

# Chapter 1

## VISION 2025: Transportation Goals and Policies

**VISION 2025** is San Luis Obispo County’s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). It serves as the blueprint to address the mobility challenges of our region. This long-range transportation plan contains an integrated set of policies, strategies, and investments to maintain, manage, and improve the transportation system in the San Luis Obispo region through 2025.

### The VISION for Transportation:

*A fully integrated and intermodal transportation system which facilitates the safe movement of people, goods, and information within and through the region.*

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**Core Values** (1-2)

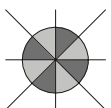
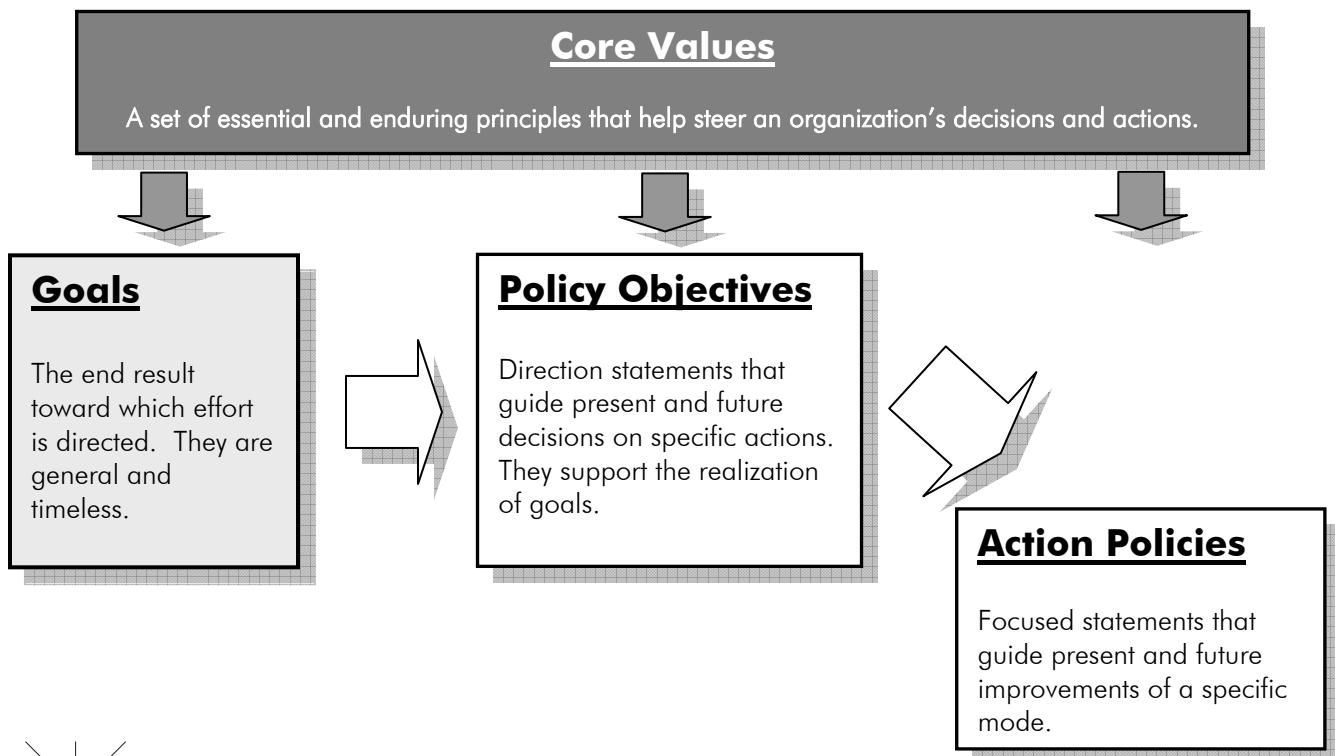
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The Plan’s vision for transportation supports many of the policies defined in the general plans of SLOCOG’s member agencies, promoting more sustainable growth in the region. The policies in this chapter collectively referred to as a “policy element,” address legislative, planning, financial, and institutional requirements, as well as areas of regional consensus. This policy element presents guidance to decision-makers regarding the implications, impacts, opportunities, and foreclosed options that will result from implementation of the RTP. Additionally, the Policy Element is a resource for providing input and promoting consistency of action among state, regional, and local agencies.

The following graphic both defines and symbolizes the relationship between SLOCOG's Core Values and the Goals, Policy Objectives, and Action Policies of **VISION 2025**.



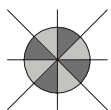
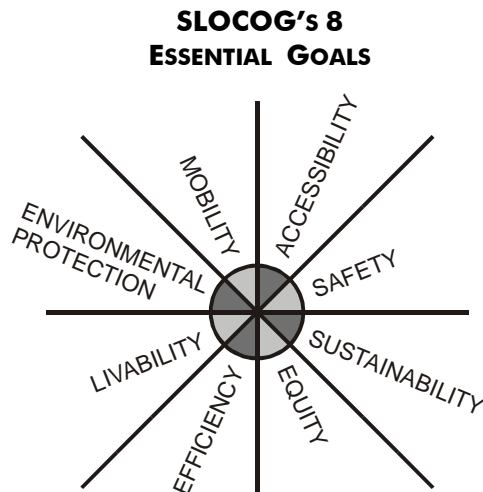
While evaluating past adopted goals and policies, a recurrence of several common and valuable principles were noted. To streamline **VISION 2025** a set of Core Values (Table 1-1) was created and redundancies were removed. They are to be considered of equal importance. These Core Values provide a moral compass for decisions and behavior, and represent efforts and considerations upon which SLOCOG places importance.

**Table 1-1**  
**VISION 2025 Core Values**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Livable Communities</b>                    | Facilitate the development and economic viability of communities in ways that reduce trips and travel distances.<br><br>Facilitate safe and convenient alternative forms of transportation. |
| <b>Sound Transportation Choices</b>           | Invest in a balanced, efficient, and effective transportation system.<br><br>Evaluate reasonable transportation improvement strategies before pursuing major roadway expansions.            |
| <b>Fiscal Responsibility</b>                  | Make wise long-term investment choices and promote additional funding through grants, private funding commitments, interagency and public-private partnerships.                             |
| <b>Intergovernmental Coordination</b>         | Facilitate interagency coordination.  |
| <b>Community Outreach &amp; Participation</b> | Assure early and continual involvement of all parties affected by major transportation improvement projects and programs.   |
| <b>Environmental Protection</b>               | Minimize adverse impacts to the environment.  |

In concert with the Core Values, **VISION 2025** was developed around eight essential goals. These goals are considered interrelated and of equal importance.

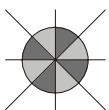
Building on the substantial efforts that went into the development of prior RTPs, the revised goals reflect the Region's emphasis on a balanced approach to multimodal transportation planning and programming. They demonstrate the need to balance many priorities described by the policy objectives, in the most cost-effective manner. Table 1-2 presents the goals of **VISION 2025** with their respective policy objectives.



**Table 1-2**  
**VISION 2025 Goals and Policy Objectives**

| <b>Goals</b>                    | <b>Policy Objectives</b>   |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>MOBILITY</b>                 | Provide reliable, integrated, and flexible travel choices within and through the region.   |
| <b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>            | Improve accessibility to goods, services and jobs.   |
| <b>SAFETY</b>                   | Enhance public safety and security in all modes of travel.   |
| <b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>           | Maintain and improve a viable transportation system for current and future users.  |
| <b>EFFICIENCY</b>               | Maximize the efficiency of the existing transportation system.   |
| <b>EQUITY</b>                   | Avoid a disproportionately adverse impact on low-income, minority, elderly or disabled populations.<br><br>Provide equitable levels of funding and transportation services to all areas, communities, and socio-economic groups. |
| <b>LIVABILITY</b>               | Support livable community concepts and efforts.<br><br>Reflect community values while integrating land use and transportation planning   |
| <b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b> | Conserve and protect natural and sensitive resources.<br><br>Preserve aesthetic resources and promote environmental enhancements with all transportation projects  |

**Action Policies**, the focused statements that will guide present and future improvements of a specific transportation mode and also facilitate policy directives by SLOCOG, are found in Chapters 3 (Land Use Transportation Connection), Chapter 4 (Maximizing System Efficiency, Chapter 5 (System Development Needs), and Chapter 6 (Financial Strategies)..



## Transportation Planning Scenarios

This update continues the focus to implement the programs and projects contained under the *Intermodal Systems Emphasis* mix of projects and policies adopted in the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan. These policies and programs seek to develop a coordinated, integrated and balanced transportation system that meets the current and long-term transportation needs of all the cities, unincorporated communities, socioeconomic classes, businesses and industries in the region. **VISION 2025** commits to further these efforts.

The 2001 RTP considered three transportation system improvement “Scenarios” to address the mobility needs for San Luis Obispo County. These same three scenarios the Intermodal Emphasis, the Highway and Streets Emphasis, and the Transit and Rail Emphasis are evaluated again using updated financial projections through 2025. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared in 2001 indicated that the “Intermodal Scenario” as proposed in the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan is the best approach to improve mobility with minimal impacts to the environment over the next twenty years. The EIR indicates that as projects contained in the plan move through the various environmental review steps toward construction, Caltrans and member agencies are to evaluate specific issues that may require mitigation in the project’s design and implementation. Table 1-3 provides a matrix comparison of the priority and fundability of capital improvements under each of the three scenarios. The three scenarios are summarized below.

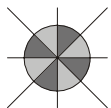
**Intermodal Systems Emphasis (VISION 2025)** – Under this recommended scenario, local, regional and statewide needs and issues for all transportation facilities and services are addressed with a dynamic and balanced approach and in a manner that results in maximum systems integration to strengthen each mode with existing funding. This approach focuses on modal integration and maximizing the functional utility of the entire transportation system.

The five major modes of transportation will be planned comprehensively and integrated together into a seamless transportation system focused on efficiency and effectiveness. This approach works toward maximizing the system’s efficiency by: supporting enhanced transit services, expanding technology, Freeway Express Bus Stops, Ridesharing, Vanpooling, parallel routes along major transportation corridors, and Park-n-Ride lots. In addition, instead of using most resources to widen US 101 to six lanes, it gives a priority to improving its maximum operational utility as a four-lane freeway with auxiliary lanes and local interchange improvements including optimized on/off ramps, and targeted implementation of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology.

The local road system is given a higher priority, with an emphasis on those routes that are regionally significant. Development of a contiguous frontage or parallel road network along US 101 is encouraged to maximize the utility of the corridor. Lower cost operational improvements, including synchronized signals, turn lanes, medians, textured crosswalks, bulbouts, and roundabouts are emphasized to manage traffic flow, protect pedestrians, reduce accidents, and reduce energy costs. In addition, under this scenario, there is an ongoing level of support for maintenance and rehabilitation of the local road system.

Transit system improvements are targeted to address high priority service needs and improve general efficiency. These actions include system or route consolidation where appropriate to increase coordination and lower costs. Multimodal centers on major transportation corridors consisting of bus loading areas, parking lots, secure bicycle storage, and related amenities would be served by freeway flyer express buses and local buses, and would provide a place for riders to park vehicles and finish their trip on the express bus. These centers would also serve as locations for carpool and vanpool formation.

Under this scenario, pedestrian facilities are improved incrementally to provide a comprehensive network serving major activity centers. The bicycle, pedestrian and multi-use trail system includes a comprehensive regional network of Class I, II or III bikeways along most major arterial



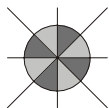
and collector roads; boardwalks, bikeways and multi-use recreational pathways are along selected portions of the coast, major waterways, and rail corridors.

Passenger Rail improvements include a continued expansion of intercity rail services. Additional rail services between Los Angeles and San Francisco would be established with stops in Grover Beach, San Luis Obispo (SLO), and Paso Robles. Continued expansion of the Pacific Surfliner is envisioned with multiple round trips per day. In addition to increased services, this scenario includes continued improvement in reliability of passenger rail services resulting from improved tracks, signals and extended and additional sidings. In the long term improved technology and increased population may allow for the use of Diesel Mobile Units (DMUs) for passenger services between major population centers in San Luis Obispo County and possibly Santa Barbara County.

**Table 1-3  
Scenario Fundability Comparison**

| RTP Action Plan Programs and Capital Improvements      | Intermodal (Vision 2025) Recommended | Highway Emphasis         |                             | Transit/Rail Emphasis |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
|  |                                      | Rt 101 6-Laning Emphasis | Highways & Streets Emphasis |                       |
| <b>Chap 4 - Maximizing the System Efficiency</b>       |                                      |                          |                             |                       |
| TDM and ITS measures                                   | ●                                    | ◐                        | ◐                           | ◐                     |
| <b>Chap 5 -Highway/Streets/Roads Program</b>           |                                      |                          |                             |                       |
| SR 101 Interchange Improvements to accommodate 6-lanes | ●                                    | ●                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| SR 101 6-lanes North County                            | ○                                    | ◐                        | ○                           | ○                     |
| SR 101 6-lanes -South County                           | ○                                    | ●                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| SR 101 Operational Improvements (aux lanes)            | ●                                    | ○                        | ●                           | ○                     |
| SR 46 Widening -                                       | ●                                    | ○                        | ●                           | ○                     |
| SR 1 Improvements                                      | ●                                    | ○                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| SR 227 Improvements                                    | ●                                    | ○                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| SR 166 Improvements                                    | ●                                    | ○                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| SR 41 Improvements                                     | ●                                    | ○                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| SR 58 Improvements                                     | ◐                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ○                     |
| Routes of Regional Significance                        | ●                                    | ○                        | ◐                           | ○                     |
| Local Maintenance and Rehabilitation                   | ◐                                    | ○                        | ◐                           | ◐                     |
| <b>Chap 5 - Non Motorized Transportation Program</b>   |                                      |                          |                             |                       |
| Bicycle Improvements                                   | ●                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ◐                     |
| Pedestrian Improvements                                | ●                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ◐                     |
| <b>Chap 5 - Public Transportation Program</b>          |                                      |                          |                             |                       |
| Public Transit options                                 | ●                                    | ◐                        | ◐                           | ●                     |
| Commuter Rail  | ○                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ○                     |
| Intercity Rail   | ◐                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ◐                     |
| Self-propelled Rail cars                               | ○                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ◐                     |
| Light Rail   | ○                                    | ○                        | ○                           | ○                     |

- Priority and fundable      ◐ Priority & partially fundable
- ◐ Limited funding available      ○ Not a Priority



**Highway Emphasis** – Under this scenario nearly all expenditures over the next 25 years are on the Highway, Streets, and Road Program, primarily focused on increasing capacity by adding lanes or constructing new facilities on major highways. Two sub options are shown on Table 1-3.

A high priority is given to expanding Highway 101 to six lanes between the Santa Barbara County Line and Paso Robles, and expanding Route 46 East to four lanes between Highway 101 and the Kern County Line. It has been estimated that the cost for widening State Route 46 to four lanes from Airport Road on SR 46 to the Kern County Line would total approximately \$270 million, and that it would cost about \$287 million to expand US 101 to six lanes between Santa Maria and Paso Robles (in 2004 dollars), including the Santa Maria River Bridge. These improvements, coupled with the other highway operational improvements and the need for local and regional interchange improvements, and the cost to fully address local road maintenance and rehabilitation estimated at \$322 million over the next twenty years, would exhaust all available funding for other transportation mode improvements.

Heavy reliance on highway and road expansion would virtually assure that single-occupant vehicle usage would remain high and would encourage “sprawl” type development. Air quality impacts are assumed to be the highest under this scenario. Intermodal development would be constrained and public transit services would remain largely unchanged, reducing the ability to meet future needs. The adoption of this scenario would be inconsistent with the adopted goals, objectives and policies of SLOCOG and member agencies, which is to follow a balanced approach to the transportation planning process.

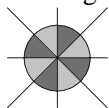
**Transit / Rail Emphasis** – Under this scenario significant funding would be directed to the agency’s Public Transportation Program. Funds would be used to purchase a large number of buses, vans and other transit vehicles, to support system operations, and to establish a commuter rail system. Significant expansion of local and regional transit services would be required to attract commuters away from their cars to reduce congestion on US 101 and other major routes. To achieve a measurable change in peak hour LOS on the region’s highway facilities, fourteen to eighteen additional full-size coaches, filled at capacity, would be needed. Currently peak hour commutes are supported by two to three full-size coaches depending upon route.

The current total expenditure to maintain and operate local and regional transit services in the county is about \$12 million per year. Service increases based upon population growth and minor service adjustments over the next 20 years - just to maintain the status quo, include; a 37% increase in fixed route services, and 18% increase in paratransit services. At this pace, in 20 years the region will be spending about \$18 million per year in 2025, and a combined total of \$400 million over the next twenty years.

If all local Transportation Development Act funds and all Federal funds were used for transit, there could be a 46% increase in fixed route services and 25% increase in paratransit. At this pace, in 20 years the region will be spending about \$29 million per year in 2025, and \$470 million over the next twenty years.

Unfortunately, the two scenarios mentioned above do not provide the significant expansion that would be necessary for a measurable impact on mode choice. It has been estimated that the regional transit system would need to expand its service level from three to five times the current level (based on a total fleet of eighteen buses and eleven vans). Local transit systems would need to increase their service levels in a similar magnitude. Simply by extrapolating today’s numbers, the costs for capital and operating for the expanded regional and local systems in 2025 could be over \$70 million, and in the range of \$2 billion over the next twenty year period. The dedication of all current Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding and Federal Transit Act (FTA) funding allocated to the region would only produce about 15% to 25% of all the funding needed.

The region does not have a dedicated funding source for the operation of such an extensive



system. A major contributing factor to the high costs is the relatively dispersed pattern of development within the County. Such a distribution does not allow for economic operation of a comprehensive transit system that will serve a significant portion of the population.

Significant rail improvements involving establishing a light rail or commuter rail system were evaluated in the 2001 RTP. Because of physical and financial realities, it did not prove to be a practical or cost-effective transportation investment for at least 15-25 years due to low population, density and funding. It has been estimated that commuter rail service would only remove approximately 200 peak hour vehicle trips from Route 101 in the South County currently at 6,500 peak hour vehicle trips (South County segment average).

## **Measuring the Performance**

Transportation within the region will be measured through a Performance Monitoring Program (PMP) designed to monitor and analyze various indicators to provide data to measure how well the transportation system is functioning. The PMP is available in Chapter 4 of the RTP, page 4-6.

The data collected through the PMP provides a basis for identifying the need for short and long term system improvements. Through this ongoing monitoring program the region will be better able to assess existing conditions and the impact of improvements to ensure that the region's investment decisions are effective and consistent with regional policies. Chapter 4, Maximizing System Efficiency, provides a complete discussion on the regional performance monitoring program.

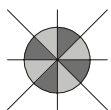
A significant amount of data regarding a wide range of transportation indicators is already collected regularly by various agencies in the San Luis Obispo region, including: SLOCOG, Caltrans District 5, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the cities and county and other, non-governmental organizations.

Caltrans and SLOCOG collect traffic volume counts on a regular basis. Transit Ridership data is collected by the regional and local transit providers and vehicle occupancy is regularly collected by SLOCOG. The SLO Regional Rideshare agency provides data on commuter behavior and the results of regular employee and employer surveys. The applicable carrier collects aviation and passenger rail loading data. This data can then be compared with data from agencies in other parts of the State and nation to determine to what degree indicators for our region are consistent.

The challenge of the Performance Monitoring Program is to effectively gather, correlate, and interpret the diverse data available into conclusions regarding the status of the transportation system. These conclusions can then be used to define effective and practical plans of action for the maintenance and improvement of the transportation system. It is also vital that the process be carried out in a way that is understood and supported by the local governmental agencies and the public.

## **The Planning Process - Public Outreach**

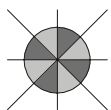
As the MPO, SLOCOG is required to implement a public involvement process to provide complete information, timely public notice and full public access to key decisions and to support early and continuing public involvement in developing its regional plans (23 CFR of the federal metropolitan planning regulations). SLOCOG formally adopted a Public Participation Plan in 1994 and recently updated it in 2002. Further, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and associated regulations and policies, including President Clinton's 1994 Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, seek to assure that minority and low-income populations are involved in the planning process.



## Federal Planning Requirements

The Regional Transportation Plan was developed considering seven Planning Factors described in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21). These seven planning factors are:

- **Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.** **VISION 2025** supports the economic vitality of the region. It seeks to improve overall accessibility to all goods services, and jobs; and enhance mobility by providing reliable, integrated, and flexible travel choices within and through the region. The balanced transportation scenario, enhanced by the plan, seeks to maximize systematic improvement of the entire transportation system, both for interregional as well as intra-regional travel and goods movement.
- **Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.** One overall goal of **VISION 2025** is to maintain and improve the regional transportation system, to enhance public safety in all modes of travel. The plan considers existing and projected needs and conditions. It prioritizes improvements with safety as a key criterion. Major transportation bottlenecks are identified and improvements developed from implementation. Major efforts have been and continue to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety by integrating these needs into integrated improvement strategies, including comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle networks, and pedestrian and bicycle friendly downtowns, streets, and boulevards. Public transit and rail safety and security are addressed through advanced technology, security considerations, defensible, safe design and integration into livable community design.
- **Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.** As noted, two major goals of **VISION 2025** is to improve mobility and enhance accessibility. The implementation of these goals are integrated throughout the Plan, focusing on major integrated routes, more localized connections, and all modal options.
- **Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.** A major thrust of the Intermodal Systems Emphasis is to create a balanced transportation system. Major relevant goals and implementing policies and programs seek to protect the environment by minimizing adverse impacts, enhancing the environment through clean air initiatives, and environmental and transportation enhancements. Energy conservation is directly promoted through **VISION 2025**'s emphasis on alternative transportation options, including public transit, rail, bikes, pedestrian and transportation demand management, and system management programs. Quality of life is further enhanced through the Smart Growth concepts that form an integral part of the plan.
- **Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes, for people and freight.** **VISION 2025**'s focus is the creation of a balanced transportation system. Local, regional, and statewide needs are addressed comprehensively and integrated into a seamless transportation system. This emphasis is thoroughly defined in the aforementioned "Intermodal Systems Emphasis."
- **Promote efficient system management and operation.** A major thrust of **VISION 2025** is to develop an integrated comprehensive transportation system that meets the needs of all system users for all transportation modes. This is accomplished through maximizing travel choices, modifying land use to be better integrated with the entire transportation system, maximizing system efficiency through TDM, TSM, and ITS considerations. **VISION 2025** includes an entire chapter devoted to maximizing system efficiency, including a comprehensive Performance Monitoring Program.



- **Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.** **VISION 2025** emphasizes improvement of the entire transportation system. The improvement of one mode is not made at the expense of others. The Plan recognizes a current funding shortfall, thereby impacting timely Local Street and Road/Maintenance improvements. However, the Plan includes an ongoing program to address maintenance needs. Funding is earmarked in part to address these needs up to the statutory and regulatory limits. The plan identifies the clear need to secure supplemental funding to fully address the funding shortfall.

**VISION 2025** considers and incorporates these throughout the Regional Transportation Plan.

