

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, 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.

A great resource for visitors and residents alike is 511sd.com, a regionally coordinated resource for transportation information. The interactive site includes information on current traffic, transit, construction, active transportation, managed lanes, motorist aid,

¹ San Diego Tourism Authority: sandiego.org/about/industry-research.aspx

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 Active Transportation pages are designed to help people plan trips, while the Managed Lanes 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
- 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 (Green Line): Santee to Downtown
- *Rapid* Routes 12, 120, 235, and 910
- Commuter Rail Routes 581, 583, and 398
- Tram 555: Downtown to Logan Heights, Golden Hill, South Park, North Park, University Heights, and Hillcrest
- Central Mobility Bikeway

Old Town San Diego

- Trolley Route 510 (UC San Diego Blue Line): San Ysidro to University City
- Trolley Route 530 (Green Line): Downtown San Diego to Santee
- *Rapid* Routes 1028 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 highway investments—components of the Complete Corridor strategy—that will provide access to regional travel and tourist destinations. These enhanced corridors will provide access to Anza Borrego State Park, Cabrillo National Monument, Palomar Mountain, San Diego Zoo and Safari Park, and other attractions. 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. The 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.

Special Events

To ensure that everyone gets to their events safely and on time, SANDAG currently works with the Convention Center, 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, SDSU Basketball Night 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. 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.

On December 31, 2018, for the New Year’s 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.).

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 partners to address demand on our transportation system due to tourism 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, 950, and 910 are included in the 2035 project phase.