

RTP 2040

Chapter 4: Snapshot of the Existing Transportation Network and System Needs



This chapter provides a snapshot of the facilities that make up the San Benito region's multi-modal transportation network and discusses the existing system needs.

Chapter 4 Snapshot of the Existing Transportation Network and System Needs

The strength of the San Benito region's multi-modal transportation network lies in its vast network of roads, highways, bus routes, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and airports. This chapter provides a snapshot of the existing facilities that make up San Benito County's multi-modal transportation network. Cities, counties, regional agencies, transit agencies, and the State of California have ownership and operating responsibility for the various parts of the system.

This chapter also discusses the San Benito region's financial and system needs for all existing transportation modes. Ultimately, those needs reflect the priorities of the region's residents, businesses, and institutions over the next 22-years. The needs assessment was prepared in a way that would support the future infrastructure improvements recommended in Chapter 6: Investments in our Transportation Future.



Over the next 22-years, the San Benito Regional Transportation Plan identifies a transportation system need of over \$1.8 billion in projects across all modes, as illustrated in Figure 4-1 (Appendix A).

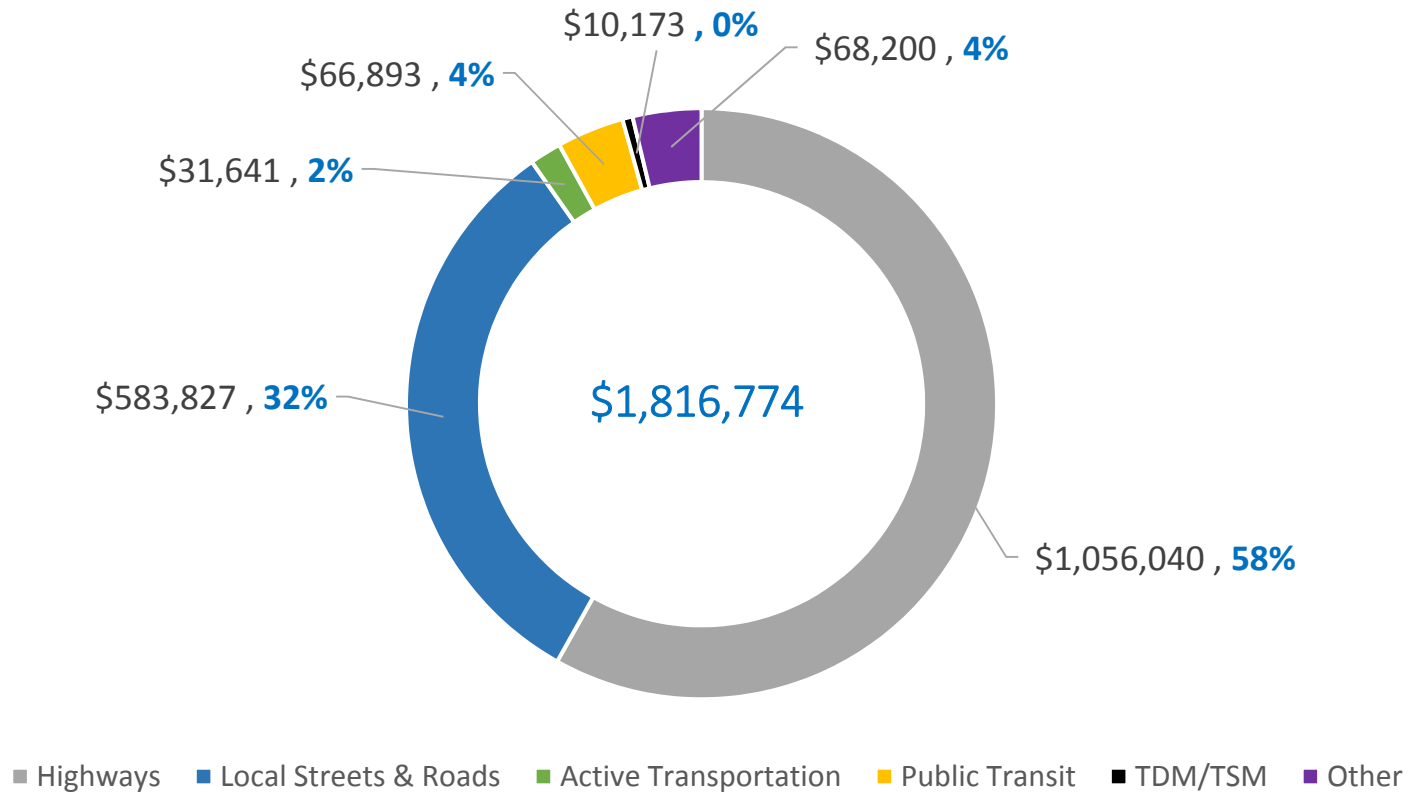


Figure 4-1, 22-Year Transportation Project Costs by Mode (000s)

Source: Council of San Benito County Governments

A summary of San Benito region's existing transportation network and system needs, by mode, are identified in the following section.

FEDERAL AND STATE HIGHWAYS

The San Benito region includes several highways that connect people between several counties, including: Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and Merced, as well as outside the region. The Federal U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service maintain a combined 34.47 centerline miles within the County.¹ The State of California's highway system extends over 89.43 maintained miles.²

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) maintains one federal and four state highways, which include routes U.S. 101, SR 25, SR 129, SR 146, and SR 156. With the exception of U.S. 101, the highways in San Benito County are primarily two-lane conventional highways. Caltrans also implements highway maintenance and safety projects.

While safety is a top priority for Caltrans, congestion on the highway system is a longstanding issue in the State. In 2013, the California Department of Transportation conducted a National Household Travel Survey to obtain insight on the top transportation concerns of California residents. The price of travel was the primary concern with 29% of the participants. This is not surprising, as in most cases, transportation costs are typically the second or third largest expense in a family budget.



Figure 4-2: California State Highway System

Source: California Department of Transportation

¹ California Public Road Data 2015

² California Public Road Data 2015

The second chief concern of those surveyed, 20%, was congestion on the highway system.³ Those sentiments were echoed by San Benito residents in a survey conducted by the Council of Governments in 2015. The Council of Governments conducted a bilingual transportation telephone survey of San Benito County voters. The purpose of the survey was to obtain insight on the transportation priorities of the community and to obtain insight on a transportation sales tax proposal, Measure P, for the November 2016 election.

Of those surveyed, over 60% expressed widening SR 25 as a top priority for the region. This indicates that highway congestion remains a top concern for local residents traveling north of the County.

Measure P, the half-cent sales tax to fund local streets and road maintenance, capital projects and funding for the widening of Highway 25 project, fell short of the required two-thirds vote. The proposed levy would have brought in about \$240 billion over 30 years to the San Benito region. As a result, funding inadequacies continue to be a challenge facing the San Benito highway system. These financial shortfalls have led to a backlog of capacity, maintenance, operations and rehabilitation projects. Highway projects can be expensive, especially compared to the region's share of federal, state, and local funds. The Council of Governments will be reassessing a transportation sales tax proposal in 2018. *The overall funding need for the San Benito regional highway system exceeds \$1 billion over the next 22-years.*

A summary of San Benito's existing highway investments, by project, are discussed in the following section.

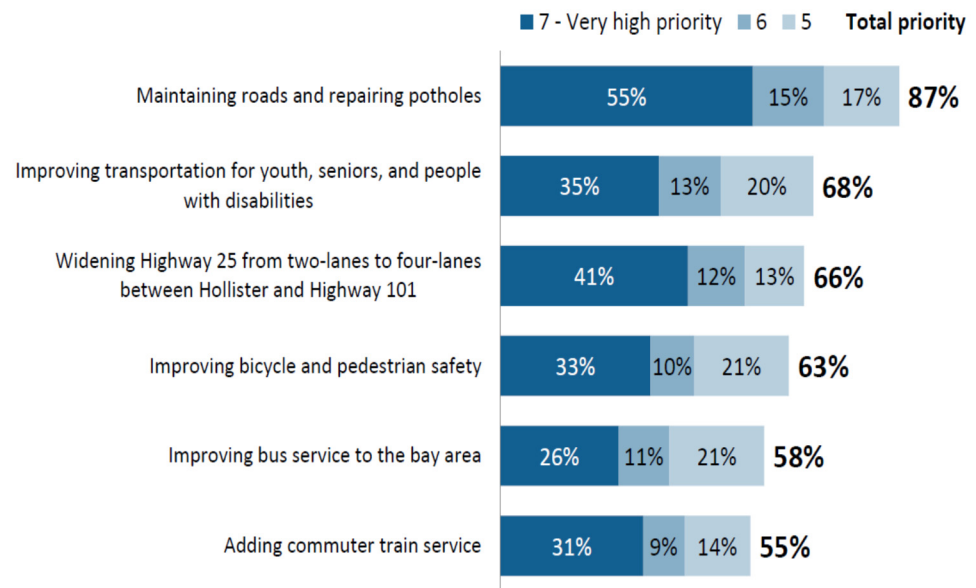


Figure 4-3: Transportation Telephone Survey of San Benito County Voters
Source: EMC Research, 2016

³ 2040 California Transportation Plan

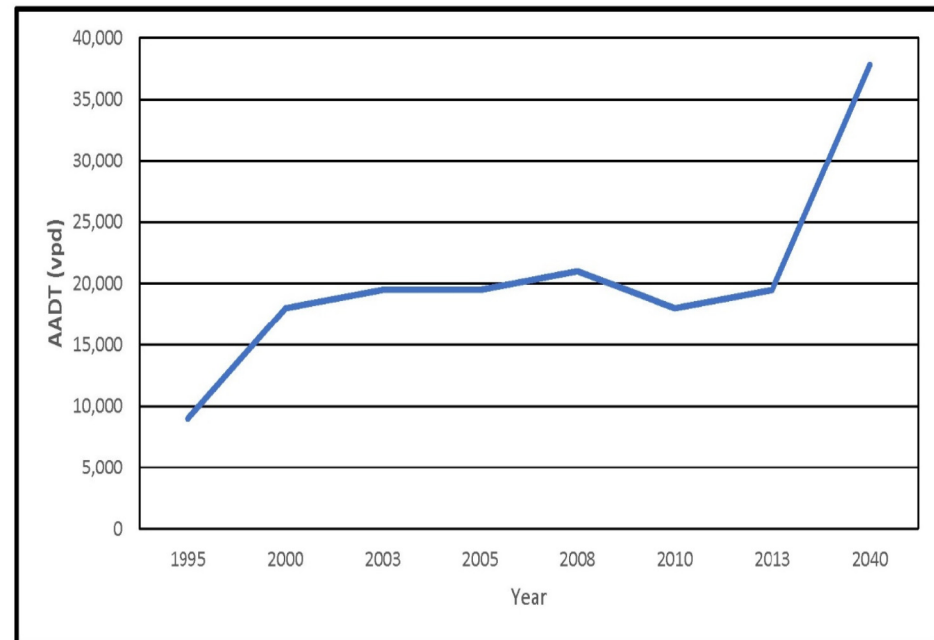
State Route 25

State Route (SR) 25 traverses the entire length of San Benito County for the south at the junction of SR 198 in Monterey County, north through Paicines, Tres Pinos, and Hollister to the northern county boundary near Gilroy, where it connects to U.S. 101. This primarily minor rural route functions as a two-lane conventional highway, with the exception of a short section in Hollister where there are three miles consisting of four and six lanes with access control. There are two creek crossings, two railroad crossings, and numerous local road and private driveway intersections.

SR 25 is a primary commuter route between Hollister to points north. Between 1998 and 2003, SR 25 experienced a high number of traffic accidents and fatalities along the corridor. Anecdotal evidence indicates that heavy peak-period traffic volumes impact parallel County roads including Frazer Lake Road.

Average daily traffic at the San Benito/Santa Clara County Line has more than doubled since the mid-1990's due to rapid population growth and commute trips, and is expected to double again by 2040.

Historical trends in daily two-way traffic volumes on SR 25 at the San Benito/Santa Clara County line are shown in Figure 4-4. Daily traffic volumes at this location have increased from 9,000 vehicles per day (vpd) in the mid-1990's to 19,500 vpd in 2013. By 2040, the volumes are forecast to increase to 37,800 vpd.⁴



Note: AADT – Annual Average Daily Traffic; vpd – vehicles per day

Source: Caltrans Traffic Data (<http://traffic-counts.dot.ca.gov/>); and Draft SR 25 Transportation Concept Report, dated 2016

Figure 4-4: Historical Daily 2-Way Traffic Volumes on SR 25 at County Line

⁴ Highway 25 Widening Design Alternatives Analysis Study, 2016

When traffic volumes exceed the capacity of a two-lane roadway, 100 percent of time is spent following other vehicles and average travel speeds of less than 30 mph.⁵ Commercial trucks and public transit vehicles travel through the area on SR 25 and are also subject to delays due to the congestion.

According to the latest Caltrans traffic data from 2014, truck traffic makes up about 6.5 percent of the total traffic on SR 25 near the US 101 junction. During peak commute hours, traffic becomes heavy, resulting in congestion. Traffic is often delayed by vehicles turning into and/or out of the numerous driveways and local roads, affecting the flow of the faster-moving vehicles. Conflicts between faster-moving vehicles and slower moving agricultural traffic occur during off-peak traffic hours. This segment of SR 25 is a conventional highway, so access to driveways is not limited. Between San Felipe Road and US 101 there are approximately 48 private driveways and 11 local road intersections along the SR 25 corridor. Several intersections do not currently have left-turn channelization lanes.



Figure 4-5 Highway 25 in San Benito County

Source: Council of San Benito County Governments

Over the last decade, the Council of Governments in coordination with Caltrans and various local government agencies, have implemented a series of projects, identified below, that address some of the needs of travelers using SR 25.

- **Highway 25 Bypass - Constructed**

The Measure A Authority, a 1988 transportation sales tax measure, funded by the Council of Governments constructed the SR 25 Hollister Bypass, which opened to the public in February of 2009. The Bypass is a six and four-lane urban arterial with bicycle lanes that begins at the intersection of SR 25 at Sunnyslope Road and extends north intersecting East Park Street, Hillcrest Road,

⁵ Highway 25 Widening Design Alternatives Analysis Study, 2016

Meridian Street, and Santa Ana Road. The new facility continues north and then west to connect to San Felipe Road and SR 25. The new route is parallel to and to the east of Downtown Hollister.

In 2014, the Council of Governments worked in partnership with Caltrans to designate the Bypass as the official SR 25. The existing SR 25 that runs through Downtown Hollister was relinquished and is now a city owned street. The transfer of the Bypass to the State was made in May 2014.

- **Highway 25 Safety and Operational Enhancements Project – Constructed**

In 2010, the Council of Governments in partnership with Caltrans completed construction on SR 25 Safety and Operational Enhancements Project. The purpose of the SR 25 Safety and Operational Enhancements Project was to reduce the potential for cross centerline collisions by constructing a median barrier and consolidating private driveways. This project is located on SR 25 between San Felipe Road and Shore Road in San Benito County.

U.S. Highway 101

U.S. 101 passes through the northwestern portion of San Benito County for 7.5 miles and serves primarily interregional traffic. It is the main north/south route that Caltrans classified as a principal arterial and includes it as part of the Interregional Route System. San Benito County has designated the route as a Scenic Highway from the Monterey County line to SR 156, and is eligible for inclusion in the California Scenic Highway Program.

U.S. 101 in San Benito County starts as a four-lane expressway at the Monterey/San Benito County Line and changes to a four-lane freeway 1.6 miles north. The route continues as a four lane freeway to the Pajaro River Bridge at the San Benito/Santa Clara County Line. State Routes 156 and 129 intersect U.S. 101 in San Benito County. Caltrans has identified a route concept for U.S. 101 that is a six-lane freeway configuration, which is currently unfunded.

In 2013, the location in the County with the highest *absolute* number of trucks was at the junction of U.S. 101 and Route 156 East, with 22,000 average daily trucks. This location also was the highest when measured by trucks as a percent of total vehicle Average Annual Daily Trucks (AADT), at 22%. The high truck volumes at this location are due to a combination of agriculture activities in Monterey County, including transportation between coolers and shippers, as well as proximity to the Bay Area for trade.

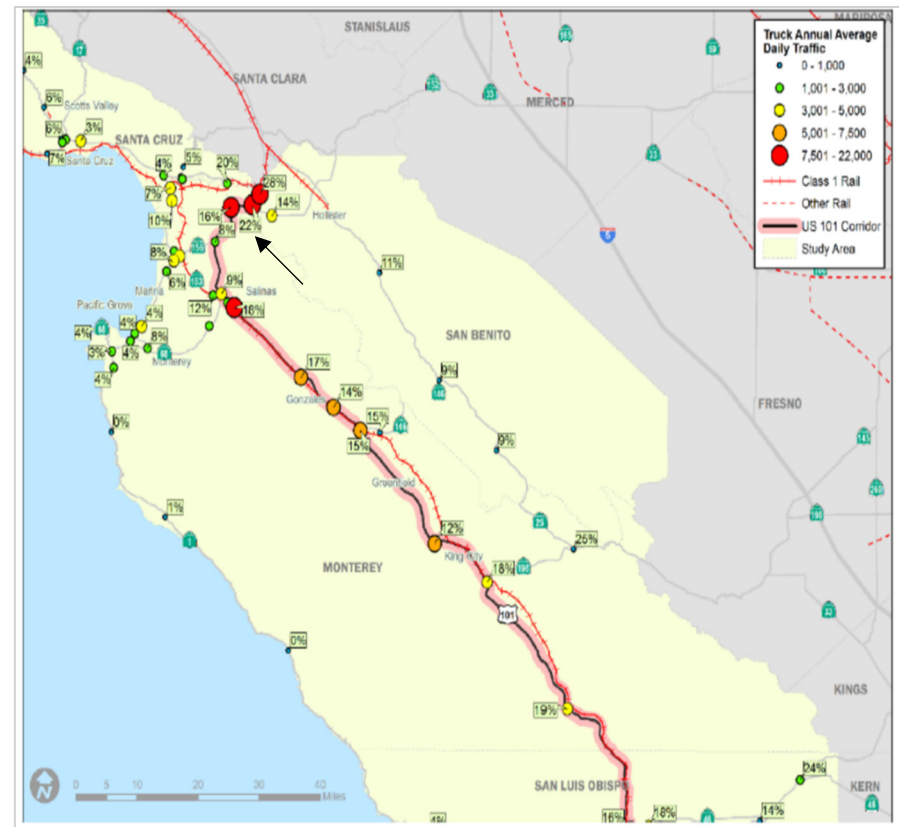


Figure 4-6 Truck Volumes and Percent Traffic that is Trucks on U.S. 101

Source: Caltrans data. Note: AADT stands for Average Annual Daily Traffic.

State Route 156

State Route 156 traverses northern San Benito County, from U.S. 101 (west of San Juan Bautista) through San Juan Bautista and Hollister to the San Benito/Santa Clara county line where it connects with SR 152. SR 156 is a four-lane expressway from U.S. 101 to San Juan Bautista, where it narrows into a conventional two-lane rural highway. In the Hollister area, SR 156 becomes a two-lane expressway, as it bypasses Hollister and maintains that configuration to the San Benito/Santa Clara County line. Near Hollister, the SR 156 Bypass continues north of the city limits.



Figure 4-7: SR 156 in San Benito County

Source: Benitolink

The corridor serves interregional traffic traveling east/west, including a substantial number of trucks during the week and recreational traffic between the Central Valley, Monterey Bay, and San Francisco Bay Area on the weekend. Caltrans classifies SR 156 as a rural minor arterial and includes it as part of the Interregional Road System and is a Focus Route. As such, the route has a high priority for completion to facility standards in order to handle higher volumes of interregional trip movements and connect all urban areas, goods movement gateways, and rural areas. It is also designated as a Federal Aid Primary Route and is part of the Freeway and Expressway System, although a large portion of the route is a conventional highway.

SR 156 is also a major corridor for residents of Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and San Benito County traveling to Monterey and Santa Clara Counties. While portions of the facility have been upgraded to handle increased demand, the segment between San Juan Bautista and Hollister remains a two-lane facility. With conflicts between commuters and agricultural operations, improving safety on this highway segment is a priority for Caltrans and San Benito policy makers.

According to the Caltrans Traffic and Vehicle Data Systems Unit and the 2008 traffic data, generally, for a two-way highway, truck traffic averages 13 to 15 percent of the total traffic volume. For this project, the average daily truck traffic is approximately 9.7 percent, with truck traffic averaging approximately 9 percent during peak-hour traffic between The Alameda (post mile 3.2) and Union Road (post mile 7.25).

Route capacity is measured in both traffic volume and quality of traffic flow. The average annual daily traffic count is the average number of vehicles that pass a given point within a 24-hour period. The Design Hourly Volume is defined as the one-hour vehicular volume in both directions of travel in the design year selected for highway design, which is usually 20 years following construction. Level of Service ranges from A to F, with a Level of Service A indicating free-flowing traffic and a Level of Service F indicating gridlock and stop-and-go conditions.

The existing two-lane conventional highway within the project limits is designed to handle a maximum of 20,000 vehicles each day. According to the Caltrans Historical Traffic Data, traffic volumes for the segment of State Route 156 between The Alameda and Union Road has increased on an average from 14,000 vehicles in the year 1992, to 20,300 vehicles in the year 2000, to its current average volume of 26,200 vehicles. Figure 4-8 shows the average annual daily traffic counts, the Design Hourly Volume, and Level of Service for this segment of the project for the year 2006. The estimated Traffic and Level of Service with, and without the project, are also shown for the years 2014 and 2034 (future conditions).

Caltrans' future route concept for SR 156 is a four-lane access-controlled conventional highway from The Alameda to Union Road (west of Hollister), and a two-lane access-controlled conventional highway from Union Road to the San Benito/Santa Clara County Line. Caltrans and the Council of Governments secured funding for the San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project and is currently in the final design and right-of-way phases to widen SR 156 from The Alameda to Union Road. Once constructed, the existing SR 156 will become a county road and will serve as access for residents living on the north side. A bicycle and pedestrian multi-use path is also proposed, connecting bicyclist traveling between Hollister and San Juan Bautista. SR 156 from the Monterey County line to the Santa Clara County line is eligible for inclusion in the California Scenic Highway Program.

Year	Design Hourly Volume	Average Annual Daily Traffic (number of Vehicles)	Level of Service
			Without Project
2006	2,400	26,200	E
2014	2,920	29,344	F
2034	4,221	37,531	F

Source: Caltrans Traffic Operations

Figure 4-8 Average Annual Daily Traffic and Level of Service with No Project

Source: San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project Final



State Route 129

As a two-lane conventional highway, SR 129 extends from Santa Cruz County into the northwestern portion of the County connecting to U.S. 101 approximately 2.6 miles from the Santa Cruz/San Benito County Line. It provides access from SR 1, in Santa Cruz County to U.S. 101 for truck traffic generated by food processing plants in the Watsonville area and a sand and gravel quarry in southeastern Santa Cruz County. The route also serves agricultural production areas used by farm equipment and slow-moving trucks carrying farm produce. SR 129 provides access to Santa Cruz and Monterey County beaches.

Truck traffic originating from Santa Cruz County on SR 129 impacts San Juan Highway and San Justo Road, both of which are narrow two lane roads ill-equipped to handle heavy loads and large vehicles. Agricultural-related businesses located on San Juan Highway are generating much of this truck traffic, which impact the county's roads as trucks move through the area toward SR 156. In addition, Anzar High School, which is also located on San Juan Highway, generates motor vehicle traffic in the area during school hours. The route concept for SR 129 is a two-lane conventional highway with passing lanes where appropriate. The highest percent of trucks on the corridor was at the junction of U.S. 101 and Route 129 in San Benito County where 27.8 percent of all traffic was a truck.

State Route 146

SR 146, in San Benito County is a two-lane conventional highway used primarily to provide access from SR 25 to Pinnacles National Park. Caltrans classifies this route as a minor arterial. San Benito County has designated the route as a local Scenic Highway and the corridor has been identified as eligible for inclusion in the California Scenic Highway Program. SR 146 is expected to accommodate anticipated growth through the long-term 2040 forecast without major capacity improvements. The route concept for SR 146 is to maintain the corridor as a two-lane conventional highway. Caltrans is in the process of relinquishing SR 146 to the National Park Service.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE ACT (STAA) TRUCK ROUTES

The highway system plays an integral part of the economy, providing households with access to jobs, education, markets and recreation activities and allowing business to conduct transactions. The federal and state highway systems are also central to the distribution of goods throughout the region.

Figure 4-9 illustrates the existing and proposed truck route network for the San Benito region. Trucks and commercial vehicles provide goods and essential services to residents every day.

Supporting Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) truck routes helps provide adequate access, limited service interruptions, and congestion alleviation that bolster State and local economies.

In addition to the highway system, there is an extensive network of local roads that are maintained by the County of San Benito, City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista, which are described in the following section.

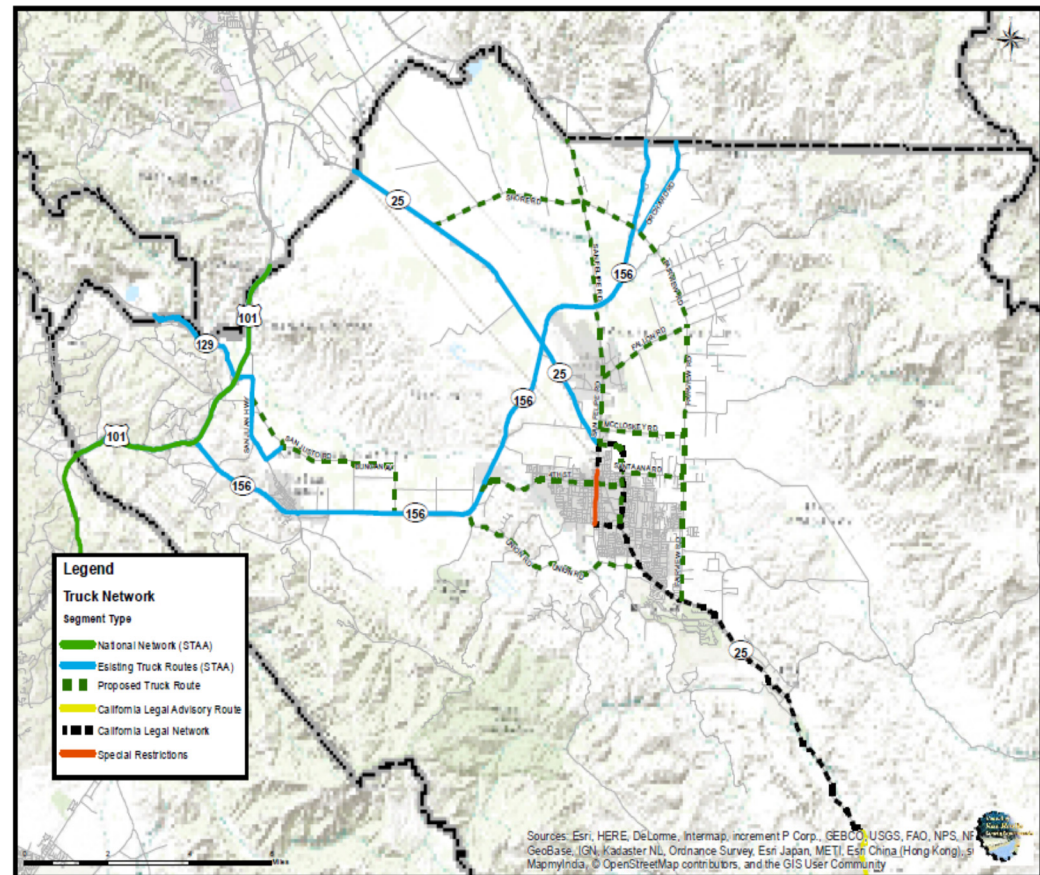


Figure 4-9: San Benito Existing and Proposed STAA Networks

Source: Council of Governments and California Department of Transportation

LOCAL STREETS AND ROADWAYS

Local roadways are the backbone of the San Benito region's economic well-being, they facilitate the movement of people and goods. The San Benito region's network includes numerous county roads and city streets. The local network of roads that are maintained by the County of San Benito, and the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista total 561.89 centerline miles Figure 4-10⁶.

San Benito local roads have seen an increase in traffic due to significant growth in the late 1990's. Traffic congestion on rural roads in northern San Benito County has created delays at rural intersections. Within Hollister, many local and collector streets are being used for through travel.

Particularly, as the capacity of regional highway system approaches, traffic sets into secondary rural roads that are not equipped or designed to accommodate high volumes of commuter traffic.

Progressively, local streets and roads are moving towards a 'Complete Streets' approach – focusing on the movement of people, including non-drivers of all ages and abilities, and the variety of travel modes they may use.

Local jurisdictions classify these facilities according to their function into one of following categories described below.

San Benito County	•454.53 miles
City of Hollister	•98.59 miles
San Juan Bautista	•8.77 miles

Figure 4-10 Local Roads by San Benito County Jurisdiction

Source: Caltrans, 2015 Public Road Data

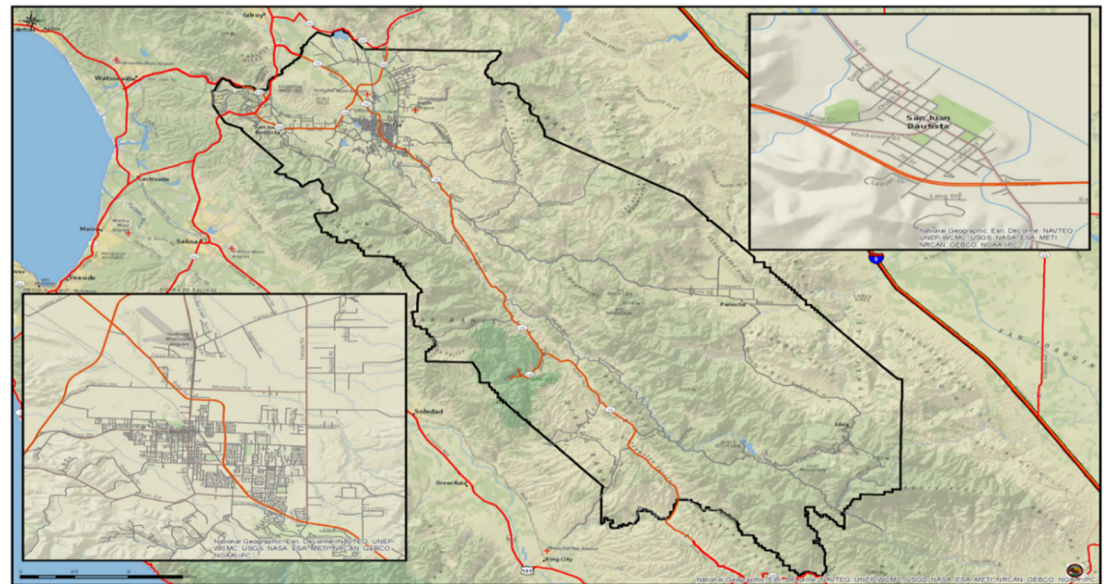


Figure 4-11 San Benito Regional Roadway Network

Source: San Benito County

⁶ Source: Caltrans, 2015 Public Road Data

Arterials

Within urbanized areas, arterials provide access to major activity centers and accommodate pedestrian and bicycle use. Arterials usually have relatively high traffic volumes and travel speeds. Arterial streets have limited parking opportunities or parking is prohibited altogether.

Collectors

The collector street and road system primarily provides for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle movement between sub-areas within residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhoods.

Collector streets and roads usually have moderate traffic volumes and travel speeds, consistent with a moderate level of pedestrian and bicycle use. Collector streets typically have limited on-street parking opportunities.

Local Roads

The local street and road system primarily provides for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle movement. Moderate to high traffic volumes and low travel speeds are consistent with the highest level of pedestrian and bicycle use. Main streets have ample on-street parking opportunities for commercial use.

Private Roads

Private roads provide access from public roads to properties otherwise unconnected to the public road system. Private roads are also found in multi-family or condominium development projects. Usually, local jurisdictions require new private roads to meet the same standards as public roads, but in many cases older facilities do not meet minimum public standards. Private roads usually have low traffic volumes and travel speeds, and pedestrian and bicycling facilities are often missing.



PAVEMENT CONDITIONS

San Benito region’s network of roads is crumbling under the weight of decades of underinvestment due to funding deficiencies.

In 2016, the California Statewide Needs Assessment Project surveyed California’s 58 counties and 482 cities on the condition of local streets and roads infrastructure. It collected data on the amount and type of funding used to support the needs of pavement, essential component needs, and bridges.

According to the California Statewide Needs Assessment Project, on a scale of zero (failed) to 100 (excellent), the statewide average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) has deteriorated from 66 to 65 (“at risk” category) between 2014 and 2016. Moreover, 52 of 58 counties are either at risk or have “poor” pavements.

As shown in Figure 4-12, the San Benito region ranked one of seven counties in the State of California to have an average pavement condition of 46, significantly worse than the statewide average.⁷

The San Benito region has a combined pavement maintenance need of over \$350 million. Figure 4-13 illustrates San Benito’s financial need when compared to the needs of the rest of the State of California.

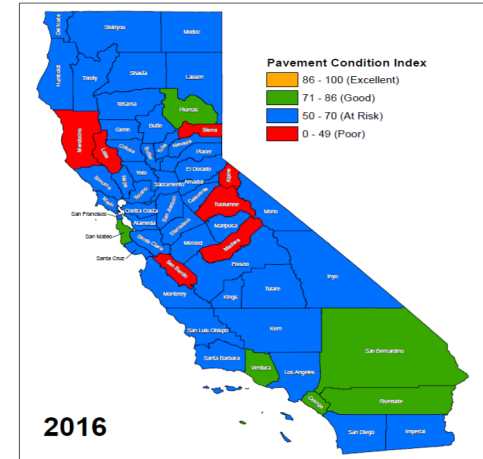


Figure 4-12 Pavement Conditions Index
Source: CA Statewide Needs Assessment, 2016

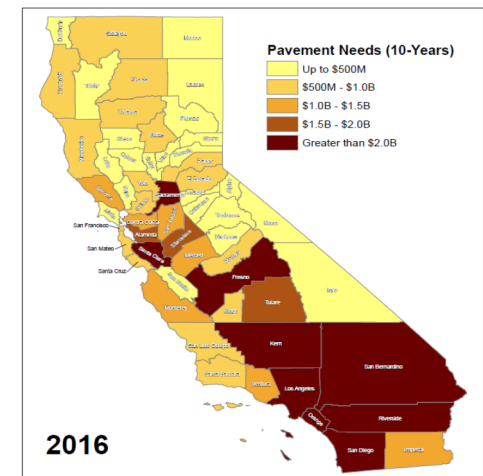


Figure 4-13 Pavement Conditions Index
Source: CA Statewide Needs Assessment, 2016

⁷ 2016 California Statewide Needs Assessment Project

The breakdown in maintenance need by San Benito jurisdiction is illustrated in Figure 4-14. The City of San Juan Bautista's maintenance needs totals \$2.1 million over the next 22-years (2018 through 2040) and are fully funded as discussed in the next chapter. The maintenance needs for the County of San Benito jurisdiction totals \$221 million over the same 22-year timeframe. The County's overall maintenance need for the years 2017 through 2041 exceeds \$454 million.⁸ The City of Hollister's maintenance need exceeds \$126 million (2018 through 2040). The City of Hollister's overall maintenance need for the years 2016 through 2040 exceed \$138 million.

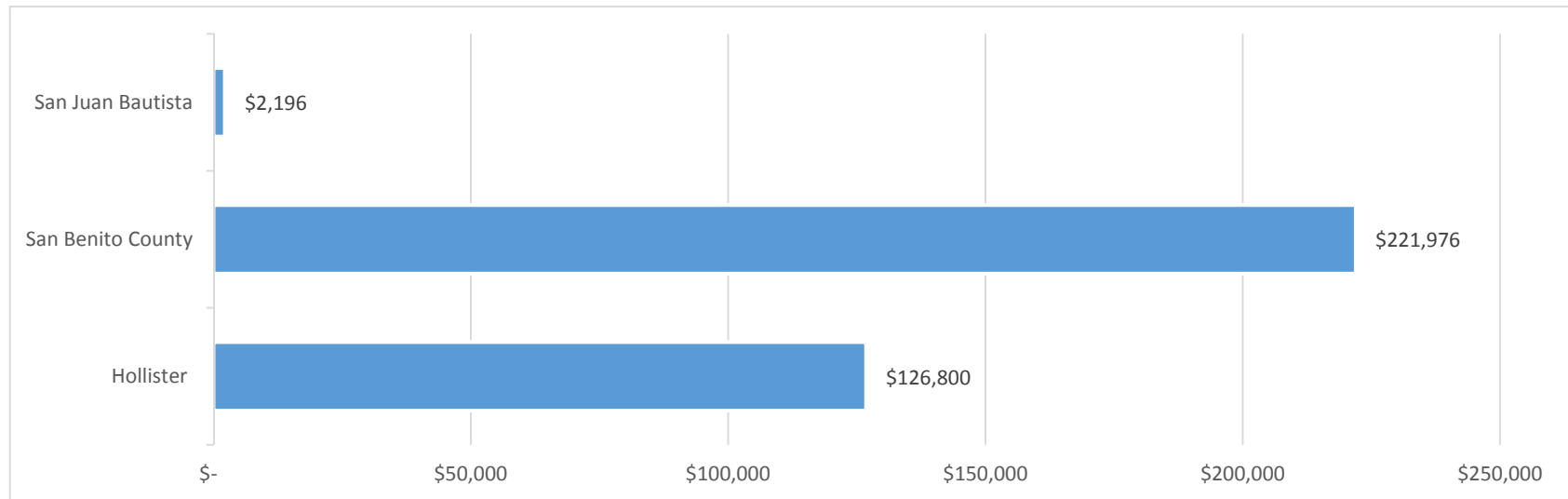


Figure 4-14, 22-Year Pavement Maintenance Needs (000s)

Source: City of Hollister, City of San Juan Bautista and County of San Benito

The shortage of funding in the County and City of Hollister has significantly impacted the ability to provide adequate maintenance to the existing roadway system, which also impacts the overall multi-modal transportation system. The Regional Transportation Plan's approach to addressing the San Benito region's local street and road maintenance needs are address in Chapter 6: Investments in Our Transportation Future.

⁸ San Benito County Pavement Management System Update, August 2016

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Active transportation is any self-propelled, human-powered mode of transportation, such as walking or bicycling.

PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

The benefits of Active Transportation have significant co-benefits for health. Projects such as bikeways or streetscape features encourage public health by developing active communities, resulting in lower healthcare costs. More recently the understanding of the relationship of transportation and health has been expanding to include a much broader range of community needs. One fundamental example is the way in which transportation can encourage physical activity, such as walking and biking, often referred to as active transportation. There is a demonstrated relationship between increased physical activity and a wide range of health benefits. Especially, considering that on a national, state and local level, people are leading increasingly sedentary lives.

According to the 2011-2012 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), only 18.2% of children in San Benito County age 5-17 reported engaging in regular physical activity in the last week (with a State rate of 20.8%) and 25.3% of adults engaged in regular walking in the past week (with a State rate of 33.3%). Lack of physical activity among young people, adults, and seniors is an increasing problem from a public health perspective. The 2011-2012 CHIS found that 57.9% of children in San Benito County age 12-17 were overweight or obese (with a State rate of 32.4%) and 41.2% of adults are obese (with a State rate of 24.8%). The survey also found that 29.2% of adults reported having fair to poor health (with a State rate of 19.4%), 17.5% have been diagnosed with diabetes (with a State rate of 8.4%), and 32.3% have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (with a State rate of 27.3%). Over the years, the Council of Governments has made strides to make active transportation a fundamental part of the overall transportation system in San Benito County.



Figure 4-15, Healthy San Benito Initiative Report Priority Outcomes, 2014

Source: San Benito County Health & Human Services Agency

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Improving transportation infrastructure in ways that encourages walking and cycling is one of several effective ways to improve physical activity, decrease traffic collisions, and improve one's health status. But, transportation planning also has a tremendous impact on community health, safety, and neighborhood cohesion. For instance, health-focused transportation plans can help reduce the rate of injuries and fatalities from collisions. Some research suggests that there is a multiplier effect: when streets are designed to safely accommodate walking and biking, more people do so, and as more people walk and bike the rate of collisions actually goes down as pedestrians and bicyclists become more visible to motorists.

In addition, more people out walking and biking in a neighborhood has an important public safety benefit, as it means there are more “eyes on the street” to deter criminal activity. Taking this a step further, studies have shown that people who live in neighborhoods with less traffic and higher rates of walking, bicycling, and transit use know more of their neighbors, visit their neighbor's homes more often, and are less fearful of their neighbors. When streets are inhospitable to pedestrians and bicyclists, residents don't feel safe walking or biking to nearby transit and their ability to access regional educational and employment opportunities is hampered. In short, improving traffic safety results in better public health beyond simply reduced injuries and fatalities.

In May 2009, the Council of Governments adopted the San Benito County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan. The Plan provides a blueprint for making active transportation an integral part of the daily life in the San Benito region. The Plan proposes 140.16 miles of designated trails, lanes, and routes that can be used to conveniently access major employers, shopping centers, and schools throughout the San Benito region. The goals of the Bikeway and Pedestrian Plan are consistent with the system goals of the Regional Transportation Plan.

The San Benito region is also making local strides to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities in all roadway projects, when feasible. *The overall funding need for the San Benito regional bicycle and pedestrian system exceeds \$31 million over the next 22-years.*

The San Benito County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan is significantly important when nearly 33% of the San Benito Countywide population is under the age of 18 and generally would not have access to a vehicle for personal use.⁹

Class I Bicycle Lanes	• 2.29 miles
Class II Bicycle Lanes	• 15.92 miles
Class III Bicycle Lanes	• 0.37 miles

Figure 4-16 Bicycle Lanes in San Benito County

Source: San Benito Bikeway & Pedestrian Master Plan

⁹ City of Hollister Downtown Strategic Plan, 2007

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) also recently, in 2017, developed the first statewide policy-plan to support Active Transportation travel by bicyclists and pedestrians through objectives, strategies, and actions. This direction continues support for the recent trend of increasing bicycle and pedestrian travel in the state and strengthens the connection between transportation, environmental sustainability, and public health.

BICYCLING FACILITIES

Like many rural communities throughout the United States the San Benito region is experiencing resurgence in bicycling as a means of transportation. The bicycle is a low-cost and effective means of transportation that is quiet, non-polluting, energy-efficient, versatile, healthy, and fun. Bicycles offer low-cost mobility to the non-driving public and offer recreational activity for people of all ages. Recent national and local surveys find that more people are willing to bicycle more frequently if better facilities are available.

As illustrated in Figure 4-16, the bicycle network in the San Benito region is modest and consists of 13.21 miles. There are approximately 2 miles of Class I bike lanes and 15 miles of Class II. Existing Class I bike lanes often parallel arterial roadways. Existing Class II bike lanes are on urban roadways, often on arterial streets. There are no existing Class IV bike routes in the region. Figure 4-17 illustrates examples of the primary bike lane classifications. Figure 4-18 depicts the current and proposed bicycle lanes.

Progresses is being made at the local level to incorporate active transportation supportive facilities in a proactive manner as opposed to reactive. As development occurs, future bicycle connections are being incorporated as part of roadway network in an effort to integrate Complete Street concepts. The Complete Streets movement aims to develop integrated, connected networks of streets that are safe and accessible for all people, regardless of age, ability, income, ethnicity, or chosen mode of travel. Complete Streets makes active transportation, such as walking and bicycling convenient and economically viable as well as provide increased access to employment centers, commerce, and educational institutions.

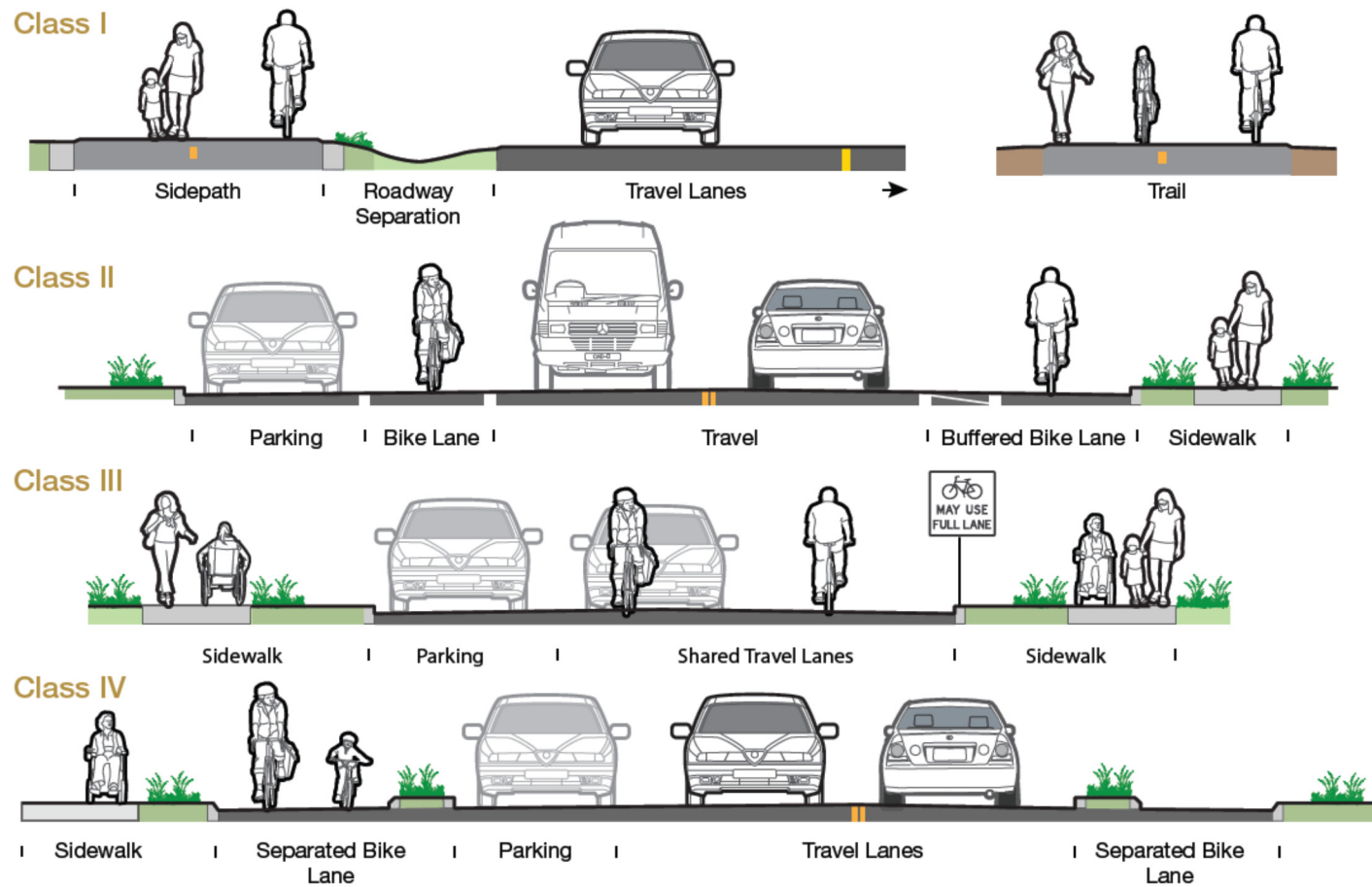


Figure 4-17 Caltrans Bicycle Facility Classifications
 Source: California Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2017

BICYCLE SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Education is an important element for increasing bicycling while also improving safety. There is a need for proper education of both youth and adult bicyclists and motorists.

San Benito County Safe Routes to School efforts aim to improve the health of kids and the community by making walking and bicycling to and from school safer, easier, and more enjoyable. Safe Routes to Schools uses education and incentives to encourage walking or riding a bicycle to and from school.

The Council of Governments has made great strides to encourage walking and bicycling within the San Benito region. Specifically, by implementing various Safe Routes to School focus programs and projects, including:

- Suggested Safe Routes to School Brochures - Bilingual handouts for various schools in Hollister that outline the best suggested routes to and from school.
- Safe Routes to Schools Program –Implementation Plan on improving facilities and encouraging walking and bicycling at R.O. Hardin and Calaveras Schools in Hollister
- Bike-to-School Day - Free breakfast, peer support, and prizes. By encouraging students to safely ride to and from school, the event strives to reduce childhood obesity, traffic at school sites, and greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage long term bicycling habits.
- Helmet Fitting Program - The Council of Governments partners with the Safe Kids Coalition of San Benito County to distribute free helmets and educate children of all ages on the importance of wearing a helmet correctly, and at all times, while riding a bicycle, skateboard or scooter.
- The Council of Governments also serves as a member of the Safe Kids Coalition of San Benito County, whose mission is to prevent accidental death and injury to children ages 18 years and under, accomplished through the collaborative efforts of community partners.



Figure 4-19, COG Staff as Members of the Safe Kids Coalition Conducting Helmet Fittings

Source: Council of Governments

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Complete Streets recognize that people who travel by foot are legitimate users of the transportation system and equally deserving of safe facilities to accommodate their travel. Sidewalks can minimize the dangers of weather conditions, tripping hazards, and public health concerns. Sidewalks elevate the individual from storm and stagnant waters along roadways that can collect debris or bacteria. There are numerous places within the San Benito region where sidewalks do not exist or end abruptly, resulting in a discontinuous network. Areas without walkways may force pedestrians to walk along the edge of the roadway or may cause pedestrians to cross at undesignated crossing locations.

Sidewalks are now required for new residential, commercial and industrial parks development. Priority locations for sidewalks were identified as part of the Council of Governments' Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Figure 4-20.

Encouraging active transportation, such as bicycling and walking, in turn, helps achieve healthy communities. These programs employ a powerful public health framework for creating healthier environments.

The Council of Governments, its local jurisdictions and partner agencies recognize that making the healthy choice the easy choice is a sure route to success in promoting healthier behavior.



Figure 4-20, Sidewalk Gaps, Hollister and San Juan Bautista

Source: 2009 San Benito County Bikeways and Pedestrian Master

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FUNDING STRATEGIES

Steps have also been taken towards improving residents' quality of life, which create a more sustainable environment by reducing traffic congestion, air pollution from vehicle exhaust emissions, noise, and energy consumption. The Council of Governments has also actively sought grant opportunities to meet the funding shortfall for the bikeway and pedestrian network. Past grants have included:

- Active Transportation Program grant application consisted of collaboration and support of the City of Hollister's application for construction of the West Gateway Project, which was awarded in 2017
- Community Based Transportation Planning Grant funded the San Benito County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan
- Bicycle Transportation Account and Safe Routes to School Grant funded the construction of the San Juan Highway Bike Lanes Project. These grant programs were consolidated into the Active Transportation Program (ATP)
- Monterey Bay Area Unified Air Pollution Control District's AB2766 Vehicle Emissions Reduction Grant Program funded the construction of the Southside Road Bike Lanes Project
- Silicon Valley Health Trust Grant funded the Safe Routes to School Implementation Plan for R.O. Hardin and Calaveras Schools

Identification of new strategies will play a vital role in moving the region towards a more cohesive multi-modal network.

PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM

San Benito County's transit system includes an extensive network of services and options providing a viable alternative to auto travel.

The San Benito County Local Transportation Authority was formed by a Joint Powers Agreement between the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista and the County of San Benito in 1990. The Authority is responsible for the administration and operation of public transportation services in the County provided by County Express and Specialized Transportation Services. *The overall funding need for the San Benito regional transit system exceeds \$66 million over the next 22-years.*

As an ongoing effort to coordinate public transportation services and resources in the San Benito region, AMBAG in partnership with the Authority and other regional transit agencies developed a comprehensive strategy for public transportation service.

The Monterey Bay Area Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan identifies the current transit needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited incomes, and outlines strategies for meeting these needs. The Coordinated Plan can be found on the AMBAG website, www.AMBAG.org.

The Plan supports transit as an essential service needed by many community members to maintain a minimum standard of living. It also recognizes the important role transit plays in improving our region's air quality, reducing traffic congestion, and improving the general quality of life for travelers who now face growing commutes.

Adequate transit service for older and disabled citizens and for coordinated social services transportation is an additional service goal which ties strongly to community access and quality of life issues. This specialized transportation service will expand over the life of the Plan to accommodate an anticipated significant increase in older age adults who continue to value mobility, but seek options to the automobile.



Figure 4-21 County Express Riders

Source: Council of San Benito County Governments

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Transit services provided by County Express and Specialized Transportation Services are vital to the mobility of the County's residents. These two public transit services allow dependent residents, such as seniors and youth, to make lifeline trips, such as: transportation to medical services, social services and education.

The Area Agency on Aging for San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties reported that in 2016 the population over the age of 60 in the San Benito region, increased by 20.5% since 2011. Notably, seniors 65+ are the fastest growing age group in California and the United States.

Of the people currently living in the San Benito region, up to 43% of the population may merit special transportation services because of their potential inability to drive due to age, disability, or income status.

Based on the U.S. Census estimates, of the total population in the region 8.2% has one or more disabilities, 10% of the population are seniors, and nearly 13% are considered low-income. Another transit dependent group are the youth demographic. In the San Benito region, one-third (33%) of its residents are under the age of 19, as illustrated in Figure 4-23.

Given this information, it is crucial to continue to operate a transit system that meets the needs of those who are most dependent on the systems as their primary mode of travel.



Figure 4-22 Clients of Specialized Transportation Services

Source: Council of San Benito County Governments

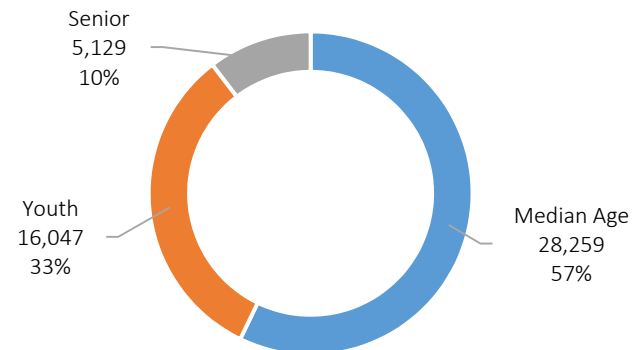


Figure 4-23 Age Groups in the San Benito Region

Source: US Census, 2010

OVERVIEW OF THE TRANSIT SYSTEM

County Express

The County Express system currently provides three fixed routes in the City of Hollister, complementary Americans with Disabilities Act Paratransit service, Intercounty service to Gilroy in Santa Clara County, and a general public Dial-A-Ride. As of August 2017, the County Express fleet included 20 vehicles. All vehicles are ADA compliant and equipped with wheelchair lifts/ramps and bicycle racks. The Local Transportation Authority contracts with a private operator for management, dispatchers, trainers, and drivers of its County Express transit service.

Fixed-Route

Fixed-Route service operates three Fixed Routes within the City of Hollister. These routes operate between 6:20 a.m. and 5:40 p.m. However, there is no Fixed Route service between 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Headways for each of the routes range from 40 to 50 minutes.

Dial-A-Ride

County Express transit system provides Dial-a-Ride service to parts of northern San Benito County, including Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and Tres Pinos, Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. where and when Fixed Route is not available, and on weekends 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Reservations for the Dial-A-Ride may be made up to 14 days in advance. Same-day service is available but is subject to availability and a convenience fee.

Paratransit

Complementary Americans with Disabilities Act Paratransit service is available for residents and visitors who are eligible for the service as determined by the Authority. The service is for individuals who are not able to access Fixed Route due to a physical or cognitive disability and have trips that begin or end in a location less than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from a Fixed Route bus stop. Reservations for the Paratransit service may be made up to 14 days in advance. Same-day service is available but is subject to availability and a convenience fee.

Intercounty

County Express' Intercounty routes provide connections from the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista to the City of Gilroy. There is daily weekday service to Gavilan College and the Caltrain station and weekend service to the Greyhound station in Gilroy. The weekday shuttle service to Gavilan College is from 6:55 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. with a limited schedule when school is not in session. There are three early morning and four evening runs to the Gilroy Caltrain station for connections to Caltrain and Valley Transportation Authority bus services. Service to the Greyhound station operates on Saturday and Sunday from 7:35 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Figure 4-24 below illustrates the public transit system-wide ridership numbers for fiscal year 2016-2017.

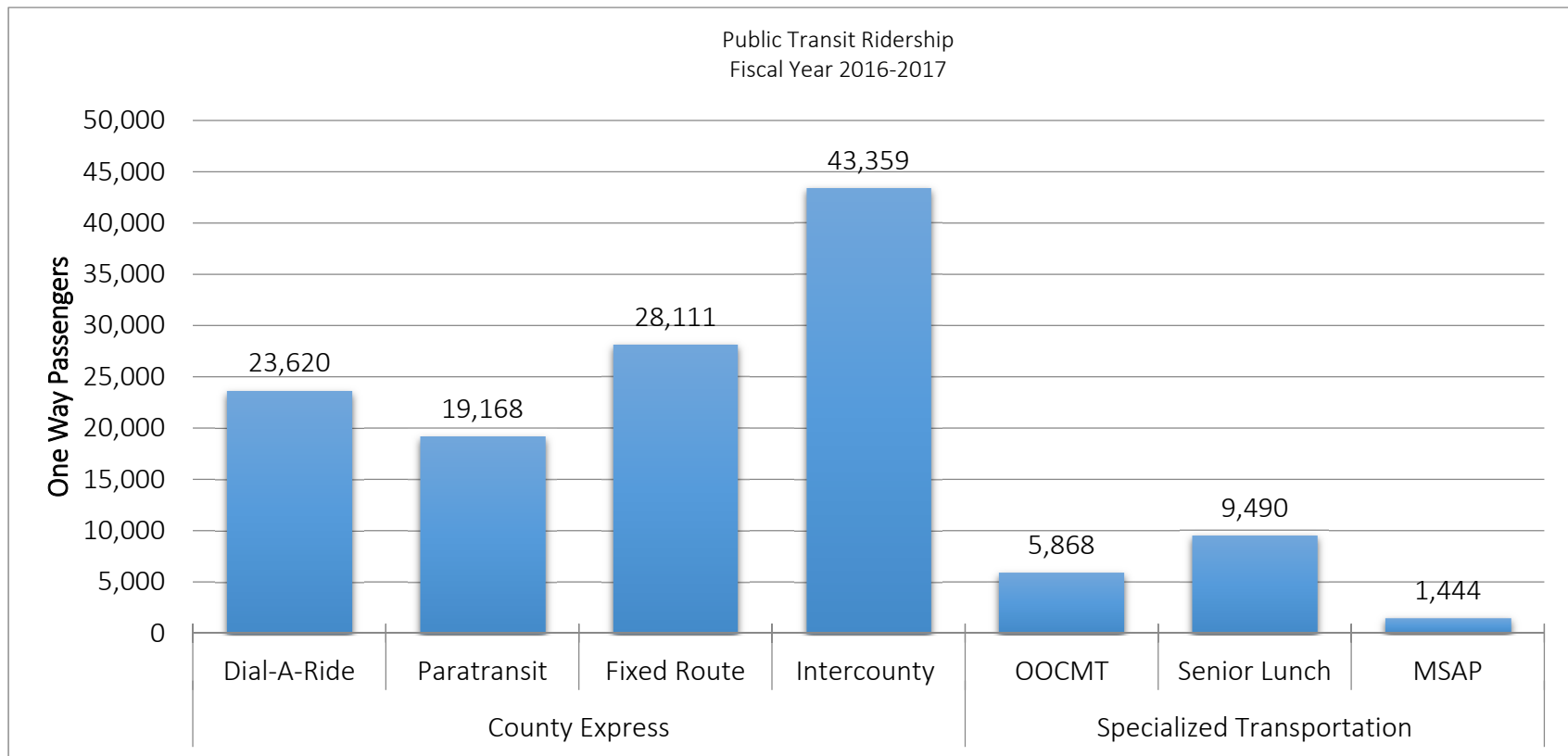


Figure 4-24 Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Public Transit Ridership

OOCMT – Out-of-County Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

MSAP – Medical-Shopping Assistance Program

Source: San Benito County Local Transportation Authority

Specialized Transportation Services

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 10 percent of the total county population is aged 65 or older.¹⁰ Many of these elderly individuals and persons with disabilities require specialized transportation services to travel to medical appointments, shop, and visit recreation centers.

The Authority contracts with Jovenes de Antaño, a local non-profit organization that has been providing specialized transportation services in San Benito County since 1990. Specialized services include: Out of County Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, Medical Shopping Assistance Transportation, and Senior Lunch Transportation Program.

These services are beyond the requirements of Americans with Disabilities Act. They provide escort services, door-through-door, and minor translation services. The coordination effort between Jovenes de Antaño and the Authority allows for efficient, affordable and reliable service for this critical need in the community of San Benito County.

Public transit needs in the San Benito region have increased, causing a surge in local Unmet Transit Needs. In 2009, the State of California eliminated Proposition 42 State Transit Assistance Increment (STA) funds from the Transportation Development Act due to State budget constraints. As a result, the Authority had to make significant reductions to its transit services and increase fares. At the 2017 Unmet Transit Needs hearing, the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council found that the lack of mid-day Fixed Route service was an unmet transit need that was not reasonable to meet due to funding constraints.

Although it has been an ongoing issue that needs far exceed funding, some relief is anticipated soon with the Authority annually receiving additional State Transit Assistance funding from Senate Bill 1, Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. At which point,



Figure 4-25 Specialized Transportation Services Driver

Source: Jovenes de Antaño

¹⁰ U.S. Census, San Benito County

staff will evaluate the service recommendations from the public and the adopted 2017 Short Range/Long Range Transit Plan. Any proposed services will need to be carefully analyzed to ensure maximum benefit to the community.

In order to meet public demand, the Authority is always looking toward generating revenue through various grants to help fund transit. Some examples of past services that were funded through grants to the Authority include:

- Expansion of Intercounty Services
- Transit Internship Program
- Transit Design Guidelines
- Short-Range and Long-Range Transit Plan
- Bus Stop Improvement Plan
- Intelligent Transportation Systems Plan
- Various vehicle, bus stop, and infrastructure projects

Although the Authority has been successful in receiving grants, these types of funds are unstable in nature. Grants are typically highly competitive and last only for a few years. While these grants are helpful, they are not guaranteed nor consistently funded. Therefore, these grants do not provide a sustainable and/or reliable source of funding needed for planning activities or maintaining service levels.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT (TSM) AND TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)

The overall funding need for the Transportation System Management and Transportation Demand Management exceed \$10 million over the next 22-years.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT (TSM)

Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system and reduce the need for costly system expansion. Transportation System Management strategies often use Intelligent Transportation System technologies. These measures include signal synchronization, ramp metering, “at-speed” truck scales “weight in motion”, and 511 traveler information systems. Strategic application of Intelligent Transportation System technology on our transportation system can increase system productivity by as much as 5%.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) implemented a statewide effort to develop Corridor System Management Plans for corridors funded under the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account. This integration of transportation planning and operations seeks to maintain over the long term, through identification of multimodal, operational, and minor capacity enhancements, the mobility benefits gained from major corridor projects.

Another form of Transportation System Management is Intelligent Transportation Systems, which involve the use of advanced computer, electronic, and communication technologies to increase the safety and efficiency of the entire surface transportation system. In 2000, the Central Coast Coordinating Group, which is composed of various transportation agencies in the Monterey Bay Area, coordinated with Caltrans to develop the Central Coast Intelligent Transportation Systems Implementation Plan. The short and long range projects will help local agencies develop new products that will help each agency to better implement, operate, and maintain their Intelligent Transportation Systems projects. The Regional Transportation Plan is consistent with the regional ITS architecture plan.

The San Benito County region continues to implement Intelligent Transportation Systems application in various transportation projects when feasible.

How can Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) help?

As transportation funds become more limited and travel demands increase, we need to find ways of maximizing the use of our existing transportation systems. Efficiently use our initial transportation investment.

The Central Coast Intelligent Transportation Systems Implementation Plan included various projects, such as:

- Traffic signal control (signal timing, synchronization, and central control)
- Interactive traveler information systems (internet websites, kiosks, telephone call-in systems, APPS)
- Smart Motorist Aid Call Boxes

Call boxes help motorists in distress by providing a direct connection to a California Highway Patrol communications center. The motorist-aid system operates along major roadways throughout the State. The programs are administered at the county level by local Service Authorities for Freeways and Expressways (SAFEs).

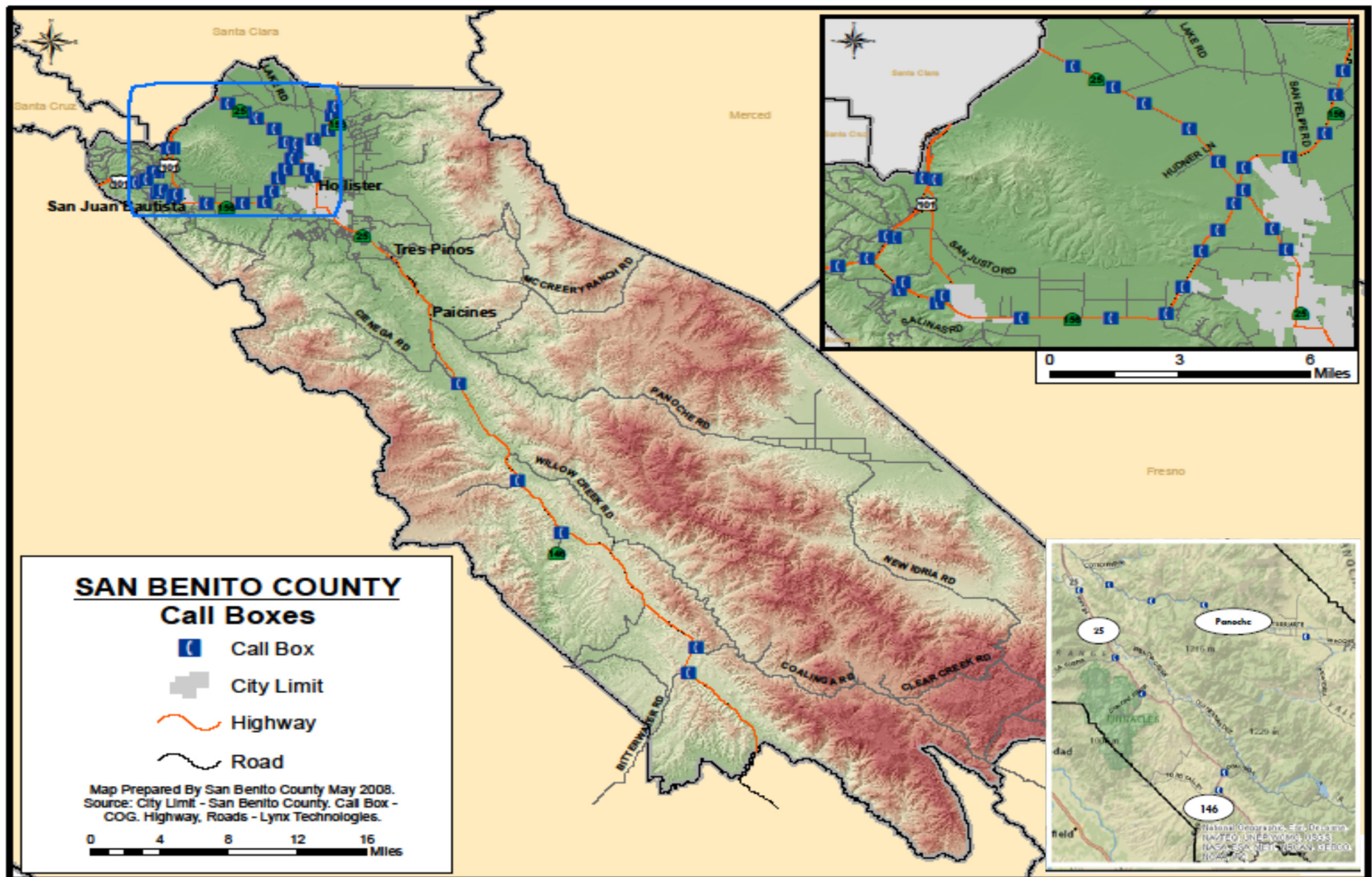
In 1998, the Council of Governments established the San Benito County Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE) to administer the \$1 vehicle registration fee collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles for maintaining an Emergency Call Box Program in San Benito County. San Benito SAFE currently maintains 40 call boxes in region, Figure 4-26 and 4-27.

Call box usage in San Benito County has remained steady over the past few years. Call box usage trends for the year typically show a decrease in calls during the winter months as people tend to travel less. Although cell phone usage is becoming more prevalent, it is still important to maintain this program because of the rural nature of San Benito County as there are areas with little to no cell phone service. Most recently, San Benito SAFE installed four call boxes in south San Benito County at the request of the California Department of Forestry due to the lack of cell service in the area.

Call Boxes in San Benito County
• 8 - Highway 25, North of Hollister
• 4 - Highway 25, South of Hollister
• 1 - Highway 146
• 6 - US 101
• 17 - Highway 156
• 4 - Panoche Road

Figure 4-26 Call Box Locations

Source: San Benito SAFE



4-27 Map of Call Box Locations in San Benito County

Source: San Benito County Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways

TRANSPORATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)

PARK-AND-RIDE LOTS

San Benito County currently has two park-and-ride lots serving area commuters. One location is at the intersection of U.S. 101 and SR 156 near Searle Road. The other location is in Hollister at the intersection of Hillcrest Road and Memorial Drive; this location also serves as a County Express transfer point for commuter transit service to Gilroy.

RIDESHARING

The Council of Governments has provided ridesharing services to San Benito County residents since 1987. The goal of the Rideshare Program is to help commuters traveling to or from San Benito County use alternatives to driving alone. The Rideshare Program helps improve air quality by encouraging shared vehicle use, and the use of other modes of transportation as alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle.

As a resource to commuters, San Benito Rideshare partners with the Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) for use of its 511 Ridematch Database. The database contains registered individuals in the region that use carpool and vanpool ride matching services. After registering in the 511 database, registrants can see if there are others with a similar commute. If schedules align, a carpool can be formed; if there are a large number of people commuting to the same location, a vanpool could be formed.

REGIONAL VANPOOL PROGRAM

The Council of Governments administers a commuter Vanpool Program, which is designed to help residents save money to reduce traffic congestion, and to make the commute to/from work more pleasant by providing affordable shared transportation. The Vanpool Program fleet consists of four 15-passenger vehicles that are leased to commuters traveling to and from San Benito County.

CALVANS

CalVans is a state-wide Vanpool Program that includes vanpools tailored to meet the needs of commuters, plus some vans especially designed for farm workers. CalVans is sponsored by the California Vanpool Authority.

COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE

Although there is no direct commuter rail service from San Benito County to Santa Clara County, County Express provides Intercounty shuttle service to connect commuters to Caltrain services available in Gilroy. The California High Speed Rail Authority has a planned route that is proposed to go through northern San Benito County as it connects the Bay Area with the Central Valley and Los Angeles. Although there is no planned stop within San Benito County, one stop is anticipated in Gilroy.

The primary rail line in San Benito County is the 12-mile-long Hollister Branch Line running from Hollister to Carnadero Creek in Santa Clara County.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

San Benito County has 11 public school districts, 7 private schools and 4 special-purpose schools. The four school districts that provide bus service for their students are Aromas-San Juan Unified, Hollister, North County Joint Union, and San Benito High School. School bus service is open only to students who live within a specific distance from the school or have a disability.

The next chapter, Chapter 5: Financing Our Transportation Investments, describes the nuts and bolts of the financial forecasts and plan expenditures for the San Benito region aimed at meeting the needs that were identified in this chapter.

OTHER REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

The overall funding need for the “other” category of projects exceeds \$68 million over the next 22-years.

AVIATION SERVICES AND GROUND ACCESS

San Benito County has one public airport (Hollister Municipal Airport), one public/private airport (Frazier Lake Airpark), and several private landing strips throughout the County.

In San Benito County, agricultural producers, fire fighters, and emergency medical services all depend on the use of the local airports for various purposes. Private aircraft users also use these aviation facilities for commercial and recreational uses. The land uses surrounding the Hollister Municipal Airport are varied and include open space, agricultural uses, and industrial/commercial development.

In order to promote compatibility between the land uses surrounding the Hollister Municipal Airport and Frazier Lake Airpark, the San Benito County Airport Land Use Commission guides itself by the Hollister Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and the Frazier Lake Airpark Comprehensive Land Use Plan, respectively. The Compatibility Plan and the Comprehensive Land Use Plan seek to protect the public from the adverse effects of aircraft noise, ensure that people and facilities are not concentrated in areas susceptible to aircraft accidents, and to keep aircraft operational areas free from obstructions or activities that may impact aircraft navigation. The San Benito County Airport Land Use Commission is made of members of the Council of San Benito County Governments Board of Directors.



Figure 4-28 Hollister Municipal Airport

Source: Hollister Municipal Airport Master Plan

Hollister Municipal Airport

The Hollister Municipal Airport is located approximately two miles north of Hollister adjacent to SR 156 and is owned and operated by the City of Hollister. The Airport Manager is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and management of the airport. A five-member Airport Advisory Commission provides recommendations on the policies and long-range plans for the Hollister Municipal Airport to the City Council.



The facility is a general aviation airport and is included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. In its operational role, it is classed as General Utility and accommodates all current aviation aircraft except certain business jets. There annual aircraft operations is estimated at 53,000 .

Hollister Municipal Airport has two intersecting runways. Runway 13-31, the primary runway, is aligned in a north/west prevailing wind direction with winds commonly out of the northwest. The crosswind runway, Runway 6-24, is aligned east/west. Both runways are lit for night use.

Runway 13-31 is the longest runway at the airport with a length of 6,350 feet. Additionally, it is the only runway served with a straight-in instrument approach. Runway 13-31 is equipped with a localizer performance with vertical guidance instrument approach, with visibility minimums of 1¼ mile and a decision altitude of 553 feet Mean Sea Level (323 Above Ground Level). Large aircraft, such as business jets and Cal Fire aircraft, almost exclusively use Runway 13-31.

Runway 6-24 is 3,150 feet in length and 100 feet wide. Runway 6-24 is a visual approach runway that it has no straight-in approach procedures. As a crosswind runway, Runway 6-24 allows aircraft, particularly smaller aircraft which are susceptible to strong crosswinds, to safely land and depart the airport when wind conditions do not favor the primary runway. Local weather patterns indicate that winds are out of the northwest in the morning, favoring Runway 13-31. In the afternoon, winds shift and blow out of the west, favoring Runway 6-24.

The City of Hollister has made continual improvements to address the future needs of the Hollister Municipal Airport. The Hollister Municipal Airport, in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the State, is continuing to bring the facility into the 21st century. This will allow increased air cargo traffic, including air-training centers for pilots and mechanics, plus support additional air tourism traffic to the area.

Frazier Lake Airpark

Frazier Lake Airpark is located approximately 4.5 nautical miles northwest of Hollister Municipal Airport and is privately-owned and operated by the Frazier Lake Airpark Corporation. Two runways are available for use at the airport, one waterway which is 3,000 feet long and a turf runway that is 2,500 feet long. The airport does not have an airport traffic control tower and no published instrument approach procedures. Approximately 90 aircraft are based at the airport, with tie-downs being the only service available.

REGIONAL AIRPORTS

San Jose International Airport is a major carrier airport that provides San Benito County residents with airline service throughout the state, nation, and selected foreign countries. The airport is approximately 55 miles north of Hollister and 45 miles from San Juan Bautista. Primary access to San Jose International Airport is via SR 25, 156 and U.S. 101.

Monterey Peninsula Airport is a smaller regional airport that provides San Benito County residents with airline service within California and a few out-of-state destinations. The airport is approximately 40 miles southwest of Hollister and 35 miles from San Juan Bautista. Primary access to Monterey Peninsula Airport is via SR 156 and U.S. 101.

The airports service the needs of agriculture, tourism, government, and other business interests throughout the region. Almost 50% of the total air trips to the area through the regional airports are specifically for business purposes while another 40% of those trips are for tourism.