

# West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor

Final RTP/SCS Study



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# WEST SANTA ANA BRANCH TRANSIT CORRIDOR PROJECT

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## Final RTP/SCS Study

*Prepared for:*



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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Definition
EIR	environmental impact report
EIS	environmental impact statement
Metro	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOP	Notice of Preparation
RTP/SCS	Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
TAZ	Transportation Analysis Zone
WSAB	West Santa Ana Branch



## 1 INTRODUCTION

The West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) Transit Corridor Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR) was released for public review in July 2021. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Federal Transit Administration published the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* for the Project on June 26, 2017. Prior to the NOI publication and pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act requirements, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on May 25, 2017. Following release of the NOI and NOP to the public, required environmental baseline socioeconomic growth projections for the Project were established in July 2017 and preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR commenced. At that time, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) *2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* (RTP/SCS) (SCAG 2016) was the adopted regional growth forecast for the Los Angeles County region. The planning and travel demand modeling process for the Project assumed incremental growth in the WSAB Study Area and surrounding region consistent with this forecast. On September 3, 2020, *Connect SoCal – The 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* (Connect SoCal) (SCAG 2020a) was adopted by SCAG. At that time, modeling and relevant analyses for the Draft EIS/EIR were complete.

The Draft EIS/EIR was circulated for a two-month public review and comment period (between July 30, 2021 and September 28, 2021). The introduction of Chapter 4 in the Draft EIS/EIR included a comparison of the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and the Connect SoCal forecasts. Comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR, as well as ongoing coordination with stakeholders, suggested updating the analysis in the Final EIS/EIR using the growth forecasts from Connect SoCal. In response to these comments, this memorandum presents a comparison of differences between the SCAG 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and the Connect SoCal regional forecast (e.g., population, housing, and employment). This comparison was used to determine whether differences in the growth forecasts would alter the planning and travel demand modeling assumptions included in the Draft EIS/EIR. A review was also performed of applicable Connect SoCal policies to determine whether there were major differences to those evaluated in the Draft EIR/EIS.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The 2016-2040 RTP/SCS policies evaluated in the Draft EIS/EIR were compared with similar policies presented in Connect SoCal. The 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal growth forecast for Los Angeles County was compared by Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) to identify incremental differences between each model. TAZs were used as the basis of comparison because they were the smallest and most precise unit of geography provided by SCAG. To determine incremental differences in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS modeling numbers with Connect SoCal forecasted growths, population (number of residents), housing (number of households), and employment (number of jobs) data contained within the TAZs were analyzed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). TAZs within Los Angeles County and within 2 miles of the Build Alternative alignments (the Study Area) were identified in GIS and exported as tabular data for comparative analysis. The population, housing, and employment estimates were totaled for Existing (2016) and projected for the horizon year (2042). The 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal information were then compared by

calculating the percent change to understand the magnitude of difference under 2016 and 2042 conditions.

### 3 REGIONAL POLICY COMPARISON

The SCAG RTP/SCS is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental, and public health goals. The document embodies a collective vision for the region's future and is developed with input from local governments, county transportation commissions, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, businesses, and local stakeholders within the Counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura. The SCAG RTP/SCS identifies priorities for transportation planning within the SCAG region, sets goals and policies, and identifies performance measures for transportation improvements so that future projects are consistent with other planning goals for the area.

The *WSAB Transit Corridor Project Final Land Use Impact Analysis Report* (Metro 2020) and Section 4.1 (Land Use) of the Draft EIS/EIR provide policy information from the SCAG RTP/SCS and a finding that the Project would be consistent with the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and its applicable guiding policies. The Project would provide cities with opportunities to plan communities with access to public transit; ; provide residents, visitors, and employees within the vicinity of the Project another mode of transportation to connect to regional destinations and employment areas; and would reduce overall air pollutant emissions and vehicle miles travelled by improved transit access and mobility.

A review was conducted on Connect SoCal to determine whether the policies cited were still relevant and if the Project findings of consistency were still appropriate. Table 1 lists 2016-2040 RTP/SCS guiding policies evaluated in the *Land Use Impact Analysis Report* and Section 4.1 of the Draft EIS/EIR and the similar guiding policies contained in Connect SoCal.

Based on the review, the Connect SoCal guiding policies would have the same underlying principles as discussed in Policy 1, 6, and 7 of the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS. The Project would remain consistent with the applicable regional policies.

**Table 1. Applicable Regional Policies from SCAG’s 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal**

2016-2040 RTP/SCS Policies	Connect SoCal Policies
<b>Policy 1:</b> Transportation investments shall be based on SCAG’s adopted regional Performance Indicators.	<b>Policy 1:</b> Base transportation investments on adopted regional performance indicators and MAP-21/FAST Act regional targets.
<b>Policy 6:</b> The RTP/SCS will support investments and strategies to reduce nonrecurrent congestion and demand for single-occupancy vehicle use by leveraging advanced technologies.	<b>Policy 4:</b> Encourage RTP/SCS investments and strategies that collectively result in reduced non-recurrent congestion and demand for single-occupancy vehicle use by leveraging new transportation technologies and expanding travel choices.
<b>Policy 7:</b> The RTP/SCS will encourage transportation investments that result in cleaner air, a better environment, a more efficient transportation system, and sustainable outcomes in the long run.	<b>Policy 5:</b> Encourage transportation investments that will result in improved air quality and public health, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
	<b>Policy 7:</b> Regionally, transportation investments should reflect best-known science regarding climate change vulnerability in order to design for long term resilience.

Source: SCAG 2016, SCAG 2020a, TAHA 2022

Notes: Fast Act = Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act; MAP-21 = Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act; RTP/SCS = Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy; SCAG = Southern California Association of Governments

## 4 REGIONAL GROWTH FORECAST COMPARISON

Demographic information presented in in the Draft EIS/EIR and associated impact analysis reports are based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and SCAG. The socioeconomic characteristics presented in those documents, including the residential population, total number of jobs, and households in an area, were derived from TAZ estimates from the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS.

Table 2 shows the percent difference between the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal 2016 and 2042 estimates for Los Angeles County and the Study Area. As part of the RTP/SCS update process, SCAG adjusted the 2020 year and prior years to reflect available demographic information from the U.S. Census. Within Los Angeles County, the comparison for future 2042 growth forecasts shows a less than 1 percent differential in the employment forecasts and a less than 2 percent differential in the population and housing forecasts. Within the Study Area, the comparison for the 2042 horizon year also shows a less than 1 percent difference in the population and employment forecasts and a 2 percent difference in the housing forecast. Overall, the difference in the forecasted growth for population, housing, and employment for Los Angeles County and the Study Area is 2 percent or less and the modeling assumptions presented in the Draft EIS/EIR are still applicable. As such, the updated growth projections for Connect SoCal would not substantially change the assumptions presented in the Draft EIS/EIR.

**Table 2. Percent Change Between SCAG 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal for Los Angeles County within 2 Miles of the Build Alternative Alignments**

	2016			2042 <sup>a</sup>		
	2016-2040 RTP/SCS	Connect SoCal	Percent Difference	2016-2040 RTP/SCS	Connect SoCal	Percent Difference
<b>Los Angeles County<sup>b</sup></b>						
<b>Population</b>	10,121,276	10,106,464	-0.15%	11,656,450	11,519,679	-1.17%
<b>Housing</b>	3,374,906	3,317,453	-1.70%	3,998,866	4,046,942	1.20%
<b>Employment</b>	4,451,905	4,740,590	6.48%	5,287,316	5,316,013	0.54%
<b>Within 2 Miles of the Build Alternative Alignments<sup>b</sup></b>						
<b>Population</b>	1,311,077	1,316,500	0.41%	1,557,718	1,568,874	0.72%
<b>Housing</b>	366,504	364,872	-0.45%	480,431	490,041	2.00%
<b>Employment</b>	606,766	635,988	4.82%	723,710	729,404	0.79%

Source: SCAG 2020b, TAHA 2022

<sup>a</sup> Build out year 2042 is based on linear projections from SCAG TAZ data

<sup>b</sup> For Los Angeles County estimates, TAZs within the county boundary were selected and exported as tabular data. For WSAB Study Area estimates, TAZs intersecting the Study Area were selected and exported as tabular data. RTP/SCS = Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy; SCAG = Southern California Association of Governments; TAZ = Transportation Analysis Zone; WSAB = West Santa Ana Branch

## 5 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Connect SoCal’s guiding policies are similar to those of the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS, and the underlying principles are still relevant for the Project as a proposed regional transit system. Therefore, the Project would remain consistent with Connect SoCal’s applicable regional policies, and the findings in the Draft EIS/EIR and in the *WSAB Final Land Use Impact Analysis Report* would be unchanged.

The planning and travel demand modeling process for the Project assumed incremental growth in the Study Area and surrounding region consistent with the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS forecast. The comparison of the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and Connect SoCal forecast data by TAZ for Los Angeles County and the Study Area concluded that the difference in the forecasted growth for 2042 for population, housing, and employment for Los Angeles County and the Study Area is 2 percent or less and that the assumptions presented in the Draft EIS/EIR are still applicable. The updated growth projections for Connect SoCal would not substantially change the assumptions presented in the Draft EIS/EIR. An updated analysis using Connect SoCal’s growth forecast as baseline data is not required because the results and findings would not be substantially different than what is presented in the Draft EIS/EIR.

## 6 REFERENCES

- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). 2016. *2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* (RTP/SCS). Adopted April 2016. <https://scag.ca.gov/resources-prior-plans>
- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). 2020a. *Connect SoCal – The 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* (RTP/SCS). Adopted September 2020. <https://scag.ca.gov/read-plan-adopted-final-connect-socal-2020>
- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). 2020b. SCAG Model and Forecast Data Request: 2020 RTP Growth Forecast by TAZ, Census Tract, City, Los Angeles County.
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). 2021. *West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor Project Final Land Use Impact Analysis Report*.