

July 25, 2025

## San Diego Advanced Air Mobility Strategic Implementation Toolkit

### Overview

Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is a rapidly emerging transportation industry that uses new types of aircrafts – like Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing vehicles and Small Uncrewed Aerial Systems, commonly known as drones – to move people, goods, and emergency services quickly and efficiently. While the federal government oversees AAM regulations, local and regional planning is critical to make sure the technology supports community needs, integrates with the existing transportation system, and avoids unintended negative impacts.

### Action: Information

Staff will present the San Diego Advance Air Mobility framework and San Diego Advance Air Mobility Strategic Implementation Toolkit to prepare the San Diego region for the impending technology.

### Fiscal Impact:

None.

### Schedule/Scope Impact:

None.

In 2023, SANDAG, in partnership with the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, launched an effort funded through a Caltrans Planning Grant to develop the San Diego Regional AAM Strategic Implementation Toolkit. At the June 21, 2024 Transportation, Borders, and Regional Planning Committee Joint Session, staff presented an overview of AAM, and the guiding principles developed for this effort. The Toolkit was recently finalized, providing practical strategies for local governments, agencies, and stakeholders to help our region prepare for AAM in a coordinated, community-centered way.

### Key Considerations

The Toolkit was created to support communities with preparing for AAM and assessing opportunities for AAM. It identifies operational considerations and use-cases such as addressing accessibility and supply chain gaps for remote and rural areas including Tribal Nations.

The Toolkit emphasizes safety, efficiency, community needs, sustainability, regulatory compliance, and seamless integration with other transportation modes. Some highlights of the Toolkit include:

- **Market and Industry Repository** – A “living” central resource to help planners and technical staff understand current trends, technologies, regulations, and data.
- **Case studies (Ch. 3)** – Explores AAM implementation potential at Brown Field Airport, the Viejas Reservation, and National City to understand how use-cases might serve different types of communities. Provides a replicable and adaptable methodology for evaluating AAM sites and use-cases.
- **Physical Infrastructure (Ch. 4)** – Provides use cases and design standards for AAM infrastructure to help engineers, planners, and technical staff understand the required infrastructure and space to support AAM.
- **Regional AAM Implementation Framework (Ch. 5)** – Step-by-step guidance for local agencies on how to plan for AAM infrastructure, understand regulatory needs, and coordinate with key stakeholders.
- **Outreach and Messaging Tools (Appendix D)** – Strategies to help agencies engage and educate the public about AAM initiatives.

The toolkit highlights considerations for respecting Tribal sovereignty and ensuring Tribes are active participants in AAM siting and routing. The Toolkit also highlights how AAM could benefit Tribal communities through improved cargo delivery and transportation access in rural areas. Appendix E, the AAM Industry & Market Assessment Report, features initial considerations for binational cross-border AAM services, including the extensive coordination and regulatory support that would be needed to support this potential use-case. The tools and key takeaways from this effort provide the groundwork for exploring future interregional, tribal, and border related AAM services.

### **Next Steps**

The Toolkit will be shared with Policy Advisory Committees, working groups, and regional partners. SANDAG will also continue to track AAM industry trends and support the region's readiness for this emerging transportation technology.

***Antoinette Meier, Senior Director of Regional Planning***