

January 30, 2026

2026 Housing Legislative Overview

Overview

In July 2025, the Board of Directors submitted a comprehensive letter to the California State Legislature outlining principles for how the San Diego region seeks to be represented in ongoing housing policy discussions and legislative efforts in Sacramento (Attachment 1). This letter discussed potential improvements to the Regional Housing Needs Assessment process and requested that specific principles be reflected in future legislation and administrative actions.

Since that time, SANDAG has actively engaged with state legislators and stakeholders to advance these regional priorities. Chair Heebner, Board members, and agency leadership conducted meetings with lawmakers throughout the fall to discuss these critical issues. Agency leadership and staff have also made multiple visits to Sacramento, meeting with members and their staff both in the Capitol and in district offices to underscore the points outlined in the letter and highlight the work that is being done to advance housing production in the San Diego region.

Key Considerations

Staff has identified several opportunities to advance these efforts through the 2026 legislative session. This includes actively monitoring and taking positions on related bills, partnering with peer agencies and statewide coalitions to inform and amend legislation, and engaging with the Administration directly to develop/update guidance and requirements to be consistent with the Board's principles.

SB 79 and Related Bills

SANDAG has been closely tracking the passage and implementation of Senate Bill 79 (Wiener), which was enacted on October 11, 2025. SB 79 establishes statewide standards for transit-oriented development (TOD) zoning around qualifying transit stops and divides transit stops into tiers based on the type and frequency of transit service. The bill authorizes housing developments by-right with specific height, density, and floor ratio standards, overriding most applicable local restrictions.

As the designated MPO, SANDAG is required to create a map of TOD stops and zones within our region by tier to support implementation of SB 79. Staff are coordinating with California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and awaiting further guidance and clarification before releasing the map. Local governments may adopt compliant ordinances or local TOD alternative plans before July 1, 2026, to be exempt from the bill's provisions.

Related legislation currently moving through the Legislature includes:

- SB 677 (Wiener) – Originally intended as comprehensive SB 79 cleanup legislation, the bill was narrowed to address the definition of high-frequency commuter rail. It extends SB 79's reach to include cumulative commuter rail service frequency at rail stations across all services, potentially impacting stations in the San Diego region that are served by multiple rail services, including the Coaster and Surfliner.

Action: **Discussion**

The Regional Planning Committee is asked to provide feedback on a proposed strategy to advance the Board of Director's course on housing-related legislation in 2026.

Fiscal Impact:

None.

Schedule/Scope Impact:

None.

- Anticipated SB 79 cleanup bill – Senator Wiener reached an agreement with the Senate Housing Committee to introduce a standalone SB 79 cleanup bill during the 2026 legislative cycle. It is expected that the language from SB 677 will move over to this new bill once it reaches the Assembly. Staff anticipates this bill to be introduced in the next couple of months and will monitor its provisions closely.

SANDAG will continue to coordinate with HCD on SB 79 implementation, monitor cleanup and related legislation, and provide technical assistance to jurisdictions as they navigate compliance with these new requirements.

Next Steps

Staff will present the proposed 2026 Legislative Program to the Executive Committee in February. Based on feedback from the Regional Planning Committee, staff would include the proposed housing-related strategy as part of its implementation.

Robyn Wapner, Senior Director of Administration and Public Affairs

Attachment: 1. SANDAG RHNA Letter San Diego Delegation