

EQUINOX CENTER

December 16, 2010

The Honorable Lori Holt Pfeiler, Chair
SANDAG Board of Directors
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mayor Holt-Pfeiler:

The Equinox Center is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit research and policy center based in Encinitas. We are dedicated to providing objective information to decision makers in San Diego County about how to balance regional growth with our finite natural resources. We are writing to you today to provide data and research to the SANDAG board that we hope will be valuable in your decision making process on the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

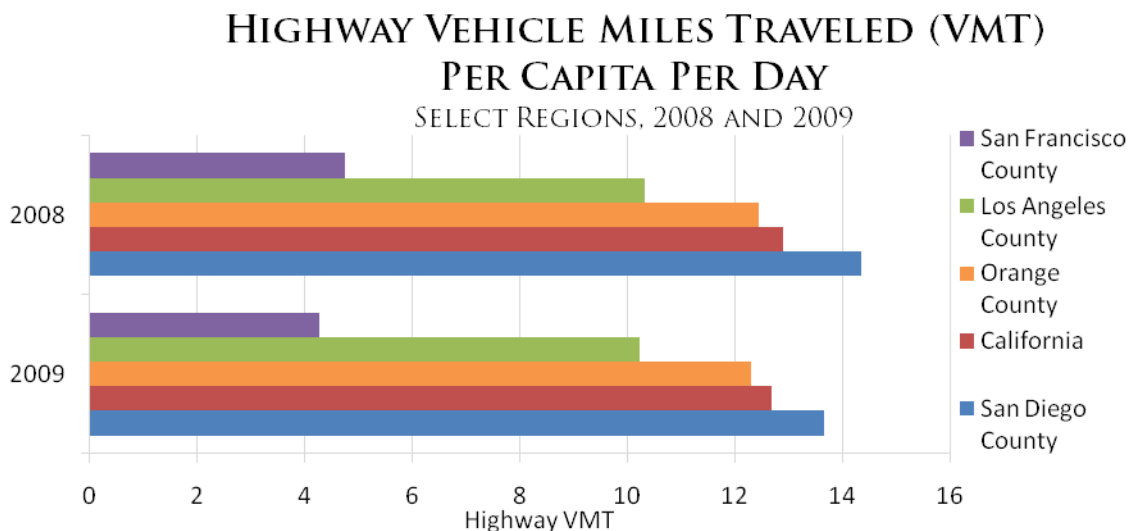
Summary of Equinox Center Position on Item 13 of Dec 17 Board agenda:

In the RTP 2050, the SANDAG Board of Directors has a tremendous leadership opportunity to step out to create a bold and sustainable transportation plan for San Diego County. **Data from Equinox Center's soon-to-be released 2011 Regional Quality of Life Dashboard reveals that we need to do better when it comes to transportation in our region.**

We believe SANDAG should put the region on the path towards more sustainable development by ensuring the updated RTP does the following:

- **Minimizes vehicle miles traveled in the region, thereby reducing air quality problems, helping us achieve climate goals, reducing congestion and improving our economic competitiveness**
- **Focuses discretionary funds on public transit**
- **Prioritizes projects that help us meet our multiple goals**

I. Minimize vehicle miles traveled



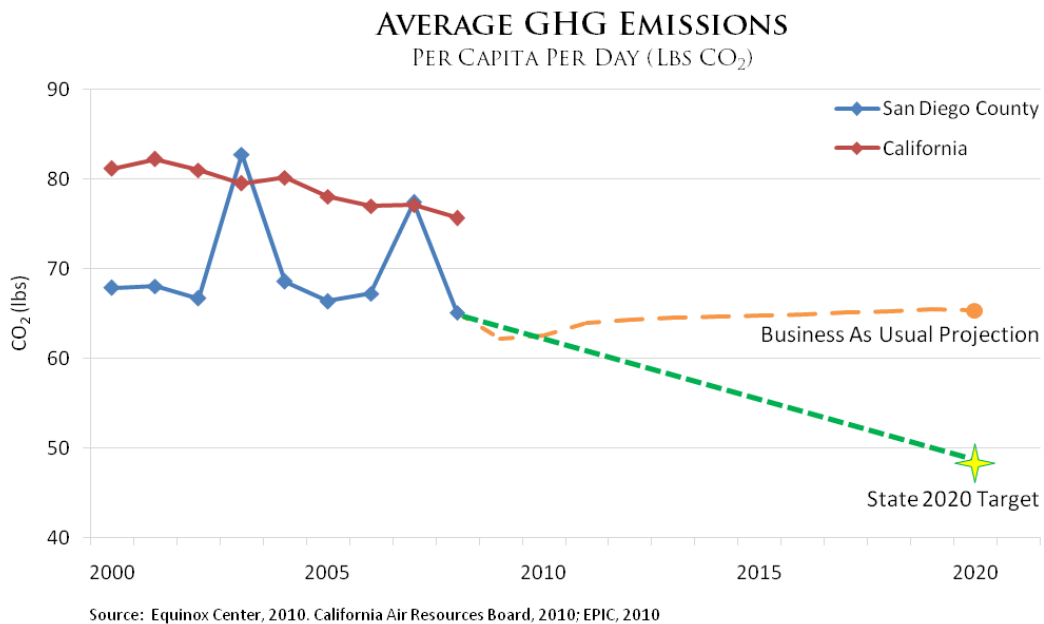
Source: Equinox Center, 2010; California Department of Transportation, 2008, 2009

Total vehicle miles traveled in the region have doubled in the past two decades, as have traffic delays. As you can see from the chart above, per capita vehicle miles traveled in San Diego County are above the California average, and even significantly above Los Angeles County. High VMTs have many consequences on quality of life in the region.

It is estimated that traffic **delays cost us about \$1,000/person/year**, and have an economic cost to the region as a whole. **75% of businesses in the region say that traffic congestion is a significant obstacle to doing business** in the region. For this reason, we call for actions that get people off the roads and using fast, reliable transit that connects people from where they live to where they work, shop, and learn.

In addition to the impacts of congestion on economic development and on personal time available to spend with family and friends, we hope you will consider the **air quality impacts** of the new RTP. Though San Diego has made some gains in air quality in the last decade, **we are still in non-attainment for particulate matter, and according to 2009 EPA data, air quality in the county was considered unhealthy on 28 days for elderly and children, our most vulnerable populations.** Air pollution costs the California economy more than **\$28 billion annually, about \$1,200/person in Southern California** because of lost worker productivity and public health costs. And **lower income and minority communities suffer disproportionately** from air quality issues, especially if they live near highways.

In addition to air emissions that impact public health, we need to act aggressively now to achieve our climate goals.



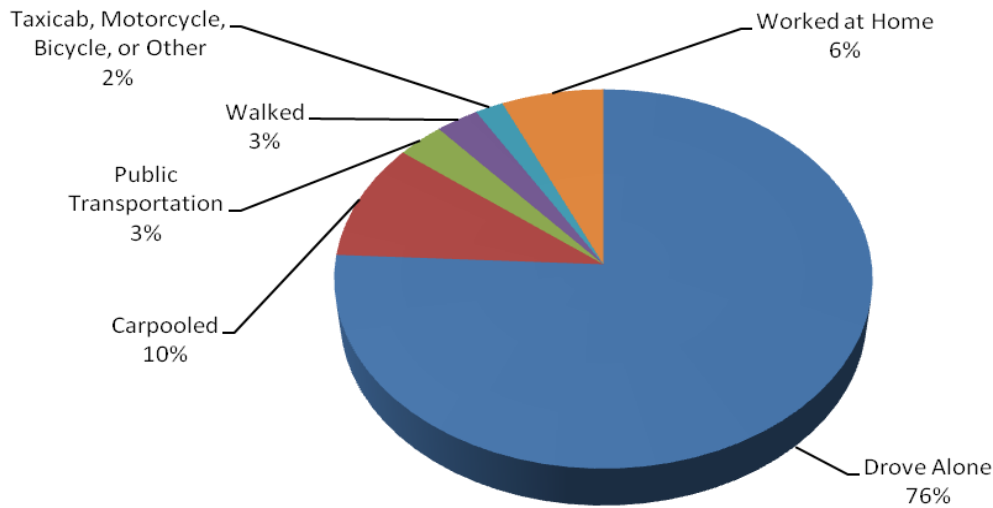
To reduce the number of days our air is considered unhealthy, and to achieve our climate goals, we must plan and act now to reduce miles traveled in the region.

II. Focus discretionary funds on fast, convenient public transportation

In order to address the region’s long-term economic, environmental, and mobility challenges, first-class public transportation is necessary. To reduce VMT, congestion that inhibits economic development and to improve quality of

life for residents, **more people need to have access to and choose transit.**

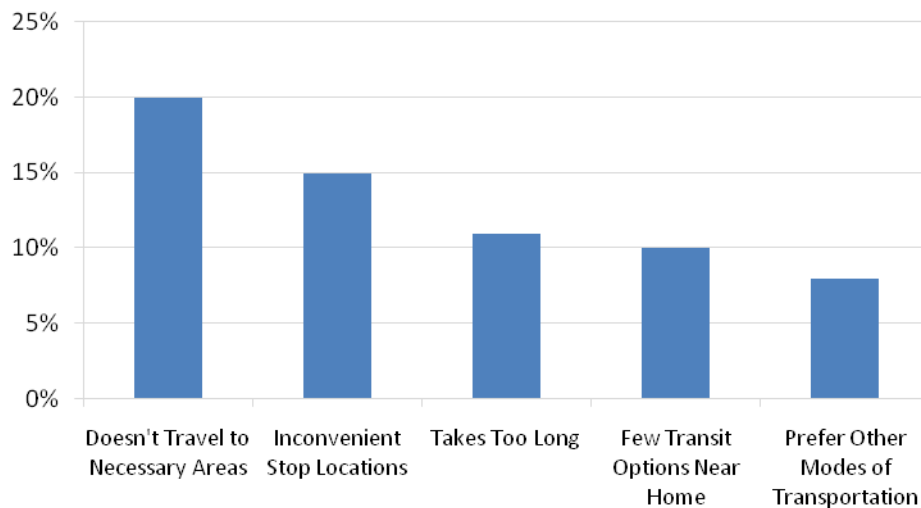
TRANSPORTATION TO WORK SAN DIEGO, 2009



Source: Equinox Center, 2010; American Community Survey, 2009 (Table C08301)

SANDAG's own public opinion survey revealed these barriers to more transit ridership.

PRIMARY BARRIERS TO INCREASED PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY



Source: Equinox Center, San Diego Regional Transportation Public Opinion Study 2008, Fig. 21

We cannot increase transit ridership significantly if we do not spend the funds necessary to do so. The committed projects in the region's RTP provide the highest percentage of highway expansion dollars of any major region in California. By focusing discretionary funds on public transportation projects, it will create better overall balance in

SANDAG's transportation investments. Although the network strategy represents a small portion of the budget, it is an opportunity to create a better balance in transportation investments.

III. Prioritize projects that support regional goals

Because TransNet has sizeable flexibility in the sequencing and timing of projects, all projects in the TransNet ordinance should be ranked according to their ability to effectively meet multiple goals, such as reducing vehicle miles traveled and cutting pollution. High ranking projects should be prioritized for inclusion in the 2020 and 2035 time frames.

In summary, **the San Diego region has a remarkable quality of life and as our population grows we need to make choices that maintain or enhance it. We ask you to consider the common good of all the region's residents and businesses, and to help make San Diego County a model when it comes to integrated, intelligent transportation planning for the future.**

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Ann Tartre, Program Director
Equinox Center
545 2nd St, #3
Encinitas, CA 92024

CC:
Clerk of the Board