

RTP 2040

Chapter 3: Regional Setting and Travel Patterns



This chapter provides projections on population, housing, and employment and how these affect the regional setting and travel patterns.

Chapter 3 Regional Setting and Travel Patterns

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

San Benito County is a rural and agricultural community in the Central Coast Region, south of Silicon Valley. The County is surrounded by the Counties of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey, Fresno and Merced. Land area is 1,389 square miles. Terrain varies from flat valley floor, to hilly rangeland in the east, to 5,450 foot peaks far south.

The City of Hollister where the County seat is located is at an elevation of 229 feet. The north and northwest segments of the County are comprised of urban areas, leaving the southern portion of the County primarily rural. The population in the County was 55,269 according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

The County has two incorporated cities – Hollister, population 35,000, and San Juan Bautista, population 1,700 – and various unincorporated communities (Aromas, Tres Pinos, Panoche, Ridgemark, and Paicines). Major transportation routes bisecting the County include State Routes 129, 156, 25 and U.S. 101.



Figure 3-1 Map of San Benito County

REGIONAL SETTING

Many factors influence the patterns of where, how much, and how we travel. The amount and distribution of traffic on highways, local roads, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and buses can fluctuate based on population, housing, location of jobs and services, the economy, travel choices, goods movement and other factors.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 1990 and 2000, San Benito County's population increased by 45.1 percent, with most of the county's population growth in or near the two incorporated cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista. Between 2003 and 2004, however, population growth in the county slowed down and increased by only 1.4 percent.

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) is the federally designated agency tasked with preparing the Regional Growth Forecast (RGF) for the tri-county region, which includes San Benito County. The RGF projects population, housing units, and employment. The RGF is used as a baseline for developing the 2040 San Benito Regional Transportation Plan.

Another critical component in planning for the future is an understanding of existing and projected travel patterns. Knowing how people travel is a necessary element in determining what transportation investment strategies are needed to meet the challenges and opportunities that will face the region through the year 2040.



Figure 3-2 Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments Area Map

POPULATION GROWTH FORECAST

Population growth is one of the main drivers and indicators of travel behavior in the Monterey Bay Area region. According to AMBAG, the population in the region is growing at a lower rate than California as a whole.

In 2015, AMBAG reported 762,676 people living in the tri-county region spread over an area of 5,767 square miles. By 2040, the population is expected to reach 883,300, as illustrated in Figure 3-3.

San Benito as a whole will be the fastest growing County within the AMBAG region.¹ The County’s geographical advantages and quality of life contribute to the growth. Specifically, the population within the San Benito region, 1,390 square miles, is expected to increase by 32 percent between the years 2015 and 2040.

As shown in Figure 3-4, the highest percent growth rate will occur in the unincorporated parts of the County (43%, approx. 7,887 people) followed by the City of Hollister (27%, approx. 9,931 people) and with less growth forecasted for the City of San Juan Bautista (22%, approx. 405 people). The City of Hollister will have the greatest absolute growth with more than 9,000 people projected through the year 2040. With the projected growth, there will be a greater demand for housing and employment.

County	2015 (Year)	2040 (Year)	Percent Increase
San Benito	56,445	74,668	32%
Monterey	432,637	501,751	16%
Santa Cruz	273,594	306,881	12%
Regional Total	762,676	883,300	16%

Figure 3-3 Monterey Bay Area Population Forecast
Source: AMBAG Regional Growth Forecast

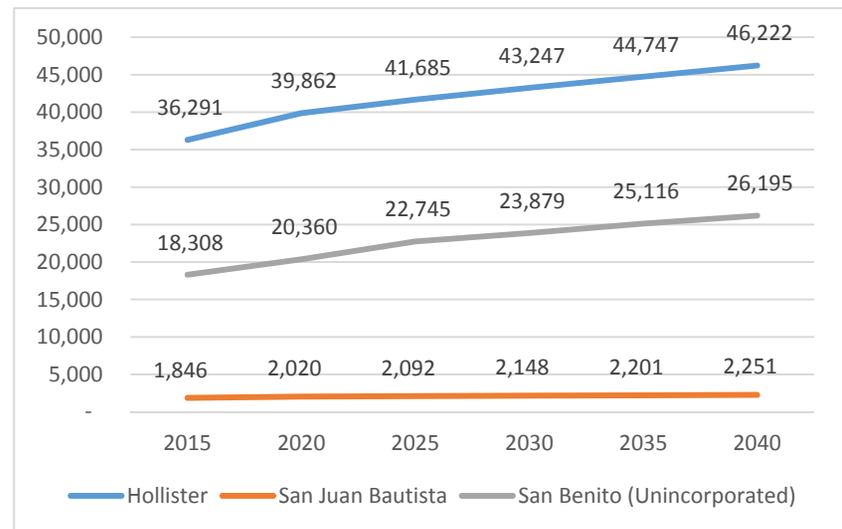


Figure 3-4 Population Forecast by San Benito Jurisdiction
Source: AMBAG Regional Growth Forecast

¹ 2018 Regional Growth Forecast

HOUSING GROWTH FORECAST

Primarily due to the availability of housing at lower costs than surrounding communities to the north and to the west of San Benito, the County is a place where many residents travel long distances for employment.

The housing market will continue to grow to accommodate future growth. Currently, the Monterey Bay Area region supports an estimated 262,660 housing units. Forecasts suggest that by 2040, the housing market will grow to accommodate an additional 42,633 housing units, as illustrated in Figure 3-5.

The San Benito region as a whole is projected to have a 31 percent (approx. 5,693) increase in housing units between 2015 and the year 2040. The breakdown of units includes a 26 percent (approx. 2,765) increase in the City of Hollister, 22 percent (approx. 164) in the City of San Juan Bautista, and 41 percent (approx. 2,764) in the unincorporated areas of the County, as illustrated in Figure 3-6. The City of Hollister will have the greatest absolute growth with 2,765 housing units projected through the year 2040.

County	2015 (Year)	2040 (Year)	Percent Increase
San Benito	18,262	23,955	31%
Monterey	139,177	163,186	17%
Santa Cruz	105,221	118,152	12%
Regional Total	262,660	305,293	16%

Figure 3-5 Monterey Bay Area Housing Projections

Source: AMBAG Regional Growth Forecast

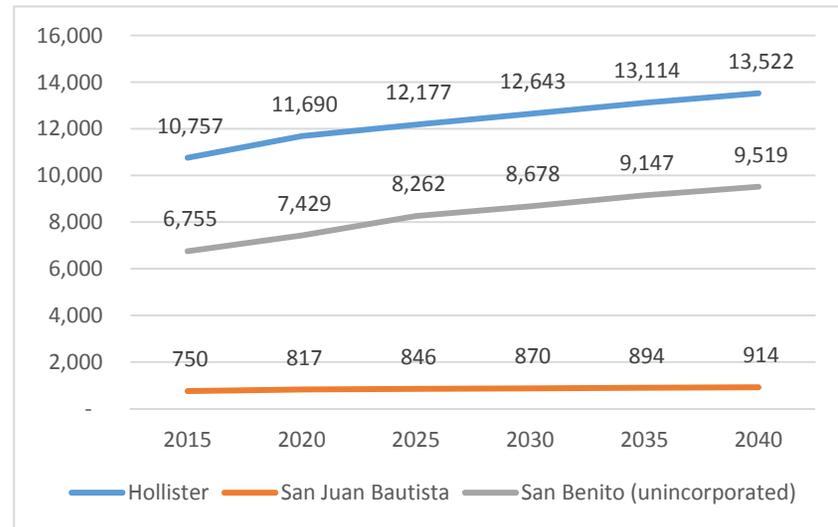


Figure 3-6 Housing Projections by San Benito Jurisdiction

Source: AMBAG Regional Growth Forecast

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH FORECAST

The Regional Transportation Plan forecasts a 22 percent (approx. 3,913) increase in employment within the San Benito region over the next 25 years, as illustrated in Figure 3-7. The neighboring Counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz are forecasted to have a population growth rate of 16 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

As illustrated in Figure 3-8, the employment projections' aggregate data shows a 24 percent (approx. 3,090) increase in the City of Hollister, 23 percent (approx. 126) in the City of San Juan Bautista, and 16 percent (approx. 697) in the County of San Benito jurisdictions through the year 2040.

The location of employment and where people live directly influences the choices made in how they travel within the San Benito region.

County	2015 (Year)	2040 (Year)	Percent Increase
San Benito County	18,000	21,913	22%
Monterey County	203,550	235,822	16%
Santa Cruz County	116,050	137,265	18%
Regional Total	337,600	395,000	17%

Figure 3-7 Monterey Bay Area Employment Projections
Source: AMBAG Regional Growth Forecast

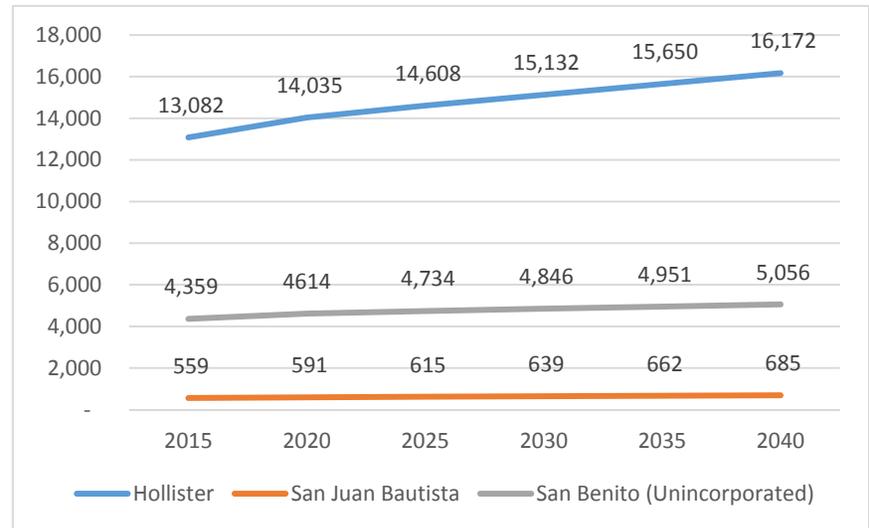


Figure 3-8 Employment Projections by San Benito Jurisdiction
Source: AMBAG Regional Growth Forecast

Employment opportunities are a factor influencing travel patterns within the region.

As illustrated in Figure 3-9, the unemployment rate within the San Benito region has dropped over the last few years from its high in 2010, due to the Great Recession. This drop is a promising sign toward economic recovery.

However, higher employment rates often translate to greater traffic volumes as more people are traveling to jobs locally and regionally. This increase means that the transportation system must be effectively planned to accommodate increasing traffic volumes.

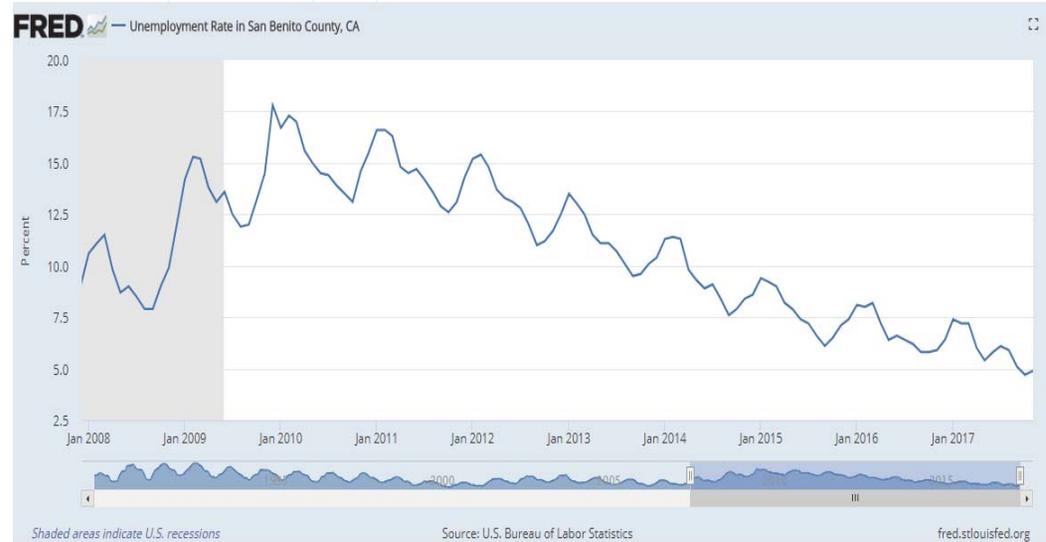


Figure 3-9 San Benito County Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2017

TRAVEL PATTERNS

Outbound Commuting

As previously noted, the primary influence on commuting is the relationship between where people live and where they work.

This relationship has become an increasingly important issue locally as the spatial mismatch between jobs and affordable housing is causing growing numbers of workers to reside farther from their workplaces.

The San Benito region is home to a high percent of commuters. According to the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division, approximately 48.9 percent of San Benito County residents commute to jobs outside of the County for employment.² This amounts to 11,694 of San Benito's total number (23,907) of workers that resided in San Benito County between 2006 and 2010, Figure 3-10. Approximately, 7,500 traveling north into Santa Clara County and points north to higher paying Silicon Valley jobs. The majority of commute destinations consists of Santa Clara and Monterey Counties, impacting the number of vehicles traveling on State Routes 25 and 156 in San Benito County.

² Special Report of 2006 to 2010 County-to-County Commuting Flows

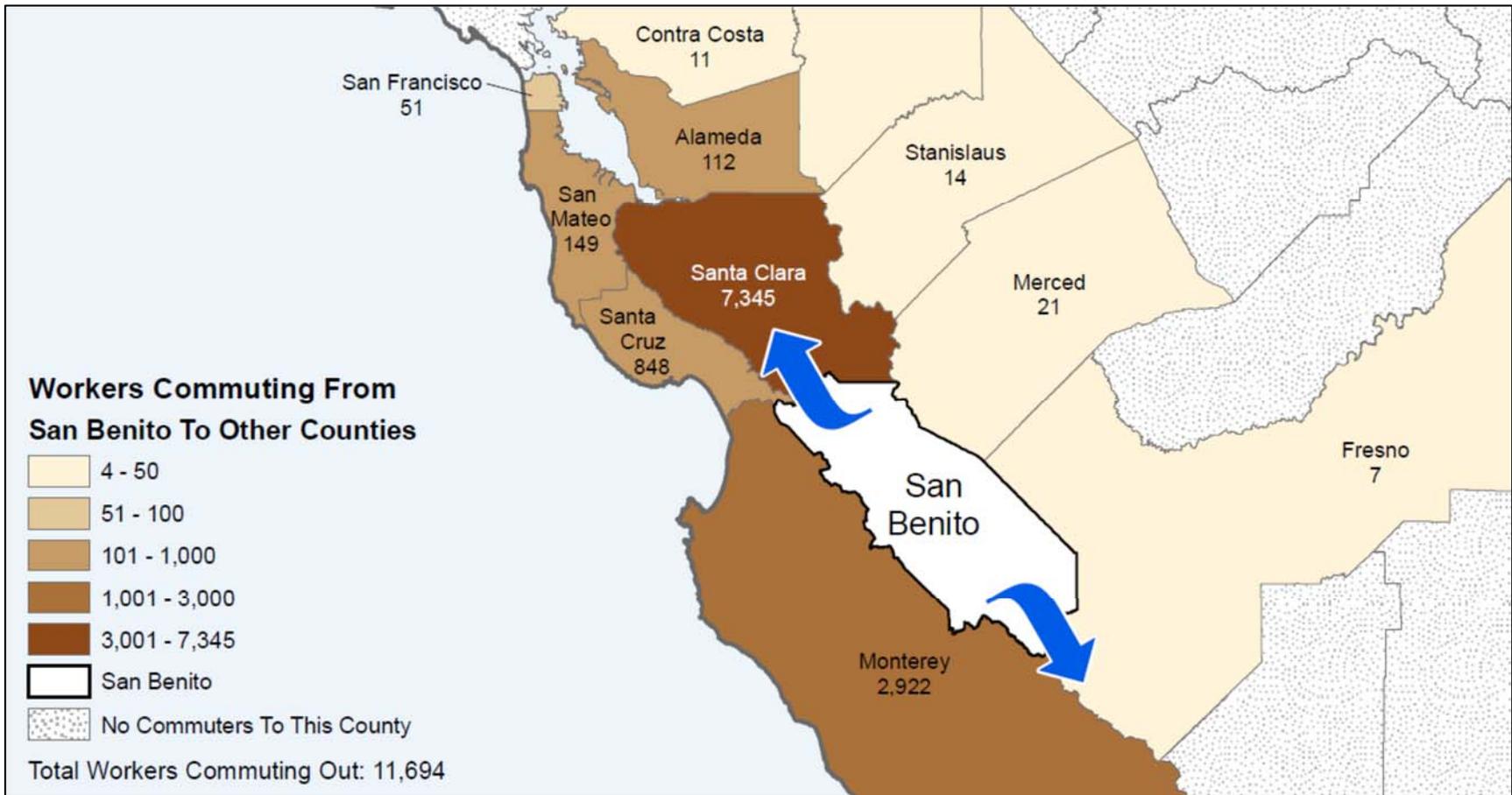


Figure 3-10 Workers Commuting from San Benito County to Other Counties

Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

Note: Special Report of 2006 to 2010 County-to-County Commuting Flows

Inbound and Local Commuting

While it is important to track outbound commute patterns, it is also imperative to factor in people who both live and work in San Benito County and those traveling into San Benito County for employment from other counties.

The data from the U.S Census Special Report, 2006 to 2010 County-to-County Commuting Flows, indicates that 12,213 people both live and work in San Benito County. The data also shows that 4,490 people commuted into the County each day for employment. The majority of commuters traveling from outside the County into San Benito are primarily traveling from Monterey, Santa Clara and Merced Counties, Figure 3-11.

The above-mentioned aggregate data is critical to understanding travel patterns and local economic impacts. In particular, the data shows that approximately 16,703 jobs were provided by local economies by commuters traveling into the County from other regions (4,490 people) and people who both live and work in San Benito County (12,213 people).

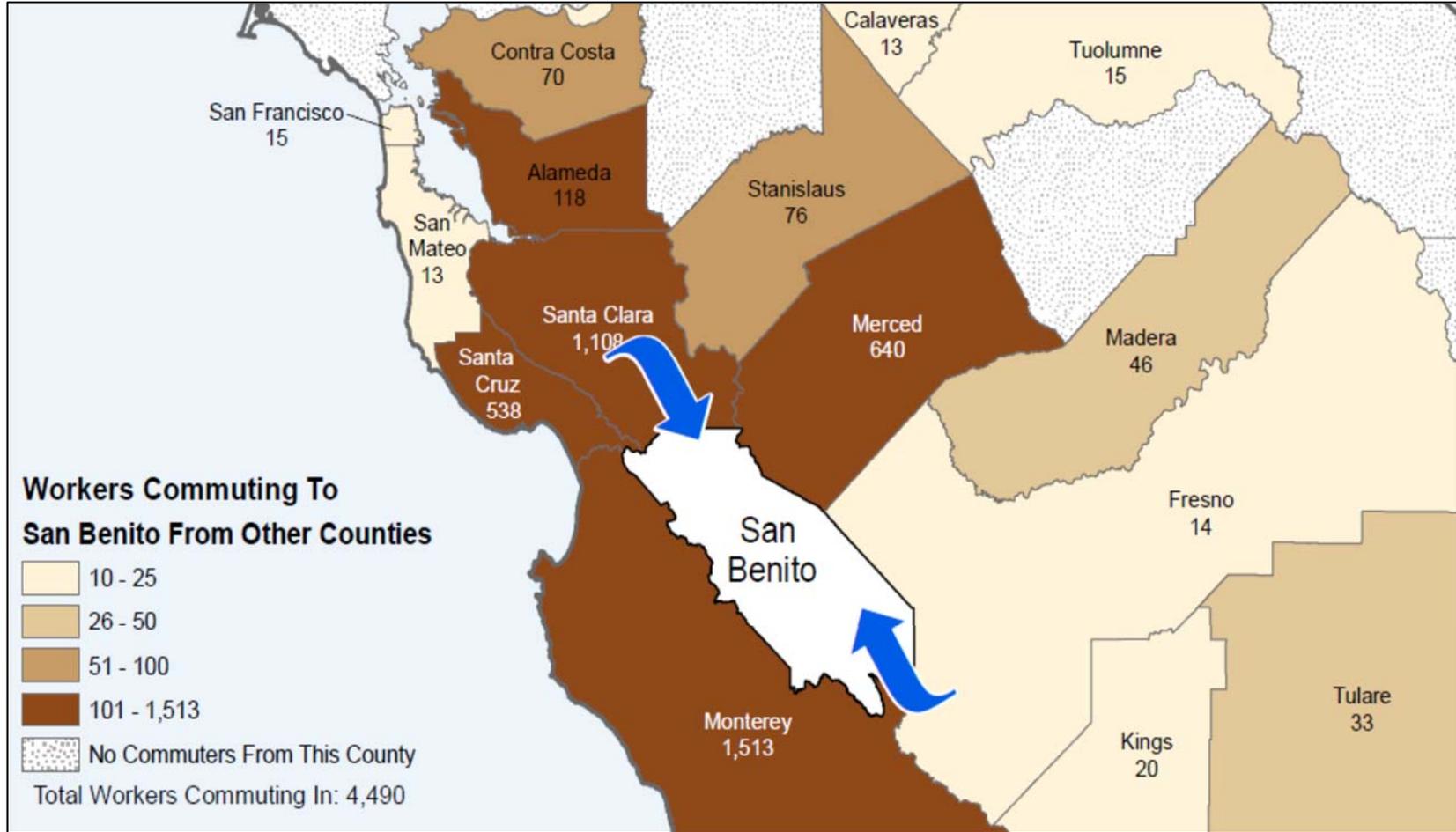


Figure 3-11 Workers Commuting from Other Counties into San Benito County
 Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2013
 Note: Special Report of 2006 to 2010 County-to-County Commuting Flows

The most common employment industries, by those residing in San Benito County and employed, include; retail trade, manufacturing, healthcare, construction and educational services. Figure 3-12 illustrates the share breakdown of the primary industries for residents of San Benito County, though some of these residents may live in the County, and work elsewhere. Census data is identified to a residential address, not an employment address.

Employment by Industries in San Benito County

For anonymity, the ACS 1-year estimate groups industries by course parent groupings.

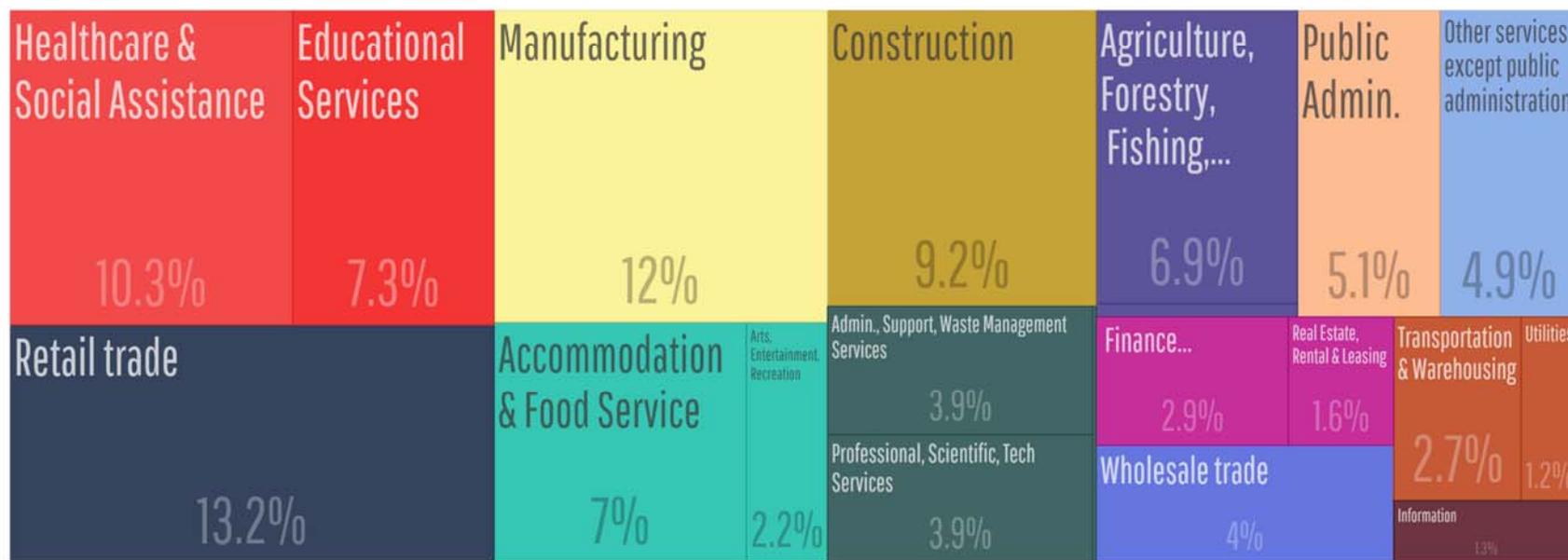


Figure 3-12 San Benito County Employment Industries by All San Benito County Residents (Includes Commuters) (2010-2015)

Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

As previously noted, 11,694 (≈49%) of San Benito residents travel outside the County for employment. The remaining 12,213 (≈51%) both live and work within the San Benito region. Another 4,490 people commute into the County each day for employment from other counties. Of the total San Benito County workforce,³ approximately 16,000 (69%) work in service industries (includes non-government and government services). Goods producing accounts for 20 percent or 3,200 employees, which includes more specific industries, such as construction and manufacturing. The 1,800 farm employees constitute 11 percent of all employees, an indicator of counties heavily dependent on agriculture -- much higher than the average 2 percent for California as a whole.⁴

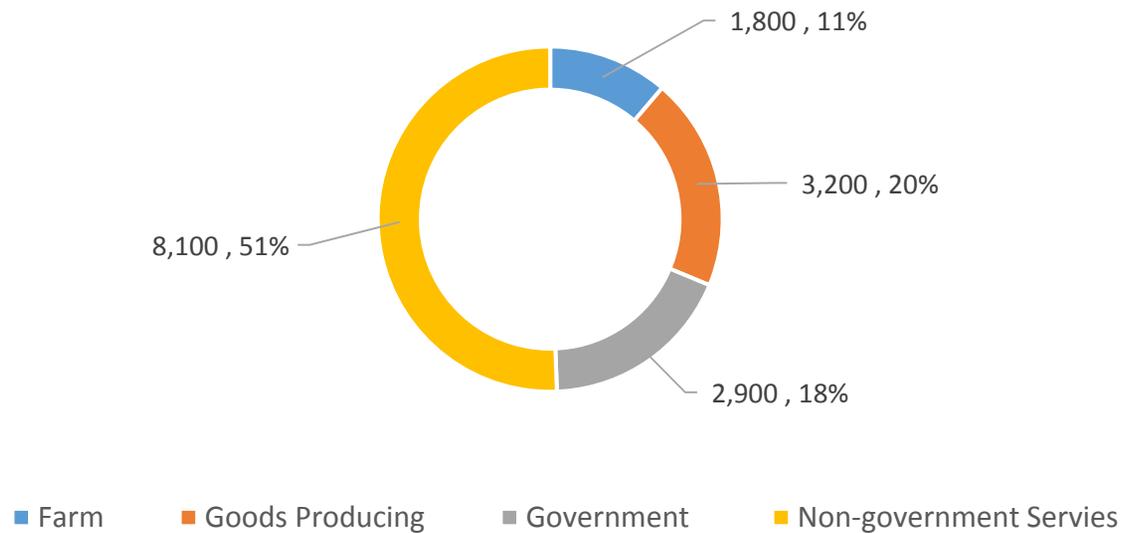


Figure 3-13 Employment Industries by those Employed in San Benito County, Regardless of Place of Residency (2010-2015)
 Source: California Employment Development Department

³ Includes those employed in San Benito County, regardless of place of residency (people that live and work in San Benito County and those commuting into San Benito County for employment from other counties).

⁴ San Benito County Economic Development Corporation, 2017 - 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

As previously noted, the number of workers residing in the San Benito region continue to exceed the number of employment opportunities available locally– resulting in a high percent of commuters traveling out of the county for employment.

In San Benito County, the *drove alone* choice had the highest number of all the travel modes with 19,759 travelers per day (78.1%), followed by carpoolers with 3,691 (14.6%) and those working from home at 882 (3.5%). The walking mode has 395 commuters per day (1.5%), public transit mode has 193 commuters (0.8%). The bicycle mode has 192 commuters per day or 0.8% of all modes. Lastly, those traveling by motorcycle and by other means had a combined total of 189 commuting (0.7%).

As noted, almost 80 percent of San Benito County residents are traveling alone as their preferred mode of transportation. Single-occupancy vehicles and limited capacity infrastructure are a significant contributor to congestion within the region.

The preferred transportation choice selected by these commuters also impacts the network as a whole. This data is supported by the preferred means of travel, referred to as mode choice, which may be by private automobile, public transit, walking, bicycling, or other means.



In a peer comparison, Figure 3-14, with Tuolumne (pop. 54,079) and Calaveras (pop. 44,767) Counties, San Benito County's "drove alone" mode choice ranked comparable. However, when compared with larger populated Counties, such as Yolo (pop. 207,320) and Santa Cruz (pop. 274,146), San Benito County had a higher percent of commuters driving alone.

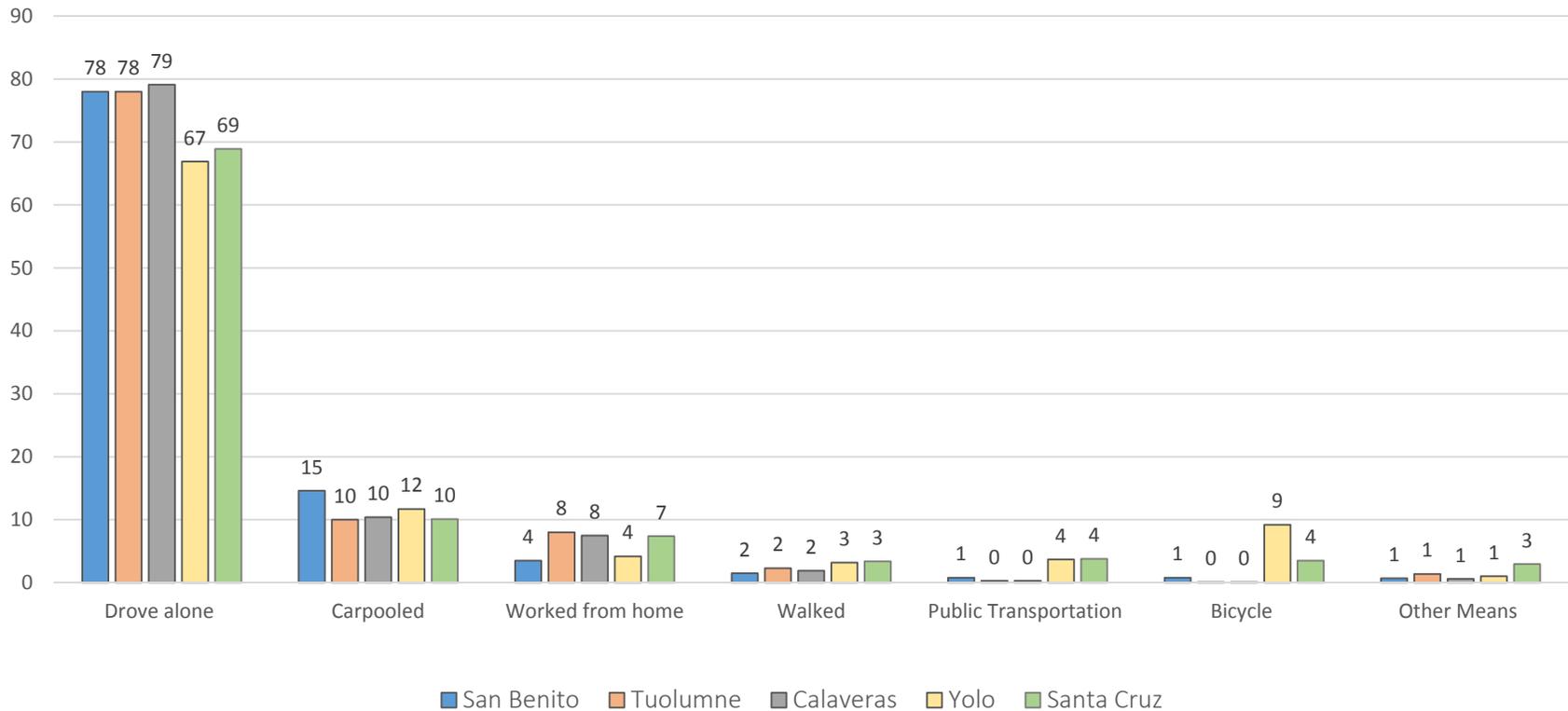


Figure 3-14 Mode Choice Peer Comparison by Percent

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

The continued reliance on single occupant vehicles, congested highways, and the limited availability of alternative modes of travel adds to the congestion during peak commute times. Within the San Benito region, the majority of all workers, 46 percent, travel between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.⁵ Another 13.9 percent commute between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Additionally, 70 percent of all San Benito workers travel more than 15 minutes to work, as noted in Figure 3-15. This data is notable because most travel at the same time of day on the same roads and highways – exceeding road capacity. These workers also have a longer average commute time, 30.7 minutes, than the national average of 24.8 minutes⁶. Moreover, six percent of the workforce in San Benito County have “super commutes” in excess of 90 minutes, which is higher than the national average of 2.62%.⁷

Increased traffic has adverse impacts on San Benito County’s regional transportation system, causing a strain on the existing infrastructure and available funding resources. Accessibility to the transportation network goes beyond utilitarian trips to and from work. Providing people access to various destinations such as education, medical care, shopping, recreation or other activities is essential to one’s daily needs.

<i>Travel Time to Work</i>	
Less than 10 minutes	16.8%
10 to 14 minutes	13.0%
15 to 19 minutes	9.8%
20 to 24 minutes	8.8%
25 to 29 minutes	4.5%
30 to 34 minutes	9.0%
35 to 44 minutes	7.3%
45 to 59 minutes	13.1%
60 or more minutes	17.6%

Figure 3-15 San Benito Travel Time to Work
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey



⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015

RECREATIONAL TRAVEL

The San Benito region is home to several popular tourist destinations. San Benito County residents and visitors enjoy world-class recreation, sports and cultural amenities within the County as well as within a 45 mile radius. There are a number of regional educational facilities, public libraries and recreational activities close by.

Pinnacles National Park, known for hiking, rock climbing, home to California Condors, camping and picnic grounds, is located in southern San Benito County. According to the Economic Development Corporation of San Benito County, over 200,000 people visit the park every year. Between 2014 and 2015, there was a five percent increase in Pinnacles National Park visitors. The primary access to the Pinnacles National Park is the southern segment of SR 25.

Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area is another tourist attraction that offers 24 trail miles for 4-wheel drive recreational vehicles and 128 trail miles for motorcycle and all-terrain vehicles (ATV). The 2015 number of visitors reached 101,273, and increased to 119,423 in 2016. The primary access to the recreation area is through San Benito County local roads.

Bicyclists, bird watchers and nature lovers also venture out on the many winding local roads or choose the canyon trek to Fremont Peak State Park with its magnificent vistas to Monterey Bay and observatory star gazing opportunities.

Another major recreation facility in San Benito County includes the San Juan Bautista Mission. The region relies on tourism to the Mission as a major industry, and tourist traffic welcomed by downtown businesses. The 2015 number of visitors to the Mission were approximately 75,000 and increased to 77,000 in 2016 with motorists traveling to and from San Juan Bautista using SR 156.



GOODS MOVEMENT

Another source of traffic on San Benito roadways is goods movement. The majority of commodities in San Benito region are transported in and out of the county by truck, with a small portion transported by rail.

The Central Coast region, which includes San Benito, Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties, is one of the most important agricultural production areas in the country and is known for its fresh produce. The region's industries include agriculture, manufacturing, food processing, and other freight-related business clusters which are critical to the region's economy. Growth in Central Coast population centers related to the region's proximity to the Silicon Valley in the north and the Los Angeles Metro area in the south has resulted in increased demand for products shipped via freight modes concurrently with an increase in demand for Central Coast products from outside of the region. The Central Coast relies on many transportation arteries for the region and the area's major truck routes.



Within the San Benito region, there are several key goods movement highways, including U.S. 101, SR 156 and SR 129. U.S. 101 is used to access freight to transport commerce on the Monterey Peninsula and points north and south. In 2013, the location with the highest absolute number of trucks was in San Benito County at the junction of U.S. 101 and Route 156 East, with 22,000 average daily trucks. The highest percent of trucks 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.

Trucking

The transportation system in the San Benito region is typical of many rural counties. Private automobiles are the primary mode of moving people and trucks are the primary mode of moving goods.

Goods movement-dependent industries represent a significant portion of the region’s economy. Figure 3-16 lists the employment in goods movement-dependent industries in the San Benito region. Data shows that 40.5 percent of San Benito jobs are goods movement dependent. The retail trade industry employs the highest number of people. Manufacturing jobs are the second top employment sector, followed by construction.

Overall, the San Benito region goods movement system supports a vibrant economy, enabling commerce and development of new industries. The transport of these industry products generates also significant amount of truck traffic in and out of the County.



<i>San Benito Good Movement Dependent Industries</i>		
	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>%</i>
Construction	1,391	6.2%
Agriculture	1,182	5.3%
Manufacturing	2,848	12.7%
Retail trade	2,978	13.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	579	2.6%
Total	8,978	40.5%

Figure 3-16 Employment in Goods Movement Dependent Industries
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

While this traffic is largely confined to state highways, it also impacts local streets and rural roads not designed to handle large heavy trucks, creating conflicts with local traffic and adding to congestion. Seasonal trucking activity in the region is a challenge for farmers trying to get their produce to market. In addition to congestion the infrastructure is not adequate to handle large truck volumes and wear.

Figure 3-17 shows the top commodities for goods moving into, out of, and within the San Benito region in 2012 and 2040 (projection) by weight.

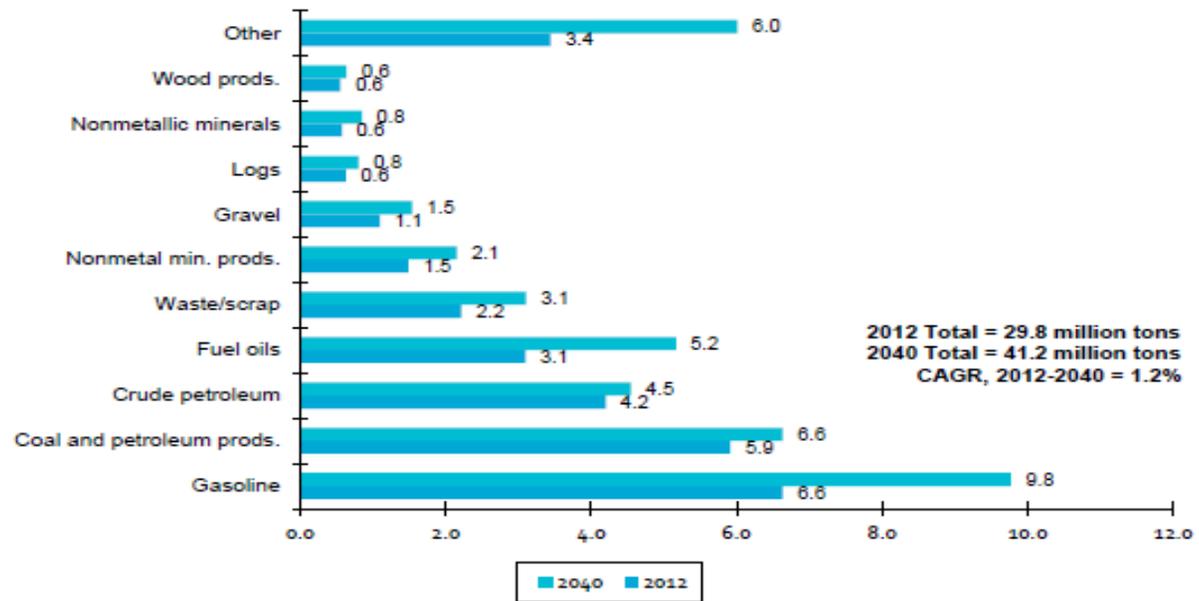
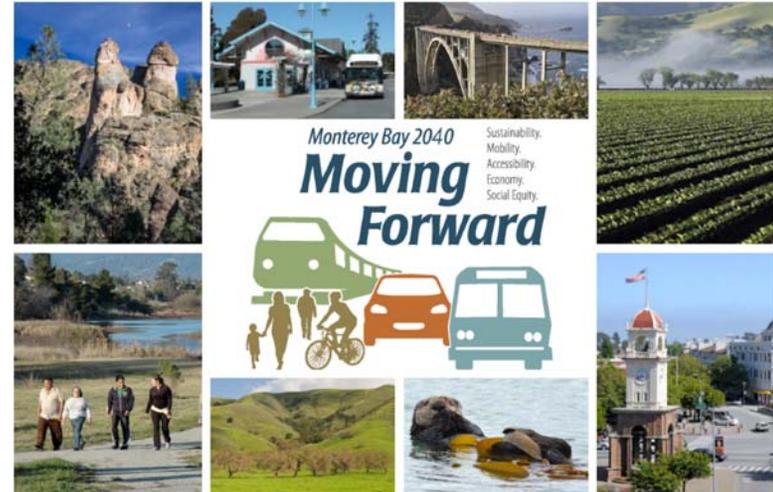


Figure 3-17: Freight Flows by Top Commodities by Tonnage, Millions of Tons
 Source: U.S. 101 Central Coast California Freight Strategies, 2016

TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE CONNECTION

Never before have the linkages and interrelationships between the regional transportation system and commercial and residential land uses been more important. As the San Benito region transforms, locating employment opportunities where there is an increased potential for transit usage, as well as walking and biking opportunities, will become critical. This is supportive of a multimodal system, while also promoting mode alternatives to the single passenger car. Land use planning and transportation options will dictate how people travel within the San Benito region. Integrating the two will have a key role in shaping the region and in delivering social, economic, and environmental sustainability.



Ultimately, the San Benito Regional Transportation Plan aims at building a system that keeps pace with projected population, housing, employment growth. The gradual upswing in employment and housing will allow public agencies have more windows of opportunity to direct future development in urbanized areas and advance the sustainability goals of the Regional Transportation Plan and AMBAG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan and its Sustainable Community Strategy.

In keeping with this interconnection between land use planning and transportation, the San Benito Regional Transportation Plan was developed in close coordination with AMBAG's 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and its Sustainable Communities Strategy.⁸ The Sustainable Community Strategy came about as a result of Senate Bill 375, Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. The bill requires the 18 MPO's in California, which includes AMBAG, to reduce transportation related per capita greenhouse gas emissions through a coordinated land use and transportation plan. For example, the Plan identifies locations ideal for compact development with a focus on infill development, and access to travel options including transit and bike/pedestrian facilities.

⁸ AMBAG Website: <http://www.ambag.org/programs-services/planning/metro-transport-plan>

MAJOR GROWTH CORRIDORS

The Regional Transportation Plan also assesses projected land uses in the region and identifies major growth corridors in order to plan for future transportation infrastructure.

CITY OF HOLLISTER

The City of Hollister’s General Plan includes a Phasing Diagram that indicates the City’s priorities for locating future growth, as illustrated in Figure 3-18.

The new residential areas include land northeast, south, east, and eventually northwest of the City respectively as the preferred progression of development. New employment growth is focused within the existing downtown, new retail gateways north and west of the downtown, and in the industrial park near the airport.

The City’s General Plan Circulation Element facilitates the orderly, efficient, and context sensitive expansion and development of Hollister’s circulation systems in support of the Land Use Element, as illustrated in Figure 3-19.

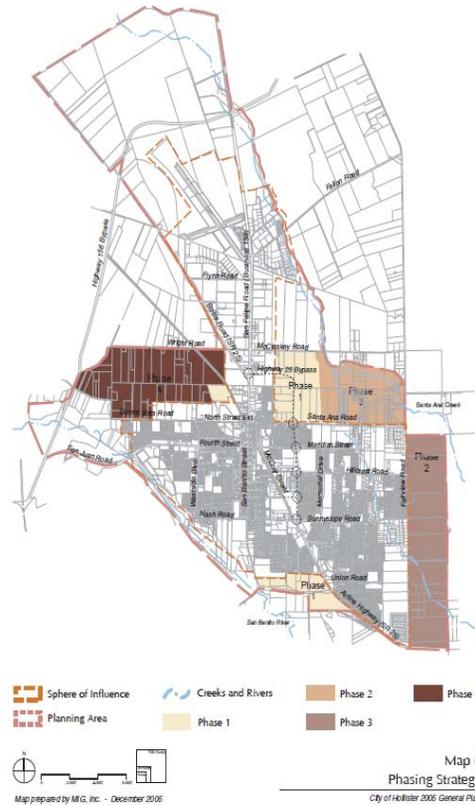


Figure 3-18 City of Hollister Phasing Strategy
Source: City of Hollister 2005 General Plan

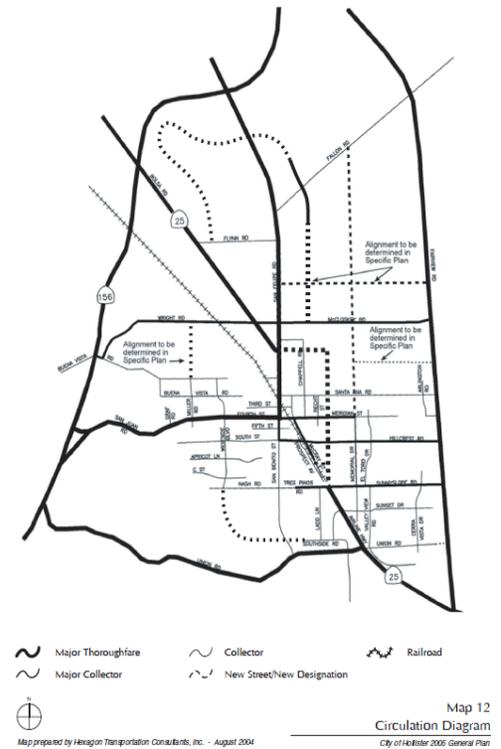


Figure 3-19 City of Hollister Circulation Diagram
Source: City of Hollister 2005 General Plan

CITY OF SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

The City of San Juan Bautista’s General Plan identifies a Clustered Growth Alternative, which focuses development on five key areas in the City. These areas were selected based on existing conditions, public opinion, and overall potential for creating accessible mixed-use areas.

The Clustered Growth Alternative arranges growth into central areas, placing retail, jobs, services, and recreation in walkable and bikeable distances. The major linear corridor encompasses four of the five clusters, where development is focused on the proposed Muckelemi Street Gateway leading into the redevelopment of the 3rd Street Downtown Corridor. South of the City, the fifth cluster creates higher density housing, more commercial and mixed-use land uses, and a linear park connecting Old San Juan-Hollister Road to the Downtown Corridor. The dotted clusters are featured in order to provide a vision for growth beyond 2035. The three key growth areas are illustrated in Figure 3-20.

The City of San Juan Bautista’s Circulation Element has a critical impact on land use patterns, economic development, public health, and social interaction. A balanced multimodal system encourages compact land use, efficiency of access, commercial development, and increased physical activity, as illustrated in Figure 3-21.

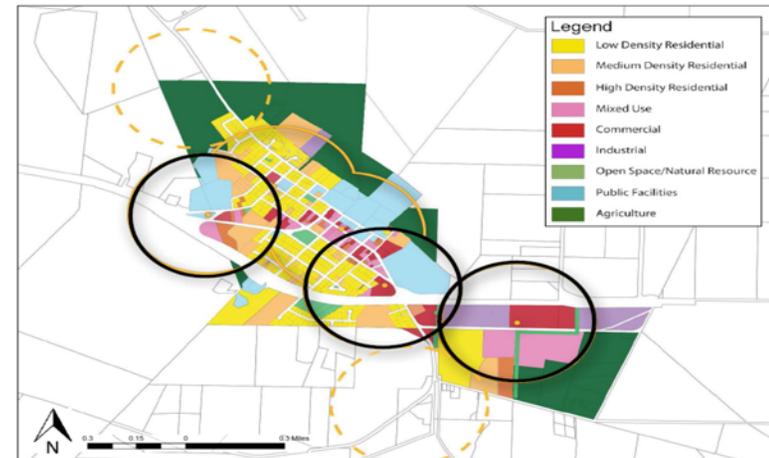


Figure 3-20 Clustered Development Key Growth Areas

Source: City of San Juan Bautista 2035 General Plan

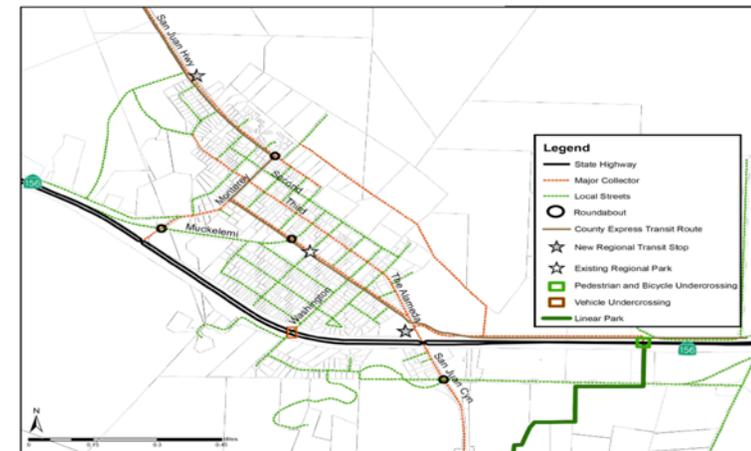


Figure 3-21 Preferred Growth Scenario, Circulation Map

Source: City of San Juan Bautista 2035 General Plan

COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

As noted in the County of San Benito’s General Plan, Figure 3-22, the County will focus future development in areas around cities where infrastructure and public services are available, within existing unincorporated communities, and within a limited number of new communities, provided they meet the goals of the General Plan and demonstrate a fiscally neutral or positive impact on the County and any special districts that provide services to the project.

The Circulation Element of the General Plan provides the framework for decisions in unincorporated San Benito County concerning the countywide transportation system. While the Circulation Element strives to encourage a multi-modal transportation system that serves the mobility needs of all residents, it also reflects the rural nature of the County. Policies encourage public transit and pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements in appropriate areas of the County where they will be most beneficial for linking residents to work, shopping, and leisure destinations. In rural areas of the County, policies in this Element encourage an efficient and economical transportation system to move goods for the agricultural and manufacturing industries.

The Circulation Element supports existing and proposed development under the Land Use Diagram for the General Plan horizon year of 2035, as illustrated in Figure 3-23. Circulation Elements play a critical role in how people travel and by what transportation mode.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, provides a snapshot of the existing transportation network and its system needs.

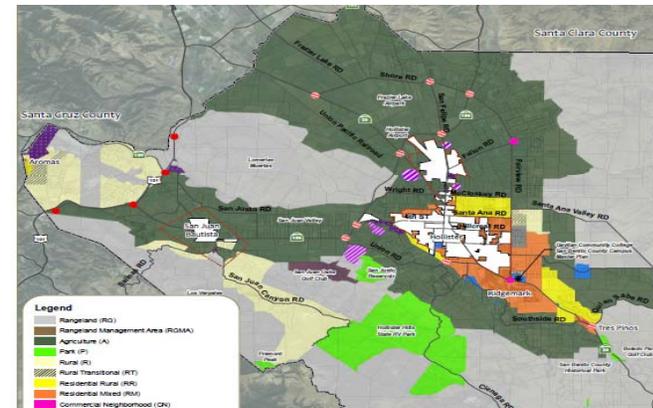


Figure 3-22 Specific Area Plan, County of San Benito
Source: 2023 City of Hollister General Plan



Figure 3-23 Circulation Diagram, County of San Benito
Source: 2035 San Benito County General Plan