

# Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: June 11, 2013

Reference No.: 2.2b. (2)  
Action

From: ANDRE BOUTROS  
Executive Director

Subject: **DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT**

## **ISSUE:**

Should the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, provide comments in response to the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIR/DSEIS) for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project located in San Diego County?

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission make no comments regarding the environmental issues addressed in the DSEIR/DSEIS. However, staff recommends that a letter be sent to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) that states:

- The Commission has no comments with respect to the project's purpose and need, the alternatives studied, the impacts evaluated, and the evaluation methods used.
- The Commission recommends that SANDAG identify and secure the necessary funding to complete the project.
- If, in the future, funds or other actions under the purview of the Commission are anticipated, notification should be provided to the Commission as a Responsible Agency.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The proposed project is located adjacent to the Interstate-5 (I-5) corridor in the City of San Diego. The project will extend the San Diego Trolley Blue Line from the Santa Fe Depot in Downtown San Diego, north on existing tracks to the Old Town Transit Center (OTTC) and then north along 11 miles of new tracks to the University Towne Centre Transit Center. The project will also construct eight new transit stations, upgrade the existing facilities between the Santa Fe Depot and the OTTC, and acquire new Trolley vehicles for the extended project operations. The alternatives evaluated in the DSEIR/DSEIS include one Build Alternative with two design options and a No-Build Alternative.

Attachment

- Notice of Availability



**MID-COAST CORRIDOR**  
TRANSIT PROJECT



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



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May 7, 2013

Bimla Rhinehart  
Executive Director  
California Transportation Commission  
1120 N Street, Room 2221 (MS-52)  
Sacramento, CA 95814



**SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Draft SEIS/SEIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2010051001)**

Dear Agency:

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), has completed the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/SEIR) for the proposed Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project in San Diego, California.

The proposed project, or Build Alternative, evaluated in the Draft SEIS/SEIR would extend the San Diego Trolley Blue Line from the Santa Fe Depot in Downtown San Diego north to the Old Town Transit Center via the existing Trolley tracks, and then north along new tracks for approximately 11 miles to the University Towne Centre (UTC) Transit Center in University City. Eight new stations would be built at Tecolote Road, Clairemont Drive, Balboa Avenue, Nobel Drive, University of California, San Diego (UCSD) West Campus, UCSD East Campus, Executive Drive, and the UTC Transit Center. The Build Alternative has two options—one provides for an additional station at the Veterans Administration Medical Center and the other provides for an alternative design for the proposed Genesee Avenue aerial alignment in University City.

The Draft SEIS/SEIR was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A Notice of Preparation of a Draft SEIS/SEIR for the project was circulated by SANDAG to agencies, organizations, and interested parties on April 28, 2010. On July 12, 2011, the FTA issued a Notice of Intent for the preparation of a Draft SEIS/SEIR for the project. This Draft SEIS/SEIR supplements the following environmental documents: the *Mid-Coast Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report* (1995); the *Final Environmental Impact Report for the Mid-Coast Corridor* (1995); and the *Mid-Coast Corridor Project Balboa Extension and Nobel Drive Coaster Station Final Environmental Impact Statement* (2001) (reference State Clearinghouse No. 1990011025). The FTA is serving as lead agency for the SEIS in accordance with NEPA, and SANDAG is serving as lead agency for the SEIR in accordance with CEQA.

In accordance with NEPA and CEQA, SANDAG and the FTA are seeking comment on the Draft SEIS/SEIR from participating, responsible, and trustee agencies and the public. We have enclosed for review and comment a compact disc containing a PDF copy of the complete Draft SEIS/SEIR. A print copy of the complete Draft SEIS/SEIR and a disc with PDF copies of all technical reports prepared in support of the Draft SEIS/SEIR are available upon request. These files are also available for review and download on the project Web site, [www.sandag.org/midcoast](http://www.sandag.org/midcoast). Also enclosed is a CEQA Notice of Availability of the Draft SEIS/SEIR and Notice of Public Meetings and Hearing for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project.

The Draft SEIS/SEIR is being made available for a 60-day comment period, beginning May 17, 2013 and ending July 16, 2013. All comments received on the Draft SEIS/SEIR will be reviewed and responded to in the Final SEIS/SEIR. Comments must be postmarked or received by July 16, 2013, in order to be considered during preparation of the Final SEIS/SEIR. Please submit your written comments to Ms. Leslie Blanda at the SANDAG office address listed below, or via e-mail at [midcoast@sandag.org](mailto:midcoast@sandag.org).

Ms. Leslie Blanda  
Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager  
San Diego Association of Governments  
401 B Street, Suite 800  
San Diego, CA 92101

For additional information concerning the Draft SEIS/SEIR, you may contact FTA Community Planner Alexander Smith at (415) 744-3133 or SANDAG Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager Leslie Blanda at (619) 595-5620 or via e-mail at [midcoast@sandag.org](mailto:midcoast@sandag.org).

SANDAG and the FTA would like to thank you for your participation in the environmental review of the project. We look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,



LESLIE BLANDA  
Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager  
San Diego Association of Governments

Enclosures:

- 1) One compact disc *Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report Volumes 1 and 2*, April 2013
- 2) CEQA Notice of Availability of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Public Meeting and Hearing
- 3) Notice of Public Meetings and Hearing

cc: Alexander Smith, FTA, Region IX

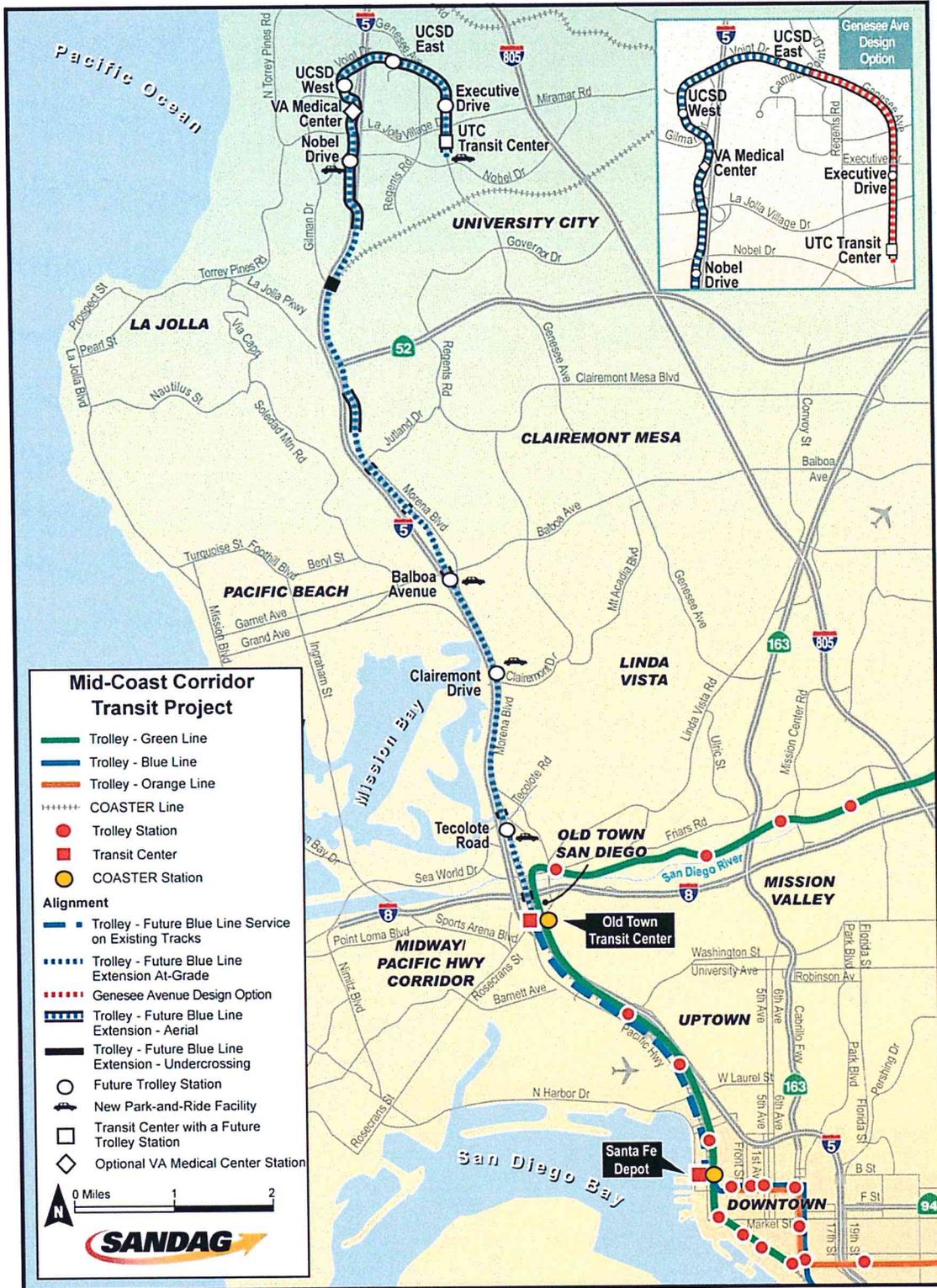


U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



**MID-COAST CORRIDOR**  
TRANSIT PROJECT

**Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project**



**MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT**



**Notice of Availability of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/  
Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Public Meetings and Hearing  
for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project**

**State Clearinghouse No. 2010051001 (Previous SCH #1990011025)**

**Notice of Availability:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) have prepared the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/SEIR) for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project in the City and County of San Diego, California, as described below. This notice informs the general public, public agencies, and interested individuals and organizations that the Draft SEIS/SEIR for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project is available for a 60-day public review and comment period, and provides notice of the four public meetings and one public hearing that will be held during the public comment period in order to secure public comment on the document. All comments received during the comment period will be reviewed and considered in preparation of the Final SEIS/SEIR. This Draft SEIS/SEIR supplements the following environmental documents: the *Mid-Coast Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report (1995)*; the *Final Environmental Impact Report for the Mid-Coast Corridor (1995)* (Reference SCH #1990011025); and the *Mid-Coast Corridor Project Balboa Extension and Nobel Drive Coaster Station Final Environmental Impact Statement (2001)*.

**Project Location:** The Mid-Coast Corridor is centered on Interstate (I-) 5 and extends from Downtown San Diego on the south to the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and University City community on the north. Located entirely within the City of San Diego, the Mid-Coast Corridor is bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west and by I-805 and State Route 163 on the east.

**Project Description:** The purpose of the proposed project is to provide for the implementation of transit improvements that improve transit service in the Mid-Coast Corridor between Downtown San Diego, Old Town, and University City by increasing the speed and reliability of transit, reducing the need for transfers, and expanding transit capacity in the corridor. The proposed project evaluated in the Draft SEIS/SEIR, also referred to as the "Build Alternative," would extend the San Diego Trolley Blue Line from the Santa Fe Depot in Downtown San Diego north to the Old Town Transit Center (OTTC) via the existing Trolley tracks. New tracks would then extend north for 11 miles to the University Towne Center (UTC) Transit Center in University City. Eight new stations (three at grade and five aerial) would be built at the following locations: Tecolote Road, Clairemont Drive, Balboa Avenue, Nobel Drive, University of California, San Diego (UCSD) West Campus, UCSD East Campus, Executive Drive, and the UTC Transit Center. With this extension, the project would provide for continuous service on the Trolley Blue Line from the San Ysidro Transit Center at the U.S.-Mexico border to University City. In addition to the 11 miles of new Trolley tracks and eight new stations, the project includes upgrades to existing facilities between the Santa Fe Depot and the OTTC, and the acquisition of new Trolley vehicles for the extended project operation. The project alignment would be located primarily within existing Metropolitan Transit System, City of San Diego, or California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) right-of-way, along local streets, the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor and the I-5 corridor.

The Draft SEIS/SEIR evaluated all adverse and/or significant impacts of the Build Alternative and options. It also includes an evaluation of a No-Build (No-Project) Alternative. The Build Alternative has two options—one provides for an additional station at the Veterans Administration Medical Center and the other provides for an alternative design for the proposed Genesee Avenue aerial alignment in University City.

**Project Review Period:** SANDAG and the FTA have issued a Notice of Availability and are circulating this Draft SEIS/SEIR for a 60-day comment period beginning **May 17, 2013**, and concluding on **July 16, 2013**. The document is available in electronic format for review and download on the project Web site ([www.sandag.org/midcoast](http://www.sandag.org/midcoast)). Printed copies of the document can be reviewed at the offices of SANDAG at 401 B Street, Suite 800, San Diego, California, and at the regional and public libraries listed in Table 1. Print copies of the Draft SEIS/SEIR can be purchased at the SANDAG offices; compact discs can be obtained free of charge. Additionally, the technical reports and memoranda prepared in support of the Draft SEIS/SEIR are available in electronic format for review and download on the project Web site and in print copy format at the office of SANDAG listed above.

**Table 1. Public Libraries with Printed Copies of the Draft SEIS/SEIR for Review**

Balboa Branch Library 4255 Mt. Abernathy Ave.	Mission Valley Branch Library 2123 Fenton Pkwy.	San Diego County Public Law Library 1105 Front St.
City of San Diego Central Library 820 E. St.	North Clairemont Branch Library 4616 Clairemont Dr.	Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Branch Library 9005 Aero Dr.
Clairemont Branch Library 2920 Burgener Blvd.	North Park Branch Library 3795 31st St.	University Community Branch Library 4155 Governor Dr.
Kensington-Normal Heights Branch Library 4121 Adams Ave.	North University Community Branch Library 8820 Judicial Dr.	University Heights Branch Library 4193 Park Blvd.
La Jolla/Riford Branch Library 7555 Draper Ave.	Ocean Beach Branch Library 4801 Santa Monica Ave.	UCSD Geisel Library 9600 John Jay Hopkins Dr.
Linda Vista Branch Library 2160 Ulric St.	Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library 4275 Cass St.	University of San Diego Copley Library 5998 Alcalá Park
Mission Hills Branch Library 925 W. Washington St.	Point Loma/Hervey Branch Library 3701 Voltaire St.	

Comments may be submitted in writing or may be made orally at the public meetings and public hearing (Table 2).

**Table 2. Dates, Times, and Locations of Public Meetings and Hearing**

Meeting Date/Time	Community Location	Address
June 4, 2013 4 to 7 p.m.	Clairemont	Cadman Elementary School, School Auditorium 4370 Kamloop Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117
June 10, 2013 3 to 6 p.m.	University of California, San Diego	Price Center E., The Forum, Level 4 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA, 92093
June 12, 2013 4 to 7 p.m.	University Community	La Jolla Country Day School, Community Room 9490 Genesee Avenue, La Jolla, CA, 92037
July 18, 2013 4 to 7 p.m.	Old Town	Caltrans District 11 Office, Garcia Conference Room 4050 Taylor Street, San Diego, CA, 92110
June 21, 2013 9 a.m.	Downtown San Diego*	SANDAG Offices Board Room (7th Floor) 401 B Street, San Diego, CA, 92101

\* This serves as the public hearing

The public meetings will be conducted in an open house format where participants can attend at any time during the workshop, view displays and information, ask questions, complete comment cards, or speak to a bilingual English/Spanish transcriber to have their comments recorded. The public hearing will be officiated by the SANDAG Transportation Committee, and a transcription will be produced and provided to the SANDAG Board of Directors, as well as provided to the general public. These meetings and hearing will be held in transit-served locations throughout the corridor that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Information at these meetings will be available in English and Spanish, and a Spanish translator will be available to assist Spanish-speaking persons understand the information presented and to ensure that they are able to submit comments. Comments may also be submitted via U.S. mail, e-mail, fax, or on the project's dedicated phone line. Information for each of these methods is provided below:

U.S. mail:

Ms. Leslie Blanda, Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager  
San Diego Association of Governments  
401 B Street, Suite 800  
San Diego, CA 92101

E-mail: [midcoast@sandag.org](mailto:midcoast@sandag.org)

Fax: (619) 699-1905

Project Telephone Line: (619) 595-5620

Comments must be postmarked or received by **July 16, 2013**<sup>1</sup> in order to be considered during preparation of the Final SEIS/SEIR.

**Adverse and Significant Environmental Impacts:** This Draft SEIS/SEIR includes an analysis of the affected environment and impacts on the social, economic, cultural, and natural environment that would result from construction and operation of the No-Build and Build Alternatives.

The analysis results presented in this Draft SEIS/SEIR indicate that the Build Alternative would have no adverse or significant long-term (operation), short-term (construction), and cumulative impacts to the following environmental areas: land use; climate change; water resources; hazardous materials; geotechnical, geologic, and seismic conditions; energy; safety and security; historic architectural resources; and utilities. For some of these environmental areas (i.e., water resources; hazardous materials; geotechnical, geologic, and seismic conditions; safety and security; historic architectural resources; and utilities), project measures, such as best management practices, were incorporated into the project to avoid or minimize impacts, resulting in no adverse or significant impacts.

No adverse or significant impacts related to hazardous materials are anticipated. Known or suspected hazardous materials are present at 36 sites of environmental concern along the project alignment, including sites enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code, particularly near the four existing traction power substations and the portion of the corridor north of the OTTC where new rail tracks

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<sup>1</sup> *Note: Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may request in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*

would be installed; however, incorporation of project measures would prevent significant or adverse impacts as a result of potential hazardous material sites.

Mitigation measures would reduce or avoid remaining long-term (operation) impacts to not adverse and less than significant for noise and vibration, ecosystems and biological resources, and electromagnetic interference. After mitigation, the Build Alternative and/or the Genesee Avenue Design Option would still result in long-term adverse and significant and unavoidable impacts on the environment in three environmental areas: transportation (traffic), visual and aesthetic resources, and community and neighborhoods (related to adverse visual impacts).

Mitigation measures would reduce remaining short-term (construction) impacts to not adverse and less than significant for ecosystems and biological resources and paleontological resources. Mitigation measures would reduce construction impacts to archaeological resources to less than significant under the California Environmental Quality Act, and would resolve adverse effects under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. However, even with the incorporation of project features and the adoption of mitigation measures, short-term (construction) impacts would result in significant and adverse impacts on transportation (transit, traffic, and parking), air quality, and noise and vibration. Construction would also result in cumulatively significant paleontological, economic, and community impacts. Adverse long-term (operation) and short-term (construction) impacts remaining after mitigation would also affect environmental justice populations, but only the Genesee Avenue Design Option would result in disproportionately high and adverse visual impacts to an environmental justice population. Some resources entitled to protection under 49 United States Code 303: Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as amended, would be affected by the project. The public is hereby informed of the FTA's intent to make a de minimis impact finding for Section 4(f) protected properties, as the project would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes qualifying the properties for Section 4(f) protection.

**Contact:** Please refer to the project Web site ([www.sandag.org/midcoast](http://www.sandag.org/midcoast)) for general information about this project. Additionally, please contact FTA Community Planner Alexander Smith at (415) 744-3133 or SANDAG Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager Leslie Blanda at (619) 595-5620 for additional information concerning the *Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Draft SEIS/SEIR*.

**Special Accommodations:** In compliance with the ADA, SANDAG will accommodate persons who require assistance in order to participate in meetings held at its facilities. If such assistance is required, please contact SANDAG at (619) 595-5620 at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting.



## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND HEARING

The *Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report* is being made available for a 60-day comment period (May 17 through July 16, 2013) for agencies and the public to review and comment on the document. Comments must be postmarked or received by July 16, 2013.

For additional information concerning this document, contact:

Alexander Smith  
Community Planner  
Federal Transit Administration, Region IX  
201 Mission Street, Room 1650  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
415-744-3133

Leslie Blanda  
Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager  
San Diego Association of Governments  
401 B Street, Suite 800  
San Diego, CA 92101  
619-525-5620

Comments may be submitted in writing or may be made orally at the public meetings and public hearing. Written comments should be submitted to Ms. Leslie Blanda, Mid-Coast Project Development Program Manager, at the address above or submitted via e-mail at [midcoast@sandag.org](mailto:midcoast@sandag.org), voice mail at (619) 525-5620, or fax at (619) 699-1905. Written comments also can be submitted at the public meetings and hearing.

Public meetings and a hearing will be held at the following dates, times, and locations:

Cadman Elementary School, School Auditorium  
Tuesday, June 4, 2013, Public Meeting 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
4370 Kamloop Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117  
(Bus station at Clairemont Mesa Boulevard/Moraga Avenue)

University of California, San Diego (UCSD)  
Monday, June 10, 2013, Public Meeting 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.  
Price Center East, The Forum, Level 4  
9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA, 92093  
(Bus stop located at Gilman Drive/Myers Drive on UCSD campus)

La Jolla Country Day School, Community Room  
Wednesday, June 12, 2013, Public Meeting 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
9490 Genesee Avenue, La Jolla, CA, 92037  
(Bus stop located at Genesee Avenue/Eastgate Mall)

Caltrans District 11 Office, Garcia Conference Room  
Tuesday, June 18, 2013, Public Meeting 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
4050 Taylor Street, San Diego, CA, 92110  
(Bus stop/Transit station located at Taylor Street/Juan Street & Old Town Transit Center)

SANDAG Offices, Board Room (7th Floor)  
Friday, June 21, 2013, Public Hearing at 9:00 a.m.  
SANDAG Transportation Committee  
401 B Street, San Diego, CA, 92101  
(Bus stop/Transit stations located at 4th/B Street & 5th Avenue Trolley Station)