



Chapter 1: Introducing a Vision for the Future of Transportation

Chapter 1 introduces the backdrop and context for the chapters to follow. The Regional Transportation Plan was developed with the understanding of the regional setting, recent economic events, long term trends, and constraints and opportunities.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AGENCY

Established in 1973, the Council of San Benito County Governments (COG) is the regional transportation planning agency representing the County of San Benito, and the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista. COG provides a forum for addressing transportation matters of area wide interest and builds consensus on transportation issues facing the San Benito region. #

Our Roll in the Community

Council of San Benito County Governments (COG) improves the mobility of San Benito county travelers by planning for an investing in a multi modal transportation system that is safe, economically viable, and environmentally friendly

The COG Board of Directors include two City Council representatives from the City of Hollister, one representative from the San Juan Bautista City Council, and two from the County Board of Supervisors. In addition to serving as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for San Benito County, the COG Board serves in a variety of capacities, including as the:

Local Transportation Authority (LTA)

The LTA was formed by a Joint Powers Agreement between the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista and the County of San Benito to administer the regional transit program.

Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC)

The purpose of ALUC is to protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring the orderly expansion of local airports and the adoption of land use measures that minimize the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within areas around public airports to the extent that these areas are not already devoted to incompatible uses.

Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE)

SAFE was established in September 1998 by the City Councils of Hollister and San Juan Bautista and the San Benito County Board of Supervisors. This agency is responsible for the area's emergency motorist aid program, which consists of emergency call boxes and other motorist aid programs such as additional CHP enforcement. There are currently 40 call boxes in San Benito County along highways 25, 101, 129, 146, 156 and Panoche Road.

Measure A Authority

Measure A is a ballot measure that was passed by the voters of San Benito County in 1988. It consists of a half cent sales tax over a period of ten years to be used for a number of local transportation improvement projects. The Measure A Authority has since expired.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

As a core function, the Council of San Benito County Governments (COG) develops a 25-year vision that guides local transportation decision making, which is presented in this document as the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is updated every four years and includes both long and short-range program of strategies and actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods. The RTP was developed based on the unique needs and characteristics of the San Benito region and helps shape the economy, environment, and social future, and communicates regional and vision to the State of California and federal government.

“The Regional Transportation Plan 2045 is guided by an integrated vision for a future transportation system that was developed with the input of residents, stakeholders, and local partners.”

Mary Gilbert, COG Executive Director

As the region’s comprehensive transportation planning document, the RTP also serves as a guide for achieving public policy decisions that will result in balanced investments for a wide range of multimodal transportation improvements. An RTP communicates the vision of a community and looks into the future. Specifically, the RTP considers the potential impacts of projected housing, population, and employment growth on the transportation network and identifies solutions to meet the increased demand on all modes, including highways, local roads, bicycle, pedestrian, public transit, among others.



This plan sets a vision and establishes priorities for transportation in the San Benito region.

PROGRESS SINCE THE PREVIOUS RTP

With each adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Council of Governments (COG) aims at planning and delivering a system that provides for consideration of all transportation modes and ultimately meets the growing needs of the region. Since the previously adopted RTP in 2018, the San Benito region has made notable progress. Particularly in the realm of transportation funding, project delivery, context sensitive planning, public engagement, and in other focus areas, as discussed in the following sections.




Transportation Funding

During the November 6, 2018 election, Measure G was approved by **69.77%** of San Benito County voters. The Measure is a one-cent sales tax authorization dedicated to transportation improvements and was sponsored by the Council of San Benito County Governments (COG).



The Measure was developed following a thorough conversation with community members, elected officials, and others to evaluate the greatest transportation needs and challenges of the San Benito County region. Identified needs included widening Highway 25, repairing local streets and roads, and bicycle and pedestrian improving mobility, and transit services.

Out of those conversations, COG staff developed a detailed expenditure plan, called the San Benito County Roads and Transportation Safety Investment Plan (TSIP), which was implemented with the passage of Measure G. Construction and planning efforts are underway on the projects identified in the TSIP, which includes a full project list that divides San Benito County transportation projects into three tiers:

		
TIER I Highway 25	TIER II Local Road Improvement	TIER III Bike, Pedestrian & Public Transit
Widen Highway 25 to reduce traffic congestion.	Maintain local roads, repair potholes, and improve traffic flow.	Improve bicycle & pedestrian safety, bus services for seniors, people with disabilities, and youth.

PROJECT DELIVERY

Highways System

Highway 25

The expansion of highways has slowed considerably over the last decade due to federal, state, and local financial constraints. Still, several strides have been made to improve access, close critical gaps, and congestion chokepoints in the regional highway network.



Figure 1-1: Highway 25, San Benito County

In 2020, the Council of Governments (COG), Caltrans, and San Benito County planning staff and engineers developed six construction alternatives for the Highway 25

Project (State Route 25 Expressway Conversion Project) during a value analysis study that met community needs and accelerate the widening project while staying within budget. The first segment of the Highway 25 Project will convert the existing two-lane conventional highway into a four-lane expressway from San Felipe Road in the City of Hollister to Hudner Lane north of State Route 156 in San Benito County. An interchange at SR 25/SR 156 will replace the existing signalized intersection (roundabout), and has been identified as the first phase of the project. The environmental phase of the Highway 25 project will commence in 2022.

Work is also under way to build an innovative, multi-lane roundabout at the Highway 25/Highway 156 intersection north of Hollister. This is a critical safety project that will immediately reduce the number and severity of collisions at the intersection. Caltrans began construction of the roundabout on May of 2022.



Figure 1-2: SR 25/ SR 156 , Turbo Roundabout

Source: Caltrans

The Measure G-funded project to widen Highway 25 (to be completed over the coming years) will also include a permanent interchange at this intersection to improve safety.

Highway 156

Another critical project in San Benito County is the State Route 156 Conversion Project which is set to begin construction in the Fall of 2022. Work is now under way to build the new Highway 156 4-Lane Expressway between San Juan Bautista and Hollister. The project is being paid for with state highway funds and developer fees. Caltrans expects to complete construction by the year 2024. The existing highway will remain open during construction of the new Expressway. Project milestones and schedule include the following:

- **Design Phase:** Complete
- **Utility Work:** Ongoing, Complete Winter 2021
- **Advertising for Bids:** December 2021/January 2022
- **Construction:** Begins August 2022



Figure 1-3: Highway 25, San Benito County

Source: Caltrans

Local Streets and Roads

Local roadways are constructed and maintained by the City of San Juan Bautista, City of Hollister, and County of San Benito, respectively.

The Council of Governments (COG) has an adopted Regional Transportation Impact Mitigation Fee Program, which finances improvements to the regional network of local roads and bicycle improvements that are needed to mitigate the traffic impact of new development. The County of San Benito and the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista are continuing their efforts to implement the projects identified in the program.

Since the last update to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), San Benito County voters approved Measure G. As noted in the previous funding section, Measure G will provide critical revenues to address local street and road rehabilitation and maintenance needs in the Cities of San Juan Bautista and City of Hollister, and County of San Benito.



MEASURE G WEBSITE
SanbenitoCog.org/MeasureG

- Project updates
- Interactive map
- Citizens Oversight Committee



Figure 1-4: First project completed under Measure G, Third Street Pavement Resurfacing Project, City of San Juan Bautista

Source: City of San Juan Bautista

Since the passage of Measure G, the local government agencies have completed several key projects. The County of San Benito completed several pavement rehabilitation projects including Buena Vista Road and Union Road in the year 2020 and 2021. The City of San Juan Bautista completed the first project funded under the Measure.

Active Transportation

The region is making steady progress in encouraging more people to embrace active transportation methods of moving. In the San Benito region, planning, designing, and constructing complete streets are being tailored to the local context and the particular needs and opportunities of each project.

Beyond the built environment of human-made infrastructure (i.e., bicycle lanes, etc.), COG continued its focus of engaging community through annual events such as Walk to School Day, Bike Week, Kids at the Park, and community sponsored bicycle rides.



Figure 1-5: COG staff participates in *Un Paseo en Bicicleta* a bicycle ride in the City of San Juan Bautista, Helmet Fitting event at Kids at the Park, and Walk to School Day at R.O. Hardin Elementary School

Source: Council of San Benito County Governments

Public Transit

Transit services in the San Benito region provide mobility benefits to the community. Significant progress has been made toward completing capital projects for transit, including the purchase of new vehicles, upgrading dispatch software, and planning for the implementation of Mobility on Demand and the Tripper service.

In the summer of 2021, the San Benito Local Transportation Authority (LTA) launched two new services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- County Express On-Demand will be the first on-demand bus service offered in Hollister. Buses will not have a fixed schedule; instead, riders can schedule a ride up to one hour in advance using the County Express On-Demand mobile phone app.
- The Tripper service is an added bus service during peak school travel times—students and the general public may ride.



Figure 1-6: Mobility on Demand mobile App
Source: LTA

The San Benito LTA also completed the Analysis of Public Transit Network Expansion Projects for Congestion Relief of the Highway 25 Corridor Study and kicked off an update to the Short-Range Transit Plan in the Fall of 2021.

Aviation

There are two airports in the San Benito County region, including the Hollister Municipal Airport and Frazier Lake Airpark.

Frazier Lake Airpark is a privately-owned airport for public use located in the northwest area of San Benito County approximately 8 miles northwest of Hollister, 40 miles southeast of San Jose, and 40 miles northeast of Monterey. The Airport is located on 156 acres of land, at an elevation of 153 feet above mean sea level. The Airport is owned and operated by the Frazier Lake Airpark Corporation. Frazier Lake Airpark is unique in two



Figure 1-6: Frazier Lake Airpark
Source: Frazier Lake Airpark

respects; one of its runways is irrigated turf, the other runway surface is water. The turf runway attracts pilots from other airports due to the unique experience of landing on a grass surface and is the only public-use irrigated turf runway in the state.

The City of Hollister owns and operates the Hollister Municipal Airport, which is located at the North end of Hollister, on the west side of San Felipe Road. The Airport supports general aviation activities and plays host to a number of airport related businesses, such as Cal Fire Air Attack Base which plays an important role in suppressing wildfires in six counties.

Over 53,000 that land and take off from the Hollister airport every year.



Figure 1-7: Hollister Municipal Airport

Source: City of Hollister

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN SAN BENITO COUNTY

The regional transportation planning process for this document is led by the Council of Governments (COG) and is a collaborative effort that is widely participated by various key stakeholders and the general public. The process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties. Particularly, planning on the development of the San Benito County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) involve the collaboration of various regional partners, including: the City of San Juan Bautista, City of Hollister, County of San Benito, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), Department of Transportation (Caltrans), community organizations, stakeholders, and the general public.



The San Benito RTP was prepared in accordance with the California Transportation Commission's Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines.