

January 25, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Quality of Life Coalition Calls On SANDAG To Spend Tax Dollars on What Communities Need**

*Group says it will partner with SANDAG only if expected ballot measure invests in clean air, better transit, good jobs*

SAN DIEGO, January 25, 2016 – At a press conference this morning, a coalition representing more than 20 community-based, regional organizations and 150,000 San Diego residents announced a vision to create a world-class economy and transportation system that benefits all families and addresses the dangers of a changing climate. The group's goal is to work with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to prioritize projects that represent community needs in a list it's creating now in preparation for a potential ballot measure later this year.

To raise more funds for transportation projects in San Diego County, SANDAG is considering proposing a half-cent sales tax increase, which could be placed on the November 2016 ballot. Currently, SANDAG is developing a list of projects that the tax increase would fund. Should a countywide sales tax increase pass in this November's election, SANDAG's predetermined list of projects will become a blueprint for decades of regional growth – a blueprint that the Coalition says must prioritize projects that benefit community members, public health and the environment.

"The projects we decide on now will undeniably impact us for the rest of our lives," says Monique López, policy advocate at Environmental Health Coalition. "The region cannot afford for SANDAG to continue its history of outdated, freeway-centric planning. SANDAG must respond to the clear demand from residents to build a region that will improve our quality of life."

The Coalition asks SANDAG to help the region move toward the goals in the City of San Diego's Climate Action Plan and avoid duplicating the [unsustainable vision](#) it approved in the Regional Transportation Plan. In October 2015, SANDAG blamed lack of dedicated funds for transit and infrastructure as part of the rationale for adopting a plan with major freeway expansion projects and minimal investment in transit, biking and walking infrastructure for the next 30 years.

"Our region has the potential to become a vibrant and inclusive economy that lifts up families, addresses climate change and creates healthier neighborhoods and good jobs instead of continuing down a path of increased air pollution, harmful effects of climate change and insufficient transportation options," says Gretchen Newsom of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. "What our communities want should be SANDAG's priority."

As SANDAG develops its list of projects for the expected ballot initiative, the Coalition hopes to see it expand mass transit, biking and walking options, create middle-class jobs, adopt sustainable and socially equitable patterns of land use, preserve open space, expand affordable housing, protect and improve water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to preserve San Diego for families and future generations.

“A few months ago, the City of San Diego passed a historic climate action plan with lofty goals to move toward a clean-energy, clean air future,” says Nicole Capretz, executive director of Climate Action Campaign. “Now it’s time for SANDAG to follow suit and implement a plan for the region that will support the city’s goals and protect our communities from the harmful effects of climate change.”

SANDAG will hold its next transportation and regional planning committee meeting at 9 a.m. on Friday, February 5, and will offer [public input opportunities](#) from January 27 through March 25. To learn more about the potential ballot measure, please [click here](#).

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**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION:** Founded in 1980, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use and unsustainable energy policies. Visit us online at <http://www.environmentalhealth.org>.

**QUALITY OF LIFE COALITION:** A new, coordinated effort with a goal of investing public money in a socially and environmentally equitable manner to build a vibrant, inclusive economy that lifts up families, creates healthier communities and addresses climate change. The Coalition represents more than 150,000 San Diegans and more than 20 local organizations, including Environmental Health Coalition, Climate Action Campaign, San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, AFL-CIO, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 569, Circulate San Diego, Sierra Club, San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, Bike San Diego, Mid-City Community Action Network, San Diego 350, Community Budget Alliance, Center on Policy Initiatives, San Diego Coastkeeper, League of Conservation Voters San Diego, Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation, American Federation of Teachers Local 1931, The Surfrider Foundation, Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 230, Environmental Center of San Diego, San Diego Audubon Society and Preserve Calavera.