

Appendix P:

Travel and Tourism

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Background

This appendix addresses a new planning factor known as Enhance Travel and Tourism. This planning factor was added to 23 CFR 450.306 within the Metropolitan Transportation Planning final rule in 2016. This appendix describes how travel and tourism are considered and implemented in metropolitan transportation planning.

Introduction

San Diego is one of the top five travel destinations for Americans, and the region welcomed 35.1 million visitors in 2019, making tourism the second-largest industry in the region.¹ Stay-at-home orders in response to COVID-19 resulted in a drastic decline in visitors to the region—there were a total of only 14 million visitors in 2020. Visitor spending decreased by more than 50%, impacting the region in numerous ways. However, as vaccinations become available, COVID-19 restrictions are being lifted, which is expected to encourage a rebound in tourism for the region.

With a wide variety of attractions to enjoy, San Diego has something for everyone. Because of the large number of visitors and the importance of travel and tourism to our regional economy, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) continues to plan and make travel easy and convenient for tourists and other visitors. SANDAG works with regional partners, including the San Diego Tourism Authority and the Downtown San Diego Partnership, to consider tourism in planning efforts. In addition, more than a dozen chambers of commerce and economic development councils foster travel and tourism in the region.

Year-Round Tourism

San Diego has many attractions that draw people to the region throughout the year. Our Mediterranean climate makes San Diego an ideal place to visit regardless of the season. Popular tourist locations include the San Diego Zoo and Safari Park, Balboa Park, SeaWorld, Legoland, multiple sporting event venues, and 70 miles of coastline. Additionally, the San Diego region is home to 17 federally recognized tribal governments with jurisdiction over 18 reservations, some of which contain gaming facilities, shopping, and entertainment venues. With a combination of public and private transportation options, San Diego residents and tourists have easy and convenient access to a variety of popular locations.

¹ "San Diego Industry Research," San Diego Tourism Authority, sandiego.org/about/industry-research.aspx.

A great resource for visitors and residents alike is 511sd.com, a regionally coordinated resource for transportation information. The interactive site includes information for travelers on current traffic, transit services, construction, active transportation, managed lanes, motorist roadside assistance, and more. The traffic information includes real-time travel speeds, traffic cameras, construction alerts, and a Twitter feed for regional transportation-related services. The Transit and Bike pages are designed to help people plan trips, while the FasTrak and Motorist Aid pages show how to easily access these resources.

Within the existing transportation system, there are many transit and active transportation routes that provide people with access to popular tourist destinations. More transportation projects will be ready as soon as 2025, and many more are planned through 2050. Below are some examples of existing and planned transit and active transportation routes included in San Diego Forward: The 2021 Regional Plan that provide access to major tourist destinations.

Balboa Park/San Diego Zoo

- *Rapid* Routes 30 and 215
- Tram 555 (Downtown to Logan Heights, Golden Hill, South Park, North Park, University Heights, and Hillcrest)
- Balboa Park Bike Route

Beaches

- *Rapid* Routes 10, 30, 103, 473, and 950

Downtown/Convention Center/Gaslamp Quarter/Petco Park/Seaport Village/USS Midway Museum

- Trolley Route 520 (Orange Line): El Cajon to Downtown
- Trolley Route 530 (Sycuan Green Line): Santee to Downtown
- *Rapid* Routes 12, 120, 235, and 910
- Commuter Rail Routes 581, 583, and 398 (COASTER)
- Tram 555
- Central Mobility Bikeway

Old Town San Diego

- Trolley Route 510 (UC San Diego Blue Line): San Ysidro to University City
- Trolley Route 530 (Sycuan Green Line): Santee to Downtown
- *Rapid* Routes 10, 28, and 640
- Uptown Bikeways

San Ysidro/International Border with Mexico

- Commuter Rail Routes 582 and 583
- Trolley Route 510 (UC San Diego Blue Line): San Ysidro to University City
- *Rapid* Route 640
- San Ysidro Mobility Hub

In addition to existing and expanded transit services, there are many planned managed lanes and rural corridor investments—components of the Complete Corridor strategy—that will provide access to regional travel and tourist destinations. These enhanced corridors will provide access to state parks such as Anza-Borrego, Cuyamaca Rancho, and Palomar Mountain; the Cabrillo National Monument; San Diego Zoo Safari Park; and other attractions. Improvements to rural corridors also support tribal governments' economic development opportunities related to gaming facilities and tourism.

The Central Mobility Hub will connect corridors and travel destinations such as the San Diego International Airport, the U.S.–Mexico border, and COASTER services, to name a few. This mobility hub will offer amenities that support a variety of first- and last-mile fleet services, microtransit, and rideshare, including e-charging stations, loading zones, carshare parking, and travel kiosks. Next Operating System (Next OS) will ensure that this network is supported by real-time travel management, creating a seamless travel experience to the top destinations in the San Diego region.

The San Ysidro Mobility Hub will transform the existing San Ysidro Transit Center, which for decades has been an anchor for the regional system, into a state-of-the-art facility featuring multimodal connections, innovative technologies, user amenities, and human-centered design. The San Ysidro Mobility Hub is scaled to serve one of the region's most historically and culturally significant communities, one of the world's busiest land border crossings, and a dynamic segment of the binational population that live, work, and play on either side of the international border. It will also catalyze needed improvements for the UC San Diego Blue Line Trolley—the busiest Trolley line across the existing system and a key component of planned services along the corridor.

Special Events

To ensure that everyone gets to their events safely and on time, SANDAG currently works with the Convention Center, the San Diego Tourism Authority, and our local transit providers to increase service and availability for public transportation during such events. For example, the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and the rideshare company Lyft have forged a partnership that works to enhance mobility accessibility. The Lyft mobile application provides real-time information about nearby MTS stations, routes, and pricing along with information about other available modes of travel, such as rideshare or e-scooters.

San Diego Comic-Con International alone can bring 135,000 people to Downtown San Diego in just one long weekend, with an estimated MTS ridership of 360,000–385,000 trips over four and a half days. MTS increases service for several events, including San Diego Padres games, San Diego State University basketball games, and the Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon. In total, more than 1 million additional passenger trips are recorded by MTS each year due to special events. North County Transit District (NCTD) also increases service for special events—for example, NCTD provides specially timed COASTER service for Padres games. For major annual events such as the San Diego County Fair, NCTD runs Special BREEZE Route 408, picking up visitors from the Escondido Transit Center and the Solana Beach Train Station.

On December 31, 2018, for the New Year holiday, MTS partnered with Lyft for ride discounts to help residents and visitors get home safely. MTS passengers were offered a one-time discount of \$5 for trips that arrived or departed from MTS transit centers between 8 p.m. and 3 a.m. That year, the Holiday Bowl and Parade and New Year’s Eve celebrations attracted large numbers of visitors, and MTS ran extra-late Trolley service on New Year’s Eve (past 2 a.m.).

Extra service for special events can help decrease congestion in areas surrounding these events, making it safer and easier for visitors to reach their destination.

Next Steps

Many of the projects planned through 2035 will increase transit frequency and the number of routes to popular tourist destinations, allowing more visitors and residents access to them. These projects include expanded *Rapid* routes connecting major tourist destinations such as Coronado, Downtown San Diego, Fashion Valley, La Jolla, Old Town, Ocean Beach, San Diego International Airport, Point Loma, and UTC.² SANDAG will continue working with our regional and state partners to address demands on our transportation systems to support the regional tourism industry and ensure that everyone who lives in or visits San Diego has access to safe and convenient transportation options.

² *Rapid* Routes 10, 12, 28, 30, 41, 910, and 950 would be in service by 2035 or earlier.