal care attendant to accompany a paying passenger on paratransit at no charge. MTS and NCTD comply with ADA regulations by making fixed-route transit safe and accessible for all people and by providing complementary paratransit services in accordance with the ADA.

MTS

MTS provides bus, light rail, and paratransit services for approximately 570 square miles of the urbanized areas of San Diego County as well as the rural parts of East County. In total, MTS serves an area of 3,240 square miles with a population of 2.3 million.

MTS Bus

MTS operates almost 100 fixed bus routes. These services include regional routes (Rapid and Rapid Express) as well as local, urban, and rural routes.

SANDAG and MTS introduced Rapid services in June 2014 with the start of Rapid 235, which provides high frequency service on the I-15 corridor from Escondido Transit Center to Downtown San Diego. Mid-City Rapid 215 began in October 2014 and provides a one-seat ride (no transfers) between San Diego State University and Downtown San Diego via College Avenue, El Cajon Boulevard, and Park Boulevard. Rapid 237 also began in October 2014 and now operates between UC San Diego (Gilman Transit Center) and the Miramar College Transit Station via Mira Mesa Boulevard and La Jolla Village Drive. South Bay Rapid 225 began service in September 2018 and operates between the Otay Mesa Transit Center and Downtown San Diego via I-805. Iris Rapid 227 began service in October 2023 and operates between the Otay Mesa Transit Center and Imperial Beach via SR 905 and the Iris Avenue Transit Center.

SuperLoop *Rapid* 201/202 provides high-frequency service in the north University City/Golden Triangle area, serving destinations such as UC San Diego, Westfield UTC, La Jolla Village Square, and Scripps Memorial Hospital. SuperLoop *Rapid* 204 provides a community circulator in Eastern University City.

Rapid Express is a weekday, peak-hour service along the I-15 corridor, with southbound service in the morning and northbound service in the evening. *Rapid Express* 280 operates between Escondido Transit Center and Downtown San Diego with one stop at the Del Lago Transit Station. *Rapid Express* 290 operates between Rancho Bernardo and Downtown with one stop at the Sabre Springs/Peñasquitos Transit Station.

Rural routes 888, 891, 892, and 894 operate over much longer distances than most routes in the urban area and have a higher fare.

MTS uses about 700 buses, most of which are powered by compressed natural gas (CNG). Articulated buses are used on select urban and Rapid routes. The agency is introducing battery-electric buses as part of its approved zero-emission bus transition plan, which will convert the entire bus fleet to zero-emissions vehicles. Beginning in 2029, 100% of new bus purchases will be zero-emission buses, with the goal for full transition by 2040. MTS has 25 electric buses in service and is adding 13 more in 2025.

Most MTS buses have bicycle racks on the front. The exception is for over-the-road coaches used for Rapid Express services, which accommodate bikes underneath the seating area. Additionally, all buses are fitted with either ramps or lifts to accommodate wheelchairs for accessibility.

MTS Trolley

San Diego Trolley, Inc., a subsidiary of MTS, operates five light rail Trolley lines. Combined, Trolley operates 65 miles of rail and serves a total of 62 stations. The Trolley provides high-frequency corridor service seven days a week. Route descriptions for each Trolley line as follows:

- The UC San Diego Blue Line runs between San Ysidro and UTC via Downtown San Diego and serves 32 stations
- The Orange Line runs between El Cajon and the Courthouse Station in Downtown San Diego via Southeast San Diego and serves 18 stations
- The Green Line runs between El Cajon and the 12th & Imperial Transit Center in Downtown San Diego via Mission Valley and serves 24 stations

- The Copper Line runs between Santee and El Cajon and serves four stations, passengers traveling north of El Cajon change trains at the El Cajon Transit Center, the terminus for Orange and Green Line trains
- The Silver Line operates in a clockwise loop around Downtown San Diego serving nine stations using vintage trolley cars., it runs hourly on select holidays

The UC San Diego Blue Line was extended to UTC in November 2021, adding 11 miles of new rail and nine new stations. Several bus routes were rerouted at that time to better align with the new Trolley service. The Copper Line began service in September 2024 as a new East County connector trolley route. Service on the Orange and Green Lines was truncated to El Cajon, with service between El Cajon and Santee replaced by the new Copper Line. The change was intended to improve service reliability, increase the frequency of Green Line Trolley service to East County on nights and weekends, and reduce traffic congestion and wait times on surface streets.

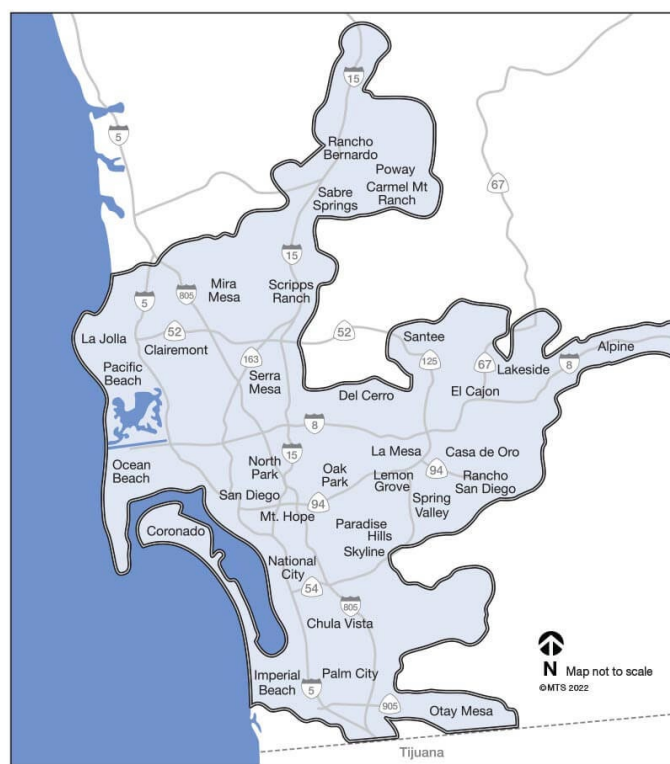
MTS Access

MTS contracts with Transdev to operate its paratransit service, MTS Access, which provides origin-to-destination service within a three-quarter-mile buffer of MTS fixed-route bus and Trolley routes. Passengers must be certified as being unable to access or use the fixed-route system due to a qualifying disability to use MTS Access. Trips may be scheduled two days in advance up until 5 p.m. the day before travel. Trips from MTS's service area to NCTD's service area require the rider to schedule trips with both agencies, transfer between vehicles, and pay the paratransit fare to both agencies. This practice can be an inconvenience and barrier to riding for potential riders. Figure 2.1 shows a map of the MTS Access service area.

One hundred percent of the MTS fleet used for demand-response paratransit is accessible in accordance with the ADA.

As of July 1, 2025, MTS Access clients can now call in and book same-day rides, based on availability. Reservations for same-day trips are taken every day between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. and cost \$10 for a one-way trip (double the regular paratransit fare).

Figure 2.1: MTS Access Service Area



Source: MTS, 2022

Fiscal Outlook

MTS has seen ridership rebound since the pandemic, with the agency exceeding 80 million trips in FY 2025. MTS holds the number two spot for fastest post-pandemic ridership recovery among the nation's largest transit agencies. Despite positive ridership trends, MTS is projecting a \$120 million budget shortfall in coming years. The agency has been able to stave off this deficit with state and federal assistance and a healthy reserve, but those funds are drying up quickly. Annual state and federal subsidies have not increased at the same pace as inflationary factors, and revenue from fare collection has not recovered enough to bridge the gap.

MTS is taking many steps to proactively address the fiscal cliff, one of which includes conducting a comprehensive operational analysis called MTS OnTrack. The OnTrack initiative will include an assessment of MTS services and future demands/needs by creating two plans:

1. If additional funding becomes available, how can the agency build upon recent momentum and success to make MTS work better for more people?
2. If no additional funding is available, how should the agency apply more significant cost savings measures (like service reductions) to create the most sustainable transit system moving forward?

MTS is gathering public feedback to help shape this effort.

NCTD

NCTD provides bus, hybrid rail, commuter rail, demand-response, and paratransit services for North County. NCTD's service area spans approximately 1,020 square miles with an approximate population of 950,000 people.

NCTD BREEZE

NCTD operates 30 BREEZE bus routes. These routes comprise all fixed-route service types: regional, local, corridor, and community bus services. NCTD operates nine routes that offer circulator services within North County communities or specific business districts. BREEZE Route 101 is a regional service operating between that mostly runs parallel to the COASTER between Oceanside and UTC with 30-minute frequencies. BREEZE Route 350 is a Rapid service between Escondido Transit Center and Del Lago Transit Center via the North County Mall with frequencies of 15-20 minutes on weekdays.

The current active fleet consists of about 150 buses, nearly all of which are CNG vehicles. NCTD is gradually introducing six battery-electric and 35 hydrogen fuel cell buses in service to replace diesel and CNG vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life.

All BREEZE buses in the fleet are equipped with bicycle racks giving passengers the ability to bike and ride to their destinations and are accessible with low floors, ramps, or wheelchair lifts to assist older adults and passengers with disabilities to board and ride with ease.

NCTD SPRINTER

The SPRINTER is a hybrid rail train that runs east to west from Escondido to Oceanside. It runs on 22 miles of rail and serves 15 stations along the Highway 78 corridor, connecting the cities of Escondido, San Marcos, Vista, and Oceanside. The European-style SPRINTER trains and raised station platforms offer level boarding. The SPRINTER offers connections to COASTER, Metrolink, and Amtrak at Oceanside Transit Center; BREEZE at 14 stations; and *Rapid 235* and *Rapid Express 280* at Escondido Transit Center.

NCTD COASTER

The COASTER is a commuter train that runs north and south through San Diego County, serving eight stations between Oceanside and Downtown San Diego. It takes about an hour to travel the entire COASTER route from end to end. NCTD runs 30 COASTER trains on weekdays, with two additional trips on Fridays, and 20 daily Saturday and Sunday trips year-round. NCTD offers expanded service in the spring and summer and for special events, such as the San Diego County Fair and San Diego Padres baseball games.

COASTER travelers can connect to the Trolley and buses at both the San Diego Old Town and Santa Fe stations in Downtown San Diego, and the COASTER Connection at the Sorrento Valley station. Passengers can connect with Metrolink and Amtrak train service north to Orange County and Los Angeles from NCTD's Oceanside Transit Center. NCTD and Amtrak have an agreement (Rail 2 Rail ®) to accept certain tickets and passes issued from each agency to be used on their trains at no additional cost for the passenger (with some blackout periods) for stops at Oceanside Transit Center, Solana Beach, Old Town, and Santa Fe Depot. This agreement increases the number of trains available to riders throughout the day.

The COASTER runs along 41 miles of the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Corridor, which is shared with Amtrak and Metrolink. During the next 20 years, SANDAG plans to construct nearly \$1 billion in improvements in the San Diego segment, including a primary effort to double track the corridor from Orange County to Downtown San Diego. To date, two-thirds of the San Diego segment has been double tracked. Other infrastructure improvements include bridge and track replacements, new platforms, pedestrian undercrossings, and other safety and operational enhancements.

NCTD FLEX

FLEX has two different service models: deviated fixed route and point-deviated fixed-route. Deviated fixed-route service has a set schedule and route but can deviate from the route up to three quarters of a mile for scheduled pick-ups or drop-offs. This service model includes FLEX 392 and FLEX 395, which connect portions of Camp Pendleton and Oceanside. Point-deviated fixed-route service also has a set schedule and route but only allows scheduled deviations to specific points along the route. FLEX 371 is the only point-deviated fixed route. It connects Escondido and Ramona and allows passengers to schedule pick-ups or drop-offs at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. Reservations are required for any trip not starting or ending at a designated stop.

The FLEX fleet is comprised of 12 vehicles that are equipped with bicycle racks giving passengers the ability to bike and ride to their destinations and are accessible with wheelchair lifts to assist older adults and passengers with disabilities to board and ride with ease.

All vehicles used for NCTD FLEX are equipped with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps or lifts.

NCTD COASTER Connection, which includes routes 471, 472, 473, 478, and 479, is a FLEX service to provide first- and last-mile connections for COASTER passengers who disembark at the Sorrento Valley COASTER Station.

NCTD+

NCTD+ is NCTD's new on-demand microtransit mode, introduced on June 10, 2024, with the launch of the San Marcos pilot zone. The Vista service zone was added to the program on May 19, 2025. On-demand trips are scheduled through a mobile application (app) or via phone with typical wait times of less than 20 minutes. All trips must start and end within the same service zone.

All vehicles used for NCTD+ are equipped with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps or lifts.

NCTD LIFT

The use of LIFT, NCTD's ADA paratransit service, requires the assessment and determination that the customer has a functional limitation that prevents the use of some or all parts of fixed-route service.

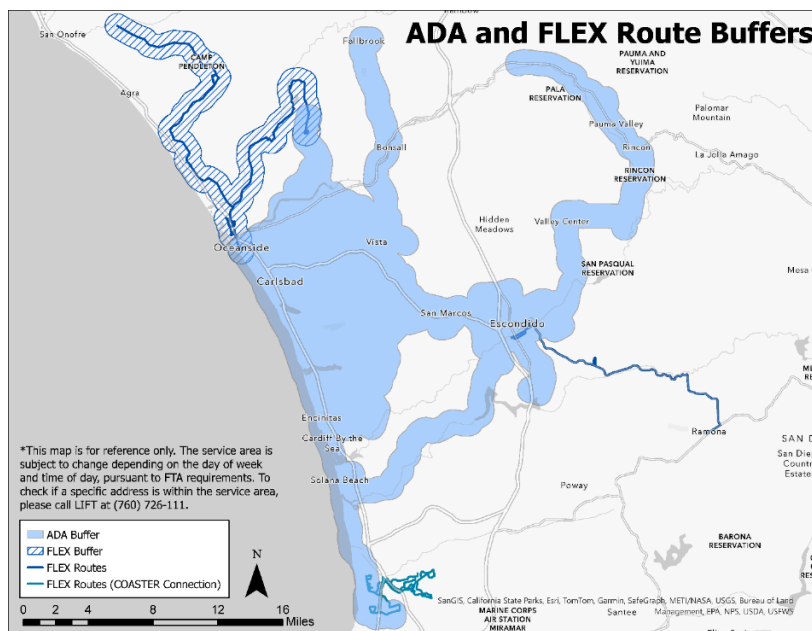
NCTD has a fleet of 40 vans and small buses known as “cut-aways” that support LIFT services, though taxis and other vehicles are sometimes used. All vehicles used for LIFT are equipped with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps or lifts.

LIFT is provided to areas that are within three quarters of a mile of an NCTD BREEZE bus route and/or SPRINTER rail station. LIFT provides curb-to-curb service for customers; however, assistance is available beyond the curb (for example, to a front door) as necessitated by a rider's disability. LIFT is provided by NCTD through its contractors, ADARide and MV Transportation. ADARide is responsible for determining eligibility and certification, while MV Transportation is responsible for providing reservations, dispatching, and transportation.

Passengers are required to reserve trips at least one day before the date of travel. However, a limited number of same-day trips may be accommodated each day to help meet unexpected needs. Such trips are not guaranteed.

People who are certified to use LIFT and obtain an NCTD paratransit photo identification can ride the BREEZE buses, COASTER commuter rail, and SPRINTER free of charge. A personal care attendant that accompanies a LIFT customer can also travel fare-free on BREEZE and SPRINTER services.

Figure 2.2: NCTD LIFT Service Area



Source: NCTD, 2024

San Diego Region Transit Fares

SANDAG oversees the Comprehensive Fare Ordinance, which provides the regional framework for transit fares implemented by MTS and NCTD. SANDAG [Board Policy No. 029](#) establishes guidelines for setting fares. Public input is vital to making updates to regional fares, therefore SANDAG hosts public hearings whenever fare changes are considered. For any fare changes to be implemented, including fare increases or changes in fare types, the SANDAG Transportation Committee must approve the changes and amend the Comprehensive Fare Ordinance.

SANDAG, MTS, and NCTD are conducting a transit fare change study in FY 2026. Through this study, the agencies will evaluate potential fare changes and estimate related changes in fare revenue and ridership based on survey data and research-supported elasticities.

The most recent fare changes were implemented in 2021, providing for a new regional fare system branded as PRONTO, a reduction of one-way fares for youth, and free transfers with a one-way fare for riders using the PRONTO system (except on the COASTER) within a two-hour window of their first ride. With PRONTO, regional and premium regional fares are capped when the rider reaches the total for a day pass and/or monthly pass. In this way, these passes are earned rather than needing to be purchased upfront.

Full-price transit fares are generally consistent across most transit service types and are flat regardless of distance. However, there are several exceptions. MTS rural routes have a higher fare but are flat regardless of distance. COASTER fares are based on the number of zones through which a passenger will travel and include a free transfer to SPRINTER, BREEZE, or FLEX within two hours of purchase. The COASTER Regional day pass must be purchased in advance, as fare capping does not apply for COASTER.

The discounted monthly SPRINTER/BREEZE pass must be pre-purchased and is therefore not available for fare capping.

NCTD+ and FLEX demand-response modes are also higher than the standard full-price transit fare. However, NCTD offers a 50% discount for passengers starting or ending their NCTD+ microtransit trip at an NCTD station or NCTD transit center and for pooled trips where more than one passenger is transported on the same reservation.

Reduced transit fares are available for several population groups, including older adults aged 65 years or older, Medicare recipients, people with disabilities who qualify for a reduced fare under federal and state law, and youth aged 18 and under. Reduced fares are half the price of full fares, rounded down to the nearest \$0.05.

The Youth Opportunity Pass pilot program offers free transit for youth aged 18 and under with an eligibility-verified PRONTO app account or card, through June 30, 2026. The Youth Opportunity Pass is part of the Transit Equity Pilot, a program which aims to make transit more accessible for everyone. To receive free transit, it is necessary to apply and provide proof of eligibility. Youth aged 6-18 without an eligibility-verified PRONTO app account or card still qualify for the half-price reduced fare mentioned above. All youth aged five and under ride free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult and do not need a card of proof of eligibility.

Transit fares can be purchased in many ways. All fare types can be paid using the PRONTO card or PRONTO smartphone app. PRONTO cards are available for purchase (one-time \$2 fee) at ticket machines, the MTS Transit Store, NCTD customer service centers, and retail outlets. The PRONTO app can be downloaded from smartphone app stores. Youth and senior/disabled/Medicare (SDM) discounts require verification before reduced or free passes can be used. Riders can pre-pay for a month pass (valid the first through the last day of the month), or use fare capping (earn as you go, never pay more than a day pass in a day, or a month pass in a calendar month).

Contactless credit or debit cards can be used at any PRONTO validator located on a vehicle or at a station. Contactless mobile wallets (on phones or wearable devices) can be used in the same way. In each case, tapping deducts a one-way adult fare (\$2.50) and is valid for two hours. A rider will be charged a one-way fare each time they tap outside a two-hour window, and there is no daily cap on fares charged.

Paper tickets are available for purchase at rail station ticket machines (Trolley, SPRINTER and COASTER). Paper tickets are available for a one-way fare. They do not include free transfers to other rail lines or buses or return trips. People using a youth, senior, disabled or Medicare reduced fare should travel with proof of eligibility.

Cash is accepted on buses (no change given) and ticket machines (up to \$5 in change) for adult (\$2.50), and reduced fares (\$1.25 for youth and SDM). There are no free transfers included with cash payments. However, riders can use cash to load a PRONTO card at ticket machines, the MTS Transit Store, NCTD customer service centers, or participating retail outlets.

MTS Access and NCTD LIFT paratransit fares are double the price of fixed-route transit fares. MTS Access fares can be paid with cash or a prepaid MTS Access ticket, which is sold in books of 10 tickets at The Transit Store. As of July 1, 2025, MTS Access clients can now call in and book same-day rides. These rides, if available, cost \$10 for a one-way trip (double the regular paratransit fare). NCTD LIFT tickets can also be purchased in books of 10 tickets at NCTD's Customer Service offices in Oceanside or Escondido or over the phone. Fares can also be paid for on a trip-by-trip basis online via the EZ-Wallet virtual payment system.

The following tables summarize the different routes by service type and list the current one-way adult fares and reduced fares for SDM.

Table 2.1: Transit and Paratransit One-Way Fares

Service	Adult One-Way Fare	Reduced One-Way Fare
Regional: MTS Bus, Rapid, Trolley, NCTD BREEZE and SPRINTER	\$2.50	\$1.25
Premium Regional: Rapid Express	\$5.00	\$2.50
NCTD FLEX	\$5.00	\$2.50
MTS Rural	\$8.00	\$4.00
MTS Access	N/A	\$5.00
NCTD LIFT	N/A	\$5.00
NCTD+ to/from SPRINTER Stations	\$1.50	N/A
NCTD+ Anywhere in Service Zone	\$3.00	N/A
NCTD+ Additional Riders	\$1.50	N/A

Table 2.2: COASTER One-Way Fares by Zone

Service	Adult One-Way Fare	Reduced One-Way Fare
NCTD COASTER 1 Zone	\$5.00	\$2.50
NCTD COASTER 2 Zones	\$5.75	\$2.75
NCTD COASTER 3 Zones	\$6.50	\$3.25

Table 2.3: COASTER Fare Zones by Station

Station	Fare Zone
Oceanside Transit Center	1
Carlsbad Village	1
Carlsbad Poinsettia	1
Encinitas	1
Solana Beach	1
Sorrento Valley	2
Old Town, San Diego	3
Santa Fe Depot, San Diego	3

Table 2.4: Transit Day Pass Prices

Service	Adult Day Pass Price	Reduced Day Pass Price
Regional	\$6.00	\$3.00
Premium Regional	\$12.00	\$6.00
COASTER Regional	\$15.00	\$7.50

Table 2.5: Transit Monthly Pass Prices

Service	Adult Monthly Pass Price	Reduced Monthly Pass Price
Regional	\$72.00	\$23.00
Premium Regional	\$100.00	\$32.00
COASTER Regional 1 Zone	\$140.00	\$58.00
COASTER Regional 2 Zones	\$161.00	\$58.00
COASTER Regional 3 Zones	\$182.00	\$58.00
SPRINTER/BREEZE	\$59.00	\$19.00

Notes: Standard Regional Pass includes: SPRINTER, BREEZE, MTS Bus, Trolley, Rapid; Premium Regional Pass includes: SPRINTER, BREEZE, FLEX, MTS Bus, Trolley, Rapid, Rapid Express, MTS Rural; COASTER Regional Pass includes: COASTER, SPRINTER, BREEZE, FLEX, MTS Bus, Trolley, Rapid, Rapid Express, MTS Rural; SPRINTER/BREEZE includes: SPRINTER and BREEZE only

MTS and NCTD also have pass programs to allow employers and students to purchase passes in bulk at discounted rates. MTS offers discounted monthly or semester passes, depending on the school, to students with a valid student identification from the following schools:

- California State University San Marcos (CSUSM)
- Cuyamaca College
- Educational Cultural Complex
- Grossmont College
- Internexus Global Education Network
- MiraCosta College
- Palomar College
- San Diego City College
- San Diego Mesa College
- San Diego Miramar College
- San Diego State University
- Southwestern College
- Thomas Jefferson School of Law United Education Institute
- University of California San Diego

UC San Diego offers its students the U-Pass, which offers unlimited transit rides on select services and is paid for through transportation fees. See the [UC San Diego](#) section for more information.

Transit Fare Discount Study

SANDAG completed a Transit Fare Discount Study in 2024 that examined potential structures for offering reduced-fare or fare-free transit to certain rider populations. The study included public outreach to hear from transit riders and members of the public on priorities and evaluation of how fare discounts might achieve agency goals. The study did not result in a firm recommendation as to a preferred scenario, but it offers decision-makers and SANDAG staff a sense of the costs, benefits, and potential tradeoffs of implementing these scenarios. The study highlighted that additional transit funding should be considered for improving transit frequency, reliability, and security. Fare discounts were less of a priority for members of the public who provided feedback, but low-income riders, older adults, and youth are the population groups that respondents would recommend for discounts.

Orange County Transportation Authority

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is a multimodal transportation agency serving Orange County. OCTA operates countywide bus service across more than 50 routes as well as paratransit services; manages the 91 Express Lanes toll facility; implements freeway, street, rail, and active transportation projects; provides motorist-aid services; regulates taxi operations; and provides day-to-day administration and oversight of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency. OCTA also administers OC Go, a half-cent sales tax for transportation improvement projects around Orange County.

The OCTA fixed-route bus service network is comprised of local, community, express, rail feeder, and limited stop routes. Although OCTA does not directly operate any routes into San Diego County, connections are available between Orange and San Diego counties via Metrolink and Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner.

Riverside Transit Agency

The Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) is a transit operator and CTSA for western Riverside County and is responsible for coordinating transit services throughout its approximately 2,500 square mile service area. RTA provides both local and regional transit services throughout the region with about 30 local routes, three CommuterLink routes, on-demand GoMicro microtransit service, and Dial-A-Ride paratransit services.

RTA previously operated Route 202, which provided peak-hour commuter express service from Temecula to Oceanside Transit Center for connections to NCTD services. Similarly, RTA previously operated Route 217, which provided peak-hour commuter express service from San Jacinto to Escondido. Neither of these services is currently operating, and there are no direct public transit connections between Riverside and San Diego counties.

Imperial Valley Transit

Imperial Valley Transit (IVT) is a fixed-route public bus service that operates 12 local bus routes and a complementary paratransit service, IVT Access, in Imperial Valley. The service is operated by private contractors and is administered and funded by the Imperial County Transportation Commission. There are no direct public transit connections between Imperial and San Diego counties.

Metrolink

Metrolink is a regional commuter rail system with eight routes linking communities to employment and activity centers in Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura, and San Diego counties. The system is operated by Southern California Regional Rail Authority joint powers authority.

Metrolink has two routes that serve Oceanside Transit Center: the Orange County Line (with service between Union Station in Los Angeles and Oceanside Transit Center), and the Inland Empire-Orange County Line (with service between San Bernardino and Oceanside Transit Center). There is currently no transfer agreement in place between COASTER and Metrolink. Passengers wishing to transfer between COASTER and Metrolink trains must have a valid ticket for both services. However, Metrolink passengers may transfer for free to NCTD BREEZE routes or the SPRINTER at Oceanside Transit Center.

Intercity Transportation

Amtrak

Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner is a state-supported, intercity rail service operating on the LOSSAN Corridor. The San Diego portion makes up 60 miles of the 351-mile coastal corridor that runs through six counties. The LOSSAN Corridor in San Diego County carries nearly 3 million passengers annually, with more than 1.9 million on Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner service and 850,000 trips on COASTER commuter trains in federal FY 2024, making it the second-busiest state-supported intercity passenger rail route in the nation.

Pacific Surfliner Stations in San Diego County include Oceanside, Solana Beach, Old Town, and Downtown San Diego. Connections to the transit system occur at each of these stations, including to the COASTER, Metrolink, Greyhound, local bus routes, the San Diego Trolley, and SPRINTER. Each day, the Pacific Surfliner rail provides 12 round trips between San Diego and Los Angeles, five trips that continue north to Santa Barbara, and two trips that continues to San Luis Obispo.

SANDAG and NCTD are members of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, which was formed in 1989 as a Joint Powers Authority. The agency seeks to increase ridership, revenue, capacity, reliability, and safety on the corridor. It is governed by an 11-member Board of Directors composed of current and former elected officials representing rail owners, operators, and regional planning agencies along the rail corridor. The agency is staffed by OCTA. As of July 1, 2015, the agency assumed administrative responsibility for the Pacific Surfliner service following the execution of an interagency transfer agreement with the State of California. Locally focused management helps to enhance customer service, ensure efficient use of resources, and allow more effective decisions about train schedules, onboard amenities, and service expansion.

Metrolink, COASTER, and Pacific Surfliner riders can choose from more departure options through the Rail 2 Rail® Program. Metrolink and NCTD monthly pass holders can travel on Pacific Surfliner trains, within the station pairs of their pass, at no additional charge. Similarly, Pacific Surfliner monthly pass holders may also ride any Metrolink or COASTER train, within the station pairs on their pass, at no additional charge.

Amtrak allows bikes on board, passengers are required to make bike reservations online prior to their trip. Bikes are allowed without a reservation on all Metrolink and COASTER trains.

Greyhound and FlixBus

Greyhound is a nationwide intercity bus operator that was acquired by FlixBus in 2021. Since 2023, the two brands have shared a nationwide network. Within San Diego County, Greyhound and FlixBus have San Diego stops at Old Town, UC San Diego, Downtown at Seaport Village, Balboa Park, San Diego State University, and San Ysidro, as well as Oceanside Transit Center and El Cajon Transit Center. These services operate most days per week, but timing and fares vary.

Other Commercial Bus Services

In addition to Greyhound and FlixBus, many other privately operated commercial buses make stops at San Ysidro Transit Center. These buses connect to locations throughout California and the western U.S. There are currently 15 private carriers under contract operating approximately 150 permitted buses. On average, 80 to 100 private buses per day use the commercial bus terminal at San Ysidro Transit Center, carrying an estimated 2,200 to 2,750 passengers. The services are coordinated by an MTS concessionaire and regulated by the CPUC.

For-Hire Transportation and Transportation Network Companies

For-Hire Transportation

Jitneys, taxis, charter services, non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services, and low-speed vehicles (LSVs) are considered for-hire transportation and are licensed and regulated by MTS by contract with the cities of San Diego, Chula Vista, El Cajon, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, National City, Poway, and Santee. Jitneys are privately-owned vehicles operating on a fixed route for a fare. MTS issues jitney permits and approves each jitney route and fare. There are two jitney companies in San Diego County, both of which are concentrated in south San Diego near the Mexico border and provide transportation to area businesses. Taxis operate regionwide, but the number of taxi permits in the region is continually decreasing due to loss of market share to TNCs. NEMT vehicles transport people for primarily medical purposes on public streets. Charter vehicles transport passengers and/or parcels over public streets, with the direction of travel prearranged in writing and determined by the passenger. Fares are based on a per-mile or per-hour basis. LSVs operate mostly in Downtown San Diego and may operate by zones and/or on a prearranged basis. These vehicles are permitted to wait at designated stands, accept street hails, and operate on a prearranged basis. LSVs may use two methods of seeking compensation, either by blocks within a zone and/or by prearranged written contract on a per-mile or per-hour basis.

As of fall 2024, MTS reported two jitneys, 720 taxicabs, 625 NEMT vehicles, 99 charter vehicles, and 37 LSVs with active permits.

Transportation Network Companies

Companies that offer an app for hailing a ride have been codified by California law as TNCs and sometimes are referred to as providing ridesourcing or ridehailing services. This legal distinction means that TNCs currently are unregulated. However, drivers that act as private contractors for TNCs are available for hire and use personal vehicles for transporting people around the region.

Lyft and Uber are TNCs that operate in the San Diego region. Clients can book rides (either for themselves or someone else) via a smartphone application to request a vehicle in real time. Both TNCs provide riders with an estimated pick-up time and fare. A rider can travel to any location, and all payments, including tips, are facilitated directly through the app.

Although TNCs have rapidly expanded mobility options for many, their services are plagued with many accessibility challenges such as charging more for accessible services, a lack of ADA accessible vehicles for passengers with disabilities, and ride-ordering platforms incompatible with screen readers and assistive technology. Since establishing oversight of TNCs in 2013, the CPUC has developed few regulations and minimal oversight to ensure equal access for passengers with disabilities.

However, California Senate Bill 1376: The TNC Access for All Act (Hill, 2018), provides the CPUC with the mandate to improve access to TNC service for wheelchair users and others with disabilities, as well as the opportunity to work with partners to build public trust and increase transparency. Since July 1, 2019, TNCs are required to collect a \$0.10 fee on each TNC trip in California. The funds generated from the fee support the expansion of on-demand transportation for non-folding wheelchair users who require a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV).

Uber offers Uber WAV and Uber Assist, which are specifically meant for riders in wheelchairs and their companions. Uber Assist, certified drivers give special assistance to riders who may need extra help. These services are only available in select markets and are currently available in San Diego. Riders who use folding wheelchairs can request a ride in all other Uber vehicle options available via the Uber application. Drivers are expected to accommodate riders using walkers, canes, folding wheelchairs, or other assistive devices.

Lyft allows passengers with accessibility needs to request wheelchair rides via its application in certain markets. In markets where those vehicles are not available, such as San Diego, information regarding local services will be sent directly to the passenger via text message when the ride is requested.

Shared Mobility Services

Shared mobility services have emerged to meet the needs of travelers who may not have access to a private vehicle or who require additional options to meet their alternative travel needs. These services can fill gaps in the region's transit network while providing convenient, on-demand travel options for a variety of trip types. The San Diego region has a variety of shared mobility services that are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Carsharing

Carsharing refers to services that provide members of the service with access to a car for short-term use. Shared cars may be located at specific pick-up and drop-off locations or throughout a designated service area. Members of some carsharing services gain access to shared vehicles with smart cards, key fobs, or apps, and may need to reserve the car ahead of time.

Members are charged for the service by the time they use the shared car or by miles driven. There are several companies that currently offer carsharing services in the San Diego region:

- Zipcar allows members to reserve a variety of four-door vehicle makes and models by the hour or day. Each vehicle must be returned within its reservation time to a Zipcar parking spot. Zipcar has carsharing locations throughout the City of San Diego and at CSUSM
- Enterprise CarShare is a membership-based rental program with a presence at UC San Diego. Current students, staff and faculty members are eligible for discounted membership, with vehicles located through the La Jolla and Hillcrest campuses.
- Turo allows members to rent vehicles per day from private individuals who list vehicles on a shared technology platform accessible via website or app. Costs are determined based on the vehicle base price, number of days, and various fees.
- Getaround is a car-sharing rental application, where car owners make money by charging hourly and day rates, determined with the help of the Getaround application, which considers demand, car type, and other features to suggest appropriate rates. Once booked, users can unlock cars through the application without a key and without ever needing to meet the owner. The Getaround application has over 5 million users and is already operating in over 300 cities around the world, including San Diego.

Dockless Bikesharing and Scootersharing

Dockless bikesharing allows users to rent a bike from any location where they are present and available. A rider uses an app to unlock the device and is charged for time spent using it. Once the user is finished with a bike, the user locks the device using an integrated lock and places the bike anywhere they like or in designated parking zones, where it then becomes available for another user.

Similarly, scootershare allows a user to unlock a scooter via an app and is charged based on usage. Once a user has completed their trip, the scooter is locked and made available for another user. After a few years of numerous companies offering bikeshare and scootershare services, current operations are mainly limited to university campuses. Spin provides shared scooters on campus at UC San Diego and San Diego State University.

Microtransit

Microtransit is one of several mobility solutions included in a category frequently referenced in the San Diego region as “Flexible Fleets.” Microtransit utilizes lower-capacity buses and vans to provide on-demand trips within defined service zones.

Microtransit is a context-sensitive solution that can meet a variety of mobility needs such as providing service where fixed-route bus is unable to operate efficiently or where a lack of sidewalks and other infrastructure makes traditional fixed route service less safe; offering convenient first- and last-mile connections from existing fixed route service (bus and rail), particularly where connecting services are limited or operate infrequently (30+ minutes); and supplying local circulation to connect community scale destinations, particularly when there is inadequate pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure. The NCTD+ service is an example of microtransit.

- Chula Vista Community Shuttle is a microtransit service operated by Circuit using all-electric shared vehicles throughout much of Chula Vista west of I-805. This service has been operating since June 2022. Rides have a fare of \$2 per ride plus \$2 for every additional passenger. Rides are free for users ages 55 and up.
- Mid-City GO is a zero-fare, electric ride-share microtransit service designed to connect the San Diego communities of North Park and City Heights. Via began operating the service in February 2025 and offers rides from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- SANDAG and the Urban Collaborative Project Community Development Corporation partnered to launch Southeastern Connect, a microtransit service in southeastern San Diego. The service provides residents and visitors with accessible, affordable connections to key destinations in the Mount Hope, Chollas View, and Emerald Hills neighborhoods.
- In March 2025, the City of El Cajon launched Via San Diego El Cajon Microtransit, an app-based, on-demand transit program that allows anyone within the El Cajon service zone to book a shared ride in the app.
- “Via Verde” will be launched by the Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center to serve residents in Barrio Logan and Sherman Heights communities in 2026.
- Carlsbad Good Ride and the Carlsbad Connector previously operated microtransit in Carlsbad, but both programs are currently paused.

Neighborhood Electric Vehicle Shuttles (NEVs) are low speed motorized vehicles that have four wheels and can reach speeds of up to 25 mph. They offer a zero-emission mobility option that is convenient for making connections to transit, and other last-mile destinations within communities. Many NEV services in San Diego County are operated by Circuit with funding from public agencies. Services provided by Circuit can be accessed by downloading the app.

- gO'side offers shared rides in Downtown Oceanside and the adjacent Eastside neighborhood. This service began in July 2023. Rides cost \$3 per person with a cap of \$6 for groups of more than two riders. To supplement rider fees for this pilot program, funding was provided by SANDAG, the City of Oceanside, and Visit Oceanside.
- Free Rides Around National City (FRANC) offers shared rides in most of National City west of I-805 since September 2023. Rides are free of charge through the mobile app.
- IB Shuffling, Coronado Island Express, the Beach Bug, and Free Rider Everywhere Downtown (FRED) previously offered NEV rides in Imperial Beach, Coronado, Pacific Beach, and Downtown San Diego, respectively.

In 2024, the SANDAG Board approved an amendment to the budget that authorized federal funding to develop and implement a pilot grant program to implement Flexible Fleet pilot projects in the region. More information about the program is provided in [Appendix F](#).

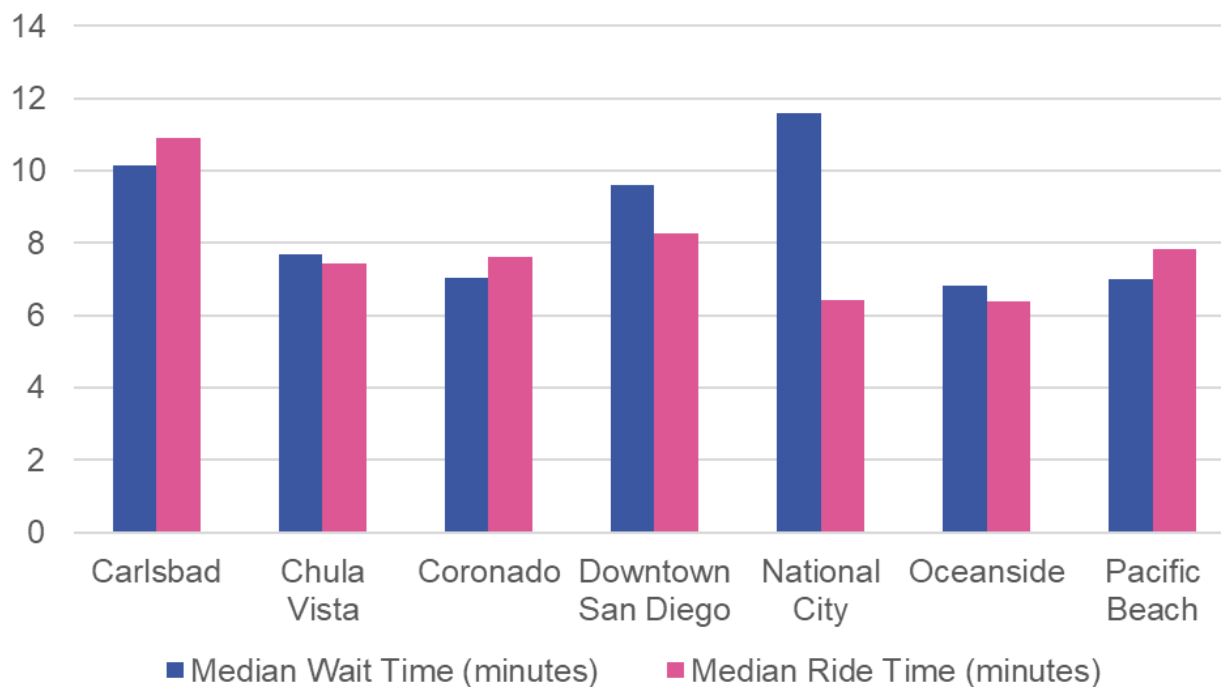
Microtransit Performance

Flexible Fleets are relatively new to the San Diego region, with most programs having started since 2022. Additionally, many of the programs have been operated as limited-term pilots based on the funding available to program sponsors. SANDAG is collecting and sharing data on Flexible Fleet performance on the [Flexible Fleets Dashboard](#) within SANDAG's [Open Data Portal](#).

The following data were provided by Circuit Transit and highlight operations in Oceanside (gO'side), Pacific Beach (Beach Bug), Downtown San Diego (FRED), National City (FRANC), Chula Vista (Community Shuttle), Carlsbad (Good Ride), and Coronado (Island Express) over the period January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2024. Four programs have since paused: the Carlsbad program paused on August 31, 2024, the Pacific Beach program concluded on October 31, 2024, the Coronado program paused on December 4, 2024, and FRED was discontinued on July 1, 2025. Future coordinated plans will include operating data from additional microtransit services, including NCTD+.

Figure 2.3 shows that Flexible Fleets are being used primarily for short trips, about 6 to 10 minutes long in most cases. This corresponds to maximum trip lengths of three miles on most services.

Figure 2.3: Median Wait and Ride Time by Flexible Fleet Service Area



Source: SANDAG Open Data Portal, 2025

Flexible Fleet ridership mostly increased between 2022 and 2024, with greater ridership in the summer months, as shown in Figure 2.4. These services would pool riders traveling in similar directions on the same trip, so the number of passengers is greater than the number of rides given. Note that not all services were active during the entire period.

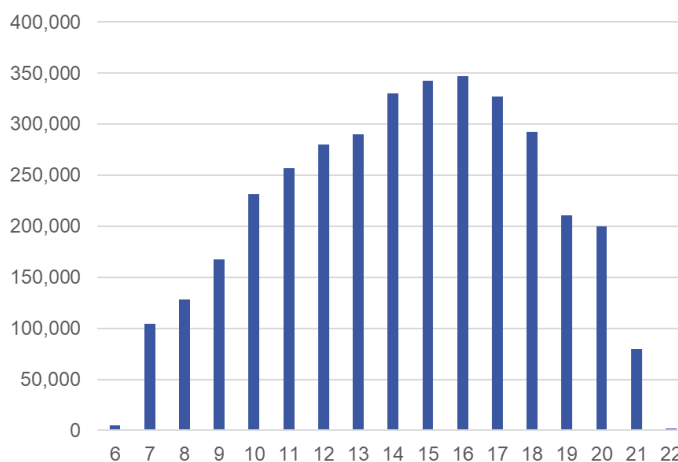
Figure 2.4: Total Flexible Fleet Rides and Passengers by Month



Source: SANDAG Open Data Portal, 2025

Flexible Fleet usage varied by time of data as shown in Figure 2.5, with early afternoon to evening being the most common time for passengers trips. Note that not all services had the same operating hours.

Figure 2.5: Total Number of Flexible Fleet Passengers by Hour of Day, Military time (e.g. 16 = 4 PM)



Source: SANDAG Open Data Portal, 2025

Transportation Demand Management

Sustainable Transportation Services (STS) is SANDAG's transportation demand management program for the San Diego region. An STS outreach team works with employers across the region to promote and encourage sustainable commute choices to reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Employer Program

SANDAG offers free assistance to regional employers to develop customized commuter programs that encourage employees to vanpool, carpool, take transit, and walk or bike to work. Commuter benefits include incentives and subsidies for employees who use sustainable transportation to get to work. Employer benefits include corporate tax benefits, reduced parking demand and environmental impact, satisfied employees, and regional recognition through the Diamond Awards. Currently, SANDAG works with 205 employers representing 441,250 employees.

Vanpool Program

The SANDAG Vanpool Program is funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program. A vanpool brings five or more people together to share the costs of getting to and from work in a van or sport utility vehicle leased through a SANDAG-contracted vendor. Vendors will accommodate people with disabilities by equipping vehicles with wheelchair-accessible features as needed. The program is best suited for long-distance commuters, with most vanpools originating in Riverside County. SANDAG provides a subsidy of up to \$500 per month for gas vehicles or up to \$600 per month for electric vehicles to offset the cost of the lease. Some employees may be eligible for additional incentives from their employer. For example, members of the military and federal employees can receive up to \$300 per month through the Transportation Incentive Program. Most participants in the SANDAG Vanpool Program pay less than \$100 out of pocket per month for all commuting costs including gas and parking.

During the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, the program lost 300 vans and has stagnated in the years since. Changing commuting patterns and an increase in remote work have likely contributed to this reduction. Reviving participation in this program will continue to be a top priority in the coming years.

Figure 2.6: Vanpool Counts and Revenue Miles, 2019-2024



Source: SANDAG STS Program, 2025

Guaranteed Ride Home Program

The Guaranteed Ride Home program provides a safety net for commuters who carpool, vanpool, take transit, walk, or bike to work three or more times per week. The program provides reimbursement of up to \$100 per ride for eligible methods of getting home from work, such as taxi, ridehail, car rental, etc., up to three times per year. This can be used in the event of a family emergency or illness, unscheduled overtime, or being stranded at work due to carpool or vanpool driver leaving for an emergency. Rides must originate from the participant's work location and may only be used to get home or to the location of their car. The service is entirely free of charge, but participants are asked to register ahead of time. Commuters must work in San Diego County to qualify for the program. Eligible applicants can register online at [SANDAG.org](https://www.sandag.org). Renewal is required on an annual basis.

Regional Bike Parking Program

The SANDAG Bike Parking Program facilitates bike commuting by providing secure bike parking at transit stations throughout the region. The network includes more than 600 bike parking spaces at 70 transit stations and Park & Ride lots throughout San Diego County. SANDAG also manages the group bike parking facility at the Sabre Springs/Peñasquitos Transit Station, which features 20 lockable bike racks and a self-service repair workstation. The lockers are free to use, with a \$25 security deposit for the key.

Bike Education Services

To encourage biking to work, SANDAG offers free bicycle education to employers, schools, and community organizations. Classes are aimed at educating new riders to be more confident and encouraging riders and drivers to safely share the road.

During FY 2024, over 1,000 people received bike education, double the number of people from the previous year.

Specialized Transportation

Many specialized transportation providers serve the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals who either cannot access transit or have needs that cannot be met by transit. In [Chapter 4](#), the unique transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with limited means are identified and discussed. Here, different specialized transportation services that seek to meet these needs are described. The services detailed below are not mutually exclusive, and an agency may operate several of these services as a part of its overall specialized transportation program.

Volunteer Driver Programs

Numerous transportation programs in the region use volunteers to provide transportation to older adults and people with disabilities. Because these programs use volunteers, they tend to be more cost-effective than traditional paratransit. Additionally, volunteers can provide personalized care and form unique bonds with the people they transport.

Shuttle Programs

Shuttle programs provide group transportation to frequent or common destinations. Most shuttle programs use wheelchair-accessible buses and are offered on a weekly basis. For example, shuttle programs may provide transportation to shopping centers, pharmacies, care facilities, or social events. Shuttle programs offer opportunities for increased socialization of older adults and people with disabilities using the program and can provide transportation at a reduced cost.

Taxi Voucher Programs

Taxi voucher programs subsidize taxi trips for older adults and people with disabilities. The agency purchases taxi vouchers and provides them at either a discounted cost or at no cost to their clients. The vouchers have a certain value that can be applied to the cost of a taxi trip. Taxi voucher programs have low overhead costs associated with operations. However, because taxi trips can be more expensive than trips provided through other means (such as by volunteer drivers), agencies may use taxi vouchers as a back-up to other transportation services.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

A large portion of transportation provided to older adults and people with disabilities consists of trips to routine, non-emergency medical appointments. These trips may be fulfilled using volunteer drivers, paid drivers, or taxi vouchers. Because the date, time, and location of medical appointments tend to be unique to the individual client, non-emergency medical transportation often is provided as single-rider trips rather than group trips. These trips, therefore, can be more expensive than trips provided through shuttle programs.

Mobility Management

Mobility management is an integrated approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to customers, including older adults, people with disabilities, and people with limited means. This involves planning and management activities that improve coordination among public transportation and other specialized transportation providers. Mobility management is a broad category of activities and includes things like travel training and trip planning for customers, operating a call center to provide ride referrals, and convening transportation providers to identify challenges and opportunities for better coordination. Mobility management is an eligible project type under the STGP, defined in more detail later in this chapter. FACT and Travelers Aid are organizations in the San Diego region that have historically received funding through the STGP for mobility management services such as referrals and travel training.

Access to Key Destinations

Access to Schools

The provision of school transportation, with dedicated yellow school buses, is a discretionary service of local school districts. Transportation is often provided for eligible students who live outside of a certain radius of the school they attend. Eligibility requirements vary by school district, school, and educational program.

UC San Diego

UC San Diego operates an extensive network of seven shuttle routes that serve the campus, medical centers, and major offsite landmarks. Shuttle services are accessible to UC San Diego students, faculty, and staff by showing campus identification and are free of charge.

- Weekdays year-round (excluding university holidays)
- Health Campus Connector: Connects the UC San Diego Health La Jolla Blue Line Trolley station with the La Jolla Medical Center
- Regents Express: Connects East Campus commuter parking (P703, P704, P705), UC San Diego Health – La Jolla, including connections to the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley at the UC San Diego Health La Jolla Station and Central Campus Station
- Outside Loop: Circles the central campus in a counterclockwise direction, including connections to regional bus service at the Gilman Transit Center and the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley at the Central Campus Station
- Mesa Loop: Connects Mesa housing, medical facilities, main campus and UC San Diego Extension locations in a counterclockwise direction
- Weekdays and weekends year-round (excluding university holidays)
- Scripps Institution of Oceanography Shuttle: Connects the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Birch Aquarium and the beach at Scripps Seaside Forum to the Central Campus at the Gilman Transit Center with a walking connection to the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley at the Central Campus Station
- Inside Loop: Circles the central campus in a clockwise direction, including connections to regional bus service at the Gilman Transit Center and the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley at the Central Campus Station
- Weekdays during fall, winter, and spring quarters (excluding university holidays)
- Grocery Shuttle – Convoy: Connects the Central Campus and Mesa residential community to the Clairemont/Convoy shopping area

In addition, UC San Diego subsidizes its students, faculty, and staff to ride public transit in the MTS and/or NCTD services areas. Through a quarterly transportation fee, UC San Diego students are eligible to receive a U-Pass, which allows for unlimited access to regular transit services in both the MTS and NCTD service areas. UC San Diego students authorized the continuation of the program in a January 2025 election. The reauthorized program adds access for NCTD's NCTD+, FLEX and COASTER services.

MTS Blue Line Trolley, bus routes 30, 41, 921A, 985, and *Rapids* 201, 202, and 237 all serve the UC San Diego campus directly. NCTD BREEZE Route 101 and FLEX 479 serve the UC San Diego campus. Additionally, UC San Diego partners with Spin to offer dockless bikes and scooters on campus at a discount.

California State University San Marcos

CSUSM is served by the SPRINTER and NCTD BREEZE Route 347. CSUSM is also within the San Marcos service area for NCTD+. CSUSM Parking and Commuter Services offers students a discounted regional transit pass for \$57.60 per month or \$160 per semester. This pass includes all MTS buses and Trolleys (excluding *Rapid Express* routes 280 and 290), as well as all NCTD BREEZE bus routes, and the SPRINTER. The pass does not cover the COASTER.

CSUSM Parking and Commuter Services sponsors commuter programs, including carpooling, biking amenities, discounted transit passes, and other programs provided through SANDAG. CSUSM Parking and Commuter Services also encourages students, faculty, and staff to participate in SANDAG programs such as ride-matching, vanpooling, and the Guaranteed Ride Home program. The CSUSM Bicycle Program offers free bike licensing, bike racks, bike tire air pump stations, and bike locks on loan. Bike lockers are available for a fee. Additionally, Zipcar provides carsharing services for the CSUSM campus.

San Diego State University

San Diego State University is served by the MTS Green Line Trolley; MTS bus routes 11, 14, 115, 856, 936, and 955; and *Rapid* 215. Discounted monthly transit passes are available for purchase by students for \$42, and a subsidized semester pass is available for \$160. The university also operates its Red & Black Safe Ride Program Monday through Friday from 7 p.m. to midnight during the fall and spring semesters, excluding university holidays. Riders can request an on-demand ride to and from designated locations using a mobile app.

University of San Diego

The University of San Diego (USD) is located along MTS Route 44. The bus stop is located at the campus entrance and is served approximately every 15 to 30 minutes. The COASTER, Blue and Green Line Trolleys, and MTS bus routes 8, 9, 10, 28, 30, 35, 44, 83, 88, and 105 stop at the Old Town Transit Center station, approximately one mile from the university's campus. Students, employees, and visitors can access USD via these transportation services by taking the USD tram that serves the Old Town Transit Center station during peak hours. Discounted transit passes are available for students for \$57.60 per month or \$180 per semester.

USD operates its Tram Service, an on-campus shuttle service free for students, faculty, staff, and visitors, that runs trams in loops throughout the entire campus. The Tram Service runs three on-campus routes approximately every 15 minutes from 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday during regular semesters. These include the East Campus Loop, West Campus Loop, and Express West. A fourth route, Valley Direct, is available by reservation request Monday through Friday. The Tram Service also provides a fifth route with morning and evening service to Old Town Transit Center. The Old Town tram route operates approximately every 30 minutes from 6:45 to 9:15 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. The Tram Service has different service hours during the summer session. The USD Tram Service has bike racks on all its trams to serve students, faculty, and staff that commute by bike. USD also has Zipcars on campus, which are available to be rented by the hour.

Access to Employment Centers

Employment Centers are areas with high densities of employment. SANDAG has identified 91 Employment Centers covering 447 square miles, or 11% of the County, that represent over three quarters of the region's jobs. The largest Employment Centers in the region each have more than 100,000 workers: Sorrento Valley, Kearny Mesa, and Downtown. Collectively, these account for 19% of the region's employees and tend to have relatively long commute distances. Downtown employees are more likely than others to use transit to get to their jobs (21%), reflecting how the availability of the Trolley and Rapid buses, as well as the cost of parking, can influence travel decisions. Employees working in other Employment Centers tend to live closer to work and have shorter commute distances but are less likely to take transit.

Many employers in the region also offer shuttle services for their employees. The shuttles may be operated by company employees or contracted to a transportation provider. The shuttles typically operate from transit centers or between remote employee parking and the jobsite. Examples of employers offering shuttles include Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Veterans Health Systems, Qualcomm, Intuit, and the Port of San Diego.

Access to Casinos

Casinos in the rural areas of San Diego County are major attractions for residents and visitors, creating a significant demand for bus services. Some casinos, such as Pala, Harrah's, and Viejas are located on existing bus routes, while others are not. The casino industry has responded with special bus services for casino visitors. Barona Valley Ranch Resort and Casino, Casino Pauma, Harrah's Resort, Jamul Casino, Sycuan Resort and Casino, Valley View Casino, and Viejas Casino each operate their own shuttle services to and from selected areas throughout the county to their casinos.

Airport Access

Frequent shuttle service between Downtown San Diego, the Santa Fe Depot train station, and the San Diego International Airport is provided by MTS Route 992. Service operates seven days a week from 4:30 a.m. to midnight, with buses every 15 minutes most of the day and every 30 minutes at night. At Santa Fe Depot, riders can connect to Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner, NCTD COASTER, Trolley, and bus routes. One of the bus routes connecting to Santa Fe Depot is the new MTS Route 910, an overnight express route between San Ysidro and Downtown San Diego, that increases the span of service for South County residents accessing the airport.

In 2021, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority introduced the San Diego Flyer, a zero-fare electric shuttle bus service between San Diego International Airport and Old Town Transit Center. The electric shuttle buses operate seven days a week, with an average arrival every 20-30 minutes. Pick up and drop-offs are timed to meet the first and last Trolley, Coasters, Amtrak trains, and MTS buses with the first pick up at 4:45 a.m. and the last pick up/drop off at 12:30 a.m.

In addition, private shuttle operators, such as EZ Ride Shuttle, provide shared-ride shuttle service from all points in San Diego County to the airport. In July 2015, TNCs Uber and Lyft received authorization to drop off and pick up passengers at the San Diego International Airport. Airport users can access Uber or Lyft services from a designated pick-up area at each of the terminals. Select Uber services (i.e. UberBLACK and UberSUV) have a transportation charter permit and may pick up passengers at a designated location within the airport, like traditional taxis. Both Uber and Lyft charge variable fees in addition to the fare for pickups at the San Diego International Airport.

The U.S. Department of Transportation finalized a [new rule](#) in December 2024 regarding airline passengers with disabilities. The rule requires that airlines provide safe and dignified assistance to individuals with disabilities; requires annual training, including hands-on training, for airline employees and contractors who physically assist passengers with mobility disabilities or handle passengers' wheelchairs or scooters; and clarifies that airlines must return all checked wheelchairs and other assistive devices to passengers in the condition in which they are received.

San Diego Region - Mexico Border

Four land ports of entry (POEs) in the San Diego region enable connections to Baja California, Mexico. San Ysidro/Virginia Avenue–Puerta México/El Chaparral is the westernmost complex of POEs and accommodates pedestrian and passenger vehicle travel. Both Otay Mesa/Mesa de Otay and Tecate/Tecate accommodate pedestrians, passenger vehicles, and commercial vehicles. Cross Border Xpress (CBX) opened in 2015 to provide pedestrian access from the U.S. directly into the terminal at Tijuana's General Abelardo L. Rodríguez International Airport. A fifth POE is planned at Otay Mesa East/Mesa de Otay II. Various public and private transportation options serve the POEs on both sides of the border, and more services and facilities are planned to further improve traffic flow and provide additional transportation options.

The POEs between the San Diego region and Mexico are among the busiest in the world and facilitate the passage of tens of millions of pedestrians and vehicles. The physical infrastructure and administrative resources at existing border POEs are already strained. Anticipated increases in population and international trade are likely to place even greater pressures on the existing infrastructure. To accommodate the border transportation system, a comprehensive effort is underway to improve access to border crossings, improve freight rail service, and coordinate commercial vehicle crossings.

San Ysidro Port of Entry

The San Ysidro POE is the busiest land POE in the Western Hemisphere and recently underwent a major modernization and expansion project led by the U.S. General Services Administration. The project implemented both northbound and southbound capacity improvements for vehicles and pedestrians, including primary booths, a secondary vehicle inspection area, administration space, and pedestrian processing facilities on the existing eastern side of the port, and the addition of a western facility at Virginia Avenue known as Ped West. This \$741 mega-project was completed in 2019, and the facility now includes 34 northbound vehicle lanes with 62 northbound vehicle primary inspection booths, 1 dedicated bus lane, and improved processing facilities for bus and Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection travelers.

The Virginia Avenue Transit Center accommodates taxis, buses, jitneys, pedicabs, and private vehicles dropping off and picking up passengers and is located on the west side of the pedestrian bridge that spans the I-5 connecting the eastern and western portions of the San Ysidro POE. This project was jointly funded by the U.S. General Services Administration and Caltrans using Coordinated Border Infrastructure program funds administered by the Federal Highway Administration. The facility was a collaborative effort that involves the federal government, Caltrans, the City of San Diego, MTS, and SANDAG.

MTS operates the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley, which serves the San Ysidro Trolley Station and connects the San Ysidro community to Downtown San Diego. The San Ysidro pedestrian facilities are also served by MTS Routes 906/907 and 910. Route 910 is an overnight express service with 30-minute frequency between downtown and San Ysidro Transit Center when Blue Line Trolleys cannot operate.

Otay Mesa Port of Entry

Otay Mesa POE serves pedestrians and personal vehicles as well as commercial vehicles. To facilitate binational trade, local governments and authorities responsible for transportation infrastructure have begun to plan or construct new projects to link the POEs infrastructure with local transportation systems and trade corridors. These corridors include I-5, I-805, I-15, and SR 125 as the primary north-south corridors and I-8, SR 94, SR 905, and SR 11 as the region's east-west corridors.

Otay Mesa is served by MTS Routes 905 and 909 and *Rapids* 225 and 227.

Tecate Port of Entry

The Tecate land POE is a semi-rural border crossing. It hosts a multimodal inspection facility and provides service for pedestrians, passenger vehicles, buses, and commercial vehicles. MTS Rural Bus Route 894 provides four round trips every weekday between the POE, the El Cajon Transit Center, and the Parkway Plaza Shopping Mall in El Cajon.

Cross Border Xpress

CBX began operation in December 2015 and was developed through a binational public-private partnership. This innovative facility enables ticketed airline passengers to travel between Tijuana International Airport and San Diego, California via an enclosed, elevated pedestrian bridge. The CBX facility consist of a main building in Otay Mesa on the U.S. side of the border housing U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspection facilities along with shops and services to accommodate travelers, an approximately 390-foot pedestrian bridge from the main building on the U.S. side connecting into TIJ's passenger terminal on the Mexican side, and parking facilities and areas for car rentals on the U.S. side.

Future Otay Mesa East Port of Entry

The development of the new Otay Mesa East–Mesa de Otay II POE is underway. This POE will provide an alternate entry for vehicles and commercial traffic approximately two miles east of the existing Otay Mesa crossing. Otay Mesa East will be linked to SR 905 and SR 125 through SR 11, which will be implemented as a toll road.

Regional Emergency Preparedness Efforts

In the event of a damaging natural or man-made disaster, some people may need transportation assistance to evacuate quickly. To meet the potential transportation needs of all community members during emergency evacuations, the County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services (OES) continues to work with regional providers who may be available to assist with transportation related efforts during an emergency, which may include the use of van, bus, rail, and paratransit services. Working with regional providers helps to ensure information on the type of service that can be offered by each provider, along with the number of passengers that can be transported is understood.

Since all transit services are ADA-accessible, all transit vehicles potentially can be used to provide relief for a major emergency. The OES has contracts with MTS and NCTD for disaster relief service provision. There currently are about 1,000 transit vehicles available to provide mass transportation assistance. During large-scale events, the OES can coordinate with transit agencies outside of the county should additional vehicles be needed for disaster relief.

Public Transit Performance Evaluation

Overview of Transit Performance Indicators

The transit performance indicators are informed by the goals of the Regional Plan, TDA performance-monitoring program, Title VI Program Update, the TransNet Ordinance, and other service-monitoring programs. The following are transit performance indicators:

- Ridership
- Passengers Per Revenue Mile†
- Passengers Per Revenue Hour†
- Revenue Hours Per Employee†
- Farebox Recovery*†
- Operating Cost Per Passenger†
- Operating Cost Per Revenue Hour†
- Average Speed
- On-Time Performance*
- Convenience
- Span of Service
- Frequency of Service (Headways)*
- Fleet Management
- Service Availability*
- Distribution of Transit Amenities*
- Accessibility
- Average Weekday Load Factor and Peak Load Factor*

** Denotes indicators that also are monitored for Title VI*

† Denotes indicators that also are monitored for TDA

Appendix B includes data sets reported in prior years to ensure statistical continuity between previous and future Coordinated Plans. SANDAG **Board Policy No. 018** establishes a requirement for annual and quarterly monitoring of transit performance for both MTS and NCTD operations. The six performance indicators evaluated per the policy are consistent with the annual performance measures required by the TDA.

TDA Objectives

The TDA performance indicators help SANDAG determine if the overall performance of the transit system is improving, and they help the transit operators determine where specific improvements can be made. Service improvements are incorporated into the Service Implementation Plans (SIPs) of each transit operator, which are included in [Appendix C](#).

The following are the six TDA indicators monitored by SANDAG:

1. Operating Cost Per Passenger (adjusted for annual inflation) – measures cost effectiveness
2. Operating Cost Per Revenue Hour (adjusted for annual inflation) – measures cost efficiency
3. Passengers Per Revenue Hour – measures service productivity
4. Passengers Per Revenue Mile – measures service productivity
5. Revenue Hours Per Employee – measures labor productivity
6. Farebox Recovery Ratio – measures service cost efficiency

These performance indicators are measured separately for fixed-route services (MTS Bus, MTS Trolley, NCTD BREEZE [Bus], NCTD COASTER, and NCTD SPRINTER) and paratransit services (MTS Access and NCTD LIFT). It should be noted that MTS Bus refers to all MTS bus services, including Rapid, Rapid Express, and rural services.

Title VI Objectives

The FTA requires that all transit operators who receive federal funds conduct assessments of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to demonstrate nondiscrimination of services and facilities for minority communities.

More than fifteen years ago, SANDAG entered into a Master Agreement with MTS and NCTD and took contractual responsibility for conducting the triennial Title VI Program update on behalf of the transit agencies. MTS's and NCTD's program updates are consistent with the Title VI Circular "Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients" (October 1, 2012, FTA C 4702.1B), as required.

Operational planning is managed by the individual transit agencies, along with the responsibility to evaluate major service changes under Title VI. SANDAG is responsible for the Title VI evaluation of transit fare changes that affect the Comprehensive Fare Ordinance pursuant to the Master Agreement between the parties.

A summary of SANDAG responsibilities under Title VI is included in the SANDAG Triennial Program update prepared separately from this document. The most recent Triennial Program update for [SANDAG](#) was completed in September 2024. The program updates for [MTS](#) and [NCTD](#) were completed in May 2024.

Evaluation of MTS and NCTD Services

This section includes the indicators over the last five fiscal years for modes operated by MTS and NCTD. Evaluation of transit operator performance allows MTS, NCTD, SANDAG, elected officials, and the public to:

- Assess the overall health of the regional transit system
- Determine whether sufficient funding is being provided to the regional transit system to meet performance targets and ensure that any additional planning and funding resources are allocated appropriately
- Determine the need for transit priority measures and once implemented over time, assess how well these measures are performing in terms of improving transit performance
- Assess regional efforts to better link transit and land use planning through regional smart growth programs
- Identify deficiencies or service gaps

Most performance indicators have associated guidelines to evaluate strong or improving performance. Performance according to the guidelines is monitored annually, but the tables show whether the guidelines have been met over the past fiscal year for simplicity. Despite some transit modes not meeting the guidelines over the previous year, a multi-year view may indicate that performance is moving in the right direction. Consistently underperforming modes may indicate the need for changes to the transit network, service plans, or vehicle assignment. In other cases, underwhelming performance may be due to factors outside the transit agency's control, such as road construction or traffic congestion. MTS and NCTD monitor their networks' performance according to their own board policies and make minor updates to schedules and routes multiple times per year while considering larger changes every five to ten years. Overall trends are discussed at the end of the section.

Ridership

Monitoring the ridership of the available transit services is necessary to ensure that overall productivity and performance goals are being met.

- **Objective:** The ridership grows year-over-year for each transit service.
- **Guideline:** Increase ridership year-over-year for each transit service.
- **Result:** Ridership decreased for all modes from FY 2020 to FY 2021, but it has generally increased for all modes ever since, all modes met the guideline in FY 2024.

Table 2.6: Annual Ridership by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	38,877,093	19,591,318	27,684,586	32,214,341	35,698,834	Yes
MTS Trolley	32,003,027	19,516,337	29,739,499	36,047,360	39,649,485	Yes
NCTD BREEZE	5,135,360	2,990,643	3,918,669	4,502,866	4,868,135	Yes
NCTD COASTER	944,109	162,707	588,409	813,207	852,993	Yes
NCTD SPRINTER	2,066,091	1,225,435	1,322,380	1,684,586	1,822,849	Yes
NCTD FLEX	30,813	21,547	25,332	38,624	48,663	Yes
MTS Access	343,960	107,193	193,166	249,662	314,099	Yes
NCTD LIFT	116,437	57,427	72,376	93,136	105,244	Yes

Passengers per Revenue Mile

The number of passengers per revenue mile is determined by taking the total number of passengers and dividing it by the number of revenue miles. An increase in passengers per revenue mile is seen as positive, as it indicates that more passengers are using the service and for longer trip distances.

- **Objective:** To operate transit services that are productive, convenient, and appropriate for the markets being served.
- **Guideline:** Improve average passengers per revenue mile year-over-year for each transit service.
- **Result:** Passengers per revenue mile decreased for all modes from FY 2020 to FY 2021, but it has generally increased for all modes ever since, all modes met the guideline in FY 2024.

Table 2.7: Passengers per Revenue Mile by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	1.90	0.93	1.34	1.72	1.75	Yes
MTS Trolley	3.47	1.94	2.56	2.84	3.26	Yes
NCTD BREEZE	1.01	0.59	0.79	0.96	1.00	Yes
NCTD COASTER	4.10	1.11	1.62	2.03	2.13	Yes
NCTD SPRINTER	3.98	2.37	2.57	3.26	3.55	Yes
NCTD FLEX	0.10	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.15	Yes
MTS Access	0.10	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.10	Yes
NCTD LIFT	0.11	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.12	Yes

Passengers per Revenue Hour

The number of passengers per revenue hour is determined by taking the total number of passengers and dividing it by the number of revenue hours. Much like the measurement of passengers per revenue mile, an increase in passengers per revenue hour is seen as positive, as it indicates that more passengers are using the service and for longer periods of time.

- **Objective:** To operate transit services that are productive, convenient, and appropriate for the markets being served.
- **Guideline:** Achieve the following standards:
 - For MTS Bus, Rapid, and Trolley: average at least 35 passenger boardings per revenue service hour.
 - For NCTD BREEZE, COASTER, and SPRINTER: average at least 20 passenger boardings per revenue service hour.
 - For MTS Access and NCTD LIFT: average 2.0 passenger boardings per revenue service hour.
- **Result:** Passengers per revenue hour decreased for all modes from FY 2020 to FY 2021, but it has generally increased for all modes ever since; MTS Bus, NCTD Breeze, MTS Access, and NCTD LIFT remain below the guidelines despite multi-year growth.

Table 2.8: Passengers per Revenue Hour by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	21.04	10.27	14.63	18.40	19.22	No
MTS Trolley	62.97	35.16	46.57	52.03	59.28	Yes
NCTD BREEZE	12.09	7.11	9.68	11.95	11.82	No
NCTD COASTER	130.13	35.04	50.87	65.73	69.49	Yes
NCTD SPRINTER	87.50	52.17	56.57	71.84	78.25	Yes
NCTD FLEX	1.81	1.25	1.50	2.27	2.79	N/A
MTS Access	2.01	1.46	1.59	1.93	1.82	No
NCTD LIFT	1.87	1.53	1.82	1.78	1.96	No

Revenue Hours per Employee

Monitoring the revenue hours per employee provides insight into the labor productivity of the operators and can provide an indication of the level of efficiency with which a transit system can deliver its services. A significant increase in revenue hours per employee may indicate that there is a shortage of employees able to operate services.

- **Objective:** To measure labor productivity.
- **Guideline:** Assess the average revenue hours per employee year-over-year for each transit service to measure labor productivity.
- **Result:** Revenue hours per employee has remained stable for most modes and can be explained by MTS and NCTD's general adherence to pre-pandemic fixed-route transit service levels despite lower ridership. The measure has been more volatile for the paratransit services. Revenue hours per employee increased substantially for MTS Access between FY 2020 and FY 2024. This is due to a reduction in employees starting with the COVID-19 pandemic. Although demand for MTS Access has increased over the following years, MTS Access maintains relatively few employees. This results in high labor productivity for that mode.

Table 2.9: Revenue Hours per Employee by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
MTS Bus	296.39	268.25	278.21	268.42	275.16
MTS Trolley	81.69	83.44	94.18	102.64	98.88
NCTD BREEZE	284.61	278.00	284.10	269.21	274.32
NCTD COASTER	14.20	8.04	19.11	21.54	33.99
NCTD SPRINTER	54.02	57.48	54.36	60.01	65.68
NCTD FLEX	225.84	258.20	232.11	223.71	219.68
MTS Access	199.53	198.76	342.31	399.89	423.83
NCTD LIFT	192.28	133.07	176.45	214.98	189.28

Farebox Recovery Ratio

The farebox recovery ratio is the percentage of operating expenses that are met by fares paid by passengers. It is calculated by dividing a system's total fare revenue by its total operating expenses.

The TDA requires transit operators to monitor the farebox recovery of all routes to ensure that public funds are spent in a fiscally responsible manner. SANDAG is required by the TDA to establish firm farebox recovery ratios for MTS and NCTD. The indicator helps to determine the appropriateness of the fare structure and the ability of the system to generate ridership and revenue. Ordinarily, an operator not meeting the required ratio would be penalized through reduced revenue. Recognizing the effect of the pandemic on transit revenues as well as the requirements set forth in the TDA, the Governor of California signed [California Assembly Bill 90 \(Ting, 2020\)](#) on June 29, 2020, which prohibits the imposition of penalties on transit operators who do not maintain their required farebox recovery ratios in FY 2020 and FY 2021. [California Assembly Bill 149 \(Newman, 2022\)](#) and [California Senate Bill 125 \(Budget, 2023\)](#) were passed in subsequent years to extend transit operator's exemptions from penalties or other revenue reduction provisions through FY 2026.

SANDAG [Board Policy No. 029](#) stipulates that farebox recovery should exceed the minimum TDA targets and demonstrate a reasonable effort to prevent regression over a three-year period. This guideline stems from direction from the Board to encourage ridership and revenue growth.

- **Objective:** To meet or exceed the farebox recovery ratio required by the TDA and SANDAG.
- **Guideline:** Achieve farebox recovery ratios that meet or exceed the following:
 - For MTS Bus and Trolley: 20%
 - For NCTD BREEZE, COASTER, and SPRINTER: 18.8%
 - For MTS Access and NCTD LIFT: 10%
- **Result:** The table below lists farebox recovery ratio by transit mode, but the calculation of farebox recovery ratio for TDA purposes is based on the operator's entire fixed-route operations. MTS's combined bus and Trolley operations, therefore, met the 20% guideline in FY 2024. NCTD's fixed route operations and both agency's paratransit operations fell short of the guidelines. As noted in the discussion on ridership section above, all modes have seen increasing ridership since lows in FY 2021. However, fare revenue growth has been less significant while operational costs have increased. The fare study being undertaken in FY 2026 will consider changes that may increase fare revenue and farebox recovery ratio. Because paratransit fares are double the price of fixed-route transit fares, changes in the fare structure would also likely affect paratransit fare revenue and farebox recovery ratios.

Table 2.10: Farebox Recovery Ratio by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	17.48%	11.49%	11.76%	13.16%	19.03%	No
MTS Trolley	34.41%	17.96%	21.49%	14.55%	22.18%	Yes
NCTD BREEZE	12.03%	5.68%	8.89%	9.07%	10.06%	No
NCTD COASTER	21.04%	4.67%	8.30%	9.79%	12.97%	No
NCTD SPRINTER	10.25%	6.42%	3.94%	3.33%	4.29%	No
NCTD FLEX	7.26%	1.06%	0.97%	1.71%	3.71%	N/A
MTS Access	4.59%	5.28%	4.56%	5.21%	7.51%	No
NCTD LIFT	7.33%	6.56%	7.06%	5.24%	6.00%	No

Operating Cost per Passenger

Operating cost per passenger is determined by dividing the total operating cost of a service and by the total number of boarding passengers. A decrease in operating cost per passenger is seen as positive as it indicates greater cost effectiveness.

- **Objective:** To measure the cost effectiveness of the transit services.
- **Guideline:** Improve the average operating cost per passenger year-over-year for each transit service.
- **Result:** Operating cost per passenger worsened for all modes between FY 2020 and FY 2021. NCTD BREEZE, MTS Access, and NCTD LIFT did not meet the guideline for a reduction in the most recent year. However, all modes are generally trending in the right direction since FY 2021.

Table 2.11: Operating Cost per Passenger by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	\$4.65	\$9.44	\$6.90	\$6.48	\$6.05	Yes
MTS Trolley	\$2.99	\$5.11	\$3.45	\$3.61	\$3.40	Yes
NCTD BREEZE	\$8.56	\$14.86	\$12.23	\$11.86	\$11.97	No
NCTD COASTER	\$21.81	\$142.89	\$56.19	\$43.82	\$35.04	Yes
NCTD SPRINTER	\$11.26	\$18.40	\$21.44	\$17.96	\$17.64	Yes
NCTD FLEX	\$69.57	\$106.06	\$132.11	\$105.64	\$70.43	Yes
MTS Access	\$43.51	\$64.44	\$65.53	\$56.75	\$61.19	No
NCTD LIFT	\$79.73	\$164.49	\$121.75	\$117.78	\$119.41	No

Operating Cost per Revenue Hour

Operating cost per revenue hour is determined by taking the total operating cost of the service and dividing it by the total number of hours that each vehicle is in revenue service (i.e., available for passengers to board and ride, including layover time). A decrease in operating cost per revenue hour is seen as a positive.

- **Objective:** To measure the cost efficiency of the transit services
- **Guideline:** Improve the average operating cost per revenue hour year-over-year for each transit service
- **Result:** Operating cost per revenue hour has generally increased over time. However, a certain amount of this increase is normal and expected, as TDA allows for operating cost per revenue hour to increase along with the regional Consumer Price Index. NCTD SPRINTER has experienced notable increases in operating costs per revenue hour in recent years. Some of this may be explained by NCTD's decision to convert rail operations from contracted service to directly operated service. All modes were likely affected by nationwide transit operator shortages in FY 2022 and FY 2023 that caused the agencies to increase wages.

Table 2.12: Operating Cost per Revenue Hour by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	\$97.93	\$96.97	\$100.93	\$119.21	\$116.22	Yes
MTS Trolley	\$188.21	\$179.56	\$160.73	\$188.05	\$201.39	No
NCTD BREEZE	\$103.46	\$105.73	\$118.40	\$141.74	\$141.54	Yes
NCTD COASTER	\$2,838.62	\$5,007.42	\$2,858.64	\$2,880.30	\$2,434.98	Yes
NCTD SPRINTER	\$985.59	\$959.72	\$1,213.08	\$1,290.00	\$1,380.06	No
NCTD FLEX	\$126.10	\$132.18	\$198.10	\$240.29	\$196.82	Yes
MTS Access	\$87.31	\$93.78	\$103.96	\$109.66	\$111.65	No
NCTD LIFT	\$149.15	\$251.98	\$222.18	\$209.98	\$234.22	No

Average Speed

Average speed is calculated here as total revenue miles per total revenue hours for each mode over the year. External factors, such as traffic congestion, public works projects, and construction often can impact speed and reliability.

- **Objective:** To maintain or improve existing average speeds on existing transit services.
- **Guideline:** Maintain or improve the average fleet speed year-over-year for each transit service.

- **Result:** Average speed was generally consistent over the study period. Although several modes did not meet the guideline in FY 2024, most of the year-over-year changes are not substantial. Improvement in this metric is often beyond the control of the transit operator.

Table 2.13: Average Speed by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	11.05	11.03	10.96	10.71	10.96	Yes
MTS Trolley	18.12	18.16	18.21	18.33	18.17	No
NCTD BREEZE	11.99	12.03	12.20	12.44	11.88	No
NCTD COASTER	31.70	31.43	31.40	32.42	32.56	Yes
NCTD SPRINTER	21.98	22.00	22.01	22.01	22.01	Yes
NCTD FLEX	18.38	18.17	18.70	21.89	18.43	No
MTS Access	19.27	21.16	19.45	20.40	18.98	No
NCTD LIFT	17.32	18.26	18.52	17.46	16.84	No

On-Time Performance

On-time performance refers to the ability of a transit service to be on time. It is calculated as a percentage and evaluates actual service operated on the road against the published schedules.

- **Objective:** To operate transit services that are reliable, offer competitive travel times, and adhere to published schedules or service intervals
- **Guideline:** Meet or exceed the following on-time performance standards:
 - For MTS Bus: meet or exceed 85% on-time performance
 - For MTS Trolley and NCTD BREEZE: meet or exceed 90% on-time performance
 - For NCTD COASTER: meet or exceed 95% on-time performance
 - For NCTD SPRINTER: meet or exceed 98% on-time performance
 - For MTS Access and NCTD LIFT: meet or exceed 94% on-time performance
- **Result:** All modes increased on-time performance from FY 2020 to FY 2021 as lower traffic congestion and ridership allowed transit to better adhere to published schedules. With the return of traffic congestion and increased ridership, most modes have seen worsening on-time performance over the following years. NCTD's services did not meet guidelines in FY 2024. However, the guidelines for these modes are stricter than those for MTS.

Table 2.14: On-Time Performance by Transit Service Type

Transit Service	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Met Guideline?
MTS Bus	85.8%	93.0%	89.7%	87.3%	88.4%	Yes
MTS Trolley	94.2%	98.2%	95.7%	95.9%	94.6%	Yes
NCTD BREEZE	88.4%	90.3%	88.2%	84.5%	83.8%	No
NCTD COASTER	93.1%	95.9%	93.2%	94.6%	93.7%	No
NCTD SPRINTER	97.9%	98.2%	97.0%	96.5%	96.3%	No
NCTD FLEX	96.4%	96.6%	84.0%	79.4%	85.2%	N/A
MTS Access	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NCTD LIFT	90.5%	95.2%	82.3%	85.1%	90.1%	No

Span of Service

Span of service refers to the time throughout the day that transit service is provided. The objective of evaluating span of service is to ensure that a transit service is convenient and can accommodate travel during most hours of the day. In particular, the transit operators focus on providing excellent commuter services in major corridors and a limited network of lifeline services. The MTS and NCTD Boards of Directors may also decide to provide higher levels of service in specific areas where there is higher ridership or special market conditions. MTS and NCTD evaluate span of service on an ongoing basis and adjust as needed. Span of service for all transit services can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Frequency of Service (Headways)

The frequency of service influences people's modal choice. The urban core is the area that requires and can support a high level of frequency that will enable passengers to travel spontaneously. Experience in San Diego County and elsewhere shows that better headways almost always result in more riders.

The minimum peak service headway goals are 15 minutes for MTS Bus and NCTD BREEZE, 15 to 30 minutes for Trolley and SPRINTER, and 40 minutes for NCTD COASTER. With the additional investment described in the Regional Plan, headways will be enhanced in the future. The current goals recognize the high cost of reducing headways and consider current funding or facility limitations. Headways for all transit and rail routes can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Fleet Management

Transit operators set and implement policies on vehicle assignments to ensure vehicles continue to be in working condition and provide appropriate capacity given rider demand. Certain services, such as Rapid and Rapid Express, have dedicated fleets. Below are descriptions of each transit operator's vehicle fleet and assigned divisions.

MTS assigns vehicles based on capacity, service needs, and whether the service has a dedicated fleet. Several vehicles for MTS Bus are interlined with one another for efficiency and cost savings. For example, one vehicle may be assigned to several routes in a service day.

The combined MTS Bus and MTS Access fleet contains nearly 800 vehicles which consist of standard buses, articulated buses, minibuses, and over-the-road coaches. Standard buses are 40-foot medium- or heavy-duty transit buses. These buses operate using CNG, diesel fuel, gasoline hybrid engines, and battery electric motors. The articulated buses, which are 60 feet long, operate on urban routes with heavy ridership and Rapid routes. The minibus fleet consists of buses 29 to 32 feet in length and operates paratransit and fixed-route services with lower ridership. Over-the-road coaches are 45-foot buses that are assigned to the Rapid Express commuter service which operates along the I-15 corridor.

These bus fleets are assigned to five different divisions:

- Imperial Avenue Division – operates standard and articulated buses
- Kearny Mesa Division – operates standard and articulated buses
- South Bay Division – operates standard buses. In early January 2015, the Chula Vista Transit Division was incorporated into this facility
- East County Division – operates standard buses, minibuses, and over-the-road coaches
- Copley Park Division – operates minibuses as well as the MTS Access fleet, which consists of gasoline-powered Type II buses

MTS's Rail fleet consists of high-floor Trolley vehicles, low-floor Trolley vehicles, and Vintage Trolley streetcars. In January 2015, a portion of the high-floor fleet was retired, and the completion of the Trolley Renewal Project now allows for low-floor trolleys to operate along all three rail lines. The Vintage Trolley operates on the Silver Line as a supplementary service in a loop around Downtown San Diego. MTS Rail operates out of one location in Downtown San Diego.

NCTD assigns vehicles based on the following: vehicle age and type, fuel capacity and/or route mileage, length of route, frequency of service, capacity, operating conditions (including turns, dips, speeds, and other road conditions), and systemwide service needs. The combined NCTD BREEZE, FLEX, and LIFT fleets contain about 200 vehicles, which consist of standard buses and minibuses. Standard buses are 30- to 40-foot medium- or heavy-duty transit buses. Most of these buses operate using CNG, with a few diesel buses left in the fleet. The minibus fleet consists of vehicles 29 to 32 feet in length and operates demand-response service (NCTD FLEX and LIFT) and fixed-route services with lower ridership.

These bus fleets are assigned to two divisions:

- Oceanside, referred to as the West Division – operates standard and minibuses
- Escondido, referred to as the East Division – operates standard and minibuses

NCTD's Rail fleet consists of COASTER commuter rail vehicles and SPRINTER low-floor light rail Trolley cars. NCTD COASTER operates out of one location north of Oceanside, and SPRINTER operates out of one location in Escondido.

Service Availability

Service availability refers to the distribution of routes within a transit operator’s service area. MTS and NCTD service availability standards are based on population and job density. Routes are distributed such that a certain percentage of residents or jobs are within a specified distance to a transit stop given their location within either an urban, suburban, or rural area; or a high-, medium-, or low-density area. Though MTS and NCTD share the same objective, they have different guidelines to account for their distinct service area and populations served.

MTS operates within the central and southern portion of San Diego County. This service area encompasses approximately three million people residing in a 570-square-mile area of San Diego County, including the cities of Chula Vista, Coronado, El Cajon, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, National City, Poway, Santee, San Diego, and unincorporated areas within the County of San Diego.

- **Objective:** To offer accessible public, lifeline, and specialized transportation services in San Diego to all populations, without discrimination based on race, color, language, national origin, or disability.
- **MTS Guideline:** Provide transit services such that:
 - 80% of residents or jobs in urban areas are within 1/2-mile of a transit stop
 - 100% of residents in suburban areas are within five miles of a transit stop
 - Residents of rural villages are served with lifeline services, which is defined as one return trip at least two days per week
- **Result:** All MTS service availability guidelines were met.

Table 2.15: MTS Service Availability

Service Area		Measure	Guideline	Result	Met Guideline?
Urban	Residents within 1/2-mile of a transit stop		80%	99.2%	Yes
Urban	Jobs within 1/2-mile of a transit stop		80%	95.9%	Yes
Suburban	Residents within five miles of a transit stop		100%	100.0%	Yes
Rural	Return trips per week to destinations from rural villages (Lakeside and Alpine)		2	7	Yes

NCTD operates a suburban–rural system with some pockets of higher density in certain corridors. Compared with the area served by MTS, North San Diego County has many fewer areas of high density. Higher-density areas in North County are along SR 76 and Mission Avenue from Oceanside to Vista and along SR 78 from Oceanside to Escondido passing through Vista and San Marcos. Any pockets of medium and high density along the coastal cities of Carlsbad and Encinitas mainly are along Carlsbad Boulevard/Highway 101 and El Camino Real/Rancho Santa Fe Road. The remainder of the area is considered low-density or rural based on persons per acre.

- **NCTD Guideline:** Provide transit service such that:
 - 90% of housing units in high-density areas (16 or more persons per acre) are within 1/4-mile from a transit stop
 - 75% of housing units in medium-density areas (11 to 15 persons per acre) are within 1/4-mile from a transit stop
 - 50% of housing units in low-density areas (6 to 10 persons per acre) are within 1/4-mile from a transit stop
 - 10% of housing units in rural areas (five or fewer persons per acre) are within 1/4-mile from a transit stop
- **Result:** NCTD met the guidelines for rural and low population densities. However, it fell short of the guidelines for medium and high population densities. Increasing service availability in medium- and high-density areas should be a consideration for NCTD in future changes to the transit network and/or if additional funding becomes available.

Table 2.16: NCTD Service Availability: Housing Units within 1/4 Mile of a Transit Stop

Population Density (Persons per Acre)	Guideline	Result	Met Guideline?
High (16 or more)	90%	77.1%	No
Medium (11 to 15)	75%	65.3%	No
Low (6 to 10)	50%	50.0%	Yes
Rural (5 or fewer)	10%	12.9%	Yes

Distribution of Transit Amenities

Transit amenities refer to items of comfort, convenience, and safety that are available to transit users. Examples of transit amenities include shelters, seating, wayfinding, trash cans, parking lots, and elevators. MTS and NCTD base distribution of amenities on passenger boardings among other considerations. Additional information on transit amenities can be found in [Appendix D](#).

Accessibility

Accessibility specifically refers to the design of transit stops, amenities, and services for access by individuals with disabilities. Evaluating accessibility helps ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to transit.

- **Objective:** To provide fully accessible transit stops.
- **Guideline:** Ensure that 100% of transit stops are fully accessible.
- **Result:** All MTS and NCTD transit centers are fully accessible. However, many individual bus stops within the county were installed prior to the implementation of the ADA in 1990. Both agencies are working toward 100% accessibility and work with developers, cities, and other agencies to improve the bus stop infrastructure within their jurisdictions. Some bus stops also have been removed for being inaccessible.

Average and Peak Weekday Load Factor

Both MTS and NCTD have established load factor guidelines to monitor productivity on transit services and allocate resources appropriately. Load factor measures seat utilization. The load factor for each route is determined by calculating the average percentage of seats occupied for a typical weekday. As ridership is much lower on the weekends, Saturday and Sunday load factors are not included. Load factor is expressed as a decimal point to two decimal places. A load factor of 1.00 means that all the seats on a vehicle are occupied. A load factor of 1.25 means that all seats are occupied and the number of standees on the vehicle is equal to 25% of the number of seats on the vehicle. Peak load factor differs from average weekday load factor in that it pertains to seat utilization during a.m. and p.m. peak travel times only. MTS and NCTD have different standards for peak load factors for each transit service.

FTA Circular 4702.1B requires that all transit operators conduct a thorough analysis of both peak and off-peak vehicle loads to ensure that service is operated equitably on Minority and Non-Minority transit routes. MTS and NCTD's most recent Title VI Program updates include this analysis.

- **Objective:** To monitor productivity on transit services and to allocate resources appropriately during both off-peak and peak travel times.
- **Guideline:** Maintain vehicle loads that do not exceed the standards, which are as follows:
 - For Rapid Express and Circulator bus routes, the standard load factor is 1.00.
 - For MTS Express, Rapid, Urban Frequent, and Urban Standard routes, the standard load factor is 1.50.
 - For Trolley, the standard load factor is 3.00.
 - For NCTD BREEZE Corridor and Core routes, the standard peak load factor is 1.40, and the standard off-peak load factor is 1.10.
 - For NCTD BREEZE Local routes, the standard peak and off-peak load factor is 1.10.
 - For NCTD BREEZE Commuter routes, the standard peak load factor is 1.10.
 - For NCTD FLEX Demand-Response routes, the standard peak and off-peak load factor is 1.00.
 - For NCTD COASTER, the standard peak load factor is 1.25, and the standard off-peak load factor is 1.00.
 - For NCTD SPRINTER, the standard peak load factor is 1.70, and the standard off-peak load factor is 1.10.
- **Result:** All modes met their respective guidelines for both minority and non-minority routes.

Table 2.17: Average Weekday Load Factor, MTS Minority Routes, January 2024

Transit Service	# of Routes	Peak Load Factor	Peak Standard	Off-Peak Standard	Met Guideline?
Rapid Express	0	–	–	1.00	Yes
Express Routes	4	0.26	0.21	1.50	Yes
Light Rail	2	0.48	0.33	3.00	Yes
Rapid Routes	5	0.26	0.21	1.50	Yes
Urban Frequent	23	0.28	0.23	1.50	Yes
Urban Standard	14	0.28	0.23	1.50	Yes
Circulator	7	0.13	0.12	1.00	Yes

Table 2.18: Average Weekday Load Factor, MTS Non-Minority Routes, January 2024

Transit Service	# of Routes	Peak Load Factor	Peak Standard	Off-Peak Standard	Met Guideline?
Rapid Express	2	0.26	0.25	1.00	Yes
Express Routes	1	0.31	0.25	1.50	Yes
Light Rail	1	0.31	0.23	3.00	Yes
Rapid Routes	2	0.31	0.25	1.50	Yes
Urban Frequent	10	0.22	0.18	1.50	Yes
Urban Standard	21	0.22	0.18	1.50	Yes
Circulator	10	0.13	0.13	1.00	Yes
Rural	4	0.36	0.60	No specific goal	Yes

Table 2.19: Average Weekday Load Factor, NCTD Minority Routes, January 2024

Transit Service	# of Routes	Peak Load Factor	Peak Standard	Off-Peak Load Factor	Off-Peak Standard	Met Guideline?
SPRINTER Hybrid Rail	1	0.26	1.70	0.16	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Corridor	1	0.23	1.40	0.16	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Core	5	0.25	1.40	0.20	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Local	11	0.17	1.10	0.12	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Rural	1	0.43	N/A	0.39	N/A	Yes

Table 2.20: Average Weekday Load Factor, NCTD Non-Minority Routes, January 2024

Transit Service	# of Routes	Peak Load Factor	Peak Standard	Off-Peak Load Factor	Off-Peak Standard	Met Guideline?
COASTER Commuter Rail	1	0.10	1.25	0.07	1.00	Yes
BREEZE Corridor	8	0.20	1.40	0.18	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Core	4	0.18	1.40	0.13	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Commuter	4	0.13	1.25	0.11	N/A	Yes
BREEZE Local	4	0.06	1.10	0.07	1.10	Yes
BREEZE Rural	1	0.22	N/A	0.19	N/A	Yes
FLEX Demand-response	3	0.10	1.00	0.09	1.00	Yes

Analysis of Trends and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected most performance measures, with the greatest changes seen in FY 2021. Since then, performance has generally been recovering toward pre-pandemic (FY 2020) levels. Ridership has continued to grow and has eclipsed pre-pandemic levels for certain services, including Trolley and NCTD FLEX. Passengers per revenue mile and passengers per revenue hour experienced similar declines in FY 2021 but have generally increased year-over-year since then. Still, several services, including MTS Bus and NCTD BREEZE, are not meeting the guidelines for passengers per revenue hour.

Revenue hours per employee has been mostly stable over the past five years. However, NCTD COASTER and MTS Access have experienced significant increases since lows in FY 2021.

Farebox recovery ratios decreased sharply in FY 2021 as ridership and fare revenue declined and have generally increased each year since the first year of the pandemic. Still, MTS fixed-route services met the guideline in FY 2024.

Operating cost per passenger generally increased in FY 2021 as ridership declined. However, most services have been trending toward pre-pandemic levels with year-over-year decreases. Operating cost per revenue hour has fluctuated over the past five years with a general trend of gradual increases.

Average speed was generally consistent across most modes over the past five years.

On-time performance for all modes increased from FY 2020 to FY 2021. This could be explained by less congested roads allowing for most consistent transit travel times. Since then, on-time performance for most modes has decreased. Rail modes continue to have stronger on-time performance than modes that travel on roads.

Specialized Transportation Grant Program Performance Evaluation

Background

The SANDAG STGP funds projects and programs that expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities. Approximately every two years, SANDAG conducts an allocation process or call for projects, to award funding through the STGP. Eligible projects include the purchase of accessible vans and buses, coordinated volunteer driver programs, shopping shuttle services, non-emergency medical trips, and transit travel training classes. Eligible applicants include local nonprofit organizations and public agencies. Funding for the STGP comes from two sources: the FTA Section 5310 and the TransNet SMG programs. Since 2006, the program has awarded more than \$38 million in federal grant funds and \$24 million in TransNet funds to support more than 270 specialized transportation projects.

Funding: FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

The Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Formula Program makes federal resources available to assist in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities when the current options are insufficient, not available, or not appropriate to meeting those needs. Eligible activities include but are not limited to capital procurement or vehicle purchases to provide transportation to seniors; mobility-management programs; travel training; volunteer driver programs; and providing on-demand service. Funds are apportioned either to states (for all areas with a population under 200,000) or large urbanized areas (over 200,000 in population) and are based on each geographical area's share of the target populations. Eligible projects also must be included in the Coordinated Plan to be eligible for funding.

In 2014, SANDAG was authorized by the governor of the State of California to be the designated recipient of the Section 5310 funds for the San Diego region. As the designated recipient, SANDAG receives an annual apportionment of funds based on the formula and must distribute the funds to eligible recipients. Eligible recipients include private nonprofit organizations, state or local government authorities, and operators of public transportation.

Current legislation requires recipients to allocate funding to “traditional” and “non-traditional” projects. At least 55% of the program funds must be spent on capital projects that would have been eligible under the former Section 5310 program, which is defined as “public transportation projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable.” These projects are more commonly referred to as traditional projects. The remaining 45% may be allocated for “public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA; public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit; or alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities.” These projects are considered “non-traditional.” A local match is required for each project: 50% local match for operating expenses and 20% local match for capital and mobility management expenses. The San Diego region's FY 2024 apportionment was \$3.5 million.

Funding: TransNet Senior Mini-Grant

Since 1988, TransNet, the half-cent sales tax dedicated to local transportation projects, has been instrumental in expanding the transportation system, reducing traffic congestion, and advancing critical transit projects. In November 2004, 67% of the county's voters approved a 40-year extension of the TransNet Ordinance (to 2048).

The TransNet Ordinance prescribes funding for specific programs through the 40 years. 16.5% of the annual TransNet revenues are dedicated to transit system improvements, the majority of which is allocated by population to the two transit operators. Per the Ordinance, the transit operators must limit the increase of their total operating costs from one fiscal year to the next to no more than the increase in the Consumer Price Index for San Diego County over the same period. If this requirement is not achieved, the operators may not receive any additional funding. However, the operators may also request the exclusion of certain cost increases that were due to external events beyond their control (such as fuel costs). Of the 16.5% of revenues dedicated to transit, 94.25% can be used for either capital or operating needs, 2.5% is designated toward ADA paratransit services, and the remaining 3.25% is reserved for distribution through the SMG program.

The SMG program is a competitive grant program administered by SANDAG. SMG seeks to improve mobility for older adults throughout the county by funding innovative and cost-effective specialized transportation services for older adults. Eligible projects may include senior shuttles, volunteer driver programs, travel training, and the brokerage of transportation services.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the STGP is to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by delivering effective, equitable, environmentally responsible, and coordinated transportation solutions in the San Diego region.

The STGP has the following objectives:

- To fund organizations that have the requisite financial, technical, and managerial capacity to implement cost-effective, innovative, and successful specialized transportation services.
- To apply a social equity lens to ensure that specialized transportation grants benefit those who need them the most.
- To promote healthier air and reduce greenhouse gas emissions region-wide.
- To encourage coordination among specialized transportation providers that reduces duplicative services, enhances efficient service, and expands ridership.

Project Types

Section 5310 funds can be used to support eligible capital, mobility management, and operating, whereas SMG funds can be used to support eligible mobility management and operating projects.

A capital project consists of the acquisition of contracted transportation services or the purchase of personal property such as vehicles, computers and software, maintenance equipment, and communication systems. Examples of eligible capital projects include, but are not limited to:

- Purchase of accessible vehicle(s)
- Acquisition of support facilities and equipment for Section 5310-funded vehicles such as computer hardware and software, transit-related intelligent transportation systems, and dispatch systems
- Acquisition of contracted transportation services

A mobility management project consists of short-range planning and management activities that improve coordination among public transportation and other transportation service providers. Mobility Management techniques may enhance transportation access for populations beyond those served by one organization within the region. For example, a nonprofit agency could receive Section 5310 funding to support the administrative costs of sharing services it provides to its own clientele with others in the target population and coordinate usage of vehicles with other nonprofits, but not the operating costs of service. Mobility management is intended to build coordination among existing specialized and public transportation providers with the result of expanding the availability of service. Examples of eligible mobility management projects include, but are not limited to:

- Operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies, and passengers
- Operation of one-call/one-click traveler services to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements as well as arrangements for customers among supporting programs
- Individual and group travel training instruction that promotes access to specialized and fixed route transportation services
- Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems including geographic information systems mapping, global positioning system technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching, and monitoring technologies, as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system, and single smart customer payment systems

An operating project consists of activities and expenses to operate, maintain, and manage a specialized transportation service for the target population. Examples of eligible operating projects include, but are not limited to:

- Operation of a volunteer driver program
- Operation of a senior shuttle
- Support for taxi voucher programs

Progress Report

STGP projects are currently monitored by measuring the number of “units” delivered. Units may include the number of travel referrals, trainings, and one-way passenger trips provided. 75% of projects awarded STGP operating, mobility management, and capital grants over the six most recently completed funding cycles of the STGP (Cycle 7-Cycle 11) delivered the number of units originally proposed in their respective grantees’ scopes of work. Cycle 12 projects were not included, as they were still ongoing in 2025. Table 2.21 lists the units delivered by projects in each funding cycle.

Table 2.21: Funding Awarded and Units Delivered by STGP Cycle

Funding Cycle	Total Awarded Amount	Units Delivered	Performance Start Year
Cycle 7	\$3,908,097	831,957	2013
Cycle 8	\$5,119,190	1,141,752	2015
Cycle 9	\$5,316,057	1,498,701	2017
Cycle 10	\$4,755,504	1,238,143	2019
CRRSAA & ARPA	\$743,077	138,024	2020
Cycle 11 and 11 Supplemental	\$4,631,086	1,152,044	2021
Total	\$24,473,011	6,000,621	

Notes: Capital Vehicle statistics from prior cycles that started in 2008 were not tracked; This chart does not include eight cycle 7 Job Access and Reverse Commute program grants that were administered by NCTD and MTS, not SANDAG; Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) & American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) were additional non-competitive funds provided for COVID-19 Relief; Cycle 11 does not include two sole source grants to FACT for Mobility Management funding which provided units that were different than any other STGP grantee; The COVID-19 Pandemic was active during Cycle 10-11, causing impacts to transportation delivery.

Operations Costs by Grant Type

STGP awardees must report performance to SANDAG throughout the life of their grant. This performance information is included in the STGP Monitoring Checklist. The Monitoring Checklist serves as a report card for SANDAG staff and grantees on grant performance and may be considered in the evaluation of grantees applying for funding in a future STGP call for projects. Connecting information on an applicant’s recent performance on one or more prior grants to the applicant’s proposed grant(s) is intended to discourage poor performance and reward strong performance.

One performance measure used in operating grants is the cost per one-way passenger trip (cost per trip), defined as the sum of grant funds and required minimum matching funds divided by the total number of one-way passenger trips. Cost per trip may vary with the level of customer assistance, trip distance and geography, whether drivers are contracted or volunteers, whether WAVs are used, and many other factors. A selection of Cycle 12 operating grant invoices from quarter three of FY 2025 illustrates typical costs per trip by service type.

Table 2.22: Cost per Trip by Service Type

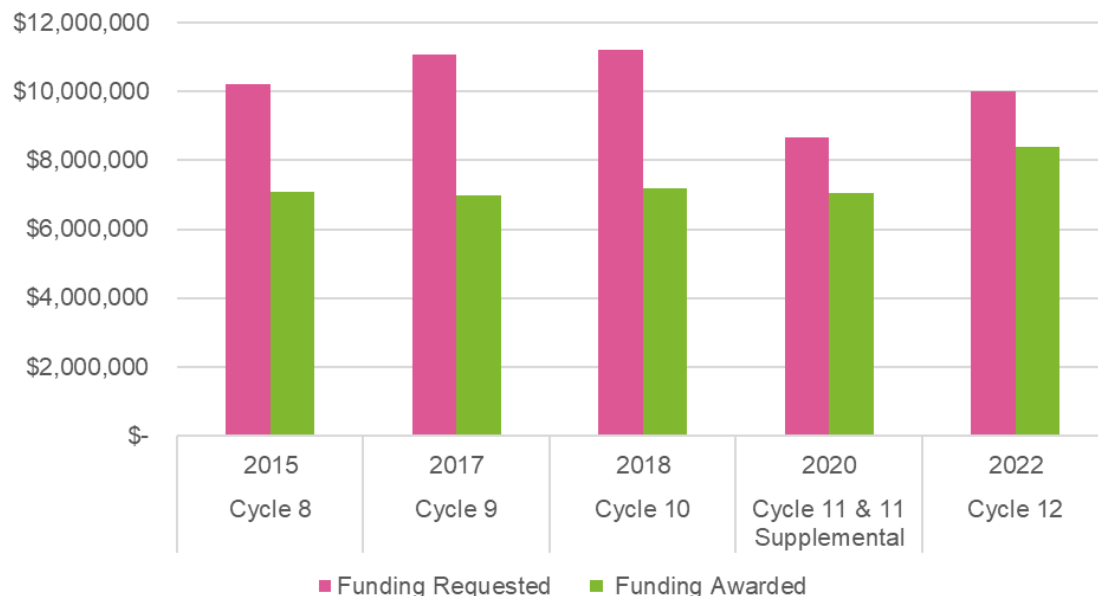
Service Type	Average Cost Per Trip (Invoice Amount Only)	Average Cost Per Trip (Invoice & Match)
Contract Providers	\$10.98	\$17.79
Volunteer Drivers	\$5.66	\$8.61
Volunteer Drivers and TNCs	\$6.17	\$14.43
Volunteer Drivers, Taxi Vouchers, Fixed Route Tickets	\$0.75	\$1.04
Average (Weighted by Number of Trips)	\$6.70	\$12.65

STGP Funding Characteristics

For the past decade, the STGP has been oversubscribed. On average, SANDAG receives applications for 40% more funding than the agency has available, as shown in Figure 2.7, emphasizing the region's demand for additional specialized transportation funding. There is a disconnect between the type of funding available with the type of funding needed. 60% of the funding requested through STGP is for operating projects, as shown in Figure 2.8. This is in juxtaposition with the Section 5310 program categorizing operating expenses as “non-traditional projects” which are limited to total no more than 45% of the total funding available.

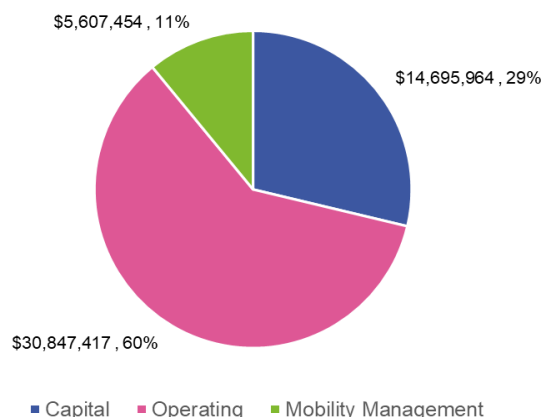
Non-profits are the most common applicant type for STGP, as shown in Figure 2.9. Other applicants are jurisdiction, transit operators, and private transportation providers.

Figure 2.7: STGP Applications Requested Vs. Awarded, Cycles 8-12



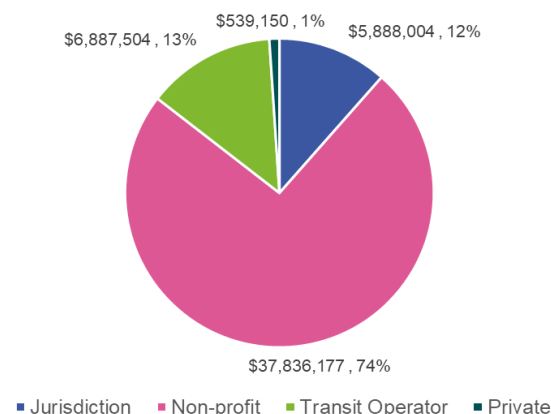
Source: SANDAG STGP, 2025

Figure 2.8: Requested Funding by STGP Project Type, Cycles 8-12



Source: SANDAG STGP, 2025

Figure 2.9: Requested Funding by Agency Type, Cycles 8-12



Source: SANDAG STGP, 2025

Opportunities to Explore Unconventional Funding Sources

While conventional funding sources such as Section 5310 and SMG remain the foundation of the STGP, these programs alone are not sufficient to meet growing regional demand. To ensure long-term stability, SANDAG and its partners can explore unconventional funding mechanisms that diversify and strengthen the program's financial base.

Philanthropic partnerships will continue to play a supporting role, particularly when local non-profit transportation providers use private donations and fundraising to match public funds. However, philanthropy alone is not likely to meaningfully expand total resources. SANDAG can build on successful regional models that combine public, private, and philanthropic resources under a single administrative framework.

One promising approach mirrors SANDAG's Regional Housing Acceleration Program. Through that initiative, SANDAG contributed Regional Early Action Program funds to the San Diego Foundation, which then augmented the pool with additional philanthropic and impact-investment resources. The foundation administers the program, matches projects to funding sources, and reinvests returned or unspent funds.

A similar model could support specialized transportation through a Mobility Access Fund. SANDAG could provide the seed capital from potential sources like TransNet or other one-time sources while a foundation would attract complementary funding from healthcare, philanthropic, or corporate contributors. A comparable approach has been successful in Austin, where the region's Transit Empowerment Fund—established through a partnership between the transit agency and local nonprofits—uses public and private contributions to expand mobility options for low-income residents. By pooling resources and reinvesting repayments, a similar fund for the San Diego region could generate steady, flexible revenue to supplement the STGP and reduce administrative burden for both SANDAG and its grant recipients.

Beyond this pooled fund concept, SANDAG could also explore additional unconventional mechanisms that build partnerships around the value created by specialized transportation. Many sectors, particularly healthcare, human services, and large employers, benefit directly when older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income residents have reliable transportation. Reductions in missed medical appointments, improvement in workforce participation, and increased community engagement all provide value for organizations. By developing formal partnerships that recognize and reinvest a portion of that value, SANDAG can extend the reach of existing public funds while improving outcomes for partner organizations.

Potential funding models could include health and human services partnerships in which health systems, Medi-Cal managed care plans, and social service agencies would co-fund trips that support preventive care and reduce costly emergency interventions. Corporate and institutional sponsorships could engage hospitals, universities, and employers whose clients, students, or workers depend on specialized transportation, positioning their support as both a social investment and a service enhancement. Funding mechanisms such as social impact bonds or similar pay-for-success models could allow private or philanthropic investors to fund expanded mobility options upfront, with repayment tied to measurable improvements such as reduced healthcare costs, improved employment access, or increased independence for riders.

Together, these approaches would help capture and reinvest the community value generated by each trip, strengthening the case for sustainable, cross-sector investment in specialized transportation.

Consolidated Transportation Services Agency Performance Evaluation

History of CTSA's in California

Effective coordination can improve transportation service delivery and cost-effectiveness, eliminate gaps in service, and remove real or perceived transportation barriers. In 1979, the Social Service Transportation Improvement Act, California Assembly Bill 120 (AB 120), provided for the establishment of CTSA's in each California county. The purpose of AB 120 is to promote the coordination of specialized transportation so that the following benefits can be realized:

- Combined purchasing of necessary equipment to achieve cost savings through bulk purchases
- Adequate training of drivers to ensure the safe operation of vehicles, as proper driver training promotes lower insurance costs and encourages use of the service
- Centralized dispatching of vehicles to allow for efficient use of vehicles
- Centralized maintenance of vehicles to allow for adequate and routine vehicle-maintenance scheduling
- Centralized administration of various social service transportation programs to eliminate duplicative and costly administrative organizations, which allows social service agencies to specialize and respond to specific social needs

- Identification and consolidation of all existing funding sources for social service transportation services to provide more efficient and cost-effective use of scarce dollars, as consolidation of categorical program funds can foster eventual elimination of unnecessary and unwarranted program constraints

Funding: Transportation Development Act

The TDA of 1971 provides funding to be allocated to public transit and non-transit-related purposes that comply with regional transportation plans. 5% of the annual TDA apportionment (TDA Article 4.5) funds Community Transit Services. This includes services for people who cannot otherwise use conventional transit services (such as people with disabilities). Eligible applicants for this funding are cities, counties, public transit operators, and the CTSA. According to SANDAG [Board Policy No. 027](#), 2% of the total available under TDA Section 4.5, about \$190,000 annually, is set aside to support the CTSA for the San Diego region. The remaining funds in this section are divided between MTS and NCTD service areas based on a formula to support their respective ADA paratransit services.

CTSA Programs in Other Regions in California

The designation of a CTSA provides an RTPA the opportunity to directly influence the implementation of transportation coordination strategies. However, AB 120 is broad enough that each RTPA in California manages its CTSA differently, with some RTPAs even designating multiple CTSA for the same geographic area. In most cases, the RTPA competitively procures a qualified agency and then assigns responsibilities through a contract.

To understand the roles, responsibilities, and practices of other CTSA across California, SANDAG examined CTSA structures implemented by 13 RTPAs across the state and conducted interviews with representatives from five of those regions.

Research focused on RTPA websites to look for information about their CTSA, specialized transportation, mobility management, dial-a-ride, paratransit, or other related terms. RTPA budgets were reviewed to understand how much money each agency was allocating to their CTSA(s) as well as the sources of that funding. The online review identified a range of existing and former CTSA models to capture the spectrum of potential structures and responsibilities, rather than evaluating every CTSA statewide.

Semi-structured virtual interviews were conducted with RTPA staff representatives to address information gaps and gain insight into which components of their CTSA programs were particularly effective or ineffective. With most RTPAs, CTSA designations and responsibilities have changed over time to respond to needs for accountability and performance. In multiple cases, the impetus to review and update CTSA responsibilities came from the process of updating the respective region's Coordinated Plan. Responsibilities identified by RTPA staff as most successful were considered representative of best practices.

Activities undertaken by CTSA vary widely across agencies. In some cases, such as Sunline Transit Agency in eastern Riverside County, the CTSA designation is assigned to the local transit operator. In these cases, operation of complementary paratransit service is the only "coordination" activity. In other cases, such as Dignity Health Connected Living in Shasta County, the CTSA is a nonprofit organization that operates or contracts to provide social service transportation for specific population groups.

Most CTSA reviewed receive between \$300,000 and \$1 million in annual funding from their RTPA for CTSA duties. This amount contrasts with FACT's annual allocation from SANDAG of approximately \$190,000. A common funding source is TDA Article 4.5, which supports organizations such as Paratransit, Inc. in Sacramento, Omnitrans in San Bernardino, and Humboldt Transit Authority. Local sales tax revenues also serve as a major funding source, allocated to Access Services, Inc. by LA Metro, Riverside Transit Agency, and Monterey Salinas Transit. Section 5310 may be used to fund CTSA activities and currently provide funding for Solano Mobility and MOVE in Stanislaus County. However, Section 5310 funding used for CTSA activities is generally awarded through a competitive process.

Research revealed that CTSA priorities and responsibilities varied from region to region, but some common practices include the following:

- Clearly defined coordination activities, such as training drivers and purchasing and maintaining vehicles on behalf of multiple providers, that respond to the needs of the region's transportation providers
- Performance measures, such as the number of rides provided via referrals from the CTSA, the number of services provided by the CTSA for transportation providers, and the net impact on administrative overhead for transportation providers, that allow the RTPA to determine the CTSA's effectiveness
- Limited term contracts, such as four to five years in length, that balance the administrative burden of procurement with cost-effective services achieved through competition
- Adequate and reliable funding that encourages the CTSA to prioritize its coordination duties
- Operating a call center to refer members of the public to effective and cost-efficient transportation providers to ensure that riders receive the appropriate level of assistance and public funding is well-utilized
- Convening social service transportation providers to discuss challenges and opportunities for collaboration
- Offering travel training for members of the public to facilitate riders' self-sufficiency where possible
- Preparing a "rider's guide" that describes the role of the CTSA, explains how to ride fixed-route transit, and introduces specialized transportation providers
- Maintaining a webpage with updated information on transportation providers and contact information

The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) provides a useful case study of how an RTPA can improve its CTSA program in response to identified deficiencies. In 1990, Humboldt Community Access and Resource Center, Inc. (HCAR) was designated as the CTSA for Humboldt County. In 2015, HCAOG hired the consulting firm Innovative Paradigms to evaluate the program. The review found that HCAOG's agreements with HCAR lacked clear expectations, making it difficult to measure performance. To improve accountability, HCAOG proposed contract revisions linking payments to specific performance outcomes. When HCAR was unable to meet the new standards, both organizations ended the agreement and CTSA designation.

Shortly thereafter, the Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) expressed interest in becoming the CTSA. In 2016, HCAOG and HTA reached an agreement designating HTA as the CTSA for up to five years, with the option to renew based on performance reviews. Since then, HCAOG has provided HTA with TDA funding, and HTA has offered dial-a-ride service while coordinating with social service transportation providers on driver training and joint equipment purchases.

This case illustrates that a CTSA designation can be reassigned to reflect changing RTPA priorities and that contracts can be structured to strengthen accountability by tying funding to measurable performance.

CTSA in the San Diego Region

SANDAG's contract designating FACT as the CTSA for San Diego County was initiated in July 2006, at which time NCTD agreed to support FACT with establishing the CTSA functions for the first year. The contract was first amended in October 2006 to revise information relating to the FACT Board of Directors. Under this first amendment, FACT ensures that a Transportation Committee member sits on FACT's Board. The contract was amended a second time in June 2019 to reflect recommendations from a TDA triennial performance audit. Most notably, the recommendations were to add performance measures that would be reported and tracked annually.

The core mission of FACT is "assisting San Diego County residents with barriers to mobility to achieve independence through coordination of transportation services". FACT's responsibilities as a CTSA are summarized through the following core functions and administrative tasks.

Core Functions

1. Provide comprehensive information and referral assistance on transportation for seniors, persons with disabilities, and other transportation disadvantaged populations.
2. Maintain an active (minimum four meetings per year) advisory council for the CTSA that can serve as a forum for local health and social service transportation agencies to coordinate and disseminate specialized transportation information inclusive of, but not limited to:
 - Legislative updates
 - Alternate transportation options
 - Funding opportunities
 - Service gaps

- CTSA policies and procedures
- 3. Maintain a public webpage that hosts a comprehensive and up to date database of specialized transportation providers, including options for seniors and persons with disabilities. The database is to be used for information and referral assistance as well as to be provided to SANDAG for use in specialized transportation planning.
- 4. Identify and pursue longer-term funding sources to leverage and support CTSA-related activities.

The CTSA is also required to complete the following administrative tasks:

- Submit an annual certified fiscal audit to SANDAG and the State Controller within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year, pursuant to the Public Utilities Code 99245 and the SANDAG TDA claim procedures.
- Submit an annual report of its operations, consistent with the Uniform System of Accounts, to SANDAG and the State Controller within 90 days after the end of the fiscal year as required by state law and the SANDAG TDA claim procedures.
- Submit electronic quarterly operating statistics consistent with the regional reporting system if CTSA provides service directly.
- Develop and annually update a strategic business plan, work plan, and budget, and provide three hard copies and one electronic copy of the plan to SANDAG prior to the beginning of each fiscal year. The strategic business plan must clearly delineate Core Functions from Other Functions and FACT activities, and it must also provide a summary of accomplishments funded by the prior year's TDA claim.
- Ensure that elected officials from municipal or county positions in San Diego County hold at least two seats on the FACT Board. This will be in addition to one director who is a sitting member of the SANDAG Transportation Committee and is appointed to this position by the Chair of the SANDAG Board. Additionally, the CTSA shall ensure that local elected officials are involved to the maximum extent possible in the development of the CTSA action plans and other local plans necessary to fulfill the coordination provisions of the California Social Service Transportation Improvement Act, and to provide for the successful implementation of consolidated transportation services. The CTSA shall ensure that the makeup of the FACT Board demonstrates countywide geographic and partner representation.

Current FACT Contracts

SANDAG's CTSA contract with FACT has no end date and was most recently amended in June 2019. Among other things, the 2019 amendment established performance measures. FACT is evaluated on its performance over the prior fiscal year in meeting its core functions, and this progress toward meeting the performance measures is reported to the Transportation Committee. FACT submits quarterly reports to SANDAG to assist in this evaluation. FACT is responsible for implementing the Core Functions listed above. However, the contract allows for the completion of other functions if directed by SANDAG. Including other functions in the CTSA scope of work is not currently tied to additional funding. Dedicated funding for the CTSA contract comes entirely from SANDAG's TDA Article 4.5 apportionment. Pursuant to SANDAG [Board Policy No. 027](#), SANDAG dedicates 2% of apportioned TDA Article 4.5 funds in San Diego to the CTSA under contract, about \$190,000 in FY 2026. FACT historically competed for additional funding for mobility management through SANDAG's STGP. Mobility management grants effectively augment FACT's CTSA role with additional funding and separate, limited-term contracts. In STGP cycles 11, 12, and 13, SANDAG awarded mobility management grants to FACT through sole source contracts that bypassed the normal STGP competitive process.

Limiting the CTSA budget to the TDA Article 4.5 apportionment and supplementing CTSA/mobility management activities with a combination of competitive and sole source contracts creates issues for SANDAG, the CTSA, and the STGP. Oversight of the CTSA program is divided between multiple contracts, resulting in a piecemeal approach to the scope of services and performance monitoring. Contract administration also becomes more difficult with multiple contracts with different reporting frequencies and auditing requirements. The indefinite contract structure is not consistent with SANDAG's current procurement best practices which require a competitive process and a beginning and end date for all executed contracts. The fragmented funding approach also hinders the ability of the CTSA to plan its finances for upcoming years and prevents other STGP applicants from knowing how much funding will be available to them through the competitive process. Direct allocations through the Section 5310 program for CTSA activities have been done sporadically, making it difficult to predict the amount of funding that will be available competitively. The direct allocation method for 5310 would be better justified as part of a longer-term strategy to provide consistent levels of funding available for both the CTSA and STGP applicants over time.

In addition to CTSA and mobility management contracts, FACT has received operations funding for RideFACT and RideFACTNow services through SANDAG's STGP and Access for All Grant Program (AFA) programs. These additional services, which have also been funded through a combination of competitive and sole-source contracts, provide WAV rides across all of San Diego County for thousands of older adults and people with disabilities. FACT's operating model is centered on a brokerage structure that contracts primarily with for-profit transportation providers and assigns trips to the lowest-cost operator for each request. While these additional operations are permissible and have separate contracts, they create the potential for conflict with CTSA and mobility management responsibilities.

A primary example of structural conflict involves FACT's referral, coordination, and brokerage operation roles. The CTSA contract requires FACT to "provide comprehensive information and referral assistance on transportation for seniors, persons with disabilities, and other transportation disadvantaged populations." Additionally, FACT's STGP cycle 12 mobility management contracts require FACT to "promote referral coordination with regional agencies and track referral outcomes." However, FACT's operating contracts prioritize operating efficiency and have performance measures focused on the number of trips completed at a specified cost per trip. If FACT delivers fewer trips or trips at higher costs than specified in the contract, this is considered negative performance and may impact FACT's competitiveness for future competitive grant cycles. The potential to improve operational efficiency could create an incentive that unintentionally favors referrals to FACT's RideFACT brokerage service, rather than distributing referrals evenly among available providers.

Participation by nonprofit and community-based transportation providers in the brokerage has also been limited historically. There is limited incentive for FACT to prioritize activities that improve coordination among transportation providers outside of the brokerage (a mobility management contract responsibility). This dynamic reflects a broader issue with how coordination outcomes are defined and funded. The statutory intent of the CTSA model emphasizes efficiency through coordination; however, current funding mechanisms and performance metrics tend to reward direct service outputs rather than the systemic benefits of coordination. Moving forward, SANDAG and its partners will work to better align CTSA performance expectations with coordination outcomes.

CTSA Performance Evaluation

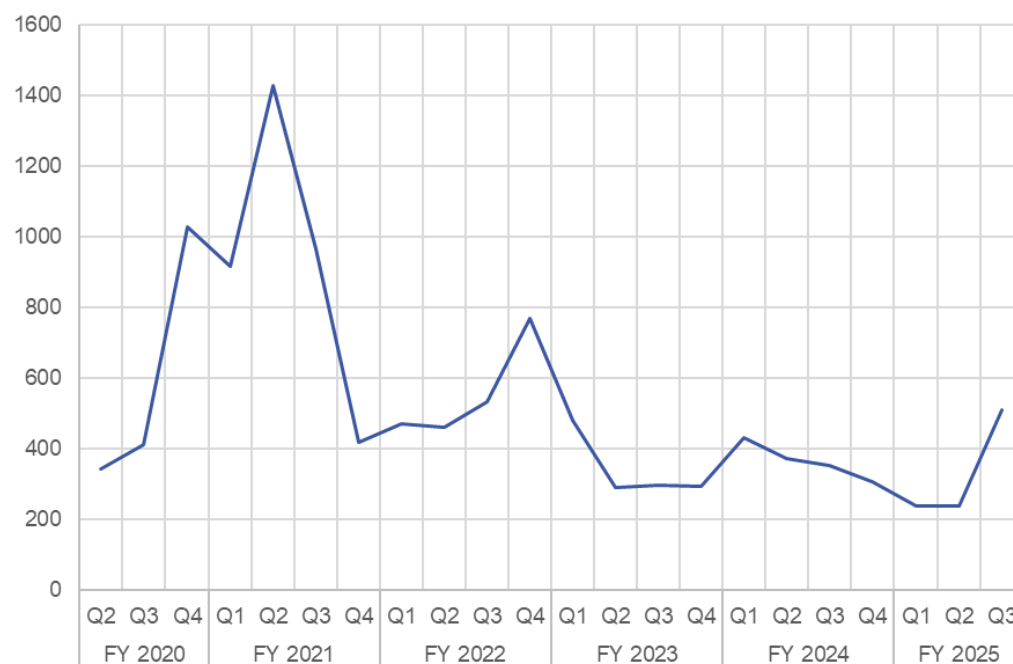
The 2019 amendment to the CTSA contract established performance measures for each of FACT's core functions. FACT is evaluated annually on its performance over the prior fiscal year during the TDA claims process, and progress is reported to the SANDAG Transportation Committee. Table 2.23 outlines the performance measures, and Figures 2.10 through 2.16 display the performance since FACT began providing reports to SANDAG in the second quarter of FY 2020.

Table 2.23: CTSA Functions and Performance Measures

Core Function	Data	Performance Measures
Provide information and referral assistance	Number of Referrals	100% referrals reported by agency
Facilitate at least four Council on Access and Mobility (CAM) meetings annually	CAM Meeting Agendas	Report agenda and attendance from each CAM meeting
Maintain a public webpage hosting a comprehensive and up to date database of specialized transportation providers, including options for seniors and persons with disabilities	- Number of web hits to FACT website 100% - documentation of web hits - Number of web hits for “Find a Ride” page - Number of providers in the database	100% documentation of web hits - Maintain contact with 100% of the agencies in the database each year
Increase/leverage available funding for senior/disabled transportation in the San Diego Region	- List of identified sources of funding - Number of applications to SANDAG, Department of Transportation, and other funding sources	- Update funding inventory at least annually - Provide list of annual applications submitted and dollar amount of successful applications

As shown in Figure 2.10, the number of referrals provided by FACT has varied over time, reaching a maximum of 1,429 in quarter two of FY 2021. The first two quarters of FY 2025 had the fewest number of referrals, with 240 and 238 in the first and second quarters, respectively. The most recent quarter included an uptick in referrals to 512.

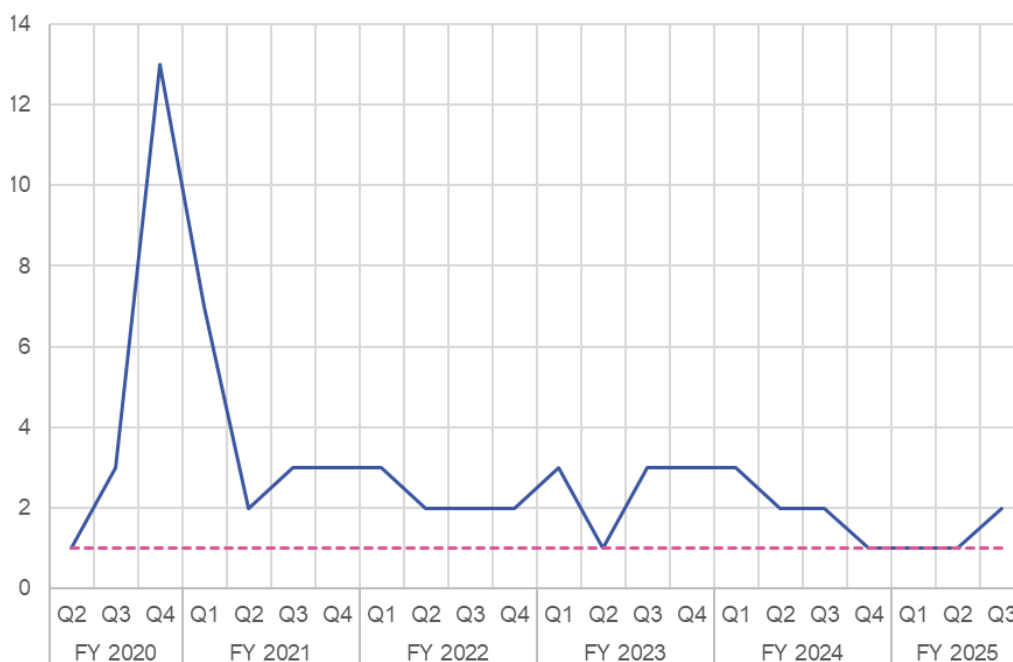
Figure 2.10: Number of Referrals Provided by FACT by Quarter



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

As shown in Figure 2.11, FACT hosted frequent CAM meetings during the early days of the pandemic, hosting as many as 13 in the fourth quarter of FY 2020. CAM meetings have resumed a more regular schedule of one to three meetings per quarter in recent years.

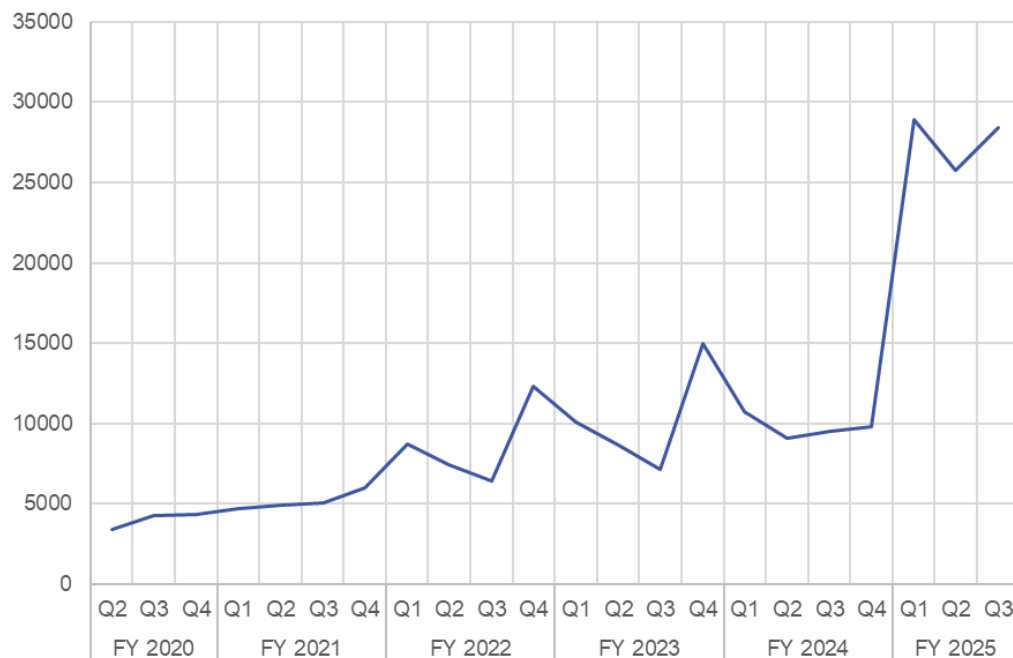
Figure 2.11: Number of CAM Meetings Hosted by FACT by Quarter



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

As shown in Figure 2.12, the number of hits on the FACT website has generally increased over time, starting with a low of 3,404 in the second quarter of FY 2020 and reaching a peak of 28,932 in the first quarter of FY 2025. Note that FACT revised their methodology for reporting hits on their website, with the new methodology applying for quarters one through three of FY 2025.

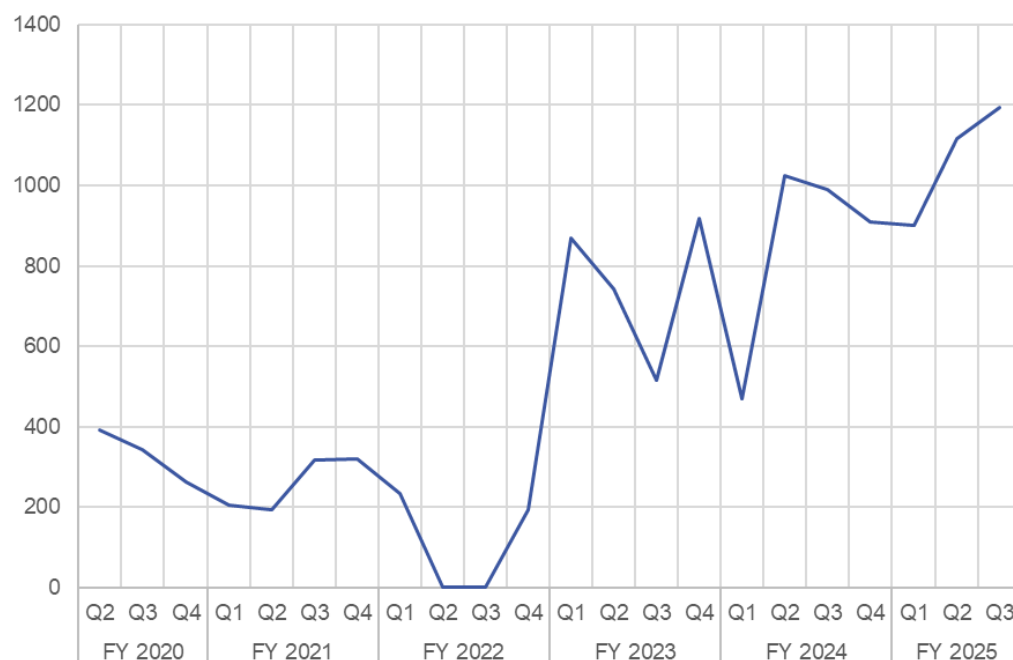
Figure 2.12: Number of Hits on the FACT Website by Quarter



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

As shown in Figure 2.13, the number of hits on the “Find a Ride” page on the FACT website has varied over time. After starting with 391 hits in the second quarter of FY 2020, the number of hits was stable or declining for about two years. During FY 2022, the “Find a Ride” page was being updated. This resulted in two quarters in which FACT reported zero hits on the page. After the update, the number of hits has been consistently higher and generally increasing to a peak of 1,195 in the third quarter of FY 2025.

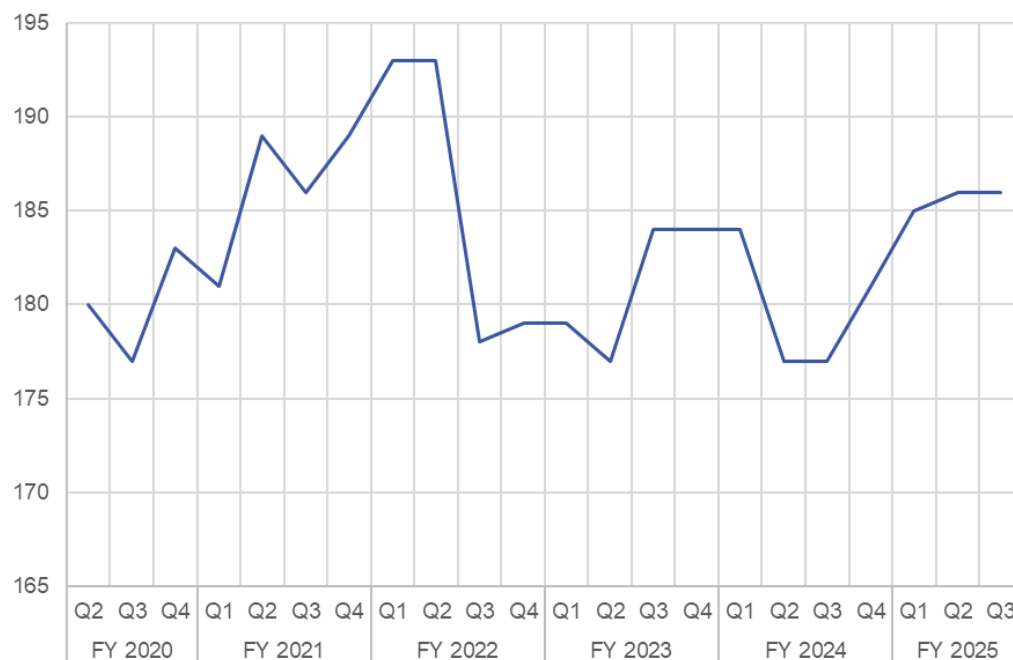
Figure 2.13: Number of Hits on the “Find a Ride” Page on FACT Website by Quarter



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

As shown in Figure 2.14, the number of agencies in FACT's provider database has been consistent, between 177 and 193 agencies. A list of organizations included in the database is included in [Appendix D](#).

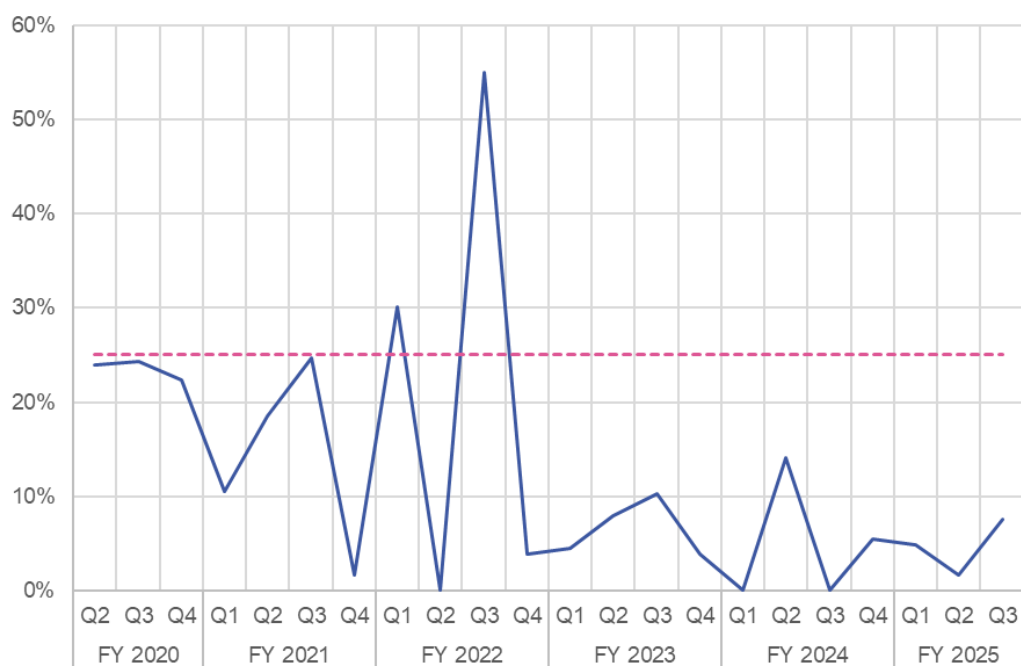
Figure 2.14: Number of Agencies in FACT Provider Database by Quarter



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

As shown in Figure 2.15, the number of agencies in the FACT provider database contacted by quarter has varied widely. In three quarters of reporting, zero agencies were contacted by FACT. The number of agencies contacted reached a peak of 98 in the third quarter of FY 2022. Figure 2.15 displays the number of agencies contacted as a percentage of the total number of agencies. A threshold line of 25% has been added to the chart for reference. This corresponds to the average share of agencies in the database that FACT would need to contact in each quarter to maintain contact with 100% of agencies in the database each year.

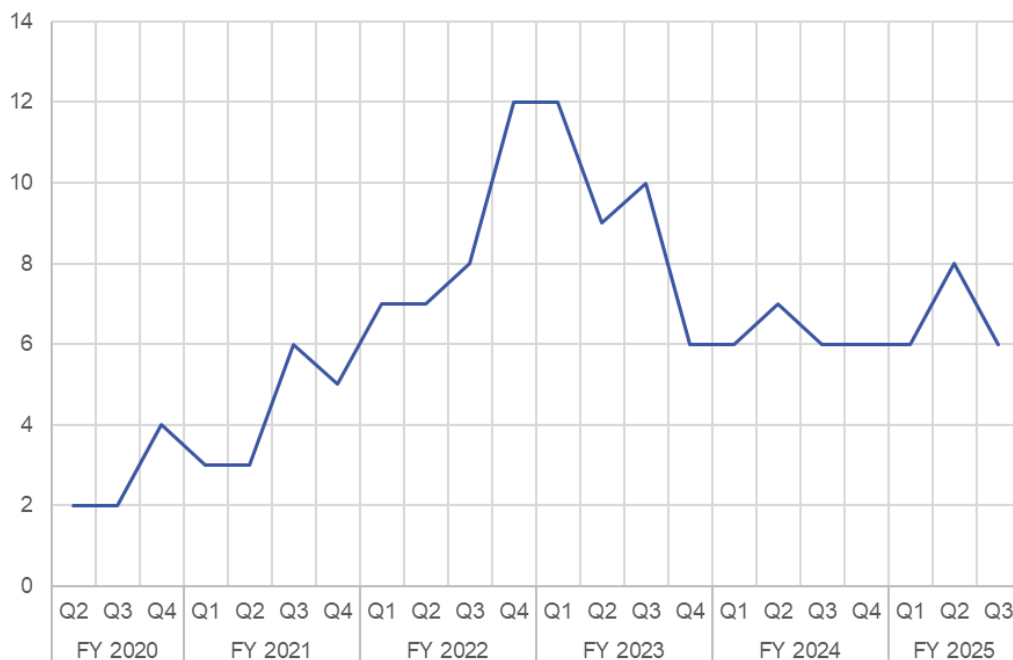
Figure 2.15: Number of Agencies in FACT Provider Database Contacted by Quarter as a Percentage



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

As shown in Figure 2.16, the number of funding applications submitted annually by FACT was increasing for nearly three years and has been lower since. In the second quarter of FY 2022, FACT reported that it had submitted two funding applications in the past year. The number of applications submitted annually reached a peak of 12 in the fourth quarter of FY 2022 and first quarter of FY 2023 before returning to six to eight applications over the past year and a half.

Figure 2.16: Number of Funding Applications Submitted by FACT in the Past Year, as Reported by Quarter



Source: SANDAG Compilation of FACT Quarterly Reports, 2025

Analysis of Trends and Discussion

The performance evaluation shows that FACT is generally meeting its core functions. The number of hits on FACT's website and "Fide a Ride" page have been increasing, suggesting that these are useful resources. FACT has also been consistently convening the CAM, suggesting that some of the region's specialized transportation providers are coordinating and discussing ways to meet rider needs. Conversely, FACT has not been consistently contacting the agencies in its database on a quarterly basis. The downward trend in the number of agencies in FACT's database that have been contacted quarterly suggests that the database may be losing accuracy and utility over time. Not every required performance measure includes a threshold, so it is not possible to determine in every case if the performance is adequate for achieving SANDAG's transportation coordination goals.

TDA Triennial Performance Audit

As a recipient of TDA funds, FACT is required to undergo independent triennial performance audits. This process is separate from the performance evaluation earlier in this chapter, which focused more on achievement from quarter to quarter. The FY 2022–2024 TDA Triennial Performance Audit Report identified and cataloged each compliance requirement applicable to FACT, as outlined in Caltrans' Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities, in alignment with relevant sections of California's Public Utilities Code, California Code of Regulations, and the terms of FACT's contract with SANDAG. In addition to two findings related to the timely submission of reports, the final audit report, excerpted below, included the following observation related to the CTSA contract:

Observation 01 - Limited Outcome-Based Performance Reporting

SANDAG should require FACT to incorporate outcome-based performance indicators, such as call responsiveness, trip fulfillment rates, and service denials, into its quarterly reporting. These metrics are critical for evaluating the effectiveness of centralized service delivery and determining whether the needs of transportation-disadvantaged populations are being met.

Currently, FACT's quarterly reporting focuses primarily on output metrics, such as the number of referrals made, rather than on outcomes that reflect service quality and impact. While the report provides valuable insights on FACT's service reach, the lack of outcome-based data limits SANDAG's ability to assess the actual performance and effectiveness of the centralized coordination model.

Recommendation

SANDAG should require FACT to incorporate outcome-based performance measures into its regular reporting. Metrics such as call wait times, successful ride fulfillment rates, and service denials should be tracked and reported alongside existing referral volume data. This would enhance visibility into the effectiveness of centralized administration and support continuous improvement in service coordination.

Management Response

SANDAG agrees with the observation. SANDAG supports tracking and reporting data that increases transparency into operations and that would allow for more thorough assessment of the performance and effectiveness of the centralized coordination model. SANDAG will work with the Office of General Counsel to determine how performance metrics can be added to FACT's reporting requirements through an amendment to their service agreement.

Responsible Party: SANDAG Senior Director Regional Planning

Implementation Date: June 2026

One reason this recommendation may be challenging to implement immediately is that the CTSA contract does not expire. SANDAG and FACT would need to come to mutual agreement to make these changes. Defining a limited term in future CTSA contracts would provide regular opportunities to update contract terms to make improvements such as outcome-based performance measures and ensure proper oversight.

Costs of Various Transportation Services

The Coordinated Plan evaluates and contains strategies related to a variety of transportation services. Each service operates with unique operations characteristics, in a particular geographical area, and offers some amount of assistance for older adults and people with disabilities. An efficient transportation system would provide the greatest number of rides, of sufficient convenience and comfort, in the right place, at the right time, with the appropriate level of assistance, and at the lowest cost. Transportation coordination strategies aim to achieve this level of efficiency. As noted in the STGP Performance Evaluation section, cost per one-way passenger trip is one way to compare various service types. Table 2.24 provides such a comparison.

Table 2.24: Cost per One-Way Trip by Service Type

Service Type	Trips Provided Annually	Average Cost Per Trip*
Fixed-Route Transit	82,940,959	\$5.79
Paratransit	419,343	\$76.92
STGP Operations	274,232	\$12.65
AFA Operations	10,779	\$167.25

Source: TDA Quarterly reports from MTS and NCTD for FY 2024, SANDAG internal reports for STGP Cycle 12, AFA Cycle 1. STGP operations include rides in a mix of WAVs and non-WAVs

**Average cost per trip is gross, includes matching requirements, and excludes fare revenue*

Efforts to encourage people to use less costly services may improve efficiency and allow for more trips to be provided overall. However, it is necessary to balance the desire to make the most of limited resources with the need for services that meet people's needs. This means that WAVs would need to be available for people who use wheelchairs, but they need not be used for all trips and all riders. One potential area for improving efficiency is accommodating trips taken by people eligible for paratransit and AFA services with less costly alternatives. Paratransit is federally required to be available. However, it could be less expensive to provide if other transportation services met riders' needs and were available to meet the demand. If fixed-route transit or STGP operations could accommodate any of those paratransit trips through policy changes or agreements between the transportation providers, the overall cost to the region would be reduced.

Chapter 3: Community Outreach and Public Involvement

This chapter provides an overview of the outreach that was conducted as part of the development of the Coordinated Plan. Outreach included participation by older adults, people with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers, and other members of the public. The chapter also highlights key feedback received and incorporated into the plan.

Public and Partner Involvement

Public outreach to a wide variety of organizations is required for the development of the Coordinated Plan. Federal guidance states that the Coordinated Plan should be developed through a process that includes representatives from public, private, and nonprofit transportation providers, as well as participation by members of the public. Furthermore, the guidelines stipulate that members of the public should include representatives of the targeted populations, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income persons. The guidance also recommends consultation with an expansive list of partners throughout all phases of the Coordinated Plan development. Additional comments from community members and board members from different SANDAG working groups provided useful feedback for the development of the Coordinated Plan. A summary of the feedback received from the various working groups can be found in [Appendix A](#).

A select number of partners were invited to participate in the project development team (PDT) to provide specific input on the Coordinated Plan. The Coordinated Plan PDT includes staff members from MTS, NCTD, SANDAG, CTSA, and FACT.

The primary responsibility of the PDT was to discuss data requests and provide feedback on the goals, strategies, and recommendations to be included in the Coordinated Plan. Additionally, transit staff from both MTS and NCTD provided key performance measures used in [Chapter 2](#). Transit agency staff members also provided each agency's SIP included in [Appendix C](#).

Outreach Efforts

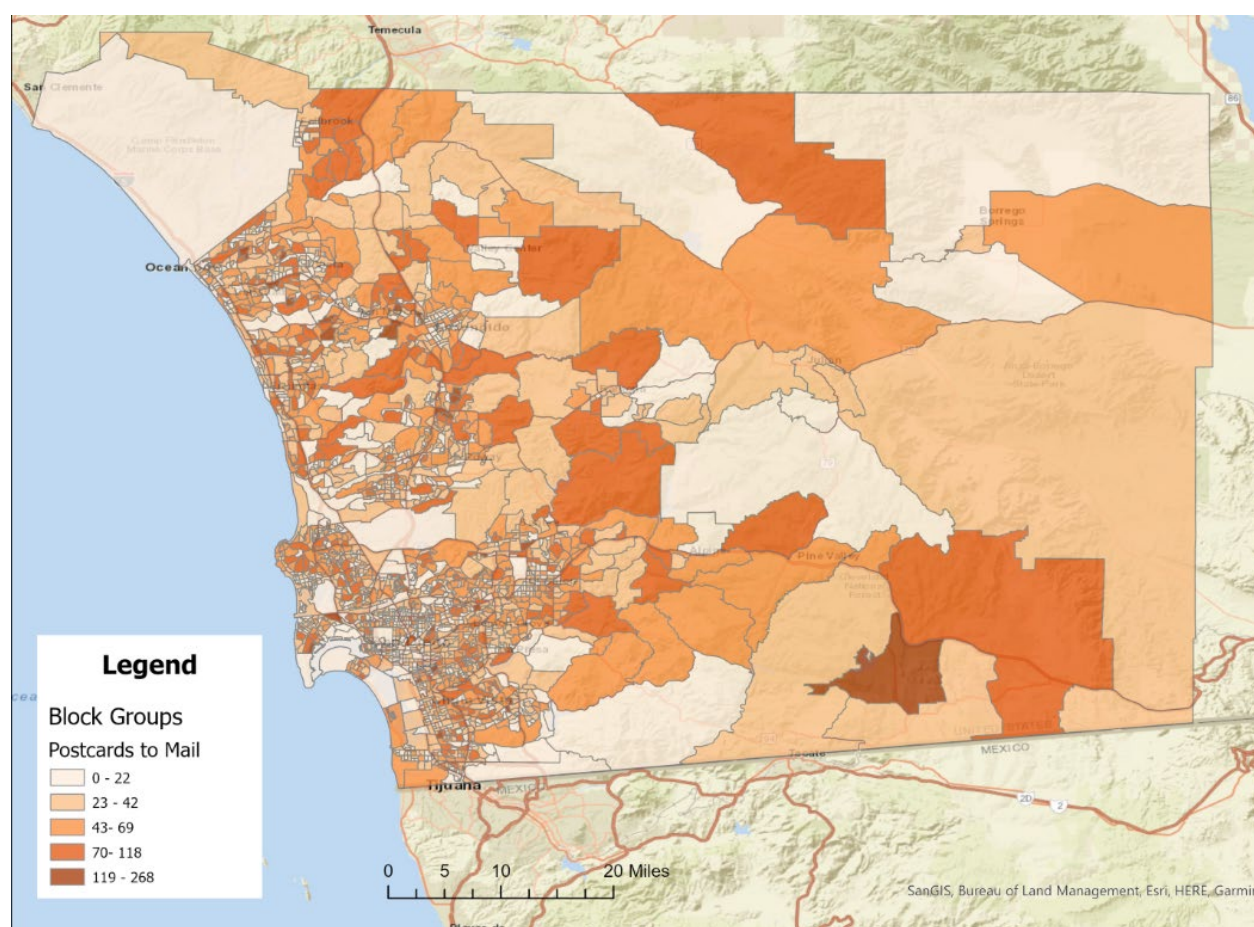
Past coordinated plans have used a qualitative questionnaire to solicit input on different topics related to transportation such as accessibility, availability, connectivity, coordination, affordability, and safety. This update to the Coordinated Plan sought proposals from qualified consultants to conduct a comprehensive survey with a statistically significant sample size to better understand that needs of older adults and people with disabilities. In addition to a survey, SANDAG received feedback from both transportation providers and riders through focus groups.

Coordinated Plan Survey

Older adults and people with disabilities were invited to participate in a survey about their transportation needs. A total of 1,574 people completed the survey online and over the phone between December 2, 2024, and January 2, 2025. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and was compatible with browser translation extensions. The survey sample was obtained using both a convenience and random approach.

SANDAG distributed a randomized selection of 75,000 postcards, proportional to U.S. Census estimates of households with one or more occupants 65 years of age or older, inviting recipients to participate. Figure 3.1 shows the map of postcard distribution numbers by census block groups.

Figure 3.1: Postcard Distribution by Census Block Group



Source: RSG, 2024

Completion rates were generally consistent across the region. Table 3.1 compares completion counts to the number of postcards mailed by major statistical area.

Table 3.1: Survey Distribution and Completion

Major Statistical Area	Postcards Mailed	Postcards Mailed, % of Total	Surveys Completed	Surveys Completed, % of Total, Unweighted	Response Rate
North City	18,568	25%	348	28%	1.9%
Central	14,128	19%	259	21%	1.8%
East Suburban	12,371	16%	179	15%	1.4%
North County East	10,395	14%	189	15%	1.8%
North County West	10,336	14%	157	13%	1.5%
South Suburban	8,339	11%	89	7%	1.1%
East County	863	1%	13	1%	1.5%
Total	75,000	100%	1,234	100%	1.6%

Note: 1,234 surveys were completed by respondents recruited via postcard. The remaining respondents were recruited via email invitation or open link.

Additional efforts for survey distribution included targeted email lists from listservs maintained by MTS and partner organizations that directly serve older adults and people with disabilities. A link for the survey was shared at [SANDAG.org/coordinatedplan](https://sandag.org/coordinatedplan) and emails were sent to SANDAG working group liaisons for further distribution. In total, the survey administration effort yielded 1,574 complete responses, with 1,544 valid responses after data cleaning. Table 3.2 shows the number of final surveys completed by age group and disability status.

Table 3.2: Number of Surveys Completed by Age Group and Disability Status

Disability Status	Under 65	65 and Older	Total
Disability	228	492	720
No Disability	0	824	824
Total	228	1,316	1,544

Note: 1,234 surveys were completed by respondents recruited via postcard. The remaining respondents were recruited via email invitation or open link.

The survey focused primarily on travel modes, travel behavior, and trip details. Opinion and attitudinal survey questions provided insight into travel sentiments and unmet transportation needs.

Key takeaways are summarized below:

- Driving, walking/using a wheelchair, getting rides from friends and family members, and fixed route transit were the most common means of transportation among the survey population
- Respondents expressed a desire for more transit coverage and higher-frequency service
- People have difficulty getting to and from transit stops

- Specialized transportation can help meet people’s needs, but many residents lack awareness of these services
- People are comfortable using technology for trip planning but need access to better information

Survey results are analyzed in greater detail in [Chapter 4](#).

Focus Groups

Transportation Provider Focus Group

SANDAG staff held a focus group with eight transportation providers operating in the San Diego region to gather information about specialized transportation needs, challenges, and possible solutions. The provider focus group took place on October 29, 2024, in person at the SANDAG office.



Transportation Provider Focus Group

A variety of specialized transportation providers were represented, including private and non-profit organizations. Some of the themes discussed included the following:

- Lack of funding for drivers, staff, and vehicles
- Need for greater coordination between transportation providers and referral agencies to make experience smoother for riders
- The importance of door-to-door and door-through-door services for certain customers, in contrast with curb-to-curb services like Uber and Lyft
- Inadequacy of taxi vouchers to fill service gaps due to cost and accessibility
- Riders’ needs for larger and more flexible service areas, service times, and same-day trips
- Ongoing pressure on providers to keep the cost per trip low to stay competitive for grant requirements
- Difficulty in acquiring wheelchair-accessible vehicles
- Riders’ difficulty understanding available programs, providers, and tools

The conversation highlighted that current specialized transportation services are successful in helping many people complete necessary tasks, such as reaching medical care and getting groceries. However, providers emphasized that they do not adequately serve people on short notice, for “non-essential” reasons, or in all locations. Specialized transportation services are generally better at meeting riders’ accessibility needs compared to fixed-route transit or other types of transportation, but they offer less flexibility. A list of the organizations that participated in the provider focus group and summarized responses for each question is included in [Appendix A](#).

Rider Focus Groups

SANDAG also held two virtual focus groups of riders/potential riders of transit and specialized transportation. Rider focus group participants were recruited via the Coordinated Plan Survey. SANDAG set demographic targets, including age, disability status, major statistical area, sex, and race/ethnicity, to ensure a diverse and representative sample for the focus group. Participants were recruited randomly from the pool of survey respondents who met these demographic criteria and indicated interest in participating in a virtual focus group about their transportation needs. The results of this recruitment effort are summarized by Tables 3.3 and 3.4 showing the age and disability status, respectively, for both focus groups.

Table 3.3: Age of Rider Focus Group Participants

Age	Session 1	Session 2	Total
18–34	2	0	2
35–64	1	1	2
65–74	1	1	2
75–84	1	6	7
Total	5	8	13

Table 3.4: Disability Status of Rider Focus Group Participants

Disability Status	Session 1	Session 2	Total
Yes	4	5	9
No	1	3	4
Total	5	8	13

The rider focus groups discussed the participants' experiences and challenges while traveling in the San Diego Region and opportunities for improvement. Each focus group was moderated by a discussion leader from SANDAG's consultant RSG and supported by SANDAG staff. A discussion guide was used to direct the overall conversation and ensure the study team collected a standardized set of findings.

Some key takeaways from the rider focus groups are highlighted below:

- Potential transit riders are discouraged from using transit regularly due to long wait times, inconvenient route coverage, safety concerns, and difficulties carrying groceries or mobility aids
- Transit affordability was recognized as a major benefit, but awareness of discounts like senior discounts could be improved by physical promotional materials, like mailed flyers
- There was a lack of awareness and use of specialized transportation services like MTS Access and programs offered by FACT and other providers

- There was hesitation to navigate the paratransit application process and frustration by riders that attempted to apply

Overall, the findings suggest that improving service frequency, expanding transit routes, enhancing safety features, and increasing awareness of specialized transportation could make these options more viable choices for San Diego residents. More analysis of the discussion is included in [Appendix A](#)

Outreach Event Timeline

A list of all events at which SANDAG staff reported or requested feedback on the Coordinated Plan is included in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Outreach Event Timeline

Event or Meeting	Date
SANDAG Social Services Transportation Advisory Council	May 21, 2024
SANDAG Board of Directors	June 28, 2024
SANDAG Mobility Working Group	September 12, 2024
SANDAG Social Services Transportation Advisory Council	September 17, 2024
Project Development Team Meeting	October 17, 2024
SANDAG Social Equity Working Group	October 24, 2024
Coordinated Plan Provider Focus Group	October 29, 2024
Survey Collection Begins	December 2, 2024
Survey Collection Ends	December 31, 2024
Coordinated Plan Rider Focus Group #1	February 12, 2025
Coordinated Plan Rider Focus Group #2	February 15, 2025
Project Development Team Meeting	February 20, 2025
SANDAG Mobility Working Group	March 13, 2025
SANDAG Social Services Transportation Advisory Council	March 18, 2025
Regional Short-Range Transit Planning Task Force	March 26, 2025
SANDAG Social Equity Working Group	March 27, 2025
Council on Access and Mobility	March 27, 2025
SANDAG Transportation Committee	April 4, 2025
Project Development Team Meeting	May 26, 2025
Project Development Team Meeting	June 12, 2025
SANDAG Transportation Committee	June 20, 2025
SANDAG Social Services Transportation Advisory Council	July 15, 2025
SANDAG Transportation Committee	October 17, 2025

Chapter 4: Needs Assessment

This chapter includes an assessment of transportation needs for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. It includes results from the Coordinated Plan Survey and another SANDAG survey that identifies transportation patterns, challenges, and solutions. The chapter also includes an evaluation of currently available specialized transportation services, an estimate of how much additional funding would be required to meet currently unmet transportation needs, and an overall determination of regional transportation service gaps.

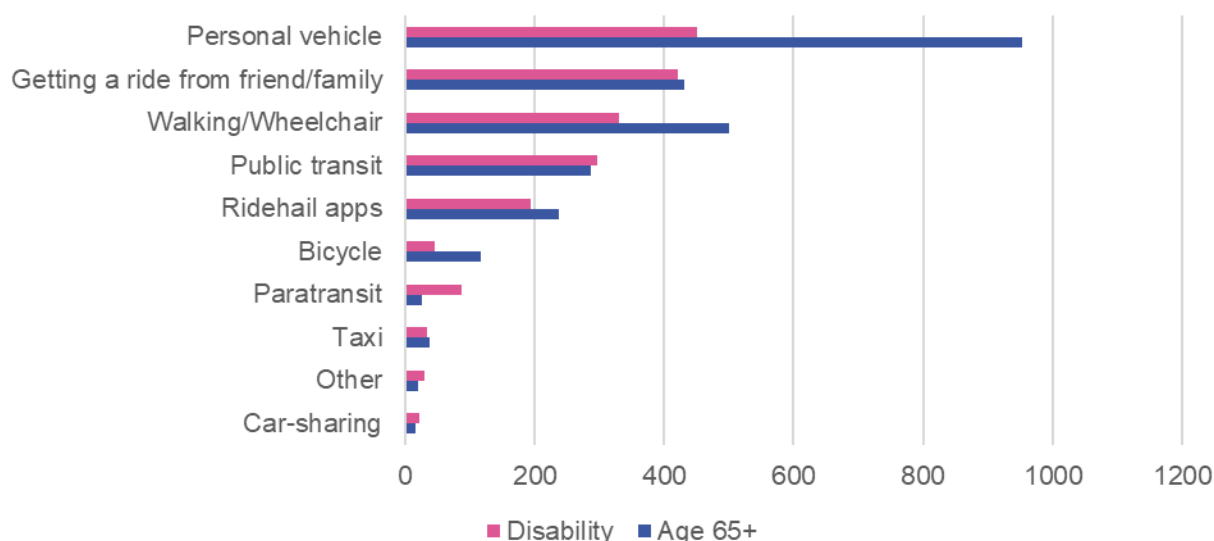
Survey Findings

Coordinated Plan Survey

This section highlights some findings of the Coordinated Plan Survey. Several figures distinguish between respondents who are aged 65 or older and respondents with a disability. Note that respondents who are both aged 65 or older and have a disability are included in both categories.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the share of the transportation modes used by respondents in the past month. Among all respondents, the most used transportation was a personal vehicle, selected by 76% of all participants. This was followed by getting a ride from a family member, neighbor, or friend and by walking and/or using a wheelchair, both at 45%. Public transportation was used by 32% of respondents for at least one trip in the past month, and paratransit/specialized transportation was used by just 6% of all respondents in the past month. It is notable that many older adults had used personal vehicles in the past month and had used few other modes. Meanwhile, people with disabilities had used a more balanced variety of modes.

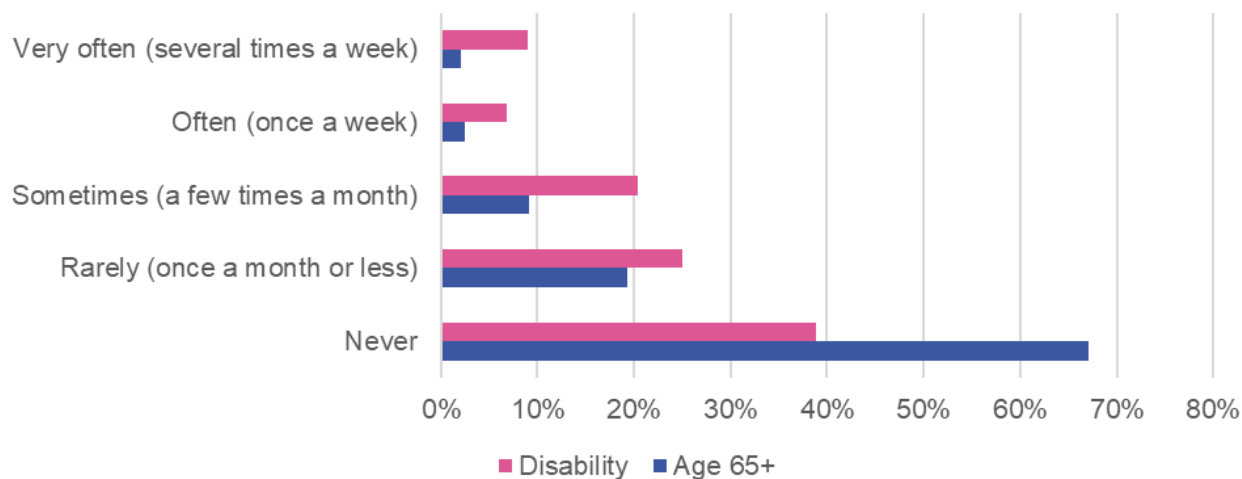
Figure 4.1: Modes Used in the Past Month, Age 65+ and/or Disability



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Respondents were asked how often they cannot go somewhere they need to go due to a lack of available transportation. Figure 4.2 shows that 67% of older adults and 39% of people with disabilities have never encountered this issue, while 2% of older adults and 9% of people with disabilities reported that they are unable to make needed trips due to a lack of transportation several times a week.

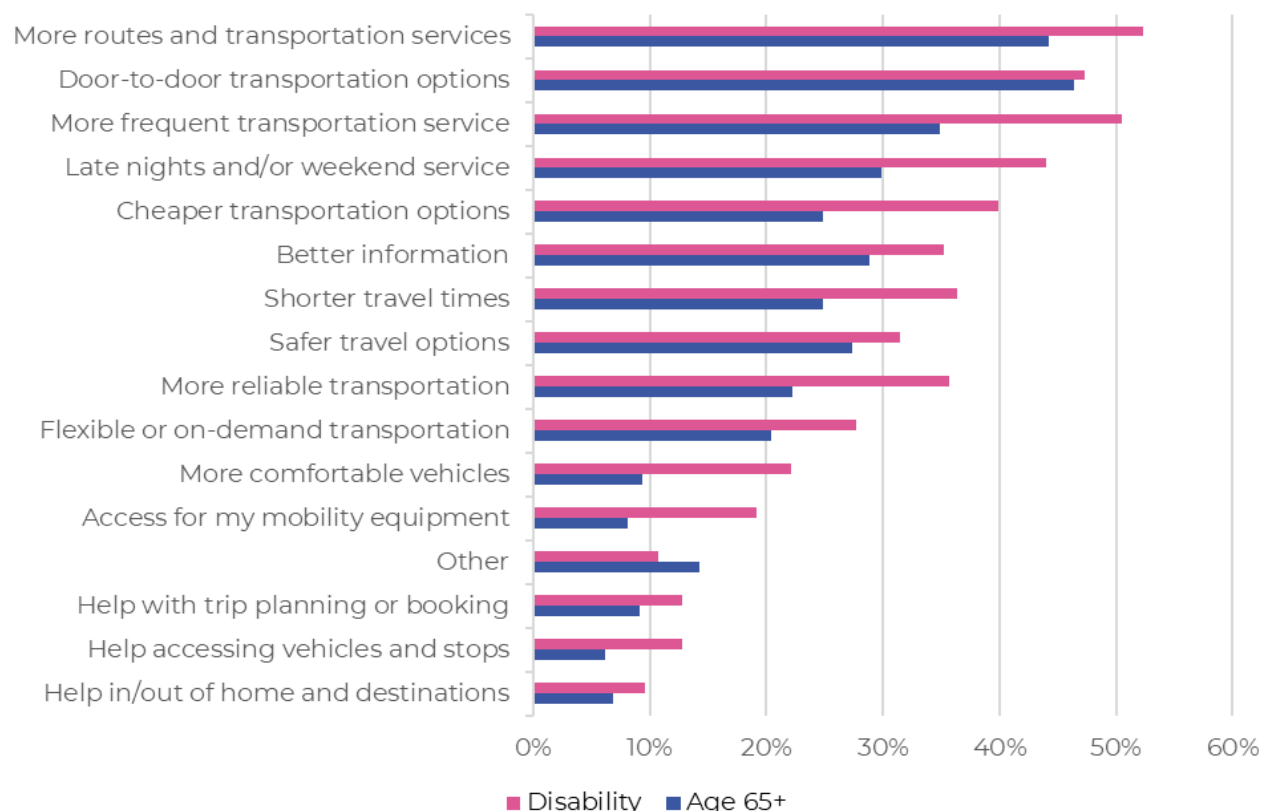
Figure 4.2: Frequency of Missed Trips, Age 65+ and Disability



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Respondents who missed trips were asked what would help them complete their necessary or desired trips. As shown in Figure 4.3, over half (51%) of these respondents selected more routes and transportation services. Other commonly selected solutions included more frequent transportation service (46%), door-to-door transportation options (46%), transportation options during late nights and/or weekends (40%), and cheaper transportation options (35%). As discounted fares are already available for fixed-route transit through the SDM designation, this response supports maintaining this fare discount program.

Figure 4.3: Transportation Solutions, Age 65+ and/or Disability

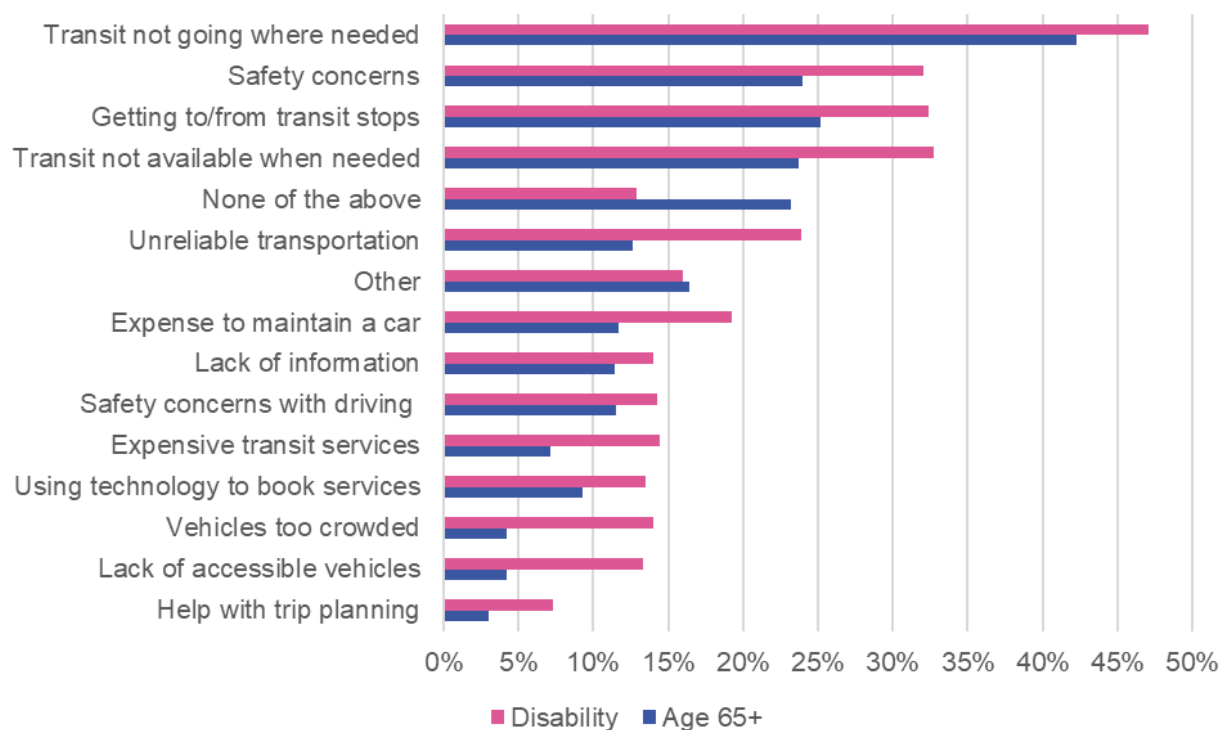


Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Regardless of whether the respondent had missed a trip due to lack of transportation options, all respondents were asked what challenges they experience when using and considering transportation options in San Diego County. As displayed in Figure 4.4, 44% of respondents identified a lack of transit services to their desired destinations as a key challenge. Other common challenges include safety concerns (27%), difficulty getting to and from bus stops or stations (27%), and a lack of transportation available when they need it (27%). Conversely, 20% of respondents stated that they do not face any transportation challenges when getting around San Diego County.

Of the 16% of respondents that selected “Other,” common themes included a lack of transit service near their home (for example needing to drive a car to the nearest bus stop), the length of trips (leading to concerns such as needing to use the bathroom), and a desire for cheaper fares on special services. Notably, a few respondents mentioned FRED and a desire for cheaper fares and expanded service areas.

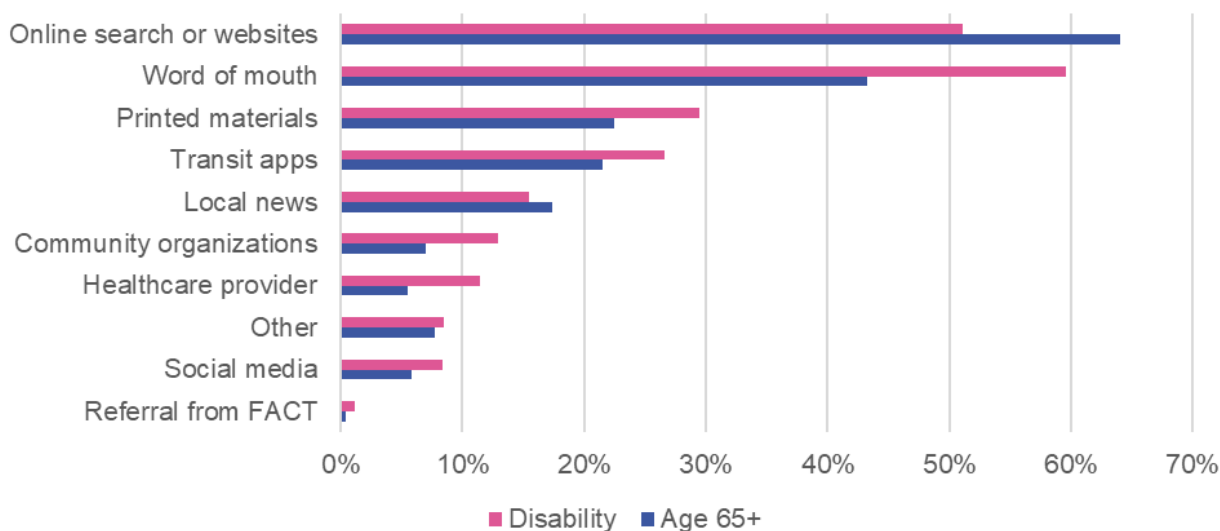
Figure 4.4: Transportation Challenges, Age 65+ and/or Disability



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Respondents were also asked about where they gather information about transportation in San Diego County. As shown in Figure 4.5, the most common source was online searches or websites (61%), followed by word of mouth (49%), printed materials like flyers and brochures (25%), and transit apps (25%). Notably, only 1% of respondents learned about transportation options through referrals from FACT, the region's current CTSA.

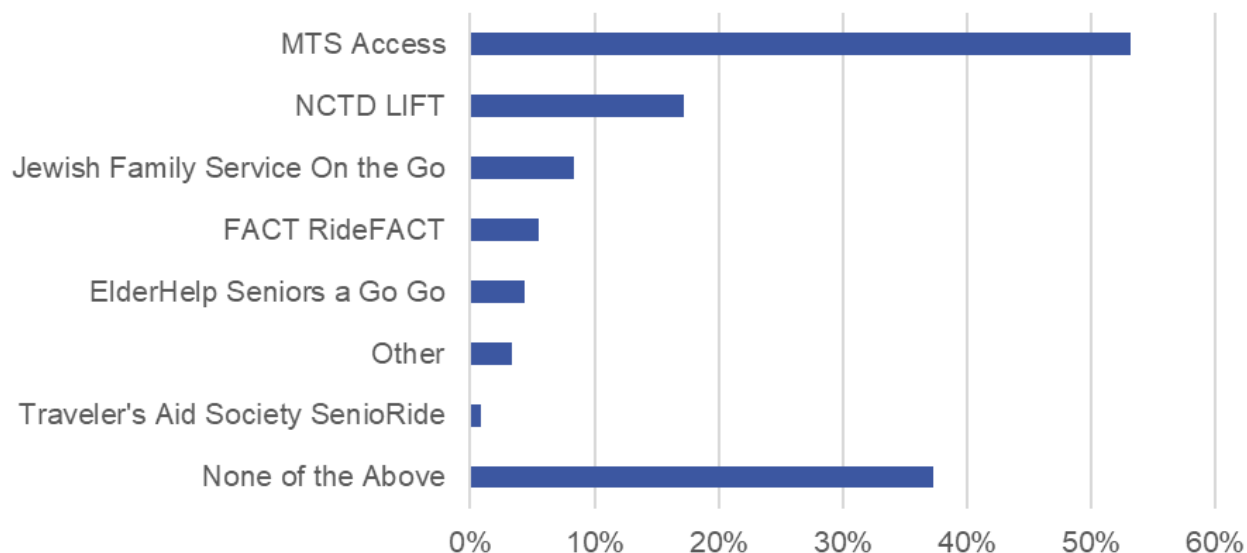
Figure 4.5: Information Source, Age 65+ and Disability



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Respondents were asked if they were aware of any of the transit services for people with disabilities that may be available to them. Figure 4.6 shows that just over half (53%) of people with disabilities were aware of MTS Access, and 17% of people with disabilities were aware of NCTD Lift. All other services were recognized by less than 10% of this group, and 37% were not aware of any specialized transit services listed.

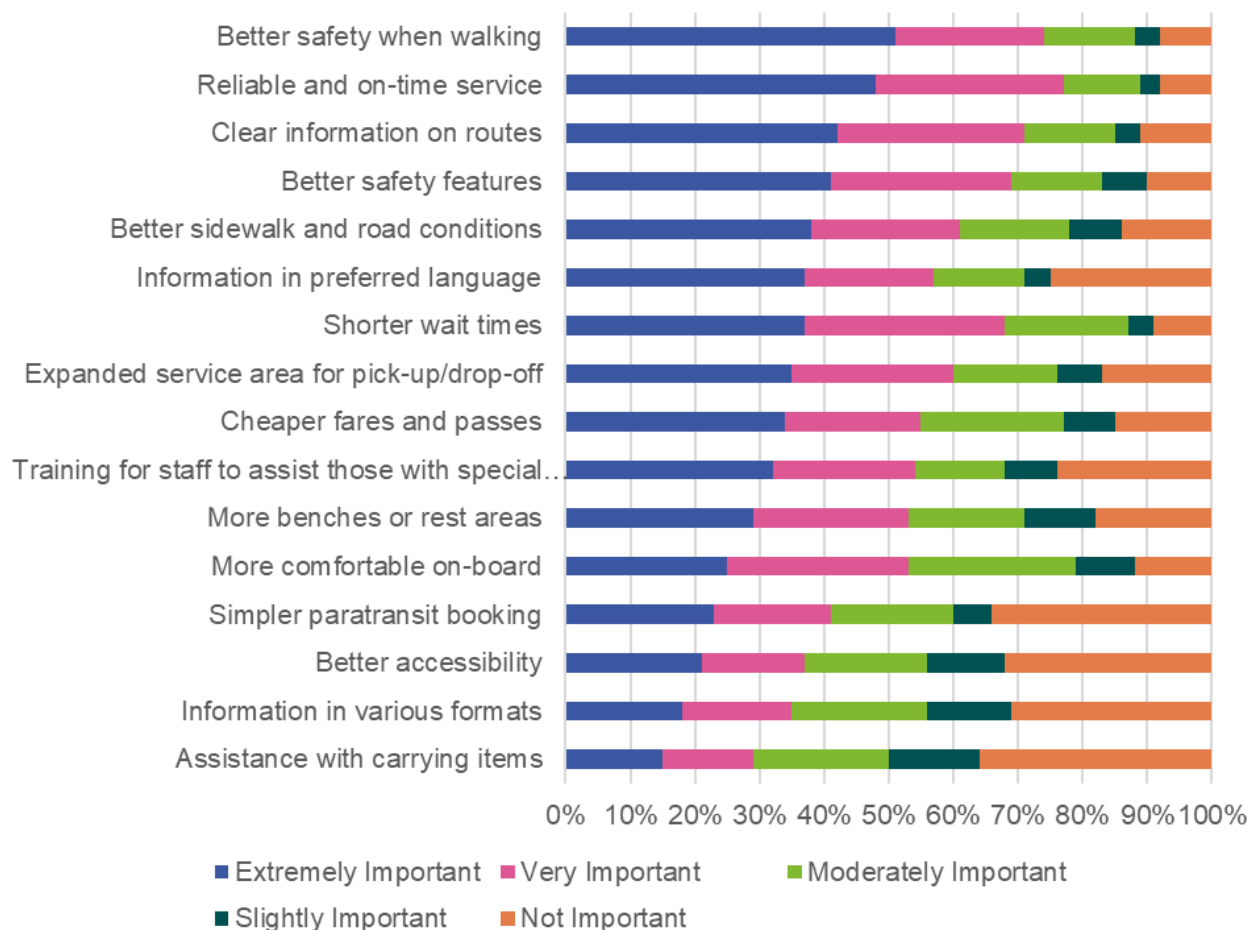
Figure 4.6: Awareness of Specialized Transportation, Disability Only



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Respondents were asked which transportation related factors were important to them (Figure 4.7). Respondents prioritized personal safety (safer crossings, street lighting), better sidewalk and road conditions (ramps, elevators), shorter wait times, and information in their preferred language. Less important factors included assistance with carrying items, simpler paratransit booking, better vehicle accessibility (ramps, lifts, wide doors), and transportation information in various formats (large print, braille, audio).

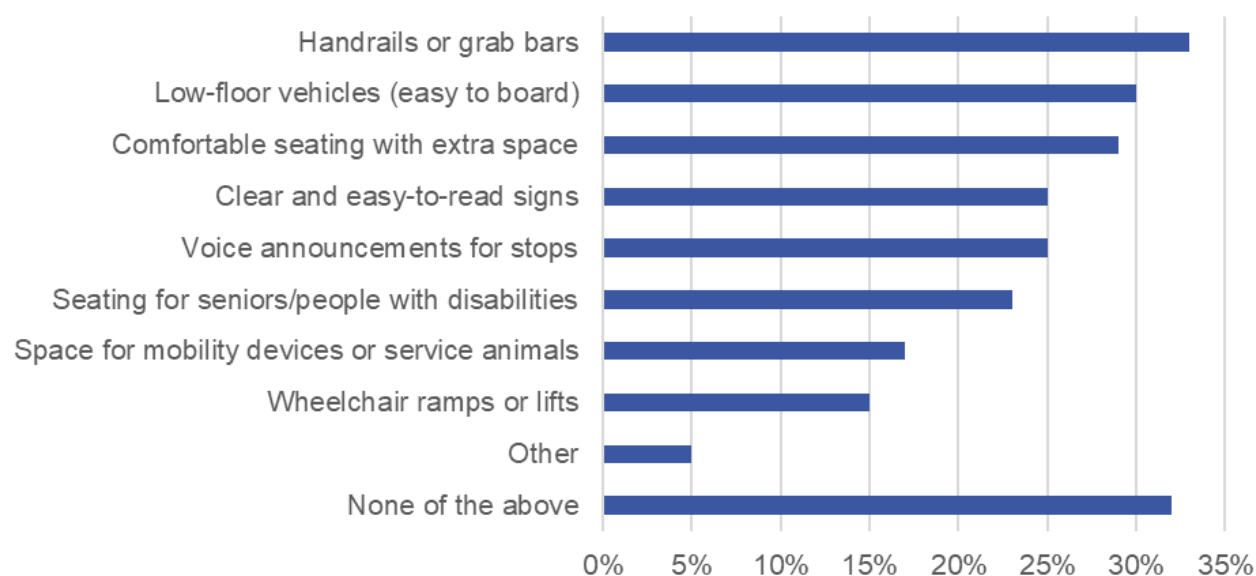
Figure 4.7: Importance of Various Factors in Making it Easier to Get Around, Age 65+ and/or Disability



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

Figure 4.8 shows the breakdown of special vehicle features that respondents with disabilities need to get around. While the two most reported features (handrails or grab bars and low-floor vehicles) also appear at the top of the list for all respondents, respondents with a disability report them more frequently. Additionally, only 32% of these respondents report that they do not need any special features in a vehicle, which can be compared to 51% of all respondents.

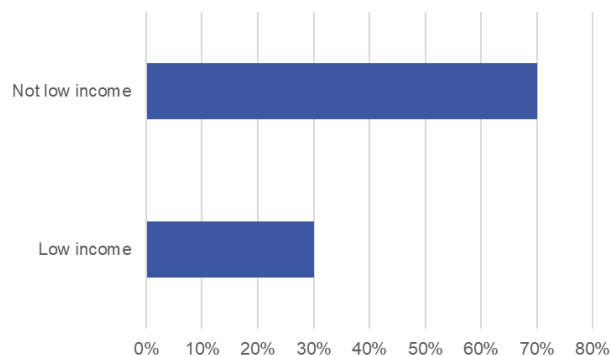
Figure 4.8: Vehicle Features Needed to Get Around, Disability Only



Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

The survey asked respondents to provide their annual household income. One quarter of respondents (25%) lived in households earning \$105,000 or more annually, while the second most frequent annual income bracket is \$30,000 or less (23%). Notably, many survey respondents are retirees, which may lead to lower annual household incomes. Figure 4.9 shows the low-income rate of respondents. Using 200% of the Federal Poverty Level as a threshold, about 30% of respondent households are considered to have low income.

Figure 4.9: Household Income Status, Age 65+ and/or Disability



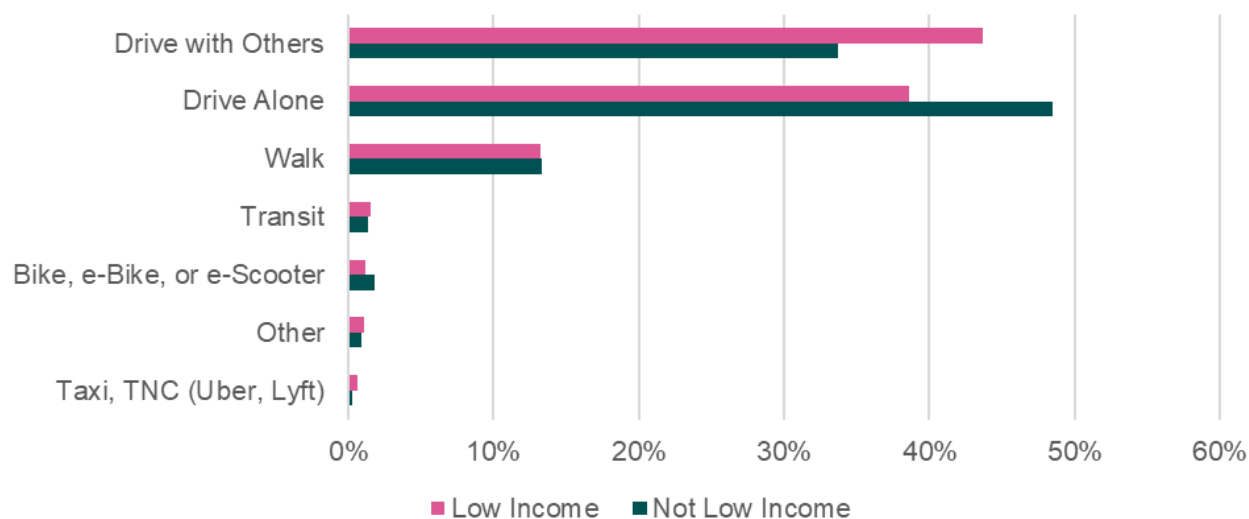
Source: SANDAG Coordinated Plan Survey, 2024

San Diego County Transportation Study

This section provides additional information about people living in the San Diego region with low incomes. This data comes from SANDAG's San Diego County Transportation Study, which surveyed residents in 2022 and 2023. This study included a travel diary portion where respondents provided information about trips they made over several days.

Respondents used a variety of travel modes for the trips that they made during the study period. Figure 4.10 shows the travel modes used for trips according to people's household income status. The figure shows that people with low incomes make more trips driving with others (carpooling) and fewer trips driving alone compared to people without low incomes.

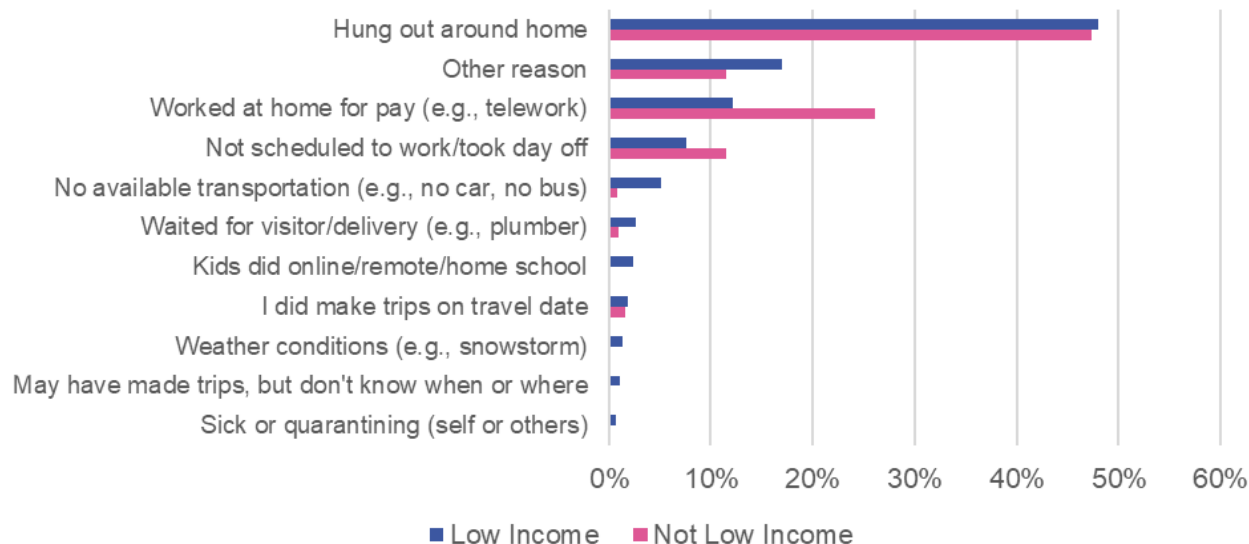
Figure 4.10: Travel Mode by Household Income Status



Source: SANDAG San Diego County Transportation Study, 2023

Figure 4.11 shows responses to the question of why respondents did not travel on a particular day while completing the travel diary according to household income status. Among people who did not travel, people with low incomes provided more varied reasons than people without low incomes. There were more responses from people with low incomes for not having available transportation. There were more responses from people without low incomes who either worked at home for pay or who were not scheduled to work on days they did not travel.

Figure 4.11: Reason for No Travel by Household Income Status



Source: SANDAG San Diego County Transportation Study, 2023

Access to Fixed-Route Transit and Paratransit

Regional Demographic Changes

Every four years, the SANDAG Data Science team works with local jurisdictions, the California Department of Finance, demographic and economic experts, and other partners to create a long-term forecast that predicts what the region will look like in terms of population, housing units, and number of jobs. The Series 15 forecast, which has a base year of 2022, shows that the San Diego region's population is expected to increase over the next two decades. Additionally, the region's population is expected to become older and more ethnically diverse. As shown in Table 4.1, adults aged 65 and older will represent 21% of the region's population, and adults aged 80 and older will represent 6% of the region's population, in 2035.

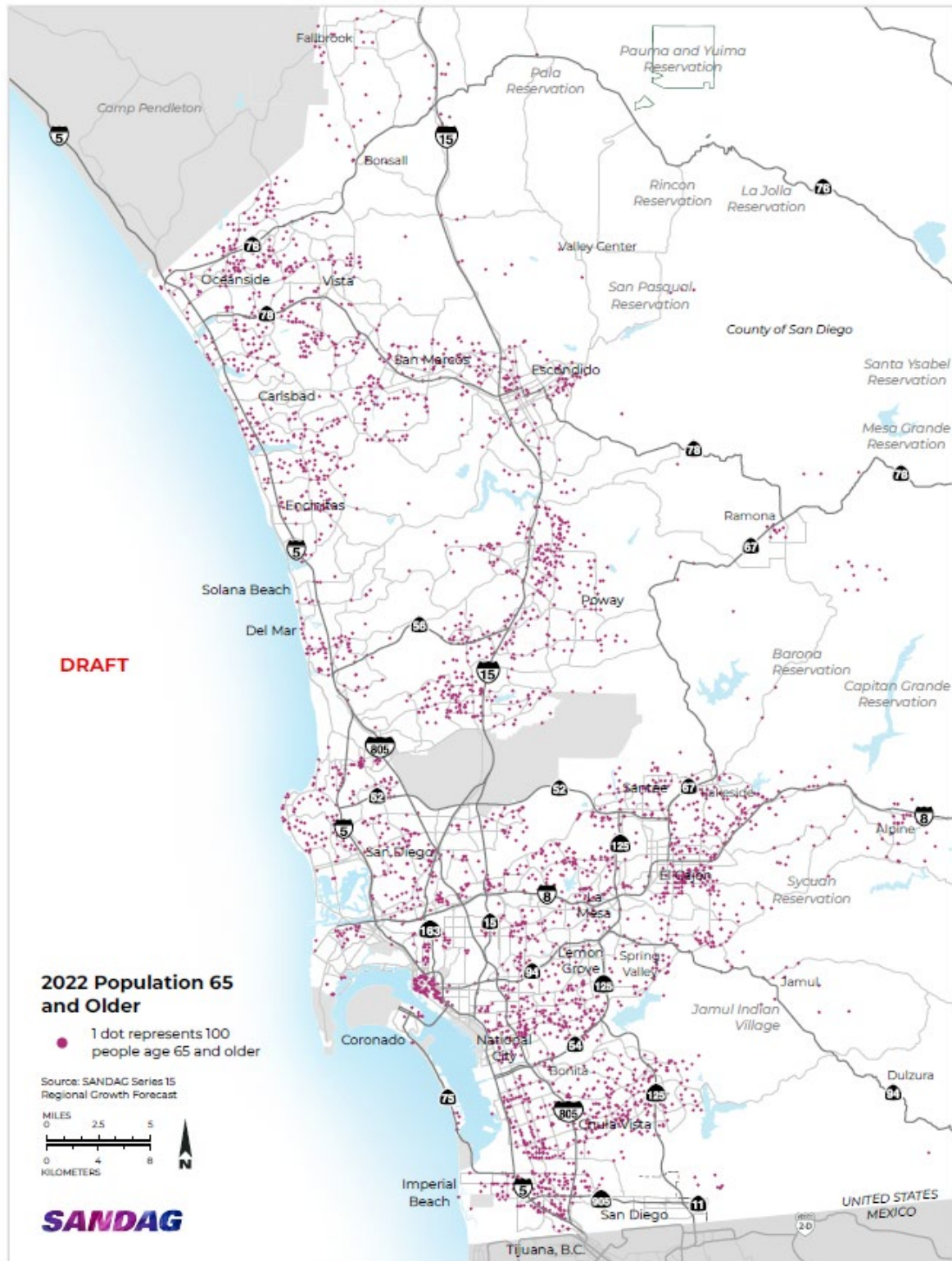
Table 4.1: Forecast Older Adult Population Change, 2022 to 2035

Group	2022 Population	% of Total 2022 Population	2035 Population	% of Total 2035 Population	% Change, 2022 to 2035
Total Population	3,287,306	100%	3,404,362	100%	4%
Age 65 and Older	518,695	16%	705,876	21%	36%
Age 80 and Older	124,846	4%	208,491	6%	67%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Figures 4.12 and 4.13 show where the region's older adults are forecast to live throughout the region in 2022 and 2035, respectively. The maps suggest that nearly all areas of the San Diego region will see increases in their older adult populations.

Figure 4.12: San Diego Region Older Adults Aged 65 and Older, 2022



DRAFT

2035 Population 65 and Older

1 dot represents 100 people age 65 and older

Source: SANDAG Series 15 Regional Growth Forecast

MILES 0 2.5 5
KILOMETERS 0 4 8

SANDAG

UNITED STATES
MEXICO

2025 Coordinated Plan

Table 4.2: Population of People with Disabilities and People with Low Incomes, 2022

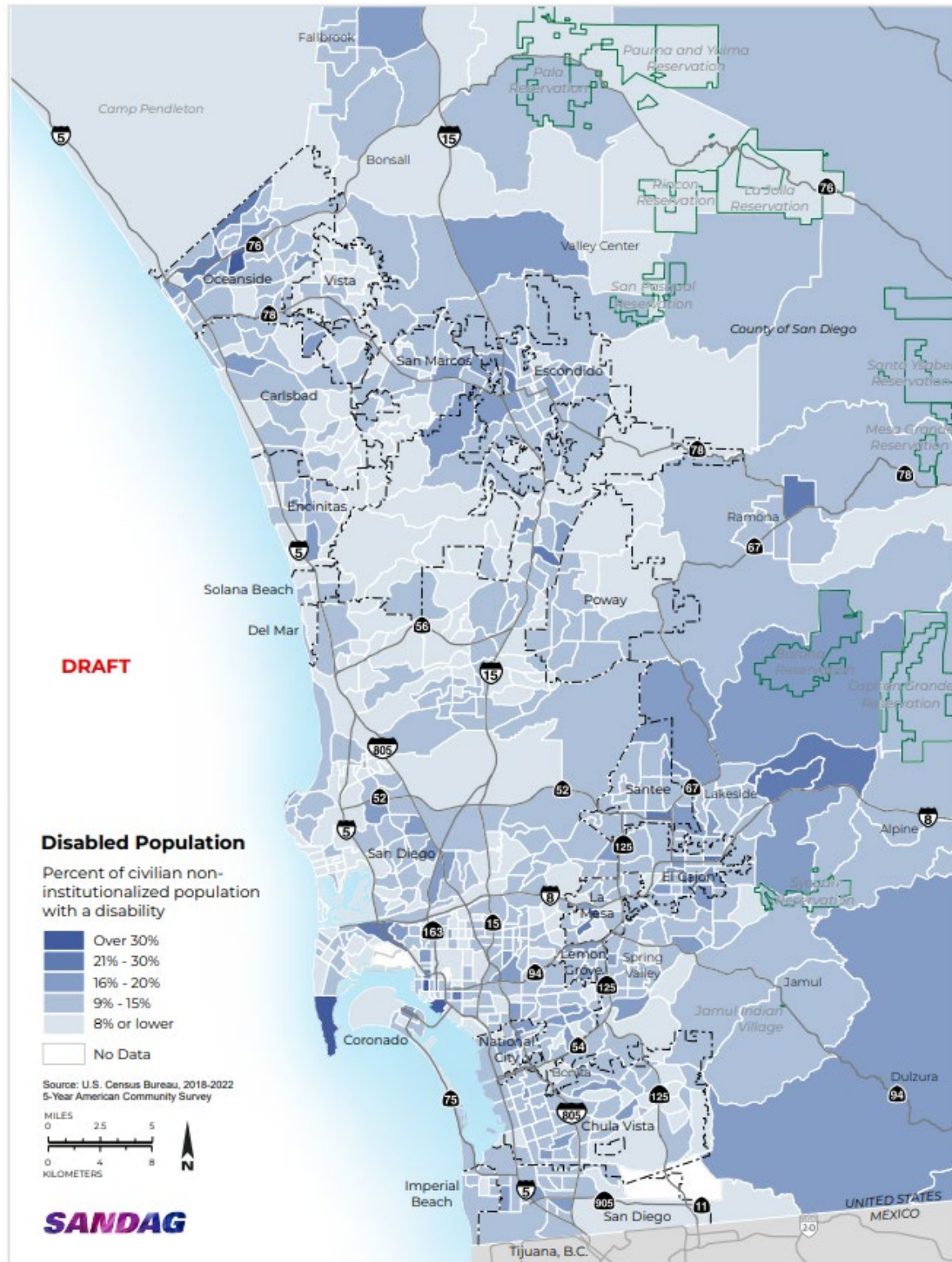
Group	2022 Population	% of Total
Total Population	3,287,306	100%
People with Disabilities, All Ages and Incomes	355,824	11%
Low-Income, All Ages and Abilities	762,099	24%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022), American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 Table B18101, ACS 2018-2022 Table C17002

Note: The percentages of each population group as a share of the region's population are calculated based on ACS estimates that vary slightly from the Series 15 total population included in the table.

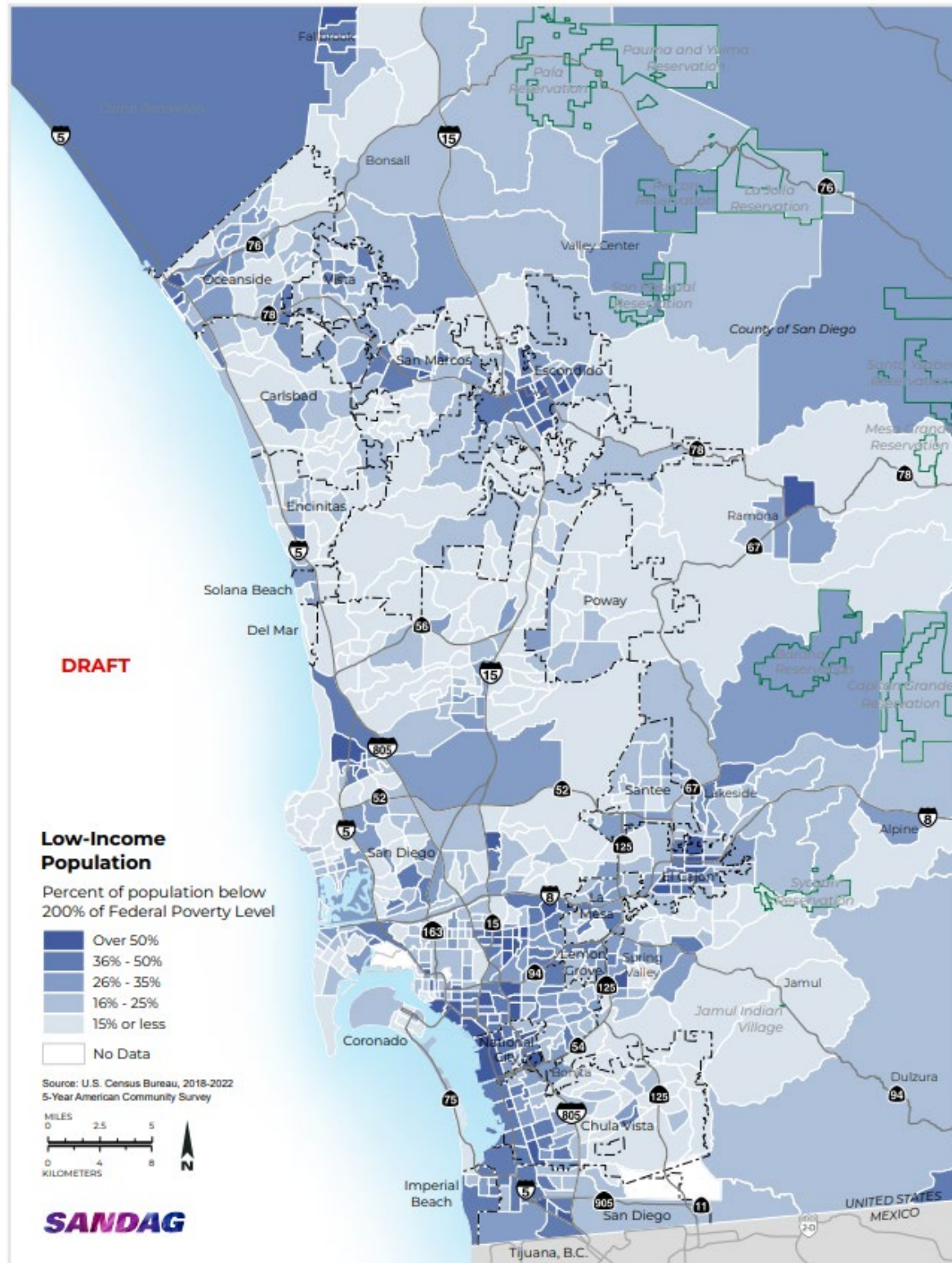
People with disabilities live throughout the region, as shown in Figure 4.14. More intense colors represent Census tracts where a greater percentage of the population has a disability.

Figure 4.14: San Diego Region People with Disabilities, 2022



People with low incomes live throughout the region, as shown in Figure 4.15. More intense colors represent Census tracts where a greater percentage of the population has a low income.

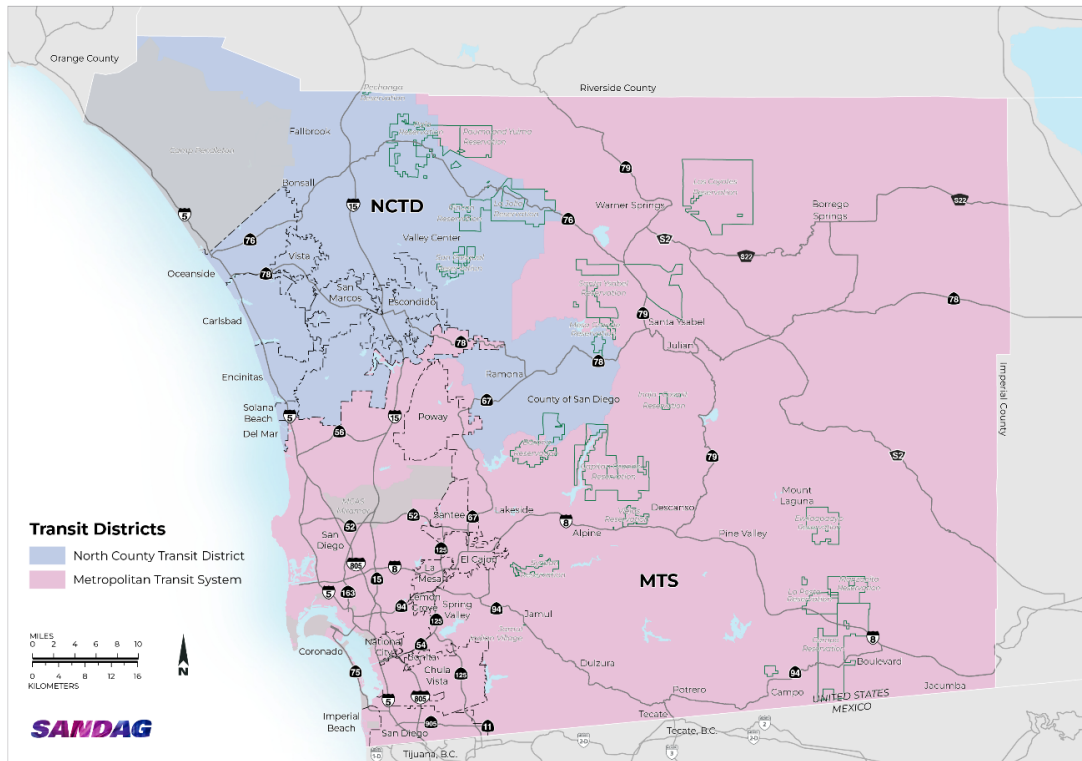
Figure 4.15: San Diego Region People with Limited Means, 2022



Current Transit Network

The San Diego region is divided into two transit service areas, as shown in Figure 4.16. NCTD serves roughly the northwestern quadrant of San Diego County, while MTS serves the remainder.

Figure 4.16: San Diego Region Transit Service Area Map



Although the service areas cover the entire county, access to transit varies by location and day of the week. Figures 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19, show the 2022 transit networks operated by the two transit operators with scheduled service on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, respectively. A three-quarter mile buffer is shown around transit stops to highlight the areas in which paratransit service is generally offered. Note that these maps are for reference only, and riders should contact MTS and NCTD to determine eligibility for paratransit.

The maps demonstrate less coverage of the region on Saturdays and Sundays, especially in the eastern two-thirds of the county. However, geographic coverage is generally consistent across days in the more urban, western third of the county.

Figure 4.17: San Diego Region Weekday Transit Network, 2022

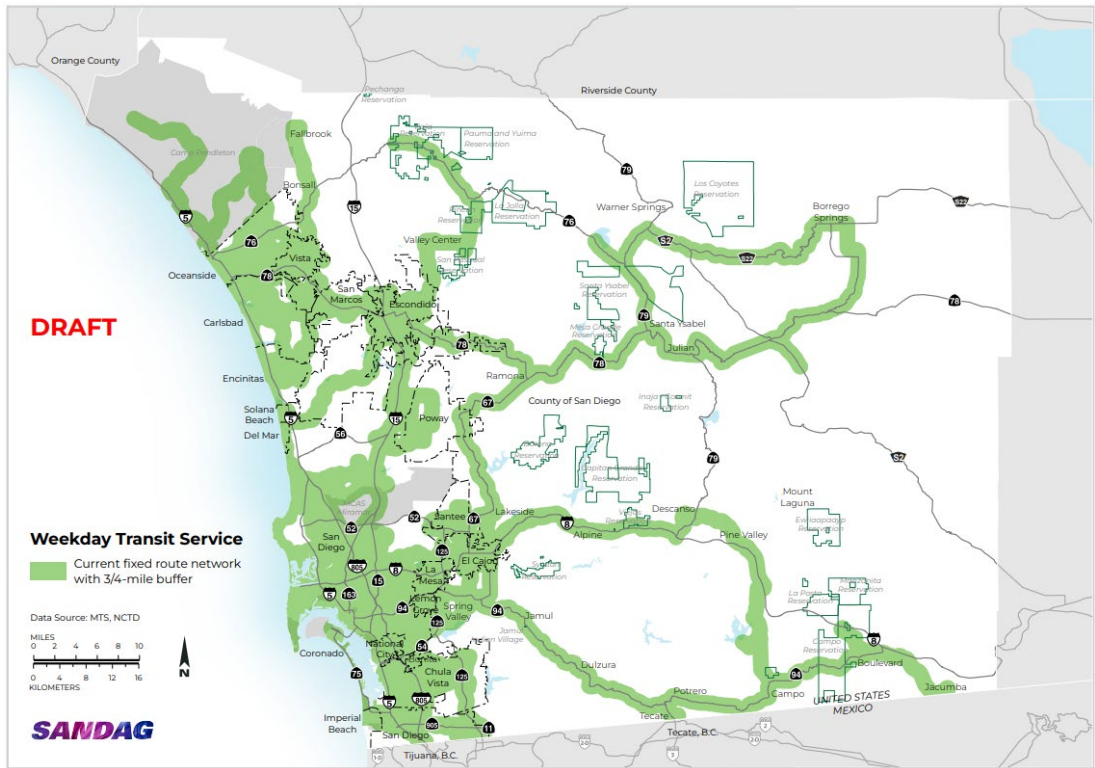


Figure 4.18: San Diego Region Saturday Transit Network, 2022

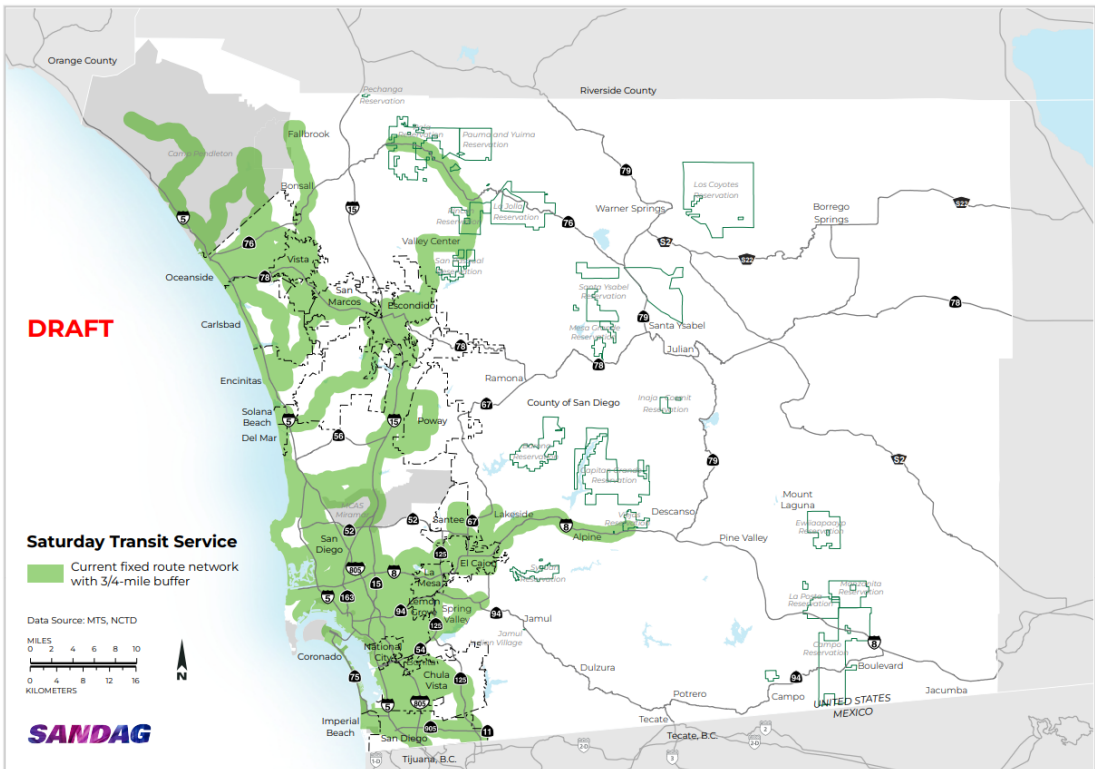
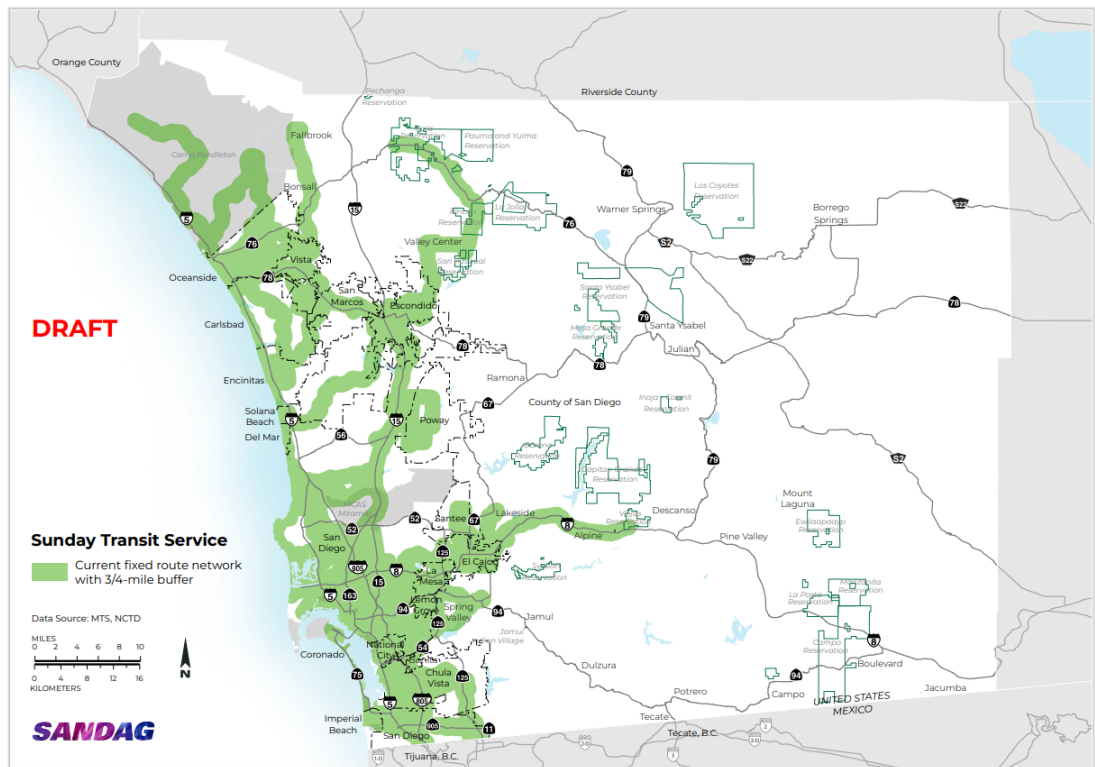


Figure 4.19: San Diego Region Sunday Transit Network, 2022



Population with Access to Transit

Table 4.3 shows how the region’s population is distributed into the two transit service areas.

Table 4.3: Population by Age and Transit Service Area, 2022

Population	MTS	NCTD
Total Population	2,332,863	954,443
Age 65+ Population	501,077	151,500
Age 80+ Population	87,819	37,027

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Among all residents living in the MTS service area, nearly 1.9 million people, or 80%, live within a half-mile radius of a transit stop with service on weekdays. A half-mile radius is used as the typical upper limit of walking distance for most potential riders. 57% of the service area’s older adults aged 65 or older, and 80% of those aged 80 or older, live within a half mile of transit stops served on weekdays. On Saturdays and Sundays, the number of people within a half mile of transit stops with service is reduced, as shown in Tables, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6.

Table 4.4: Population in MTS Weekday Service Area by Age, 2022

Population	Population with MTS Transit Service on Weekdays	% of Population in MTS Service Area
Total Population	1,871,208	80%
Age 65+ Population	284,876	57%
Age 80+ Population	70,492	80%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Table 4.5: Population in MTS Saturday Service Area by Age, 2022

Population	Population with MTS Transit Service on Saturdays	% of Population in MTS Service Area
Total Population	1,736,865	74%
Age 65+ Population	261,074	52%
Age 80+ Population	64,820	74%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Table 4.6: Population in MTS Sunday Service Area by Age, 2022

Population	Population with MTS Transit Service on Sundays	% of Population in MTS Service Area
Total Population	1,696,306	73%
Age 65+ Population	253,917	51%
Age 80+ Population	63,057	72%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Among all residents living in the NCTD service area, about 664,000, or 70%, live within a half mile of a transit stop with service on weekdays. 66% of the service area's older adults aged 65 and older, and 68% of those aged 80 and older, live within a half mile of a transit stop with service on weekdays. On Saturdays and Sundays, the number of people within a half mile of transit stops with service is reduced, as shown in Tables, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9.

Table 4.7: Population in NCTD Weekday Service Area by Age, 2022

Population	Population with NCTD Transit Service on Weekdays	% of Population in NCTD Service Area
Total Population	663,528	70%
Age 65+ Population	100,024	66%
Age 80+ Population	25,303	68%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Table 4.8: Population in NCTD Saturday Service Area by Age, 2022

Population	Population with NCTD Transit Service on Saturdays	% of Population in NCTD Service Area
Total Population	598,547	63%
Age 65+ Population	88,236	58%
Age 80+ Population	22,371	60%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Table 4.9: Population in NCTD Sunday Service Area by Age, 2022

Population	Population with NCTD Transit Service on Sundays	% of Population in NCTD Service Area
Total Population	582,285	61%
Age 65+ Population	86,303	57%
Age 80+ Population	21,897	59%

Source: Series 15 Forecast, base year (2022)

Current Specialized Transportation Services

Specialized transportation service availability varies across the region. STGP grantees establish their service areas and operating characteristics, with some open to clients only and others open to members of the general public, though generally with eligibility restricted based on age, ability, and/or income. While some communities are served by multiple STGP grantees, there is generally at least one public demand-response service available in all areas of the region. Section 5310 funding distributed through the STGP is limited to the urbanized areas of the region, so the following maps are primarily focused on the western portion of San Diego County. Section 5310 funding for the rural and small urban areas in California is distributed by Caltrans through a separate call for projects. In addition, service varies over time as programs receive and spend grant funding. The variation in geographic and temporal service availability makes it difficult for members of the public to know their transportation options. This challenge justifies the presence of a CTSA that can coordinate with transportation providers to understand available capacity and determine how best to meet riders' needs. The following maps show the services available as of February 2024.

Figure 4.20: STGP Public Demand-Response Service Areas Operating in February 2024

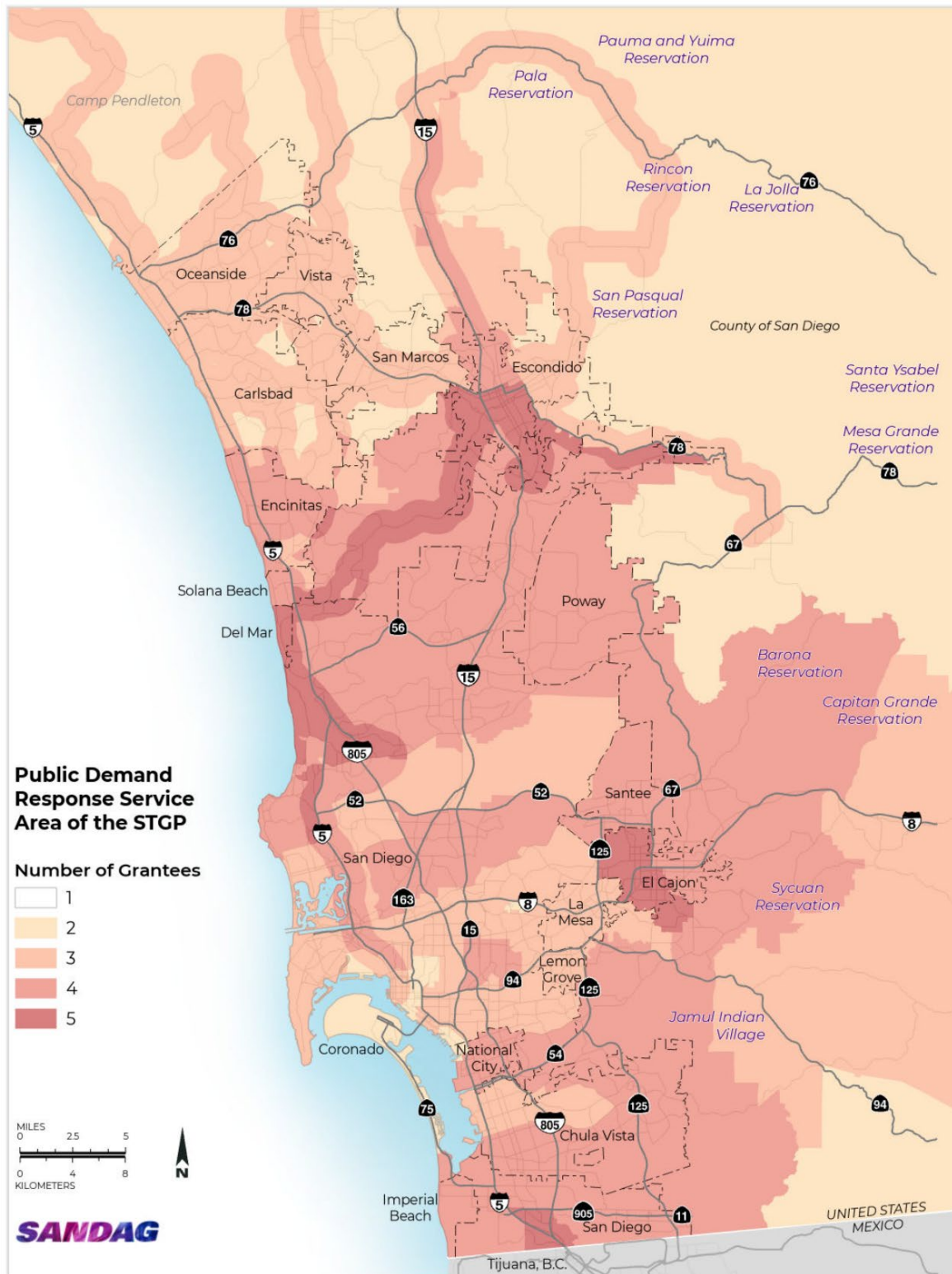
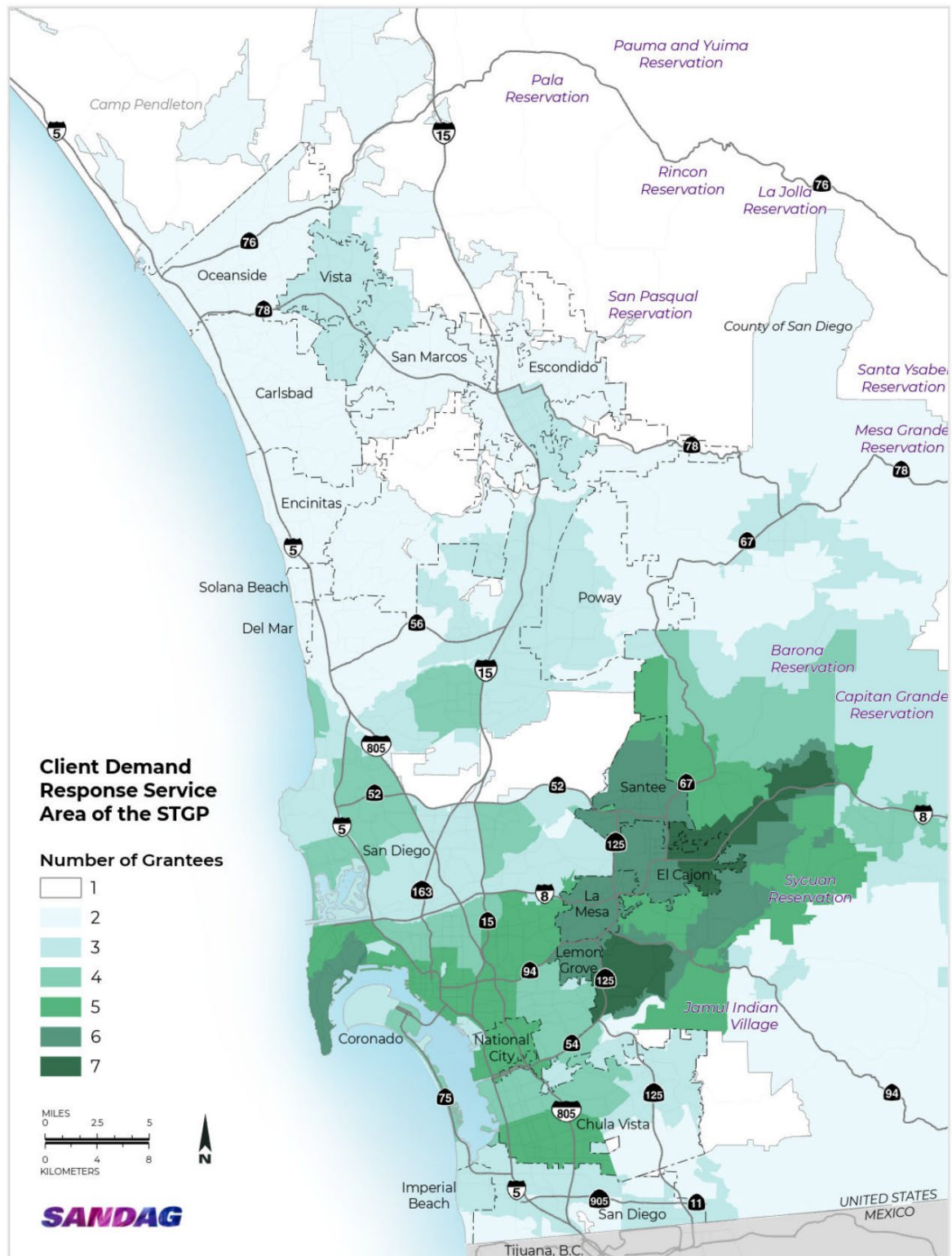
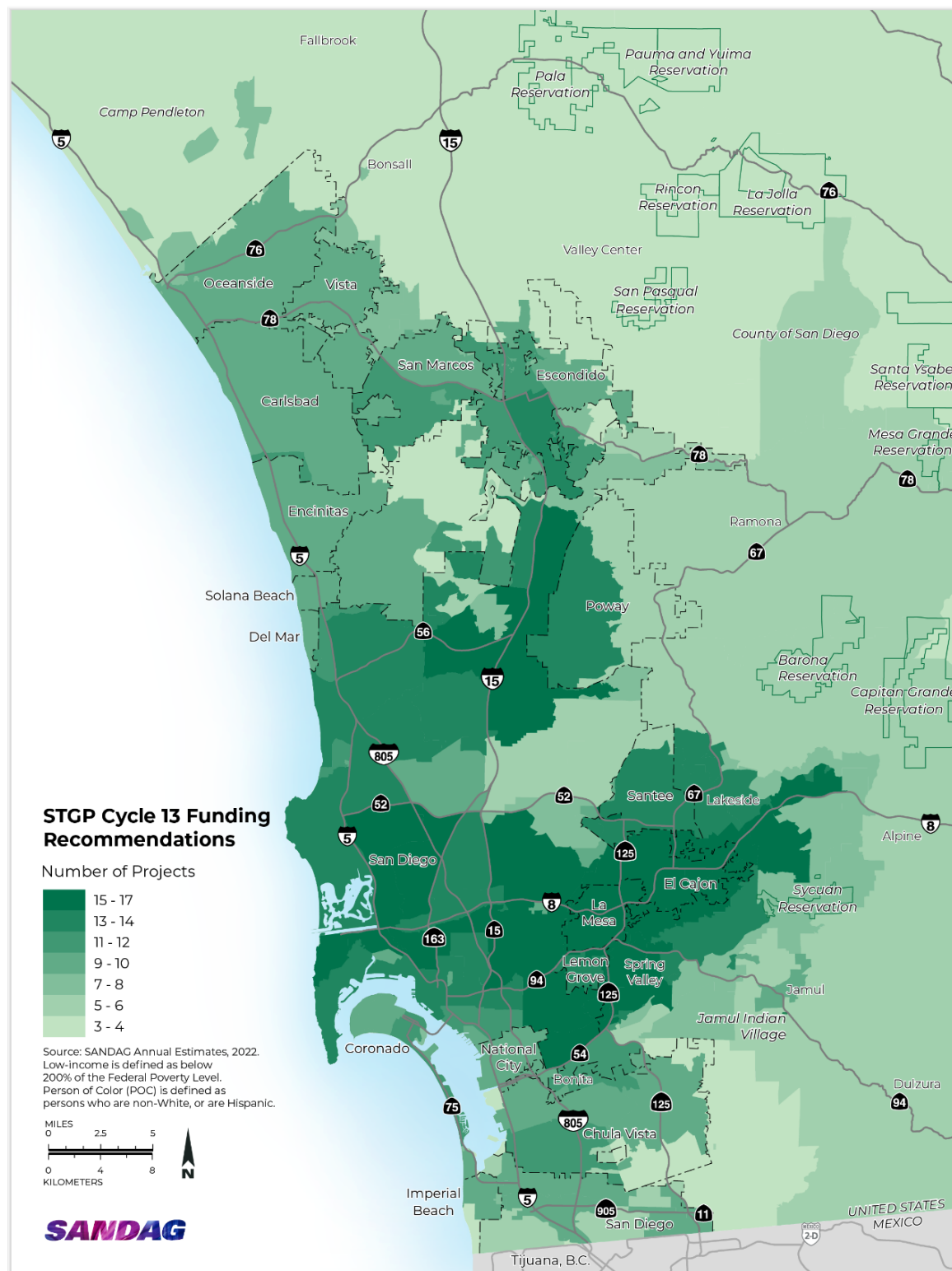


Figure 4.21: STGP Client Demand-Response Service Areas Operating in February 2024



The availability of specialized transportation will change again in late 2025 with the introduction of services funded through STGP cycle 13, as shown in Figure 4.22.

Figure 4.22: STGP Service Areas of Projects Awarded in Cycle 13



Estimated Unmet Transportation Demand

Although public agencies in the San Diego region spend a significant amount of money providing transportation, both through direct operations and contracts and subsidies to other providers, many people have needs that are currently unmet due to a lack of transportation. This plan attempts to quantify the unmet transportation demand.

Transportation services within the scope of the Coordinated Plan include fixed-route transit, paratransit, specialized transportation operating projects funded through the STGP, and WAV specialized transportation operating projects funded through the AFA. As noted in Table 2.24, these transportation services combine to provide about 83.6 million trips per year.

Responses from the Coordinated Plan Survey suggest that the region's older adults and people with disabilities miss as many as 14.5 million trips per year due to a lack of transportation. Of these 14.5 million trips, 2.5 million would be taken by people who use wheelchairs and presumably would need WAVs. The remaining 12 million trips could presumably be accommodated with non-WAVs. Scaling up existing transportation services to meet this unmet demand would require significant additional funding. However, more analysis would be needed to understand where these services should be located, what vehicle types would be appropriate, and the level of assistance needed to ensure riders could travel safely.

Other Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations

In addition to the Coordinated Plan, SANDAG invests in numerous other projects and initiatives as an agency to address the transportation needs of various disadvantaged communities within San Diego County. SANDAG enables advocacy efforts for underserved populations by facilitating cooperation through working groups, such as the Regional Plan Social Equity Working Group and Tribal Technical Working Group. Both working groups demonstrate SANDAG's commitment to ensuring regional planning efforts align with and support underrepresented communities.

In 2022, SANDAG launched the Youth Opportunity Pass pilot program, which provides free transit rides for young people ages 18 and under and has provided millions of rides since its launch. Data from the program is available on the [SANDAG Open Data Portal](#). SANDAG also works with community-based organizations to provide education for youth and families about public transit options in their neighborhoods.

Transportation Accessibility

Sidewalks

The Coordinated Plan Survey and focus groups revealed a lack of safe pedestrian crossings and other accessibility barriers, especially near transit stations and stops. Barriers such as missing curb ramps, steep slopes, uneven sidewalks, and inadequate lighting can make it difficult or unsafe for people to reach transit stops on foot or by mobility device. For older adults and individuals with disabilities, even short distances can become challenging when sidewalks are obstructed or missing. As a result, many potential riders are unable to use fixed-route transit because the first and last segments of their trip feel unsafe. Although some data is available for potential areas for improvement, there is no regionwide data source of sidewalk gaps, missing curb ramps, and other barriers to accessibility.

Transit Stops and Amenities

All MTS and NCTD transit centers are fully accessible. However, many individual bus stops within the county were installed prior to the implementation of the ADA and may not meet current standards. As a result, some bus stops have been removed for being inaccessible. Both agencies are working toward 100% accessibility and work with developers, cities, and other agencies to improve the bus stop infrastructure within their jurisdictions.

Service Gaps

Based on the Transportation Assessment, Outreach, and Needs Assessment, we have identified five primary service gaps:

- Public agencies do not coordinate consistently to collect and analyze data on transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.
- Older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes have limited awareness of what transportation services are available to them due to a lack of easily accessible information.
- Transportation resources could be better coordinated and more efficient.
- Fixed-route transit could be improved to better serve older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.
- Funding available for transportation providers and coordinators is limited.

Chapter 5: Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations

The Coordinated Plan outlines actions that SANDAG and partner agencies can take to better meet the needs of the older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes. This chapter identifies the goals, strategies, recommendations, and implementation approaches intended to address the service gaps identified in Chapter 4. This includes the identification of transportation coordination strategies to improve the efficiency of available services. It also includes how SANDAG plans to monitor and implement the strategies and recommendations and highlights the important roles of transit operators and the CTSA in enhancing effectiveness and efficiency. This chapter also identifies priority projects for future STGP funding cycles. However, unlike the regional plan, the Coordinated Plan is not fiscally constrained. Its purpose is to identify existing gaps in service and recommendations for strategies to fill those gaps if additional funding becomes available.

Relationship with the Regional Plan Vision and Goals

The regional plan is SANDAG's long-range plan for transportation, land use, housing, and environmental strategies that meet the needs of all residents of the San Diego region. The Coordinated Plan is a near-term plan to meet the transportation needs of the region's older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. Goals for the more focused Coordinated Plan were developed in consideration of the broader goals of the 2025 Regional Plan, expected to be approved by the SANDAG Board of Directors in December 2025.

2025 Regional Plan

The 2025 Regional Plan has four goals: convenient and reliable movement of people and goods, equitable access to essential needs and opportunities, healthy communities and environment for everyone, and a safe transportation network for all users.

Coordinated Plan Goals

The needs assessment documented in Chapter 4 identified five service gaps. Each service gap is accompanied by a proposed goal, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Service Gaps and Goals

Service Gap	Goal
Public agencies do not coordinate consistently to collect and analyze data on transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes	Goal 1: Available, usable, and shareable data that is collected efficiently to support planning efforts and improve mobility options
Older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes have limited awareness of what transportation services are available to them due to a lack of information	Goal 2: Clear, understandable, and readily available information about transportation options from transportation providers, coordinators, and public agencies that results in increased public awareness
Transportation resources could be better coordinated and more efficient	Goal 3: Coordinated and efficient use of transportation resources
Fixed-route transit could be improved to better serve older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes	Goal 4: Convenient, accessible, safe, and comfortable transportation services
Funding available for transportation providers and coordinators is limited	Goal 5: Financial and operational stability for transportation providers and coordinators

Strategies and Recommendations

Implementation Methods/Lead Agencies

Achievement of the Coordinated Plan goals will require several actions, referred to collectively as strategies and recommendations. Some of these may be accomplished through action from SANDAG alone, while most others will require coordination with other organizations. When other organizations are involved, the Coordinated Plan recommends collaboration to achieve the goals. Strategies and recommendations are summarized below.

SANDAG Strategies

SANDAG can use existing resources and forums to lead many of the Coordinated Plan Strategies. Implementation actions are identified as tasks in SANDAG's annual budget. Examples of actions SANDAG will be responsible for include the following:

- Evaluate regional needs through preparation of the Coordinated Plan
- Monitor and report on performance of transportation providers and CTSA
- Manage the CTSA contract and define the scope of work
- Administer funding through the STGP
- Facilitate discussions through the SSTAC

CTSA Strategies

The CTSA is expected to implement certain strategies as assigned by SANDAG through its contract. Examples of actions the CTSA will be responsible for include the following:

- Coordinate with and provide ride referrals to transportation providers
- Facilitate discussions through the CAM
- Explore joint procurement, use, and maintenance of wheelchair-accessible vehicles, driver training, and other transportation coordination activities

MTS and NCTD Strategies

SANDAG [Board Policy No. 018](#) assigns SANDAG the responsibility to prepare the Coordinated Plan and conduct long-range transit planning activities. It also assigns short-range transit planning activities to MTS and NCTD. The Coordinated Plan recommends that MTS and NCTD make policy changes to achieve the plan's goals. Examples of policy recommendations include the following:

- Operate and improve fixed-route transit and paratransit frequency, reliability, and service coverage consistent with the 2025 Regional Plan
- Change fare policy for fixed-route transit for customers certified to use paratransit
- Consider setting aside funding for specialized transportation in future transit-funding ballot measures, if pursued

Interagency Strategies

The Coordinated Plan also identifies additional strategies where there are opportunities for collaboration with agencies like local jurisdictions and Caltrans. Contingent on additional funding and staff capacity, SANDAG will work with these agencies and strive to implement them if possible. Examples of strategies that would require interagency collaboration include the following:

- Collaborate on data collection and analysis efforts to fulfill multiple agencies' requirements more efficiently
- Improve accessibility of sidewalks and waiting areas near transit stops

Specialized Transportation Provider Strategies

In addition to the strategies directly implemented by other agencies, as noted above, several strategies are identified as priorities for specialized transportation providers applying for funding through the STGP. To be eligible for funding, STGP applicants must show how the proposed projects align with the program's priority strategies. Applicants are not expected to address every strategy, and STGP funding alone will not be sufficient to meet all regional needs. Instead, the strategies outlined here should serve as a reference point for decision-making if new funding opportunities arise in the future. SANDAG may also encourage applicants to advance a variety of STGP strategies, rather than having all applicants pursue a single STGP strategy, through the language and evaluation criteria specified in the Call for Projects. Appendix F lists all the STGP priorities identified in the Coordinated Plan.

Implementation and Funding

Some strategies and recommendations can be achieved with existing resources and are recommended to reduce redundancy and improve efficiency and coordination among current providers. Others will require new or expanded funding—for example, service expansions to better meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. These strategies are identified as contingent on additional funding and can be pursued if new resources become available in the future.

The sections below outline the strategies that each agency will pursue to advance implementation of the plan and achieve the identified goals. Only the Lead Agency is listed under each goal. The Lead Agency will be primarily responsible for initiating and carrying out the strategy, while other agencies may provide support as appropriate.

Goal 1: Data Sharing and Collaboration

Goal Background

Interagency outreach for the Coordinated Plan found a key service gap: public agencies do not consistently coordinate to collect and analyze data on the transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. To address this gap, the goal is to establish data that is available, usable, and shareable, and to ensure it is collected efficiently to support planning efforts and improve mobility options. Table 5.2 lists five strategies to meet this goal.

Table 5.2: Data Sharing and Collaboration Strategies and Recommendations

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/Recommendation	Contingent on Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
SANDAG	1.1	Develop and implement an Interagency Collaboration Strategy that defines roles and responsibilities for implementing agencies. The plan will highlight opportunities to streamline data collection (such as surveys and focus groups) and information sharing for riders	No	Completed Interagency Collaboration Strategy
SANDAG	1.2	Discuss transportation coordination topics at SSTAC with transportation providers	No	Include summary of transportation coordination topics discussed at SSTAC in TDA Annual Report
Interagency	1.3	Collaborate with other agencies on their own data collection efforts to fulfill multiple requirements more efficiently when possible	Yes	Coordinated data collection efforts relating to older adults/people with disabilities.

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/Recommendation	Contingent on Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
Interagency	1.4	Make collected survey data available for use by other agencies to eliminate redundant efforts and establish a baseline. Share data collection efforts and availability at SSTAC, or other interagency meetings	No	Survey reports and data shared and published on SANDAG and other agency websites
Interagency	1.5	Conduct a regional mapping effort to identify sidewalk gaps and other barriers to accessibility, such as steep slopes, to identify where projects to improve accessibility are most needed	Yes	Inventory of available shapefiles with sidewalk and elevation information

SANDAG Strategy 1.1: Develop and implement an Interagency Collaboration Strategy that defines roles and responsibilities for implementing agencies. The plan will highlight opportunities to streamline data collection (such as surveys and focus groups) and information sharing for riders

Through outreach with agencies, working groups, and feedback from the Coordinated Plan Survey and focus groups, it became clear that coordination among agencies working on similar initiatives could be improved. To address Goals 1, 2, and 3, SANDAG will lead the development of an Interagency Collaboration Strategy to establish a structured meeting cadence to ensure consistent coordination and exchange of information among participating agencies and partners. The plan will identify key partners, define their roles and responsibilities, and serve as a tool to track ongoing data collection and information-sharing efforts to maintain transparency and alignment across initiatives. It will also include a review of existing forums and identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration, including potential connections between SANDAG working groups such as SSTAC and CAM to coordinate on related topics and efforts. The CTSA will play an essential role in facilitating ongoing coordination between agencies and implementation of the Interagency Collaboration Strategy. Progress for this strategy will be measured by the development of an Interagency Collaboration Strategy by the next coordinated plan update.

SANDAG Strategy 1.2: Discuss transportation coordination topics at SSTAC with transportation providers

Building on SANDAG Strategy 1.1, this strategy focuses on bringing topics identified through interagency collaboration resulting from the development of the Interagency Collaboration Strategy to existing forums. SANDAG directly sets the agenda for the SSTAC, the body that meets to discuss the transportation needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. SANDAG will use the SSTAC to discuss coordination topics and potential policy changes at least once per year. In addition, CAM is convened by the CTSA. SANDAG's Interagency Collaboration Strategy liaisons will facilitate the transportation coordination topics and request that the CTSA incorporate relevant topics for discussion at CAM meetings at least once per year. To measure progress of this strategy, a summary of transportation coordination topics discussed at SSTAC will be included in the TDA Annual Report.

Interagency Strategy 1.3: Collaborate with other agencies on their own data collection efforts to fulfill multiple requirements more efficiently when possible

While it is the responsibility of SANDAG to prepare the Coordinated Plan, there are other agencies doing similar work to assess and meet the needs of the region's older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. Agencies currently collect and analyze data to fulfill agency-specific responsibilities, but these data collection efforts currently conducted independently could become more efficient and cost-effective. For example, SANDAG conducts surveys, focus groups, and other forms of outreach every four years when updating its coordinated plan. SANDAG will work with other agencies through these efforts to identify opportunities to fulfill each agency's respective requirements.

Interagency Strategy 1.4: Make collected survey data available for use by other agencies to eliminate redundant efforts and establish a baseline. Share data collection efforts and availability at SSTAC, or other interagency meetings

Building on Interagency Strategy 1.3, this strategy proposes sharing survey data findings between agencies and, when appropriate, with the public through SANDAG's Open Data Portal. Survey and outreach results could also be shared at various working groups and existing forums such as SSTAC and CAM to guide ongoing coordination efforts.

Interagency Strategy 1.5: Conduct a regional mapping effort to identify sidewalk gaps and other barriers to accessibility, such as steep slopes, to identify where projects to improve accessibility are most needed

An additional strategy, contingent on additional funding, is to conduct a regional mapping effort to identify sidewalk gaps. The Coordinated Plan Survey and focus groups highlighted the absences of safe places to cross the street and other barriers to accessibility, particularly around transit stations and stops. While local jurisdictions and transit operators already have some information about where there are opportunities for improvement, it is often inconsistent across the region. A coordinated approach would begin with consolidating existing datasets and collecting new information only where necessary. This effort would help pinpoint areas where travelers face challenges accessing transit. This additional information would help project sponsors prioritize projects with the greatest potential to benefit older adults and people with disabilities.

Goal 2: Awareness and Information

Goal Background

The Coordinated Plan Survey and focus groups revealed that many residents are not aware of the transportation options that are available to them, even though they are comfortable using technology and online search tools. This gap indicates a lack of publicly available information regarding the existence, eligibility requirements, and operating characteristics of transportation services. Table 5.3 lists four strategies to meet this goal.

Table 5.3: Awareness and Information Strategies and Recommendations

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/Recommendation	Contingent on Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
CTSA	2.1	Collaborate with other agencies and transportation providers to improve information regarding transit, paratransit, specialized transportation eligibility, availability, and discounts in creating rider guides and other transportation resources to be available on CTSA and agency websites	Yes	Publication of a rider guide linked on SANDAG, CTSA, MTS, and NCTD websites. Increase in public awareness due to availability of rider guide and other transportation resources
CTSA	2.2	Provide information and referrals to older adults, people with disabilities, and other people needing specialized transportation	No	Number of successful referrals and measured customer satisfaction
Specialized Transportation Providers	2.3	Offer in-person and online travel trainings	N/A	N/A

Note: Specialized Transportation Provider Strategies are listed as N/A for Contingent on Additional Funding and Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan because their achievement depends on projects implemented by successful STGP applicants

CTSA Strategy 2.1: Collaborate with other agencies and transportation providers to improve information regarding transit, paratransit, specialized transportation eligibility, availability, and discounts in creating rider guides and other transportation resources to be available on CTSA and agency websites

While some transportation providers are successful in publishing information about their services, it is inconsistent across the region and across providers. Through this strategy, the CTSA would be expected to harmonize information on transit, paratransit, and specialized transportation from other agencies to create consistent rider guides and other informational resources. These resources could be published on multiple agencies' websites and distributed in various accessible formats to reach a wide audience. Progress for this strategy would be measured by the publication of a rider guide linked to SANDAG, CTSA, MTS, NCTD, and other transportation provider websites.

CTSA Strategy 2.2: Provide information and referrals to older adults, people with disabilities, and other people needing specialized transportation

Improving awareness and access to information helps ensure that demand for transportation services is met more equitably and efficiently. However, the cyclical nature of funding programs creates uncertainty for users and hinders awareness of available transportation services over time. While rider guides will allow many people to make informed transportation choices, there will still be a role for referral services. The CTSA is expected to function as a one-stop shop for public information on transportation and provide referrals to transportation providers. This information and referral service should consider providers' available capacity, cost structures, reliability, and other factors. The current CTSA contract includes information and referral services, but a new contract would require improved performance measures that better track the outcomes and satisfaction of referrals.

Specialized Transportation Provider Strategy 2.3: Offer in-person and online travel trainings

Travel training allows participants to receive guidance, ask questions, and build confidence in navigating transportation systems, especially fixed-route transit. Among all transportation services, fixed-route transit offers the most flexibility to riders and becomes more cost-effective as the number of riders increases. Therefore, efforts to reduce the information barrier to riding fixed-route transit and other lower-cost transportation services may improve mobility while reducing costs.

Additionally, online travel trainings extend the reach of these programs by making information available to those who cannot attend in person due to distance, scheduling conflicts or mobility limitations. Together, these formats ensure that critical information about transportation services, eligibility, and trip planning is widely available, inclusive, and accessible to all potential riders, helping increase awareness.

Goal 3: Transportation Coordination

Goal Background

Feedback from the Coordinated Plan Survey and focus groups highlight that the provision of transportation service, especially specialized transportation, could be more efficient and benefit from greater coordination. This will be especially important in the future as the regional population ages. A larger proportion of the region's residents being older will likely mean greater demand for specialized transportation services, making coordination of resources critical for meeting the need. Table 5.4 lists seven strategies to meet this goal.

Table 5.4: Transportation Coordination Strategies and Recommendations

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/Recommendation	Contingent on Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
SANDAG	3.1	Evaluate STGP administration based on Coordinated Plan Priorities	No	Updated STGP management plan and calls for projects
SANDAG	3.2	Conduct a new, competitive CTSA procurement to establish a contract that includes an updated scope of work, outcome-based performance measures, a limited term, and sufficient and predictable funding	No	New CTSA contract that improves coordination by incentivizing the CTSA to maximize the number of referrals to other transportation providers; incentivizes the CTSA to match riders with the lowest-cost transportation provider that meets their needs; and includes sufficient funding through a direct allocation of Section 5310 funding, subject to performance
SANDAG	3.3	Re-compete CTSA contract every four years as needed (option) when updating the Coordinated Plan to ensure that coordination activities and performance metrics reflect regional needs and allow for evaluation of the CTSA's effectiveness. Continuously monitor CTSA performance	No	N/A - beyond next Coordinated Plan
CTSA	3.4	Implement updated scope of work in CTSA contract and report performance to SANDAG	Yes	New CTSA contract and performance evaluation

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/Recommendation	Contingent on Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
CTSA	3.5	Using the CAM, collect feedback continuously from social service transportation providers to determine which coordination strategies would be effective, best serve their needs, and could be addressed by the CTSA.	No	Include summary of transportation coordination topics discussed at CAM in TDA Annual Report
CTSA	3.6	Explore joint procurement, use, and maintenance of wheelchair-accessible vehicles; driver training; ride-scheduling and dispatching; specialized transportation eligibility verification; use of improved referral tracking software; and other functions to reduce duplication and improve efficiency and effectiveness of coordination	Yes	Feasibility study based on discussions with transportation providers
MTS and NCTD	3.7	Improve the utilization of fixed-route transit vehicles by offering zero-fare access to fixed-route transit for customers certified to use paratransit	No	Program creation and report on findings

SANDAG Strategy 3.1: Evaluate STGP administration based on Coordinated Plan Priorities

SANDAG will evaluate the STGP to ensure that administration of the program in upcoming cycles reflects the priorities identified in the 2025 Coordinated Plan. Several changes are possible. For example, SANDAG could reduce the amount of money available for competition by directly allocating a portion of Section 5310 funding for a new CTSA contract. At the same time, unconventional sources of funding could be added to the program and available for competition. More information about exploring unconventional sources of funding is in SANDAG Strategy 5.1. For this initial evaluation of STGP administration, SANDAG will use the existing funding available through the program and work closely with partner agencies and grantees to discuss potential changes. Progress for this strategy will be measured by the updated STGP management plan and/or calls for project.

SANDAG Strategy 3.2: Conduct a new, competitive CTSA procurement to establish a contract that includes an updated scope of work, outcome-based performance measures, a limited term, and sufficient and predictable funding

The CTSA is an important organization that SANDAG can rely on to improve transportation coordination. Discussion in Chapter 2 highlights issues related to how SANDAG currently assigns transportation coordination responsibilities to its current CTSA through the CTSA contract and additional STGP mobility management contracts. These current practices require an exception to SANDAG's normal contracting processes, hinder the ability of the CTSA to plan its finances for upcoming years, and prevent other STGP applicants from knowing how much funding will be available to them through the competitive process.

Although the need for improved transportation coordination is clear, expanding the scope of the existing CTSA contract without competition would be considered a sole-source contract and not consistent with the agency's standard procurement practices. Instead, we recommend articulating the expectations of the CTSA in a dedicated contract with a defined contract term and sufficient funding to avoid the need for augmenting CTSA duties with STGP mobility management contracts.

In recognition of these issues, SANDAG will reconsider the structure of the CTSA. This may include conducting a new CTSA procurement to allow for a redefined and expanded scope along with additional funding. A new CTSA contract would include an updated scope of work, outcome-based performance measures, a limited term (e.g. four years with an option to extend another four years), and sufficient and predictable funding. Such improvements would be written to encourage the CTSA to offer services that enhance the region's specialized transportation providers and use public funds more efficiently.

If SANDAG were to conduct a new CTSA procurement, it would be reasonable to align the timing with the expiration of the next round of mobility management grants and/or TDA payment schedules. Cycle 13 mobility managements contract are expected to expire in January 2028.

Whereas the current CTSA contract only includes payment through TDA Article 4.5, the budget for a new CTSA contract could be increased through additional direct allocations of Section 5310 funding. Providing sufficient funding for the CTSA would avoid the need to augment the CTSA's scope with limited-term mobility management responsibilities. While a direct allocation of Section 5310 funding would remove funding from the competitive STGP, it would make funding allocations more consistent and improve organizations' abilities to make longer-term operating plans.

If a new CTSA were identified in the middle of a fiscal year, SANDAG would need to be prepared with a funding plan. TDA claimants, including the CTSA, are eligible for payment with TDA dollars at the beginning of a new fiscal year after having submitted their claims months before. SANDAG could use Section 5310 funding to pay for the first several months of CTSA functions if this is set aside for the new CTSA contract is part of SANDAG's FY 2028 budget. Therefore, SANDAG would likely need to begin the CTSA procurement and budgeting process in calendar year 2026.

Progress on this strategy will be measured by the creation of a new CTSA contract. Depending on the structure of the new contract and contents in the scope of work, it could also advance Goals 2 and 5.

SANDAG Strategy 3.3: Re-compete CTSA contract every four years (option) when updating the Coordinated Plan to ensure that coordination activities and performance metrics reflect regional needs and allow for evaluation of the CTSA's effectiveness. Continuously monitor CTSA performance

SANDAG will revisit the CTSA contract every four years. This will include using the identification of transportation service gaps and needs conducted through the Coordinated Plan every four years to determine whether the CTSA contract scope of work is still appropriate. In addition, it will include determining if SANDAG is satisfied with the performance of the CTSA. If SANDAG is satisfied with the CTSA's performance, then the contract may be extended for another four years. Alternatively, SANDAG will conduct a new procurement and take the opportunity to update the scope of work to reflect current needs.

In the meantime, and regardless of whether a new procurement is conducted, SANDAG will continue to monitor current CTSA performance of the core functions outlined in the CTSA contract.

CTSA Strategy 3.4: Implement updated scope of work in CTSA contract and report performance to SANDAG

As noted in the previous section, SANDAG will reconsider the structure of the CTSA and may conduct a procurement to enter into a new CTSA contract. The new contract would contain an updated scope of work that reflects transportation coordination activities that best meet the needs of the region. Activities would be derived from CTSA best practices (see Chapter 2 for a review of responsibilities assigned to other California CTSA's and how contracts are often structured) and reflect recommendations from the FY 2022–2024 TDA Triennial Performance Audit Report. The updated contract would also include performance measures that allow SANDAG to effectively evaluate CTSA performance. The CTSA would provide performance data to SANDAG as required by the updated contract. It is likely that the new contract would include greater scope and budget, so implementation of the updated scope of work would be contingent on additional funding from SANDAG.

CTSA Strategy 3.5: Using the CAM, collect feedback continuously from social service transportation providers to determine which coordination strategies would be effective, best serve their needs, and could be addressed by the CTSA.

SANDAG's current CTSA contract requires regular meetings of the CAM. The CTSA will continue convening the CAM and use the forum to actively engage transportation providers in discussions of transportation coordination needs and topics derived from the Interagency Collaboration Strategy discussed in SANDAG Strategy 1.1. The CTSA will collect and document feedback from these providers in a summary report to SANDAG. This will be included in SANDAG's TDA Annual Report to the Transportation Committee to inform policy discussions regarding regional transportation performance and needs.

CTSA Strategy 3.6: Explore joint procurement, use, and maintenance of wheelchair-accessible vehicles; driver training; ride-scheduling and dispatching; specialized transportation eligibility verification; use of improved referral tracking software; and other functions to reduce duplication and improve efficiency and effectiveness of coordination

This strategy lists many possible coordination activities that the CTSA could pursue if directed by SANDAG to assist the region's transportation providers. The CTSA would be directed to evaluate the feasibility of implementing such activities and discuss with transportation providers at CAM meetings. It is likely that the new contract would include greater scope and budget, so implementation of the updated scope of work would be contingent on additional funding from SANDAG.

MTS and NCTD Strategy 3.7: Improve the utilization of fixed-route transit vehicles by offering zero-fare access to fixed-route transit for customers certified to use paratransit

In the case of MTS and NCTD, transportation coordination can take the form of encouraging, where possible and appropriate, the use of less costly fixed-route transit instead of paratransit.

Customers can become certified to use paratransit if they have a disability that prevents them from being able to use fixed-route transit. However, some customers certified to use paratransit due to a disability may be able to use fixed-route transit sometimes. Given the large gap between the operating costs of each mode, transit agencies would save money on any trips that customers elected to take on fixed-route transit rather than paratransit. This would be true even without collecting fares from these passengers on fixed-route transit. Therefore, it is recommended that transit agencies offer zero-fare access to fixed-route transit for customers certified to use paratransit. Implementing this strategy would also advance Goal 4 by providing additional travel options for customers certified to use paratransit.

Goal 4: High-Quality Transportation

Goal Background

The Coordinated Plan Survey revealed that fixed-route transit could be improved to better serve older adults and people with disabilities. To address this, Goal 4 is to provide transportation that is convenient, accessible, safe and comfortable. A principal challenge to achieving this is funding availability. As noted in Chapter 2, MTS is expecting budget shortfalls in the coming years. This means that the region will be unable to maintain the current service levels of fixed-route transit without more funding. In recognition of these funding challenges, most of the recommendations for MTS and NCTD in this section are contingent on additional funding. Table 5.5 lists eight strategies to meet this goal.

Table 5.5: High-Quality Transportation Strategies and Recommendations

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/ Recommendation	Contingent or Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
SANDAG	4.1	Continue to monitor performance of all transportation services in the region	No	TDA Annual Report
MTS and NCTD	4.2	Maintain fixed-route transit service levels, infrastructure, and vehicles to ensure access to opportunities	Yes	Vehicle revenue hours and other performance measures of service availability
MTS and NCTD	4.3	Continue providing subsidized fixed-route transit rides to older adults and people with disabilities through the SDM fare and consider expanding to include people with low incomes	Yes	Continuation of SDM fare discount
MTS and NCTD	4.4	Improve fixed-route transit frequency, reliability, and service coverage consistent with the 2025 Regional Plan	Yes	Vehicle revenue hours and other performance measures of service availability
Interagency	4.5	Improve accessibility of sidewalks and waiting areas near transit stops	Yes	Length of sidewalk, number of curb ramps, accessible pedestrian signals, transit shelters constructed
Specialized Transportation Providers	4.6	Provide specialized transportation, prioritizing cost-effective and non-redundant services	N/A	N/A
Specialized Transportation Providers	4.7	Provide paratransit-equivalent service across the MTS/NCTD service area boundary without requiring rider transfers, coordinating with the CTSA as needed	N/A	N/A
Specialized Transportation Providers	4.8	Use additional STGP funding, if available, to expand door-to-door and door-through-door service availability	N/A	N/A

Note: Specialized Transportation Provider Strategies are listed as N/A for Contingent on Additional Funding and Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan because their achievement depends on projects implemented by successful STGP applicants

SANDAG Strategy 4.1: Continue to monitor performance of all transportation services in the San Diego Region

SANDAG [Board Policy No. 018](#) requires annual and quarterly monitoring of transit performance for both MTS and NCTD. Six performance indicators, consistent with the annual performance measures required by the TDA, are evaluated each quarter. These indicators are tracked for 13 quarters to show year-over-year trends and quarter-to-quarter changes in performance.

Because SANDAG is responsible for regional transit fares, the indicators help determine whether the system is obtaining the desired results and if overall performance is improving based on updated regional strategies or service operation plans. They also assess transit system management, to help the transit agencies determine where improvements can be made. SANDAG convenes MTS, NCTD, the CTSA, and Caltrans on a quarterly basis in meetings of the Regional Short-Range Transit Planning Task Force to discuss the quarterly monitoring reports and other short-range transit planning topics.

One topic discussed at each meeting is upcoming operational changes planned for each agency. MTS and NCTD are required to submit a Service Implementation Plan (SIP) to SANDAG each year formalizing these service changes in advance of the budget approval process. The SIPs list the operational changes each transit operator implemented or plans to implement to balance proposed fiscal year budgets. SIPs also include a discussion regarding the service changes and their impacts on existing service gaps and deficiencies based on the goals and objectives from the Coordinated Plan. SANDAG is responsible for evaluating operational changes and ensuring that any transit service changes are consistent with regional objectives. [Appendix C](#) includes the regional SIP, which consolidates the MTS and NCTD SIPs.

As the agency responsible for setting the agenda for Regional Short-Range Transit Planning Task Force meetings, SANDAG will begin including items tracking implementation of Coordinated Plan strategies. Some strategies will require policy changes to implement, and SANDAG will facilitate discussions with the transit operators to determine what actions are feasible and could be implemented.

In addition to coordinating and discussing service and policy changes across agencies, SANDAG, MTS, NCTD, and the CTSA are also required to undergo independent triennial performance audits to remain eligible for continued funding through TDA. Eligibility for year-over-year increases in funding depends on making a reasonable effort to implement productivity improvement recommendations, including those identified in the triennial performance audits. SANDAG will monitor each agency's efforts and performance to implement these recommendations annually. The most recent audits are available at [SANDAG.org/tda](https://sandag.org/tda).

While regular performance monitoring and performance audits show that the agencies are generally performing well, policy changes at the state level and/or additional funding are needed to sustain their operations.

MTS and NCTD Strategy 4.2: Maintain fixed-route transit service levels, infrastructure, and vehicles to ensure access to opportunities

Feedback from the Coordinated Plan Survey emphasized that existing fixed-route transit services are important, effective, and well-used among older adults and people with disabilities. In addition, fixed-route transit is a cost-effective way to meet transportation demand, so maintaining fixed-route transit service levels manages the demand for other costly, limited-capacity services. Contingent on additional funding, the transit operators are recommended to maintain these service levels. Progress implementing this strategy will be measured by reevaluating transit performance measures in the next Coordinated Plan.

MTS and NCTD Strategy 4.3: Continue providing subsidized fixed-route transit rides to older adults and people with disabilities through the SDM fare and consider expanding to include people with low incomes

As shown in Table 2.24 in Chapter 2, operating costs per one-way passenger trip vary by transportation service, and fixed-route transit is a cost-effective means of facilitating travel for many older adults and people with disabilities. However, the SDM fare discount for older adults and people with disabilities means the transit operators collect less fare revenue from these riders. Contingent on additional funding for financial sustainability, the transit operators are recommended to continue providing fare discounts to older adults and people with disabilities and consider expanding to include people with low incomes. Progress implementing this strategy will be measured by the continuation of the SDM fare discount.

MTS and NCTD Strategy 4.4: Improve fixed-route transit frequency, reliability, and service coverage consistent with the 2025 Regional Plan

The Regional Plan identifies the long-term transit service levels planned for the San Diego region. If MTS and NCTD can find sufficient resources to maintain existing service levels and fare discounts as mentioned above and still have additional funding, they are recommended to improve the transit network consistent with the Regional Plan. Progress implementing this strategy will be measured by reevaluating transit performance measures in the next Coordinated Plan.

Interagency Strategy 4.5: Improve accessibility of sidewalks and waiting areas near transit stops

This strategy would build on Interagency Strategy 1.5 by using the regional sidewalk map to pinpoint locations where accessibility improvements are most needed, ensuring that investments are targeted and effective. Although building new infrastructure to improve accessibility would require additional funding upfront, it could increase the number of people who could use fixed-route transit services, encouraging the use of cost-effective transportation modes. Progress implementing this strategy can be measured by the number of physical accessibility improvements.

Specialized Transportation Providers Strategy 4.6: Fund operations of specialized transportation, prioritizing cost-effective and non-redundant services

Specialized transportation services provide essential mobility to the region's older adults and people with disabilities, especially where fixed-route transit and paratransit are unavailable. STGP applicants are encouraged to continue providing transportation through operating grants. It is recommended that services be cost-effective to provide the greatest number of rides with available funding and provide non-redundant service offerings or geographic coverage to provide benefits to many of the region's residents.

Specialized Transportation Providers Strategy 4.7: Provide paratransit-equivalent service across the MTS/NCTD service area boundary without requiring rider transfers, coordinating with the CTSA as needed

Facilitating more paratransit-equivalent trips across the transit service area boundary could enhance mobility for people with disabilities who cannot ride fixed-route transit, and the CTSA could be helpful in coordinating such service if directed to do so. STGP applicants are encouraged to provide or facilitate these types of trips.

Specialized Transportation Providers Strategy 4.8: Use additional STGP funding, if available, to expand door-to-door and door-through-door service availability

Feedback from the Coordinated Plan Survey revealed that door-to-door and door-through-door specialized transportation services would be helpful in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Because these types of services are more expensive to provide, they are recommended if additional funding for STGP becomes available.

Goal 5: Operator Stability

Goal Background

A variety of federal, state, and local funding programs provide critical financial support for transportation in the San Diego region. While these programs provide funding to SANDAG, MTS, NCTD, and specialized transportation providers through the STGP, the cost to operate, maintain, modernize, and expand the region's transportation network is always increasing. Accordingly, achieving many of the Coordinated Plan priorities requires additional funding. In recognition of this challenge, Goal 5 is to have financial and operational stability for transportation providers and coordinators. Table 5.6 lists two strategies to meet this goal.

Table 5.6: Operator Stability Strategies and Recommendations

Lead Agency	ID	Strategy/Recommendation	Contingent on Additional Funding	Measurement of Progress by Next Coordinated Plan
SANDAG	5.1	Pursue funding from both conventional (local ballot measures and state/federal funding) and unconventional (philanthropic) sources, to augment and sustain all transportation services in the San Diego region	No	Additional funding beyond current sources for specialized transportation, issue a request for information and prepare a report of findings and recommendations related to unconventional funding sources
MTS and NCTD	5.2	Consider setting aside funds for specialized transportation in future transit funding ballot measures proposed by public agencies	Yes	Additional funding beyond current sources for specialized transportation

SANDAG Strategy 5.1: Pursue funding from both conventional (local ballot measures and state/federal funding) and unconventional (philanthropic) sources, to augment and sustain all transportation services in the San Diego region

Existing transportation funding programs—administered through the FTA, the State of California, and agencies like SANDAG—fund both capital improvements and operating needs for transit and specialized transportation services. Federal programs such as FTA Sections 5307, 5310, and 5311, along with competitive grants like CMAQ, Surface Transportation Block Grant, and Capital Investment Grant, constitute the core of federal investment in transit. State programs, including those supported by the State Transportation Improvement Program, State Transit Assistance, Senate Bill 1, and Cap-and-Invest revenues, further enhance funding opportunities for sustainable transportation projects. Locally, TransNet and TDA funds serve as the primary, ongoing sources of support for transit operations, capital improvements, and specialized transportation. A summary of funding sources is available in Appendix F.

SANDAG is always seeking additional funding sources. This includes staff monitoring notices of funding opportunities from state and federal agencies and coordinating with legislators to ensure they are aware of the region’s funding needs. However, there may be opportunities to grow the pot of funding available for specialized transportation by working with unconventional partners like philanthropic organizations or foundations, as mentioned in [Chapter 2](#). To learn more about these opportunities, SANDAG will issue a request for information. Based on the feedback received, SANDAG will prepare a report of findings and recommendations out of this effort to identify potential next steps. These might include partnering with a foundation to leverage current funding and bring more resources to specialized transportation.

MTS and NCTD Strategy 5.2: Consider setting aside funds for specialized transportation in future transit funding ballot measures proposed by public agencies

Elected officials serving on the MTS and NCTD boards have the authority to consider potential new funding sources and may decide to put tax or bond measures on the ballot for consideration among members of the voting public. Any decisions related to placing measures on ballots will require future action by the board of each agency. Achieving a successful vote on a ballot measure is challenging, but it can result in a significant amount of flexible transportation funding for the region. It is recommended that transit-funding ballot measures, if proposed in the future, allocate funding for specialized transportation, similar to how TransNet includes funding for the SMG program. Progress implementing this strategy will be measured by the amount of additional funding available