



## RCTC State and Federal Legislative Platform

**OBJECTIVE:** The 2026 State and Federal Legislative Platform (Platform) serves as the framework that will guide Riverside County Transportation Commission's (RCTC or Commission) advocacy efforts for state and federal policy and funding decisions that enable the Commission to: implement Measure A, the Traffic Relief Plan (TRP), the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and other adopted plans and programs; comply with state and federal requirements; and improve mobility for the people of Riverside County.

RCTC's State and Federal Legislative Platform offers positions on key policy issues which are likely to be the focus in the next legislative and congressional sessions.

### Key Policy Issues for 2026

At the **state** level, RCTC will engage on the following issues in 2026:

- Streamline California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review and requirements for passenger rail projects, including the Coachella Valley Rail Project (CV Rail).
- Implementation of the Cap-and-Invest program (formerly known as Cap-and-Trade) to maximize discretionary funding opportunities from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to regional transportation projects and transit.
- Reforms to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) mitigation requirements that reduce infrastructure project costs and improve project delivery timelines.
- Policies and funding that prioritize the advancement of commuter choice and transportation projects of all modes in Riverside County, including the 15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension (15 ELPSE) and CV Rail.

RCTC's engagement and advocacy at the **federal** level in 2026 will include:

- Efforts to enhance the competitiveness of the 15 ELPSE and CV Rail Project for funding.
- Advancing RCTC's proposals for inclusion in surface transportation reauthorization legislation, including those related to local control of federal formula funding, improvements to rail programs, and increasing funding and resources for projects in rapidly growing communities.
- Submitting highly competitive applications for Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending in Fiscal Year 2027 for vital transportation improvements across the county.

### **Equity and Fairness**

- Ensure that rural, low-income, and disadvantaged communities in Riverside County benefit from equity-based transportation planning and implementation policies.
- State and federal funding should be distributed equitably to Riverside County. This includes core formula funding as well as supplemental distributions.
- Governance structures should ensure equitable representation and decision-making authority is provided to Riverside County.
- Policies should be developed and implemented with regional variance to limit disproportionate impacts on regions with fast-growing populations, including low-income and disadvantaged communities priced out of coastal urban centers.
- Engage in policy discussions regarding the way public outreach and public meetings are conducted by public

agencies.

- Support transportation projects and services that reconnect communities and/or expand access to jobs, educational opportunities, and vital services, regardless of transportation mode.
- Policies should be sensitive to each region's unique needs and avoid "one size fits all" assumptions, over-reliance on single modes of transportation that would disadvantage regional mobility, and lack of distinction between urban, suburban, and rural needs.

## **Regional Control**

### *Protect Our Authority and Revenue*

- Existing statutory authorities for the Commission should be preserved and protected.
- Project selection and planning authority for state/federal funds should be as local as possible, preferably in the hands of the Commission.
- Oppose efforts to infringe on the Commission's discretion in collecting and administering its revenue sources including, but not limited to: Measure A, tolls, and TUMF.
- Oppose efforts by non-elected, regulatory bodies and non-transportation interests to assert control over transportation funding and decision-making.
- Oppose efforts to place mandates on agencies which could nullify RCTC mobility improvement priorities by driving up operating and project delivery costs.
- Oppose efforts to remove or reduce tax exemption of municipal bond interest to avoid increased costs to financed projects.
- Reinstate advanced refunding of municipal bond authority.
- Oppose legislation that restructures or interferes with governance of the Commission or other local and regional transportation agencies without the support and consent of the entity and member agencies affected.
- Oppose legislation that amends procurement law in a manner that increases the Commission's exposure to litigation, costs, decreased private sector competition, conflicts of interest, or deviation from best practices.
- Monitor legislation relating to tax collection for impacts on Measure A revenues or administration fees.
- Support efforts to preserve, stabilize, leverage and/or increase funding for transportation.
- Oppose policy changes that infringe on the ability of the Commission to receive maximum sales tax collections relative to state sales taxes on internet sales or any other change in policy.
- Support local control and policies that incentivize self-help counties' continued funding contribution to transportation projects in California.
- Support legislation that clarifies that any initiative by the voters proposing to impose a sales tax using the Commission's authorizing statutes shall be implemented by the Commission.

### *Alignment of Responsibilities*

- Support strong collaborative partnerships with state and federal agencies.
- State and federal rulemakings, administrative processes, program guidelines, and policy development activities should include meaningful collaboration from regional transportation agencies.
- State and federal authority related to planning, programming, funding, clearing, or managing the performance of projects should align rather than conflict or duplicate, and should recognize mandates and responsibilities placed upon regional and local governments.
- Support policies that provide decision-making authority and flexibility to agencies bearing financial risk for projects. Oppose policies that place unfunded mandates and other undue burdens and restrictions on agencies that bear financial risk for projects.
- Support efforts by the state government to improve maintenance and operations of the state highway and interstate systems.

- Oppose efforts by the state government to negate their obligation to maintain the state and federal highway systems, or otherwise realign those costs and responsibilities to local and regional agencies.
- Oppose efforts by the state legislature to deflect responsibility for voting on revenue for statewide transportation to local voters.

### **Accountability**

- Revenue derived from transportation sources should be spent exclusively on planning, development, and implementation of transportation projects. Support measures to strengthen the relationship between transportation revenue and expenditures; oppose measures that weaken them.
- Support efforts to ensure that all projects in a voter-approved sales tax measure expenditure plan are delivered to the public.
- Encourage the adoption of on-time, balanced state budgets, and federal appropriation and authorization legislation to ensure transportation projects are delivered without delay or costly stoppages, and that adequate planning for future projects can take place.
- Promote policies that ensure state and federal agencies have adequate funding in order to be responsive and accountable to Commission concerns when working on Commission projects.
- Oppose efforts by non-elected, regulatory bodies to dilute, reduce, or withhold transportation funds.
- Support maximum transparency of funding agencies through the clear scoring and evaluation of funding requests.

### **Funding**

- Support efforts to preserve, stabilize, leverage and/or increase funding for transportation.
- Support continued testing and analysis of California's road charge pilot program as a potential replacement of the state motor fuels excise tax as the primary funding mechanism for transportation and ensure that urban, suburban, and rural communities are treated in an equitable manner.
- Monitor the federal government's pilot program to explore potential replacement mechanisms for the federal gasoline excise tax.
- Support re-dedication of California truck weight fees to transportation accounts.
- Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funding should be distributed by population share and air quality standards to county transportation commissions to facilitate expeditious project delivery and expenditure of funds.
- Support maintaining the legislative intent behind Senate Bill 1 (Statutes 2017) and historic base program funding, by:
  - Opposing efforts to tie distribution of transportation funding to ancillary policy matters, such as housing.
  - Opposing efforts to deviate from legislative intent and existing statute.
  - Supporting efforts to adjust formula allocations to maximize funding decisions being made as locally as possible.
  - Ensuring program guidelines are as broad as possible with respect to mode, to the extent appropriate while adhering to legislative intent.

### **Regional Partnerships**

- Collaborate with regional transportation agencies to impact transportation funding and regulatory policies to bring equity and fairness to the Inland Empire region.
- Collaborate with public and private sector stakeholders on policy and funding matters that enhance economic development and quality of living in the Inland Empire region.
- Engage in legislative efforts impacting regional transportation agencies, particularly when the efforts have a

nexus to the Commission.

- Support implementation of projects in other counties that are contained in the Southern California Association of Governments RTP/Sustainable Communities Strategy when requested by other counties and not in conflict with the Commission's interests.

## **Technology and Innovation**

- Support implementation and expansion of state and federal initiatives to expedite and advance innovative transportation policies, programs, and technologies.
- Monitor studies, regulations, and legislation regarding the deployment and use of autonomous vehicles, intelligent transportation systems, and new technologies.

## **Project Delivery Streamlining**

- Support all efforts to reduce project delivery timelines and provide flexibility to meet planning requirements due to changing circumstances, while maintaining important environmental protections.
- Support the availability of project delivery tools such as the design-build and progressive design-build project delivery methods, construction manager/general contractor (CM/GC, or construction manager at-risk) project delivery method, and public-private partnerships to the Commission, the State, federal agencies, and other infrastructure agencies. Oppose efforts to add barriers to effective implementation of such tools.
- Support adjustments to SB 743 Steinberg (Chapter 386, Statutes of 2013) VMT modeling, analysis, and mitigation for highway and roadway projects in a manner that recognizes the varying feasibility of multimodal alternatives by region.
- Support reciprocity of CEQA for the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).
- Support removing the statutory sunset on the NEPA Assignment program California participates in with the Federal Highway Administration which continues to benefit Commission projects.
- Support efforts to modernize the CEQA, including but not limited to:
  - Reduce the Commission's exposure to litigation;
  - Increase accountability and disclosure for plaintiffs in CEQA cases;
  - Limit courts' ability to invalidate an entire CEQA document when a writ of mandate can resolve discreet issues;
  - Exempt illegal actions from CEQA review; and
  - Prohibit "document dumping."
- Support categorical exclusions for multimodal transit projects and for safety improvements on roads and highways.

## **Environment**

- Encourage efforts to limit impacts to the climate, air quality, and habitats in a manner that promotes improved quality of living and equitable outcomes for residents of Riverside County, provided that these efforts are sufficiently funded and do not negatively impact the mission of RCTC.

### *Climate Action and Air Quality*

- Support a greater share of state greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction funds under the Cap-and Invest program toward transportation investments in Riverside County to address the transportation sector's share of GHG emissions.
- Ensure criteria for defining disadvantaged communities and environmental justice areas of concern accurately represent Riverside County and enable the region to compete for funding.
- Oppose efforts to place new environmental criteria (such as GHG reduction or vehicle miles traveled reduction) on transportation projects and programs without commensurate funding for alternatives or

flexibility for mitigation.

- Oppose legislative proposals or implementation measures (programming, funding, environmental review, etc.) associated with the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), Caltrans System Investment Strategy (CSIS), Executive Order N-19-19, Executive Order N-79-20, AB 32 Nunez (Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006), SB 375 Steinberg (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008), SB 743 Steinberg (Chapter 386, Statutes of 2013), SB 32 Pavley (Chapter 249, Statutes of 2016), AB 1279 Muratsuchi (Chapter 337, Statutes of 2022), or other climate action goals that hinder a just transition to multimodal transportation systems in Riverside County.
- Support alternative metrics to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) that balance consideration of environmental impacts with the population growth and social and economic needs of regions, such as improved transportation mobility.
- Support efforts that allow transportation agencies to receive credit for VMT-reducing projects that have been recently delivered or are included in future delivery plans.
- Oppose efforts that prevent or discourage the funding or development of transportation projects solely based on census tract screening tools in and around the project location, particularly if use of the screening tool for this purpose disregards external impacts that contribute to the indicators measured.
- Oppose legislation to authorize a multicounty revenue measure for environmental programs if the measure is not required to: (1) provide equitable funding to Riverside County, and (2) be developed through formal consultation with the Commission before and after passage, and (3) involve the Commission in expenditure of funds within Riverside County related to transportation projects, programs, and services; or if such a measure would negatively impact the Commission's ability to achieve voter approval of local transportation revenue.

#### *Habitat Conservation*

- Support efforts or initiatives that expedite the approval of Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Community Conservation Plans, or Special Area Management Plans, or support the implementation of existing plans.
- Support funding for projects and programs that promote wildlife connectivity, if resources are not redirected from other transportation funding programs.
- Oppose legislation that limits the streamlining benefit of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan or Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan by impugning or duplicating requirements for analysis and remediation of impacts.

#### **Projects and Programs**

- Support programs and policies that advance transportation projects in Riverside County.
- Oppose policies that inhibit the efficient, timely delivery of such projects.
- Support increased funding for Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) programs, which provide life-saving and cost-effective roadside assistance to motorists. Oppose legislation and rulemakings that inhibit the cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency of FSP programs.

#### **Alternatives to Driving**

- Support the continued development of a multimodal transit system in Riverside County that promotes equitable access through geographic reach and service frequency, commuter mobility choice, and environmental sustainability, as well as maximizes regional competitiveness for state and federal funding.
- Support integration of public transportation systems in southern California.

#### *Ridesharing*

- Support incentives to employers that enhance or create transit reimbursement or ridesharing programs.

- Oppose new mandates on employers or transportation agencies that would result in disruption of the Commission's ridesharing program.
- Support programs and policies that invest in and foster new technologies that promote ridesharing, traffic information, and commuter assistance.
- Support regional cooperation toward establishing transportation data standards and technological integrations.
- Support rideshare and vanpool program eligibility for state and federal transit funding, such as the Transportation Development Act.

#### *Active Transportation*

- Support maximum regional control of project selection for funding of active transportation projects.
- Support policies and programs that recognize when active transportation improvements are incorporated into other modal projects.

#### *Transit*

- Support all transit operators in Riverside County with legislative concerns impacting the operators' funding and operations.
- Support efforts to provide flexibility of funding between capital and operating budgets from state and federal programs for transit agencies.
- Support efforts to reevaluate transit performance measures in state and federal law.
- Support policies and funding programs that promote the establishment or expansion of express bus service that utilizes the Riverside Express Lanes.
- Support incentives for transit agencies that utilize alternative fuels and/or zero-emission buses.
- Support additional funding for specialized transit programs within state and federal programs.
- Support funding for micro-transit programs, as well as efforts to classify these programs as transit operations/transit operators within state and federal programs.
- Support funding and flexibility for transit operators to meet zero-emission fleet transition requirements.
- Support additional funding for transit rider and operator safety and security.
- Oppose unfunded mandates that would negatively impact the operating budgets of transit agencies.

#### *Passenger Rail*

- Support inclusion and prioritization of Coachella Valley Rail service in the California State Rail Plan, Federal Corridor ID Program, and other state and federal plans and program pipelines.
- Support legislation to better enable the Coachella Valley Rail service to become part of California's intercity rail network, such as legislation to allow intercity rail joint powers authorities to expand their service areas.
- Support efforts to secure state and federal funding for the Coachella Valley Rail project and streamline its project delivery.
- Support LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency and Metrolink with legislative and regulatory concerns impacting funding and operations.
- Support efforts to provide an equitable share of funding to west coast intercity rail systems as compared to the Northeast Corridor.
- Support Metrolink's policy and funding needs with regards to implementation of positive train control and other rail safety systems.
- Support Metrolink's SCORE implementation and encourage SCORE investments in Riverside County.
- Support efforts to prioritize high-speed rail funding for connectivity improvements to existing transit systems and infrastructure in California's urban areas. Ensure that funding is equitably distributed to southern California and maximize opportunities for regional rail improvements in Riverside County. In particular,

support all efforts to ensure that funding is provided as soon as possible to projects included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and the Commission.

- Ensure that the Commission's rights and interests in passenger rail in southern California are properly respected in state, federal, and regional plans and policies.
- Support efforts for improved enforcement of the Commission's rights and interests in passenger rail in southern California with host railroads. This includes protecting the Commission-negotiated rights of passengers to on-time passenger rail service that avoid excessive freight train delays.
- Support additional funding for safety and security operations at passenger rail stations in Riverside County.

#### *Teleworking/Remote Working*

- Engage in policy discussions that utilize teleworking as a method to reduce traffic congestion and improve local economic and public health by permanently increasing the number of Riverside County residents who telecommute or work remotely.

#### **Tolling and Managed Lanes**

- Support legislation that ensures the full and accurate capture of toll revenues, to protect the Commission's debt and congestion management obligations.
- Support legislation that authorizes toll agencies to pilot or deploy new technology to improve toll operations and mobility.
- Support legislation and policies that strengthen existing statutory authority for connecting toll segments to be implemented in an adjacent county with approvals by both authorized counties.
- Engage in legislation regarding privacy laws to ensure an appropriate balance between customer privacy, public safety, financial obligations, and practical operations is reasonably met.
- Oppose legislation increasing the type and/or number of vehicles subject to free or reduced toll rates, to protect the Commission's debt and congestion management obligations, and to reduce operational costs and complexity.
- Oppose policies which would dictate how tolling policy and rates are implemented on the Commission's tolled facilities.
- Engage in policy discussions that may involve legislation or regulatory efforts that add statutory barriers to expanding the use of tolling.
- Oppose policies that would dictate, limit use of, or create onerous requirements for utilizing toll revenue.
- Engage in legislation and monitor administrative policies relating to interoperability of business practices of tolled facilities statewide, regionally, and nationally, in order to ensure technical feasibility, efficient and effective operations, cost reasonableness, and customer satisfaction.
- Support increased enforcement of managed lanes for improved travel time reliability and effective operation of express bus service.
- Support policies that recognize the role of pricing and managed lanes as an integral part of multi-modal corridor mobility and achieving environmental goals.
- Support initiatives and research that demonstrate the air quality improvements, VMT reduction, and economic benefits from the use of toll and managed lanes.

#### **Goods Movement**

- Policies should recognize the impact of goods movement from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the U.S.-Mexico border on Riverside County.
- Support state and federal legislative action to continue dedicated funding for goods movement projects, inasmuch as the funding source:

- Has a nexus to the user;
- Does not reduce funding to existing highway and transit programs;
- Provides funding to California, and southern California in particular, commensurate with this region and state's significance to interstate goods movement; and
- Can be spent on grade separation projects.
- Advocate for accurate representation of Riverside County in the National Highway Freight Network or other national or statewide freight route designations.
- Advocate for freight funding from state and federal sources to be distributed based on a regional consensus, in consultation with state and federal agency's freight plans.
- Oppose increasing the capacity or intensity of freight movement in and near Riverside County without commensurate mitigation of impacts.
- Support legislation to ensure that the Commission is eligible to seek federal goods movement and freight program discretionary grant funding.
- Oppose policies that restrict the ability to deliver goods movement enhancements due to application of SB 743 or other VMT reduction or mitigation requirements.