A **BOLD** VISION FOR A BETTER FUTURE
Dear San Diego Region Residents:

It’s time for a bold vision to help us confront the challenges facing our region and provide public policies and programs that enhance our quality of life and improve this region we call home. This annual report highlights some of our collective work. We have a number of dynamic initiatives underway: developing an overarching Regional Comprehensive Plan, implementing the $42 billion Regional Transportation Plan, preserving our open space and habitat, addressing and financing our infrastructure needs, and keeping sand on our wonderful beaches.

At SANDAG, a bold vision for the future is emerging. Major regional public policy decisions will be made in the coming year that will affect our land use, transportation, environment, housing, jobs, and economy. Active public participation has been and will remain key to honing this vision, developing priorities and investment strategies, and putting coordinated plans in place that will sustain our region for everyone here today and for the generations to follow.

We thank you for your support and involvement, and look forward to another productive year.

Sincerely,
Hon. Ron Morrison
Chair, SANDAG Board of Directors

What does the future hold for our region? Tomorrow is full of promise; however, a number of significant challenges and opportunities are facing the San Diego region. SANDAG has been charged with new responsibilities to better coordinate regional decision-making, transportation, land use, and infrastructure. This unprecedented effort will require a renewed commitment from elected officials working together with our residents, community, environmental, and business leaders, and other stakeholders.

Through SANDAG, we can galvanize the regional decision-making process. We must make different choices and develop a vision, strategies, and the resources to create a better future for the San Diego region.
SANDAG is undertaking the development of a Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) that will focus on the interconnected issues of urban form, transportation, housing, healthy ecosystems, our international and county borders, the economy, and infrastructure financing. At the core of the RCP is a shared vision of what we want to preserve and enhance about the region’s quality of life. Ultimately, planning has to take into account real-world trade-offs, conflicting needs, and other challenges.

The RCP represents a sweeping, integrated plan for managing our shared regional future and its resources. The goals of the planning effort are to develop a broad-based consensus reflecting the values, needs, and preferred solutions of as many residents as possible. The draft plan is scheduled to be completed in late 2003 with the final plan adopted by mid-2004.

The SANDAG Regional Planning Committee, composed of local mayors, council members, and a supervisor, will provide oversight for the preparation and implementation of the plan. Planning and community development directors also will be closely involved in the plan’s preparation. An extensive public outreach program is underway to ensure involvement by stakeholders from every corner of the region.
**WORKING FOR A BETTER REGION**

With a bold, regional agenda that challenges complacency and advances creativity, SANDAG has been empowered through its member agencies to turn planning concepts into realities. Those realities will translate into more travel choices for commuters, open space and habitat preservation, continued economic growth and diversity, sand on beaches, more types of housing that is affordable, safer communities, and the very best research and information to assist in making public policy.

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**STREAMLINING GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING**

Regional governance enters a new era in 2003 with SANDAG evolving into a consolidated agency responsible for transit planning, funding allocation, project development, and eventually, construction in the San Diego region.

Culminating three years of work among local mayors and council members, Governor Davis signed Senate Bill 1703 (Peace, D-El Cajon). This new consolidated agency now has all of the responsibilities and roles of SANDAG, and many of the transit functions of both the San Diego Metropolitan and North County Transit Development Boards.

In addition, the new consolidated agency will continue to provide the public forum and decision point for significant regional issues such as growth, environmental management, habitat conservation, housing, open space, air quality, energy, fiscal management, economic development, and public safety.

Many individuals and representatives of organizations contribute to the regional decision-making process by participating in SANDAG’s committees and working groups as well as by attending workshops and public hearings.
The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a cornerstone of SANDAG’s work in 2002. MOBILITY 2030 introduces a new-era strategy for transportation that increases capacity on rail, buses, trolleys, and highways, and sets out the vision for a seamless regional transportation system. More than two years of committed involvement from stakeholders has paid off with a plan that has the potential to revolutionize travel in the region. A key element of the RTP is the Regional Transit Vision, a way to get public transit integrated into communities throughout the San Diego region.

Making the most of TransNet dollars is another initiative for SANDAG. In 1987, San Diego region voters approved the TransNet program – a half-cent sales tax to fund a variety of important transportation projects throughout the region. TransNet is a 20-year, $3.3 billion transportation improvement program. The current TransNet program expires in 2008.

And, $1 million in TransNet funds is financing seven innovative Walkable Communities Demonstration Programs. Design and construction of the projects are underway in Encinitas and San Marcos. Other projects are planned in Oceanside, El Cajon, and the communities of North Park, Golden Hill, and Clairemont in the City of San Diego. Walkable communities also got a boost with the release of SANDAG’s Regional Pedestrian Design Guidelines that local agencies can use in developing planning and design standards to promote walkable communities.

In the past year, TransNet funds have contributed to a number of essential projects including buying right-of-way for SR 52 east through Santee to SR 67; completion of SR 125 North to extend it from Spring Valley through Lemon Grove to La Mesa and connect at SR 52 in Santee; the connector for SR 125 South in the Chula Vista area which is now being combined with a tollway to link SR 54 and the future SR 905 at the U.S./Mexico border. In the North County, environmental work continues for the widening of eastbound SR 78 from El Camino Real to College Boulevard in Carlsbad, and SR 76 in Oceanside from Melrose Drive to Mission Road.

The future of transportation is evident in a number of projects underway in the region. I-15 will be transformed into a “freeway within a freeway” from Kearny Mesa north to Escondido. The Mission Valley East Trolley Line takes shape over I-8 in Mission Valley and on the campus of San Diego State University, as progress continues to
extend the trolley east from Qualcomm Stadium to La Mesa via the university. This trolley extension will be in service by 2005.

Progress continues on the I-5/I-805 merge as high occupancy vehicle lanes and additional general purpose lanes are constructed. In the North County, the Oceanside-Escondido Rail Line, now called “The Sprinter,” gets the green light as all funding has been secured to complete the east-west line. The new trolley rail line will serve 15 stations along the route, including a loop onto the Cal State San Marcos campus.

And, construction is underway on the middle segment of State Route 56 from Camino del Sur to Carmel Country Road, which is scheduled to open for traffic in July 2004 and will link Interstates 5 and 15. Along the U.S./Mexico border, environmental work is wrapping up and construction set to begin on SR 905, the four-lane freeway scheduled for completion in 2007.

More and more residents are jumping on the bandwagon to reduce rush hour traffic. SANDAG’s Vanpool Program has grown by 40 percent in the last year from 183 vanpools to 257 vanpools. Now, more than 2,400 commuters ride to and from work in a vanpool. A major promotional effort was launched for Rideshare Week in October. The outreach and advertising resulted in a 200 percent increase in rideshare information requests. The week’s activities culminated in the Diamond Awards luncheon where area employers and individuals were recognized for their efforts to reduce rush hour traffic congestion. And, bicycle commuting is more convenient and high-tech with the installation of 36 electronic bicycle lockers at the Solana Beach, Carlsbad Poinsettia, and Oceanside Coaster stations.
A highlight of the year was the SANDAG Board’s unanimous approval of a comprehensive program to preserve nearly 20,000 acres of undeveloped land in north San Diego County. Culminating 10 years of work and consensus building, the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program, will preserve land in the seven North County Cities of Escondido, San Marcos, Vista, Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, and Solana Beach. The designated habitat weaves together contiguous parcels of land to offer wildlife open space corridors to protect 51 species of endangered or threatened plants and animals.

SANDAG continued its work on the Regional Beach Sand Project that placed 2.1 million cubic yards of sand at 12 eroded beaches from Imperial Beach to Oceanside in 2001. More than five miles of new beaches were created using sand dredged from offshore sites. The first year’s monitoring confirmed expectations that sand from the project would remain on the region’s coastline, and have little or no adverse environmental impacts. The SANDAG Shoreline Preservation Committee and the coastal cities are exploring potential funding sources that can provide the resources to carry out a major beach restoration project every other year.

To continue its efforts to ensure an adequate water supply in the region, SANDAG received an informational report from the County Water Authority that contained an evaluation of potential routes for a binational aqueduct to convey Colorado River water to the California-Baja California border region. The Regional Colorado River Conveyance Feasibility Study was accomplished in coordination with the International Boundary and Water Commission and the Department of Water Resources in the United States, and the Comisión Nacional del Agua and the Comisión Estatal de Agua in Mexico.

SANDAG and the San Diego Regional Energy Office (SDREO) are working together on a Regional Energy Strategy which will be included in the Regional Comprehensive Plan. The SDREO has created a Regional Energy Policy Advisory Council which includes SANDAG representation to assist in the strategy’s development.
SEIZING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

More of the region’s residents need the opportunity to share in the region’s economic prosperity if we are to maintain our competitiveness with other metropolitan areas around the country and the world. That is one of the major findings in SANDAG’s report, *San Diego’s Indicators of Sustainable Competitiveness*. The competitive edge, according to the findings, will go to regions in which social equity, environmental quality, and economic vitality are balanced.

The analysis, completed with the help of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, reveals the region is at a competitive disadvantage because of our inequities. As part of the analysis, SANDAG has developed a “sustainable competitiveness index” to measure the region’s progress in the areas of the environment, the economy, and equity. The index compares San Diego to 20 other metropolitan regions.

ANALYZING THE DATA

SANDAG researchers, demographers, statisticians, and economists generate and analyze a wealth of demographic, economic, transportation, land use, environmental, and criminal justice information. This past year, SANDAG prepared the 2030 Cities/County Forecast. SANDAG has prepared these long-range forecasts of population, housing, and employment since the early 1970s. The forecasts are used as a resource by elected officials, planners, academics, and the public. Among other applications, the Preliminary 2030 Cities/County Forecast is the basis for the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Comprehensive Plan. Both the RTP and the RCP will be updated using the most current forecast data available. SANDAG’s forecasts are developed with the close cooperation of the local planning directors and their staffs and through a collaborative effort with experts in demography, housing, the economy, and other disciplines.

In addition, SANDAG member agencies have access to this data and expertise through the Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program. Through the LTA program, SANDAG provides assistance to local agencies in their planning efforts and decision-making. In 2002, SANDAG completed 117 projects for local agencies including Geographic Information System analyses; demographics, economic, transportation, and housing studies; opinion surveys; and environmental and general plan analysis.
The SANDAG Borders Committee continues its commitment to enhanced borders planning with several initiatives underway among San Diego, Riverside, Imperial, and Orange Counties, and with Baja California and its municipalities. Future plans include completion of a borders visioning process to define infrastructure priorities and financing strategies.

SANDAG also will focus on the development of long-term strategies with the I-15 Interregional Partnership (I-15 IRP) with Riverside County. Key activities of the I-15 IRP include the release of an Existing Conditions Report that defines the interregional commuting problem, documents existing programs that are addressing the jobs/housing imbalance, and forecasts future commute conditions. Other activities include coordinating transportation plans and funding priorities so that future improvements and expansion on I-15 efficiently connect at the county line.

Last October, SANDAG held an informational exchange summit with the elected representatives of tribal governments. Participants learned how the tribal councils are organized and function as well as the tribes’ concerns regarding land use, economic, and transportation planning and the affects on Native American reservations. Tribal council representatives and SANDAG Directors also agreed that additional summits would be mutually beneficial.

SANDAG is working with Caltrans on a three-year study to determine the transportation infrastructure needs to adequately serve cross-border travel and trade. The Binational Infrastructure Needs study will include border infrastructure, needs, and financing as part of long-term planning efforts and will be incorporated in both the Regional Comprehensive Plan and the Regional Transportation Plan.

SANDAG worked with transportation planning agencies in California and Baja California, to develop a San Diego Region-Baja California Cross-Border Travel Forecasting traffic model to assist in transportation infrastructure planning in the binational border region. The model will help local, state, and federal agencies on both sides of the border to plan highway, major roads, and other transportation infrastructure.
ENSURING OUR SAFETY

SANDAG’s Criminal Justice Research Division continues to be a resource for local communities to assist in the planning process for crime-fighting (prevention), public safety, and crime-reduction strategies. The Division functions as the Regional Criminal Justice Research Clearinghouse to compile and analyze crime and arrest trends and to provide historical and current crime and justice information for member agencies, law enforcement, and community organizations. SANDAG also offers independent and objective evaluation of specific programs geared to address crime, social, and quality of life issues in the region.

SANDAG publishes numerous comprehensive reports on many aspects of the justice system including domestic violence, juvenile arrests, drug abuse trends, resident opinion surveys, and regional crime statistics and trends. Research projects conducted this past year include the Arrestee Drug Assessment Monitoring Report, the Annual Arrest Report, and the Mid-Year Crime Report. Evaluation projects include San Diego County Probation’s and Sheriff’s Connections program for mentally ill offenders; Anti-Defamation League and Juvenile Court Pathways program to teach tolerance; Target Capacity Expansion – HIV Reduction Project; Replication of Effective Treatment for Methamphetamine Dependence; City of San Diego Needle Exchange Project; and several San Diego County Probation Departments juvenile justice prevention and intervention programs.