

SANDAG approves \$204B transportation plan

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SAN DIEGO — A plan that sets up a framework for future transportation projects around the region for the next 35 years was approved Friday by the San Diego Association of Governments.

The \$204 billion plan was opposed by environmentalists and public transit advocates, who contend that the plan called “San Diego Forward” doesn’t go far enough in prioritizing mass transportation.



Supporters said the plan put together by the regional planning agency sets aside 75 percent of funding in the first five years to implement transit, bicycling and walking strategies.

“Throughout the process, SANDAG has been required to make a lot of tradeoffs, and the result, I believe, is a balanced plan,” said San Diego Councilwoman Lorie Zapf. “There’s investments in transit, and bikes, in pedestrian walkways, and express lanes, and environmental mitigation and much more.”

Councilman Todd Gloria said he would like to see a higher priority to public transit, but described the plan as an improvement over previous versions.

“Because this plan dedicates, for the foreseeable future, three-fourths of the funds available to transit, because it’s a marked improvement over the last plan that only gave half the money to public transit, and because this plan all of our state requirements when it comes to greenhouse gas

emissions, I will support this plan,” Gloria said.

According to SANDAG, the plan was put together with the expectation that 1 million more people would call San Diego County home, and there would be an additional half-million jobs and 300,000 extra houses.

Among other things, the agency said the plan will commit more than 50 percent of its overall investment to transit, including five new trolley lines, 32 new Rapid bus routes lines, and significant increases in transit frequencies. The plan would also result in an added 160 miles of freeway car pool lanes and 275 miles of bikeways. The Environmental Health Coalition contended the plan is “freeway- centric,” and ignored years of community requests for prioritized improvements to transit, biking and walking infrastructure.

The EHC also believes the plan will exacerbate air pollution, health and asthma problems in low-income communities south of Interstate 8, and prevent the city of San Diego from meeting the goals of its climate action plan.

After the vote, San Diego Councilman David Alvarez said the plan was not balanced for all of San Diego.

“In this plan, major traffic relief and improvements to public transportation in the South Bay and in much of the city of San Diego are pushed decades into the future,” Alvarez said.

“If you are stuck in traffic on the I-805 in Chula Vista, this plan says you have to wait years for a reliable alternative,” Alvarez said. “If your commute to downtown on the Blue or Orange lines simply takes too long, this plan says you have to wait 20 years for major improvements.”

The SANDAG directors, made up of elected officials with the county and its 18 cities, called the plan a compromise designed to meet the varying needs of its members.

Supervisor Ron Roberts, who sits on the boards of the Metropolitan Transit System and California Air Resources Board, urged approval of the plan. He called it a gateway to the sort of projects the plan’s opponents want.



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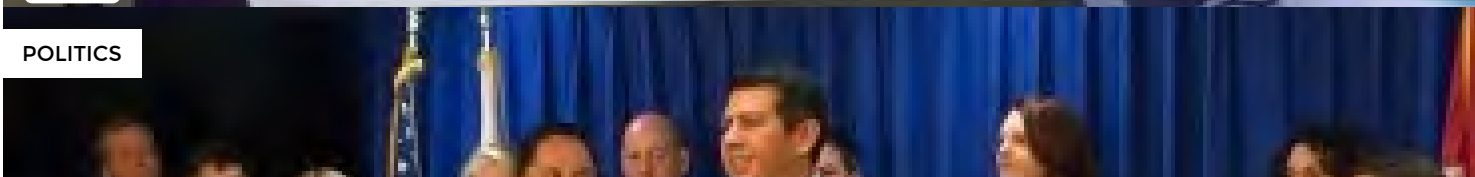
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