



TO: SANDAG BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FROM: ELLISON WILSON ADVOCACY, LLC
SUBJECT: SANDAG LEGISLATIVE REPORT – APRIL 2026

Legislative Overview

Key upcoming legislative dates in 2026 include:

- May 15: First house fiscal committee deadline
- May 29: Deadline for all bills to be passed from first house
- July 2: Second house policy committee deadline (for all bills)
- August 31: Deadline for all bills to be passed by the Legislature
- September 30: Deadline for Governor to sign all bills sent to him

SANDAG Co-Sponsored SCS Reform Bill – SB 1087 – Advances from First Policy Committee

On February 13th, Senator Chris Cabaldon (D-Napa) introduced SB 1087, a product of extensive collaboration between the four largest MPOs in the state, including SANDAG, developed through regular stakeholder working group meetings over the past year to propose thoughtful and meaningful updates to the SB 375/Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) process.

The bill was substantively amended on March 25th, consistent with additional input from Senator Cabaldon and other legislators, MPOs, and relevant stakeholders to include the following provisions:

- **Require CTC to Establish Guidelines for Sustainable Communities Strategies & Implementation Reports:** Requires the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to collaborate with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) guidelines, which will be incorporated within the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) guidelines.
- **Ensure State Highway Projects are Consistent with the SCS:** As part of the process for approving the Caltrans Asset Management Plan, requires the CTC to coordinate with MPOs and other regional transportation planning agencies, as applicable, to ensure that regionally significant projects selected for funding from the State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) are consistent with the timing, phasing, and scope of the projects as included in the regional transportation plan/sustainable communities strategy (RTP/SCS).
- **Modernize SB 375 to Increase Transparency, Accountability & Implementation:**

- **Frequency of SCS Updates:** Changes the frequency of SCS updates by MPOs from once every four years to once every eight years. Implementation of the new eight-year timeframe will be staggered, as determined by each MPO, upon the first or second RTP update after January 1, 2027.
 - **Changes to SB 375 Greenhouse Gas Target-Setting:**
 - Requires CARB to establish a greenhouse gas (GHG) emission-reduction target for each MPO and, prior to establishing targets, to consider the recommendations of a Regional Targets Advisory Committee which will recommend factors and methodologies, including how to balance GHG emission reduction with goals for state fair housing, affordability, economic vibrancy, and land conservation.
 - Requires CARB to use the most recent version of its emissions model when establishing targets. Requires the GHG-reduction targets to consider all on-road transportation sectors and to reflect the combined effects of federal, state and local policies and investments to improve fleet efficiency and reduce vehicle miles traveled. Requires targets to be based on what is achievable for the region, considering existing conditions, financial constraints, and exogenous factors, such as population, economic growth, or cross-border traffic.
 - Establishes new transparency requirements for target-setting, including releasing a draft target for public comment, publishing methodology and assumptions online at least 60 days prior to the release of a draft target, requiring public workshops in each affected region, and requiring that targets be adopted in a public hearing in the district.
 - **Transparency for Approval of SCS Methodology:** Prior to beginning public outreach for an SCS update, requires MPOs to submit to the CTC the technical methodology they will use to prepare the SCS. Requires the CTC to review the proposed methodology for consistency with the SCS guidelines within 30 days.
 - **Timelines for Review & Determination of SCSs:** Establishes a process for a 60-day CTC review of SCSs prepared by MPOs and requires the CTC to make determinations that the SCS, if implemented, would or would not achieve the regional GHG emissions reduction target, or that additional information is needed. If review is not completed within the 60-day window, provides that the SCS is deemed determined to achieve the GHG emission reduction target.
 - **SCS Implementation Reports:** Requires MPOs to submit an SCS implementation report on eight-year intervals staggered with the SCS update.
- **Streamline CEQA Review of RTP/SCS Plan Adoption:** Provides for a plan-level exemption from CEQA for the adoption of the RTP/SCS if the regional agency engages in enhanced public outreach. Provides that this plan-level exemption does not exempt projects that would implement actions undertaken pursuant to the RTP/SCS.
 - **Ensure Caltrans Funding Connects to SCSs:** Requires Caltrans' to include the goals of a sustainable communities strategy when allocating local and regional planning grants.
 - **Clarify Trade Corridors Enhancement Program Funding Eligibility:** Expands access to the Trade Corridors Enhancement Program (TCEP) for GHG-reducing projects by allowing projects within the jurisdiction of an MPO that has an adopted Alternative Planning Strategy to access TCEP grant funding.
 - **Enact Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SCCP) Refinements:**

- **Consistency with the SCS:** Requires projects funded by the SCCP to support the implementation of the RTP/SCS, demonstrate consistency with the phasing, timing and project scope included for the project in the RTP/SCS, and to prioritize near-term projects in the SCS that will be delivered in advance of the regional GHG emission reduction goal date. Removes the SCCP requirement for the development of redundant and fiscally unconstrained corridor plans.
- **SCCP Eligibility:** Expands access to the SCCP for GHG-reducing projects by allowing projects within the jurisdiction of an MPO that has an adopted Alternative Planning Strategy to access TCEP grant funding.

SB 1087 was heard by the Senate Environmental Quality Committee on April 8th, where SANDAG’s Senior Director of Regional Planning, Antoinette Meier, provided lead testimony in support of the bill, alongside SCAG’s Deputy Executive Director Darin Chidsey. At the hearing, Committee Chair, and former SANDAG Chair, Senator Catherine Blakespear reinforced the need for the bill and ultimately voted in support with the inclusion of the following amendments:

- keep GHG emission reduction methodology development and SCS review at CARB, rather than move it to the CTC as currently proposed.
- direct CARB to set additional regional GHG emission reduction targets for 2045.
- exempt an SCS/APS from CEQA, rather than making the exemption contingent on “enhanced public outreach”.
- Make additional technical amendments.

With the acceptance of these amendments, the bill was passed by the Committee 5-0, with 2 Republican Committee Members abstaining from the vote. These amendments were formally added to the bill on April 9th.

The bill will be heard next by the Senate Transportation Committee on April 20th.

SB 79 (Wiener) Follow-up Efforts Continue to Develop

In 2026, there have been several efforts to address last year’s SANDAG-opposed SB 79 (Wiener), which allows by-right development near certain transit stops. First, Senator Wiener “gut-and-amended” his bill, SB 677, to purportedly “clean up” SB 79. This bill was passed by the Senate in January with provisions that resulted in opposition to the bill from the cities of Solana Beach, Encinitas, and Carlsbad, as well as ongoing concern from SANDAG. Specifically, SB 677 amended the definition of “high-frequency commuter rail” in a manner that would expand the number of qualifying TOD stops subject to SB 79’s development standards (by now stacking services).

Subsequent to its passage, Senator Wiener stated that SB 677 will ultimately be amended to be non-SB 79 related, and that all SB 79-related provisions would instead be placed into an alternative bill, SB 908. Upon introduction, the bill was devoid of any substantive language and merely stated:

It is the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation that would make technical and clarifying changes to Chapter 4.1.5 (commencing with Section 65912.155) of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code, as enacted by Senate Bill 79 (Chapter 512 of the Statutes of 2025), and to add a select set of San Francisco Bay area ferry terminals to the scope of that chapter.

In late March, the California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) released its “SB 79 Advisory Clarifications on Definitions for Metropolitan Planning Organizations,” found here: <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/planning-and-community/sb-79-mpo-advisory.pdf>.

Thereafter, Senator Wiener gut-and-amended SB 908. Nevertheless, several legislators are still independently seeking modifications to SB 79, including:

- **AB 2576 (Harabedian)** – As introduced by the City of Pasadena and supported by SANDAG, this bill would have:
 - Delayed SB 79’s effective date from July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2027, and delayed Housing Accountability Act penalties from January 1, 2027 to January 1, 2028
 - Delayed deadline for local jurisdictions to adopt HCD-approved alternative TOD plans from July 1, 2027 to July 1, 2028
 - Increased population threshold for certain requirements from 35,000 to 40,000
 - Expanded “historic resource” definition to include local, state, and national registers and removes 10% cap on historic resource exclusions

SANDAG testified in support of this introduced bill at its April 15th Assembly Housing & Community Development Committee, however, in order to be passed, the Committee insisted that the bill be significantly amended to solely permit local governments to adopt an ordinance exempting, through the first year of the seventh housing element cycle, the following projects from the provisions of SB 79: 1) Individually listed sites on a state or federal register that were designated prior to January 1, 2025; and 2) Contributing structures within a historic district that was designated prior to January 1, 2025.

As such, all delay-related provisions were removed from the bill and the bill was passed by the Committee, 11-0. The bill will be heard next by the Assembly Local Government Committee on April 22nd.

- **AB 2415 (Hoover)** – This bill, designed to purportedly address a matter raised by the City of Folsom, provides that, for SB 79 purposes, a transit-oriented development alternative plan may reduce the capacity in up to one transit-oriented development zone in total units or residential floor area by more than 50% if certain requirements are met. The bill is scheduled to be heard for the first time by the Assembly Housing & Community Development Committee on April 22nd.
- **SB 722 (Wahab)** – This bill exempts existing parcels or sites from SB 79 that are subject to the Mobilehome Residency Law, Mobilehome Parks Act, the Recreational Vehicle Park Occupancy Law, and the Special Occupancy Parks Act. This bill was passed by the Senate back in January and has not yet been referred to a committee in the Assembly.
- **SB 1361 (Durazo)** – Backed by L.A. Metro, this bill:
 - would allow the increased density requirements outlined in SB 79 around Metro’s light rail and heavy rail stations that were operational or in pre-revenue service as of January 1, 2026.
 - would limit SB 79 density requirements around future rail transit stops, specifically those not yet in pre-revenue or revenue service.
 - would also limit current and future Bus Rapid Transit projects from SB 79 requirements. This allows for Metro’s community partners to engage in thoughtful transit-oriented development planning in a process that is not specifically tied to the construction of a future transit line.

This bill is scheduled to be heard for the first time by the Senate Housing Committee on April 21st.

SANDAG-Supported RHNA Process Improvement Bill – AB 2296 – Passed by First Committee

Last year, Assemblymember Diane Papan introduced AB 650, a Cal Cities-sponsored, SANDAG-supported bill that included beneficial provisions that would allow local governments to begin the housing element update process six months early, provide greater certainty and reduce ambiguity in the housing element review process, and ensure that local governments have adequate time to respond to the California Department of Housing and Community Development’s (HCD) review letters. While the bill successfully advanced through the legislative process, Governor Newsom ultimately vetoed the bill, stating his concern “that this bill would inappropriately shift responsibility for preparing housing elements from local jurisdictions to HCD,” which would purportedly “add at least \$11 million in new annual costs.”

In 2026, Assemblymember Papan reintroduced the bill as AB 2296, once again sponsored by Cal Cities and supported by SANDAG, includes the following key provisions:

- Extends timeline for subregional entity formation from 28 to 34 months, and COG regional housing need determination from 25 to 31 months
- Extends RHNA methodology development timeline from 2 to 2.5 years and draft allocation distribution from 1.5 to 2 years (except 7th cycle with 2027 deadlines)
- Requires HCD to provide specific analysis or text when finding housing elements non-compliant, with 30-day review of responsive changes
- Prohibits Housing Element Law amendments from applying during 34 months prior to scheduled updates

AB 2296 was heard by the Assembly Housing & Community Development Committee on April 15th, where in addition to support testimony from SANDAG, several additional cities and local government groups also urged legislators to vote “yes.” Ultimately the Committee unanimously passed the bill, 11-0, with amendments to remove the prohibition against Housing Element Law amendments from applying during 34 months prior to scheduled updates. The bill will be heard next by the Assembly Local Government Committee on April 22nd.