



December 2, 2021

Chair Catherine Blakespear
Board of Directors
San Diego Association of Governments
401 B. Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

SUBJECT: Support for Proposed Changes to SANDAG's Bicycle Safety Projects

Dear Chair Blakespear:

On behalf of the below organizations, we are writing to support staff's proposed changes to SANDAG's Bicycle Early Action Program. These changes have the potential to significantly reduce costs and shorten timelines, while saving lives.

On September 16, 2021, we sent a coalition letter requesting that SANDAG adopt policies to build its bicycle projects more quickly and more cost-efficiently.¹ The letter noted that significant media coverage illustrates how SANDAG spends enormous amounts of funding on planning efforts, with too few bicycle lane miles to show for it.²

Many of our recommendations are reflected in Staff's proposed changes. Summarized, the 11 proposed policy changes are that SANDAG:

1. Put reasonable time constraints on the outreach process, while maximizing community engagement.
2. Consider temporary quick build solutions that offer immediate safety to bicyclists and give an opportunity to test design concepts;
3. Maintain standard environmental review timelines;
4. Coordinate with reviewing agencies on fixed timelines throughout the design process to improve efficiency;

¹ Coalition Letter, Recommendations for Reform for SANDAG's Bicycle Safety Projects, September 16, 2021, available at https://www.circulatesd.org/coalition_letter_recommendations_for_reform_for_sandag_s_bicycle_safety_projects.

² Andrew Bowen, "\$61 Million Spent On SANDAG's Bike Program; Less Than 4 Miles Completed," KPBS, January 10, 2018, available at <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2018/jan/10/sandag-bike-program-less-4-miles-complete>; Joshua Emerson Smith, "SANDAG's regional bikeway program delayed a year, \$79 million over budget," October 28, 2019, San Diego Union Tribune, available at <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/transportation/story/2019-10-28/sandag-bikeway-program-79-million-over-budget>.

5. Support adoption of NACTO guidelines by reviewing agencies, so all agencies are working from the same manual;
6. Identify non-bikeway improvements desired by local agencies early in the planning phase and work collaboratively to identify funding from local agencies;
7. Develop understanding between SANDAG and utility companies as to each agency's responsibilities;
8. Partner with rail agencies to identify required improvements;
9. Monitor, track, and report performance indicators including cost and timeline to determine where delays and unexpected costs occur and can be addressed;
10. Take advantage of streamlining from the recent, federally-enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA);
11. Identifying possible revenue sources from the IIJA, with an eye towards advancing project timelines.

In particular, the proposed changes require that staff “[c]learly identify the goals of the project and set a defined project outreach timeline up front.” A defined timeline will avoid the indefinite outreach period that created delays and cost overruns for so many previous SANDAG projects.

Too many tragic deaths have occurred on streets that had not yet received their planned bicycle facility. By building bicycle infrastructure more quickly, SANDAG will save lives. Moreover, by spending cost-efficiently, SANDAG will have money to put towards additional bicycle facilities, saving even more lives.

Particularly notable in the above list is the inclusion of quick build solutions. When SANDAG decides an area needs a bicycle facility, it can quickly create temporary, quick-build projects on a very short timeline. These projects will provide safety to road users far more quickly than a fully-designed bicycle facility could. They also give an opportunity for SANDAG to refine design concepts based on the temporary infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Jesse O'Sullivan
Policy Counsel
Circulate San Diego

Andy Hanshaw
Executive Director
San Diego Bicycle Coalition

Noah Harris
Transportation Policy Advocate
Climate Action Campaign