



AB 805– SANDAG Accountability and San Diego–Area Transportation Reform

IN BRIEF

AB 805 would reform the consolidated agency San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), as well as the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD), to strengthen the checks and balances within the system and ensure better representation, accountability and transparency.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego Association of Governments functions as the region’s consolidated metropolitan planning organization, regional transportation planning agency, and congestion management agency. In contrast, most areas of the state have these functions split between multiple agencies. This means SANDAG has outsize authority to direct a larger share of transportation funding in San Diego County, while MTS and NCTD are only responsible for the maintenance and operations of the region’s public transit.

In this past election, it was discovered that SANDAG misrepresented the revenue projections that would have been raised through a sales tax increase on the ballot, known as Measure A. News reports revealed that the staff at SANDAG knew these figures were incorrect before the election but failed to alert members of its board of directors of the correct figures and disclosed the rosy projections anyway.

Out-of-date cost estimates were also used in the official long term plans for TransNet, the transportation infrastructure program in San Diego, despite having updated its own figures a year earlier. This enabled SANDAG to obscure an \$8.4 billion cost increase facing the projects until after the Measure A tax increase had failed.

THE PROBLEM

The funding and management of San Diego’s transportation resources are controlled by an obscure agency that has very little direct accountability to the public. Votes at the SANDAG and transit boards are not proportionate to the populations of the

communities whose voices on transportation issues are delegated to these agencies.

Further, the management of SANDAG resources lack the proper checks-and-balances of an agency responsible for billions of dollars in funding.

SOLUTION

AB 805 would institute a number of reforms. Specifically, AB 805 would:

- Modify the voting structures of SANDAG, MTS, and NCTD to better reflect the populations they serve with proportional representation based on population;
- Raise the profile and accountability of the members of the boards by designating the mayors or mayoral designees to represent their respective cities;
- Allow MTS and NCTD to pursue their own tax increases, subject to voter approval, for use on public transit operations, transit infrastructure, and active transportation;
- Create an Audit Committee with members of the public and the role of independent auditor within SANDAG to perform audits on financial transaction reports, expenditure plans, annual budgets, and revenue forecasts;
- Require SANDAG to report to the Legislature annually on the public transit issues such as the region’s transit needs;
- Require SANDAG’s regional comprehensive plan to address greenhouse gas emission reduction rules adopted by the State Air Resources Board and identify disadvantaged communities; and
- Require SANDAG to adopt internal control guidelines to prevent and detect financial errors and fraud, and develop a process for staff performance reviews.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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