



# CITY OF PALM DESERT

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

February 26, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington DC, 20590

**Subject: Support for SCAG RAISE Grant Application – Southern California Comprehensive Sustainable Freight Plan**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the City of Palm Desert, I am writing to support the Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG) Grant Application, "Southern California Comprehensive Sustainable Freight Plan" for the United States Department of Transportation's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program. SCAG seeks grant funding to update its current "Comprehensive Goods Movement Plan and Implementation Strategy" published in 2013, a long-range plan for the goods movement system in Southern California designed to ensure that the Southern California region continues to play a vital role in the global supply chain.

SCAG is the largest Metropolitan Planning Organization in the United States, representing a region that serves as our nation's premier international trade gateway. Along with being an economic and cultural powerhouse, the SCAG region is one of the most significant goods-movement regions in the U.S. and leads many important freight categories in international trade volume, seaports, railroads, air cargo, and trucking activity. This diverse and interconnected freight system helps make Southern California a leader in the manufacturing, production, warehousing, and distribution sectors, imparting a tremendous impact on the national economy. In fact, key goods movement industries support one out of every three jobs in the Southern California region. As such, the region is critical in facilitating and supporting domestic and international freight and goods movement. An update to the Southern California region's comprehensive goods movement plan and strategy is therefore essential to support economic goals, address mobility challenges and supply chain issues, foster environmental good stewardship, and promote community livability and a high quality of life.



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During the past 10 years, global supply chains have experienced increasing instability. International tariff policies, the COVID-19 pandemic, new wars, intensifying inflationary pressures, and geopolitical tensions across the globe have disrupted freight movement. However, investments in freight movement have never been higher, with historic levels of federal and state funding allocated to improve freight fluidity, efficiency, safety, resilience, and technical innovation.

It is critical that SCAG leverage these investments to update its “Comprehensive Goods Movement Plan and Implementation Strategy.” The Plan’s core elements will include equity-focused engagement and implementation components, the development of a freight tour-based model enhancement, and strategies leading to a phased schedule of prioritized projects for the Southern California region expected growth in manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, and other key industries.

Situated in the Coachella Valley, we in Palm Desert observed firsthand the effect that Tropical Storm Hillary had on freight movement through our region. It is vital that we invest now in a transportation infrastructure that protects and supports the future of goods movement throughout the SCAG region.

SCAG’s proposed Plan update is crucial for the regional and national economic future. It will be critical to help alleviate issues in disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by freight while enhancing technical planning tools and identifying priority projects. The proposed Plan update will create benefits for both local agencies looking to implement projects as part of a cohesive regional freight network, and for state and national goals for zero emission fleets, improved safety planning, and innovative solutions for the largest goods movement market in North America. For those reasons, I respectfully urge you to give this proposal full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,

Karina Quintanilla  
Mayor