



# 2023 Highlights

from your San Benito COG Board of Directors

## Celebrating 50 Years

### Our Commitment

- Planning for the Future
- Financing and Programming Projects
- Providing and Funding Bus Transit
- Promoting Ridesharing
- Maintaining Emergency Call Boxes
- Administration of Measure G
- Commission for Airport Land Use

### Major Projects in Progress

- US 101/25 Interchange
- 152 Trade Corridor
- Turbo Roundabout
- Hwy 156 Improvement
- 101 Wildlife Connectivity Project
- Highway 25 Conversion
- Revamping Transit

### Beautification and Safety

- Underpass Mural in San Juan Bautista
- Highway 25 Beautification in Hollister
- Monument/ Sculpture at Hwy156/ Bixby Rd

### Advocating on Urgent Road Issues

- Emergency repairs for RR Crossing
- Hwy 156 Left Turn Restrictions
- Hwy 156/ Union closure timeline

Since its formation in 1973, the Council of San Benito County Governments (SBCOG), a joint powers authority (JPA), has collaborated with local entities to address regional transportation issues in San Benito County. As the regional transportation planning agency, we strive to improve the quality of life of residents through efficient transportation planning, financing transportation projects, providing public transit, promoting mobility options, administering



SBCOG Executive Team  
 Front: Director Curro, Binu Abraham, Director Morales, Back: Director Sotelo, Vice Chair Casey, Chair Freels

Measure G funds, and ensuring safe land uses around our airports.

Last year was a time of significant change and revamping SBCOG to better address the future transportation needs of our region. This journey began with the appointment of our **new Executive Director**, Binu Abraham. Ms. Abraham joins us from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, one of California's four largest COGs, bringing with her over two decades of invaluable transportation expertise. Her extensive experience, coupled with established connections within California, promises a wealth of insight and collaborative opportunities. Demonstrating proficiency in navigating diverse funding streams and fostering relationships with local entities and stakeholders, Ms. Abraham has already proven instrumental in steering our organization toward success. We are looking forward to the coming year and progress under her leadership.

We also welcomed two **new Transportation Planners** to our team, Douglas Kean, and Samuel Borick.

Samuel Borick holds a master's degree in environmental policy and a bachelor's degree in economics. Mr. Borick is deeply passionate about leveraging



Highway 25 Workshop with Caltrans



statistical analysis to improve transportation planning decisions. He enjoys engaging in policy research and tends to find the economic and environmental dimensions of transportation policy most fascinating. Outside of work, Mr. Borick enjoys gardening, frequenting the rock-climbing gym, contributing to volunteer projects, and immersing himself in music.



Caltrans Clean California Grant: San Juan Bautista Underpass

Kean enjoys exploring new recipes, cooking elaborate meals, spending time with family, weightlifting, and going on long bike rides.

Douglas Kean earned his bachelor's degree in public policy, planning and management. Mr. Kean is motivated by a strong commitment to challenging the status quo with an emphasis on equity and safety. He thrives on researching global projects and adapting them to a local context. Outside of work, Mr.

With their combined expertise and complimentary skills, we are confident in their ability to contribute to the success of SBCOG in delivering meaningful projects in the years ahead.

Continuing the trend of expanding and building our core team, on February 12th SBCOG hired **new legal counsel**, Sloan Sakai Yeung & Wong LLP and the Law Offices of Kirk E. Trost. Their experience representing Regional Transportation Planning Agencies and Transportation Commissions across northern California will be an asset to SBCOG. Counsel and the Executive Director have already hit the ground running with meetings with the speaker's office, the California Transportation Commission, and Board training and strategic visioning and planning sessions. Their expertise will be invaluable as we work towards addressing the transportation and mobility needs of San Benito County residents.



CTC Town Hall with Speaker Robert Rivas

### **Hosted a special Town Hall Meeting & Local Tour for the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to showcase our transportation challenges and priorities**

In September 2023, COG hosted a special two-day Town Hall event for the Commissioners of CTC and their staff, to share our town and county and help them understand our transportation issues. The CTC is the agency that prioritizes state funding for major road projects. In the past, CTC has funded the Highway 156 improvement project as well as the Clean California grant funding for murals in the cities of San Juan Bautista as well as landscaping and art along



Highway 25 in Hollister. It was an important meeting that demonstrated the importance of moving the Highway 25 project forward in our county.

### **State Funding for Transit Infrastructure to enhance transit operations and reduce emissions**

SBCOG advocated for and is set to receive approximately \$8.2 Million from the State to focus on enhancing transit investments and upgrading our transit



SBCOG Team

services to meet the demands of the community. This funding will be used to address two key areas: restoring transit services that were reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic; and planning for the next generation of transit infrastructure needed to accommodate the growing needs of the community.

### **Measure G Funds supporting critical projects were distributed to local communities**

- \$3.8 million to Highway 25 project
- \$4 million to San Benito County
- \$4 million to City of Hollister
- \$420,000 to San Juan Bautista
- \$985,000 to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit projects

### **Legislative Day & Advocacy**

- Met with our legislative members and presented SBCOG's priorities in Sacramento for the Central Coast Coalition legislative day, March 2023
- Participated and presented near and long-term priorities of SBCOG at Speaker Rivas' Transportation Roundtable, November 2023
- Panelist at BenitoLink Town Hall to discuss transportation needs and create awareness, November 2023
- Participated and presented on Highway 25 needs at the Board of Supervisors Legislative Day, February 2024

*Chair Scott Freels  
Mayor, San Juan Bautista*

*Vice Chair Mia Casey  
Mayor, City of Hollister*

*Director Dolores Morales  
Council Member, City of Hollister*

*Director Mindy Sotelo  
Supervisor, County of San Benito*

*Director Angela Curro  
Supervisor, Chair, County of San Benito*

*Binu Abraham  
Executive Director, SBCOG*