



DATE: April 11, 2017  
TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council  
FROM: Colin Parent  
SUBJECT: Analysis of AB 805 and La Mesa's Interests

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to provide some analysis of the potential impact of Assembly Bill 805, which proposes to change the voting structure of both the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), and the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS).

While some news coverage has suggested that the proposal will diminish the influence of small cities, that analysis is incomplete for La Mesa.

La Mesa shares borders with San Diego, and most of our commuting residents work in San Diego or commute through it. We also share numerous freeway and transit lines with San Diego. As such, we share strong common interests with the City of San Diego for how transportation funding is allocated.

We should evaluate AB 805 not on the basis of whether it is good for small cities generally, but instead we should evaluate that proposal on the basis of whether it will be good for La Mesa in particular. As I detail below, I believe that AB 805 is good for La Mesa.

La Mesa is small, and we will can only choose to be a part of a larger coalition at SANDAG and MTS. La Mesa must decide whether to ally itself with a coalition of small cities, mostly in the North County, or whether we should ally ourselves with the larger jurisdictions, especially the City of San Diego, with which we share substantial transportation infrastructure.

1. **AB 805's proposed changes to the leadership structure of SANDAG would benefit La Mesa by shifting influence away from North County which does not share common interest with La Mesa.**

Because of our small size, La Mesa will never have a commanding vote share at SANDAG. However, La Mesa does stand to benefit if the City of San Diego gains influence on the SANDAG board, because so much of our transit lines and freeway routes are shared with the City of San Diego.

A review of the 2015 SANDAG Regional Plan shows that projects benefitting La Mesa almost all travel through the City of San Diego. None of the projects that directly benefit La Mesa travel through any of the cities in North County. The projects in the Regional Plan can be reviewed online here:

[http://www.sdforward.com/pdfs/RP\\_final/AppendixA-TransportationProjectsCostsandPhasing.pdf](http://www.sdforward.com/pdfs/RP_final/AppendixA-TransportationProjectsCostsandPhasing.pdf).

Projects that will benefit La Mesa in SANDAG's plans include a variety of highway and transit projects, and they are listed below.

The phasing for transit and highway projects benefitting La Mesa show that SANDAG clearly favors North County jurisdictions with projects slated for earlier construction. This is the result of SANDAG providing smaller jurisdiction in North County with a disproportion level of authority at SANDAG. The North County cities are able to receive substantially more benefits than their relatively small population would otherwise justify. This does not serve La Mesa's interests.

#### SANDAG 2015 Regional Plan - Highway Projects Affecting La Mesa

- SR 94 Improvements
- 125/94 Interchange
- SR 125 Improvements between SR 54 and I-8
- I-8 Improvements from I-5 to SR 125

#### SANDAG 2015 Regional Plan - Transit Projects Affecting La Mesa

- Green Line Trolley Frequency
- Orange Line Trolley Frequency
- Rapid 10 Bus - La Mesa to Ocean Beach via Mid-City, Hillcrest, Old Town
- Rapid 90 Bus - El Cajon Transit Center to San Diego International Airport ITC via SR 94, City College (peak only)

We can determine how La Mesa fares compared to the North County jurisdictions by evaluating the priority SANDAG places on projects. With few exceptions, jurisdictions in North County receive projects benefitting them before La Mesa. A review of those projects is below.

#### SANDAG Phasing - Transit:

None of the transit projects benefitting La Mesa are scheduled in SANDAG's 2015 Regional Plan to begin before 2020. However, multiple projects including the COASTER and SPRINTER in North County are planned for the 2020 period.

#### SANDAG Phasing - Managed Lanes:

Only the SR-94 improvements for La Mesa are scheduled to occur by 2035. However, the I-5 and SR-78 are all scheduled to occur before 2035, primarily benefitting jurisdictions in North County.

#### SANDAG Phasing - Highway Projects:

The I-8 projects benefitting La Mesa will not occur until the 2050 timeline. In contrast, the I-5 and SR-15 projects serving North County will be completed by 2035.

#### SANDAG Phasing - Freeway Connectors:

The SR-94 and SR-125 connectors will be finished by 2035. This is comparable to the variety of freeway connectors like the 56 and 78, which will occur in that same time frame, which primarily serve North County.

**2. AB 805's proposed changes to the leadership structure of MTS would benefit La Mesa.**

Because of our small size, La Mesa will never have a commanding vote share at MTS. However, La Mesa does stand to benefit if the City of San Diego gains influence on the MTS board, because so much of our transit lines are shared with the City of San Diego.

A review of the MTS transit routes suggests that La Mesa is unique among MTS jurisdictions for having transit lines that primarily serve as connections into the City of San Diego.

Most transit lines in La Mesa are intended to connect residents to the City of San Diego job centers. Only two MTS bus lines connect to non-San Diego areas, and they are primarily routes to connect Spring Valley residents to the Orange Line stops within La Mesa. Only one bus line in La Mesa is primarily internal to our boundaries, connecting La Mesa residents to Grossmont College.

Other small cities with the MTS system are likely not to see the same confluence of interests with La Mesa and San Diego because of the greater share of lines within their boundaries that do not serve as connections to the City of San Diego.

While AB 805 might diminish the influence of most small cities within MTS, the bill will benefit the interests of La Mesa, because our lines are focused mostly toward San Diego, not other small cities in the region.

For reference, view the current MTS Route Map:

[https://www.sdmts.com/sites/default/files/attachments/rtm\\_2016\\_a.pdf](https://www.sdmts.com/sites/default/files/attachments/rtm_2016_a.pdf)

**La Mesa Bus Routes**

Connections from La Mesa to San Diego

- Orange Trolley
- Green Trolley
- 1 Bus
- 7 Bus (Top ridership for bus lines in the entire MTS system)
- 14 Bus
- 115 Bus

Internal Lines Mostly Within La Mesa:

- 854 Bus (Lake Murray and Grossmont College)

Connections to La Mesa for Residents in Spring Valley:

- 851 Bus
- 855 Bus

**MTS Cities with Preponderance of Lines Serving within their Boundaries:**

- El Cajon
- Chula Vista
- National City

MTS Cities with Even Split between Internal Lines and Lines Connecting to San Diego

- Santee (only two mostly-internal bus lines and one trolley)
- Lemon Grove (fairly balanced)
- Coronado (relatively few lines)
- Imperial Beach (relatively few lines)

3. Conclusion:

I believe that we should evaluate AB 805 not on the basis of whether it is good for small cities generally, but instead we should evaluate that proposal on the basis of whether it will be good for La Mesa in particular. As I detailed above, I believe that AB 805 is good for La Mesa.

La Mesa is small, and we will can only choose to be a part of a larger coalition at SANDAG and MTS. AB 805 presents us two choices. We can ally ourselves with a coalition of small cities, mostly in the North County, with whom we do not share common interests. Or we can ally ourselves with closer jurisdictions like the City of San Diego, with whom we share substantial transportation infrastructure, and common interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colin Parent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Colin Parent  
Councilmmeber