



Mayor and City Council

June 11, 2019

Mr. Hasan Ikhata
Executive Director
San Diego Association of Governments
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Director Ikhata:

On behalf of the City of El Cajon, I write this letter to convey our community's opposition to any modification to the 2004 TransNet Extension Ordinance, including the shifting or removal of funding from highway projects. This letter is supported unanimously by the El Cajon City Council. On behalf of the City Council and the City of El Cajon, I request that the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) pursue new sources of funding for projects not listed in the 2004 TransNet measure.

In November 2004, the region's voters approved Proposition A, a 40-year-extension of a half-cent transportation sales tax, also known as TransNet. The Extension Ordinance specifically identified expansions of highways, including several important freeway projects in East San Diego County—specifically I-8, SR-52, SR-94, SR-67, and SR-125. These, along with other important highway and transit projects, were intended to balance the region's transportation needs and address the movement of goods within and through the region. The 2004 TransNet measure identified less than 20 percent of taxes collected to be allocated toward transit specific projects; the remaining approximately 80 percent was promised for highway and congestion relief. The City of El Cajon believes that modifying this allocation ratio violates the will of the voters.

Unfortunately, fourteen highway projects have yet to be funded—these are vital projects that SANDAG promised to San Diego County voters. Several of these unfinished projects are in East County and include the addition of HOV lanes on SR 52, SR-94 and SR-125 interchange, widening SR-94 to six lanes from 125 to Avocado Boulevard, and completing the general purposes lanes on I-8 from Greenfield Drive to Los Coches Road. One reason there are many highway projects unfinished is because public transit projects were frontloaded and most have either been completed or are underway. Despite the fact that over 96 percent of San Diego citizens use vehicles for the majority of their transportation needs, to date, TransNet dollars have been disproportionately appropriated to public transit.

On April 26, 2019, SANDAG staff unveiled a new vision for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that identifies many new public transit projects while removing the unfunded highway projects promised to voters in 2004. If adopted, this reallocation of TransNet funding will degrade the public's confidence and contribute to worsening traffic conditions throughout the region. The City of El Cajon is not opposed to new projects outlined in the revised RTP, but if SANDAG wishes to pursue this new vision, then other funding should be pursued.

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Additionally, the City urges the inclusion of highway and road projects in SANDAG's new RTP. The success of the region's transportation system relies on more than just public transportation. Roads and highways are, and will continue to be, a critical component of the transportation network.

Also, a functioning road network is critical to public safety and will help reach State-mandated climate reduction goals. Recent fires in our region remind us of the need for highway improvements to reduce congestion. SR 52, SR 125, SR 67, SR 94 and I-8 are often in gridlock during morning and afternoon commutes; imagine what could happen if a wildfire forces mass evacuation in East County. Additionally, the lack of progress on the SR 52 connectors to SR 125, SR 67, and I-15 are contributing to the region's environmental pollution. While East County residents wait for the completion of promised highway projects, they do so while sitting in idling cars causing avoidable Greenhouse gas emissions.

For these reasons, the City of El Cajon opposes modifications to the 2004 TransNet Extension Ordinance, including any changes to highway projects and their funding, and requests SANDAG pursue new funding sources for projects not originally included in the Extension Ordinance. It is important that SANDAG maintain the confidence of voters and deliver on promises to address critical road and highway projects.

The City of El Cajon joins the County of San Diego, the City of Vista, and the City of San Marcos in opposing the proposed changes. We believe the importance of a functioning road network cannot be overstated, and we welcome the opportunity to work together on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Wells", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bill Wells
Mayor