



# **DIRECTORS' RETREAT SUMMARY**

March 21, 2025

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## Participants

Chair Randy Rowse (Santa Barbara)  
Director David Brown (Solvang)  
Director Laura Capps (Santa Barbara County, District 2)  
Director Al Clark (Carpinteria)  
Director Joan Hartmann (Santa Barbara County, District 3)  
Director Ariston Julian (Guadalupe)  
Director Steve Lavagnino (Santa Barbara County, District 5)  
Director Roy Lee (Santa Barbara County, District 1)  
Director James Mosby (Lompoc)  
Director Alice Patino (Santa Maria)  
Director Paula Perotte (Goleta)  
Director David Silva (Buellton)

## Factors that Support SBCAG Success



## Introduction

SBCAG Board of Directors met for a retreat on February 27, 2025, in Solvang to discuss and identify priorities, goals, and regional needs that could influence SBCAG's strategic direction in the years ahead. The retreat's goals were to establish a strategic framework and identify specific areas for successful future regional collaboration. A key focus of the discussions included an evaluation of Measure A, the countywide half-cent transportation sales tax, including its impact and considerations for the timing and implications of its potential renewal or extension. An additional objective of the retreat was to foster stronger relationships among the SBCAG Directors to facilitate a collaborative Board dynamic.

This effort was supported by pre-retreat interviews conducted by the facilitator from December 2024 to January 2025, which included input from Directors, City Managers, the County Administrator, and Public Works Directors. A summary of these pre-interview insights can be found in Attachment A (SBCAG Pre-Retreat Interview Input Summary).

The retreat was centered on two agenda items: 1) brainstorming and prioritizing future areas of focus, and 2) discussing Measure A and its role in the region's strategic goals. This document summarizes the outcomes of the retreat and provides the Board with actionable insights and recommendations for advancing SBCAG's mission.

## Brainstorming and Prioritizing Future Areas of Focus

SBCAG Directors contributed thirty-one ideas for projects/areas for future collaboration as part of a brainstorming exercise.

Following the brainstorming, Directors used "dot voting" to reflect priorities. Each Director placed dots on the ideas that were priorities for them. The highest priority suggestion received 5 points, the second highest received 4 points, and the lowest of their five priorities, received 1 point.

The suggestions with the highest number of total voter points are noted in Table 1 below.



**Table 1: Highest Number of Total Voter Points**

Number of Points	Proposed Project / Area of Collaboration
14 **	Recognize North County sacrifice and resolve
13	Local control of housing
13 **	Hwy 1 and Hwy 166 have a lack of turn offs and passing lanes along with the Mahoney and Betteravia traffic (West SM Valley)

12	Broadband engagement with the private sector and with model that is a “gold standard ”
12	Commuter rail implementation
12	Finish Hwy 101 (including Cabrillo south onramp)
12 **	Begin developing a plan for the future of Measure A
11	Recreational master plan with more coordination and more funding
11**	Undergrounding of utilities
10	Hiking and biking trail systems regionally
9	Food vendors and micro-kitchens
9 **	Streamlining permitting process
7	Disaster Preparedness
7	Completion of Hwy 1 project north of Lompoc

\*\* Includes input from SBCAG Director Bob Nelson provided at the March 20 Board of Directors meeting as he was unable to attend the retreat due to other county-related business.

Suggestions with six or fewer voter points are noted in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Proposals That Received Six or Fewer Voter Points**

Number of Points	Proposed Project / Area of Collaboration
6	Relationship with Caltrans for brush and encampment clean-up along Hwy 101
4	Next-generation travel preparation with AI and other future vehicles
4	Evaluating previous RHNA success
4	Evacuation planning
3	Continue to have SBCAG retreats
3	Expansion of programs for flexible workforce transit (e.g., CalVans)
3	Best practices in planning and meeting RHNA numbers in the regional area
3	Reconsidering a bike/pedestrian crossing over Hwy 101 in West Goleta
3	Water unity across regions (e.g., water levels and availability)
3	Make roads safer and asphalt to maintain safe roads
2	Caltrans to fix Hwy 101 Storke/Glenn Annie exit

There were also several suggestions that did not receive any votes in the prioritization process. See the proposed projects that did not receive votes in Table 3.

**Table 3: Proposals That Received No Voter Points**

No Voter Points	Proposed Project / Area of Collaboration
	Consider impacts from farm operations in San Luis Obispo County
	Fire insurance
	Regional funding for local agencies
	Develop partnerships with the Federal Aviation Administration for future aerospace
	Collaborate for libraries
	Work towards the betterment of the entire county

## Measure A

SBCAG Executive Director Marjie Kirn gave a brief presentation on the history of Measure A in Santa Barbara County. In November 2008, Santa Barbara County voters overwhelmingly approved the Road Repair, Traffic Relief, and Transportation Safety Measure, commonly called Measure A. Before the measure was brought to voters, regional committees provided input on projects and programs, which formed the basis of the Measure A Ordinance and Investment Plan. The Ordinance and Investment plan served as the framework for allocating funds raised through the measure. The measure was approved by more than 79% of voters and outlined investments in three program categories, with each category receiving a designated percentage of sales tax revenues over a 30-year period. Specifically, 13.4% of revenues are allocated to the Highway 101 Carpinteria to Santa Barbara project, while North County and the South Coast each receive 43.3% of revenues to address current and future regional transportation needs.

## Measure A Splits by Subregion

	North County	South Coast
<b>Local Priorities</b>	74.9%	59.9%
<b>Small Agency Priorities</b>	2.0%	0.2%
<b>Highways/Regional Projects</b>	16.0%	1.5%
<b>Carpool/Vanpool</b>	0.4%	1.5%
<b>Local Transit</b>	0%	18.7%
<b>Interregional Transit</b>	4.9%	5.6%
<b>Specialized Transit</b>	1.0%	1.3%
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian/Safe Routes to School</b>	0.7%	5.7%
<b>Rail</b>	0%	5.5%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Marjie commented that stakeholder town halls held in both North and South County were helpful in building consensus. The percentage of funding for each area of the County was agreed upon and followed consistently through the years. Prior to the Measure being placed on the ballot, the Ordinance and Investment plan was approved by all the cities and the County. After the voters approved the Measure, a Strategic Plan to implement the Measure was prepared initially in 2010 with a requirement to update every five years along with annual audits to ensure the funds were spent according to the plan.



Marjie explained that the Directors could opt to extend the current measure, amend it, or create a new measure with a higher sales tax amount. Any extension/renewal or new Measure would need 66.7% voter approval to be established. The question for the Board is if they want to put any type of measure on the ballot, what election year would they like to target? Marjie recommended a measure be placed on a ballot in alignment with a presidential election year to capitalize on voter turnout. Presidential elections in November of 2028, 2032, or 2036 were discussed. This assumes a desire to continue this tax beyond the current termination date of 2040.

Directors quickly agreed that renewing or extending the current ½ cent sales tax measure is the desired course of action. Directors noted that it is important to inform citizens of the promises made and kept with Measure A. The benefit to the entire County is significant. There was also an agreement that it is best to aim for a ballot measure in 2032, along with the presidential election. By that time, Hwy 101 will be completed and there is time to go back to the electorate if the ballot measure is not successful on the first effort. Targeting 2032 will allow beneficial time for planning to build awareness across cities and the county.

It was also suggested to explore how construction costs have increased since the establishment of Measure A. Directors noted that the surrounding counties of Ventura and San Luis Obispo do not have a ½-cent sales tax and an increase above the state sales tax cap of 10.25% would necessitate legislative involvement to receive an

exception. Directors agreed that the proposed amount of tax is one area where polling is relevant. There are many other areas where polling will be helpful for future planning.

Directors raised many other considerations regarding Measure A. Directors emphasized that it will be important to show constituents all of the projects and accomplishments from Measure A countywide with consideration of signage and press releases. For example, Directors noted how Measure A provided benefits in accelerating projects (i.e., it is estimated that the use of Measure A for Hwy 101 saved fifty years of project construction compared with normal construction timelines.)



Directors indicated they want a timeline of activities to place a measure on the ballot. Directors recalled how stakeholder meetings proved very effective in past measure efforts. A campaign should resonate with residents so the benefits are easily understood and appreciated with consideration for a target date of 2032. Directors also noted that there may be a benefit in beginning to identify catalyst project ideas that register with the constituents. There was also encouragement to use studies to identify plan priorities to incorporate into the new Measure's Investment Plan with the support of Caltrans to acquire state funds. There were two questions asked by Directors in attendance, including, "How can we make basic road maintenance sexy?" and "How does North County's sacrifice get resolved?" The answers to these questions will be further explored in the process.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Marjie Kirn stated that the following next steps will be taken:

- The priority suggestions for future projects and collaborations will be brought to an official SBCAG meeting for formal approval.
- SBCAG staff will research each of the priority ideas, considering whether they are short-term or long-term, which stakeholders need to be involved, and which organization is best suited to lead the project.

- SBCAG will provide a chronological graphic of the Hwy 101 improvements noted with funds allocated to each section.

Other suggestions by the Directors include:

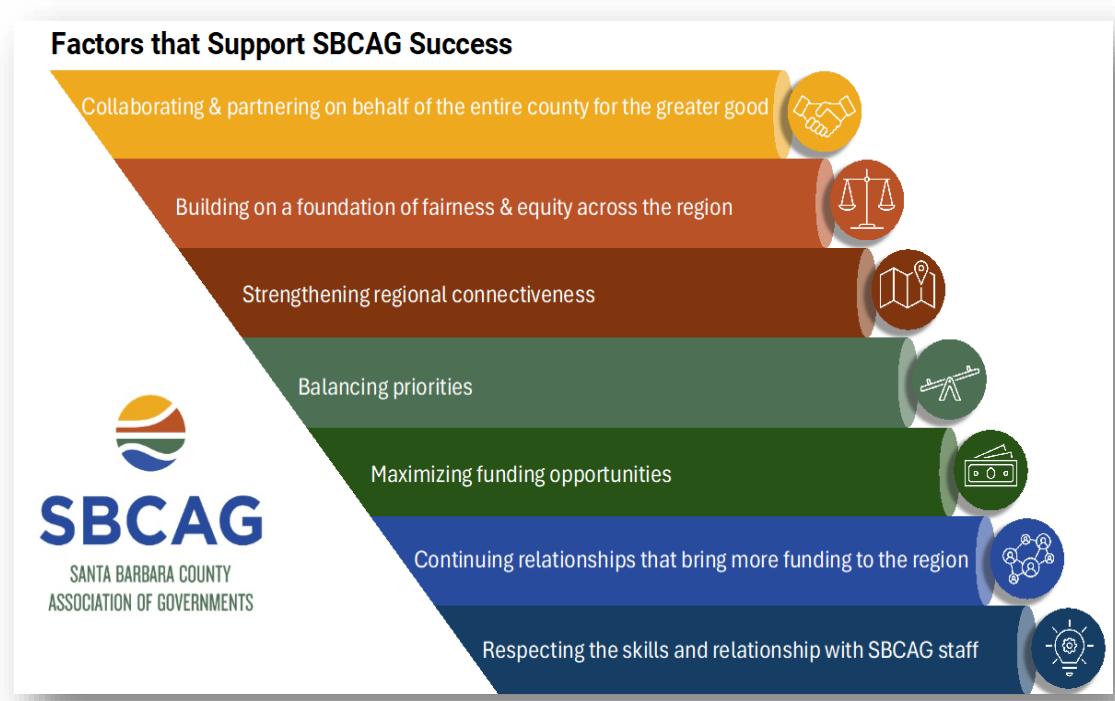
- Directors expressed a desire to meet in person during SBCAG meetings. It was suggested to coordinate in-person attendance at a singular location with lunch during the months that the Air Pollution Control District has a meeting following the SBCAG Board of Directors meetings.
- Directors would like to have future retreats like this one that provide for unstructured dialogue and in-depth discussion.

## Attachment A

### SBCAG Pre-Retreat Interview Input Summary

In preparation for the retreat, the facilitator, Susan Klein-Rothschild, interviewed each SBCAG Director by phone or video meeting. In addition to Directors, key informants such as city administrators from each city and the County CEO were interviewed. There were also interviews with three Public Works Directors. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the factors that have contributed to past success in SBCAG, initiate thinking about the future direction for SBCAG, and discuss considerations that need to be addressed to support a successful retreat.

The factors that have contributed to past success in SBCAG are captured on page 2 of the summary and are copied below. There was a high degree of consensus that SBCAG has been exceptionally effective in the past ten years and the factors below are keys to the success. There was a strong desire expressed by all Directors in pre-retreat interviews to continue the momentum and the success of the past ten years. A number of Directors stated this was not always the case historically.



Ideas for future SBCAG collaborations were solicited in pre-retreat interviews and offered by Directors during the retreat. Almost all ideas that were raised in the pre-retreat interviews were brought forward for consideration at the retreat. There were two

ideas that arose during pre-retreat interviews that were not addressed or were framed differently during the retreat.

The first suggestion that was not raised directly at the retreat was about partnering for positions shared across jurisdictions. This suggestion was offered by one Director in a pre-retreat interview.

A second suggestion that was raised in pre-retreat interview was covered more broadly at the retreat. In pre-retreat interviews, a number of Directors voiced the need to focus on infrastructure for new housing. At the retreat, local control of housing, which incorporates infrastructure, was the idea that received the highest number of points by Directors.

Directors also offered thoughts on what to consider to ensure a successful retreat.

Some of the suggestions included:

- New SBCAG members need orientation and background to participate fully. New members change the dynamic.
- Time for networking and time for movement is important in a full day meeting.
- Staff reports and accurate historical information regarding Measure A funding will inform the discussion.
- We need to listen, hear each other, and be open minded across jurisdictions. We need to work together.
- The relationships in SBCAG are built on trust. Continue to build that trust.
- Basic fairness should guide decision-making.
- North County has an increasing population and we have an opportunity to complete some projects before the infrastructure is complete.
- Consider unintended consequences when planning.
- We need Measure A to extend beyond 2040.