Southern California Association of Governments, Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League and California Emerging Technology Fund Announce Roadmap to Address Climate Change and Reduce GHG Emissions

Groundbreaking research identifies significant opportunities to reduce vehicle trips and GHG if work-from-home policies are both flexible and low-income communities have access to affordable, reliable home Internet

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View full research here
View SCAG and regional findings in chart form here

Los Angeles, April 21, 2022 – Pursuing long-term solutions to address climate change, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) in partnership with the Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League (LA DEAL) today announced recommendations to reduce vehicle-generated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by accelerating broadband infrastructure construction and home broadband adoption to decrease vehicle trips. According to the research supported by a Sustainable Communities Grant from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), depending on the scope and speed of action, the region can potentially reduce the region's GHG emissions by up to 15%.

The key findings and recommendations are being announced in celebration of Earth Day 2022 and at a critical period in the region's planning history; the California Air Resources Board (CARB) has assigned to SCAG a target of reducing GHG by 19% from 2005 levels by 2035. Additionally, emerging from the pandemic, elected and business leaders are making consequential decisions about how and where their employees work that likely will significantly impact the degree to which vehicle trips can be reduced. Adding to the urgency, decisions on where and how to deploy historic levels of federal and state funding for broadband infrastructure and affordable home Internet for qualified households are being made now. (State statute defines broadband as a generic term for high-speed Internet infrastructure, including wireline and wireless networks and technologies.)

In the new research, the private sector identified the top two strategies to reduce trip generation as expanding construction of high-speed Internet throughout the region and employer tax credits to implement telecommuting. And more than half of public agencies, service providers and education and health organizations surveyed said lack of high-speed Internet infrastructure limited the number of employees who can work remotely and said the top strategy to reduce trip generation is to help their clients, including students and patients, access affordable home Internet and a computing device.

"Achieving the widespread region's goals will require land-use planners and regulators to think about incorporating broadband into all new projects to help reduce trip generation and ensure Digital Equity. Decisions made today will impact the future of California's leadership and competitiveness in the world economy and reputation as a pioneering steward of the environment and champion of social equity and justice so all Californians can thrive in the Digital Age," said Kome Ajise, SCAG Executive Director. "High-speed Internet infrastructure can not only offset vehicle trips, reduce GHG emissions, and relieve traffic congestion, but ultimately provide all of our communities equitable access to healthcare and the education that the Internet provides."

"Eliminating the Digital Divide in Los Angeles County directly supports the health and welfare of each resident by connecting them to vital online services," said Bill Allen, President and CEO of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), a co-convener of LA DEAL. "This report shows reliable broadband connectivity for all has the potential to significantly reduce GHG emissions, which will reduce air pollution and improve overall wellness. We look forward to working with leaders across the region to implement permanent solutions to achieve universal broadband connectivity."

"Closing the digital divide benefits all Angelenos, and is imperative for our marginalized communities whose youth need essential access to connect to school and services. And directly related to their success is a healthy environment, which closing the digital divide also greatly impacts. UNITE-LA is eager to build upon this survey's findings as we support equitable broadband access," said Amy Cortina, Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, UNITE-LA, a co-convener of LA DEAL.

Stakeholder input research was conducted by Civic Leader Partners, including the Inland Empire Regional Broadband Consortium (IERBC), Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC),

LA DEAL, and Southern Border Broadband Consortium (SBBC). Magellan Advisors and DKS Associates conducted technical research and analysis. More than 25 distinguished professionals comprised an Expert Advisory Committee to peer review the research design and results.

"We are at a once-in-a-generation crossroads. Elected officials, business leaders and residents are showing a strong willingness to take action to fight climate change, and we have identified viable, equitable paths to get there," said Sunne Wright McPeak, CETF President and CEO. "The amount of GHG emission reduction to help address climate change derived from broadband as a green strategy depends on policy and practice leadership from public and private stakeholders through a focused initiative with quantified goals."

View Overall Observations and Conclusions [here](#)

Key Recommendations

- Affirm substantively that telework (especially hybrid and flexible work arrangements) are here to stay. Validate that public and private employers have embraced this concept as the new normal and there is no desire or intent to return to old behaviors.

- Incent employers to achieve target outcomes and optimize telehealth and distancing learning for both reduction of trip generation and quality experiences for participants.

- Accelerate deployment of high-speed Internet infrastructure. Evaluate the perceived gap in broadband infrastructure by the private sector to determine and quantify if the need is middle-mile construction (connecting facilities) or last-mile deployment (connecting employees to work)—or both—and identify the obstacles and solutions.

- Develop and adopt policies, strategies and programs to promote adoption of technology and home Internet use to optimize opportunities to reduce vehicle trips. Identify specific processes for how municipalities, hospitals, and schools can accelerate use and support training for digital skills competency.

- Design and implement a pilot project (and then expand if demonstrated to be effective) — a true stakeholder-driven, collaborative approach to transforming neighborhoods that achieves and accelerates adoption to get all households online. Ideally, use investment in middle-mile infrastructure as a catalyst for last-mile deployment and adoption.

Key Research Findings

- The private sector identified the top strategy to reduce trip generation as "Construction of High-Speed Internet Infrastructure Throughout the Region to Connect All Locations". The private sector's next top-rated strategy is "Employer Tax Credits to Implement Telecommuting".

- Public Agencies, Service Providers, Education, and Healthcare Sectors identified the top strategy to reduce trip generation as "Assisting Clients, Customers, Students and Patients with Securing Affordable Home Internet Service and a Computing Device".

- Lack of high-speed Internet infrastructure limited the number of employees who can work remotely for all Stakeholder Groups:
  — 40.6% Private-Sector Business;
  — 50.6% Public Agencies or Service Providers; and
  — 56.4% Education or Health Organization.

- Interviewed low-income households rated the importance of the following factors or assistance in subscribing to home Internet service (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest):
  — Affordable Home Internet Service: 3.38
  — Improved Internet Infrastructure: 3.35
  — Affordable Computer: 1.67
  — Digital Literacy Training for Family: 1.25

- Significant percentages of these households said they could reduce vehicle trips by being connected to the Internet, ranging from 70.3% for paying bills to 20.9% for getting public benefits.

About Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization (MPO), representing 6 counties, 191 cities and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to encourage a more sustainable Southern California now and in the future.

About Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League (LA DEAL)
The Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League Consortium is a collaborative community-driven process to assess and tackle the broadband gaps that exist in communities across the Los Angeles region. This unique Regional Broadband Consortium for Los Angeles County seeks to address broadband access in a systemic and equitable way through true community representation and robust infrastructure of civic leaders representing business, education, nonprofits, and government, so that both unserved and underserved communities have equal access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet service. The devices and training to optimize their use. LA DEAL is convened by LAEDC and UNITE-LA

About California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF)
CETF is a statewide non-profit foundation with the mission to close the Digital Divide in California. CETF provides grants to non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) to assist low-income households adopt broadband and become digitally proficient, leads and manages School2Home to successfully integrate technology into teaching and learning with deep parent engagement to close the Achievement Gap in middle schools in low-income neighborhoods, and promotes Digital Inclusion in public policy to achieve Digital Equity.