
September 17, 2026

The Honorable David Zito
Chair
SANDAG Transportation Committee
1011 Union Street, Suite 400
San Diego, CA 92101

SUBJECT: Support for Airport Transit Connection

Dear Chair Zito and Members of the SANDAG Transportation Committee:

On behalf of Circulate Planning & Policy, whose mission is to create excellent mobility choices and vibrant, healthy neighborhoods, I am writing in support of releasing a formal request for information to continue progress on a rail connection between Downtown San Diego and the San Diego International Airport (SDIA).

1. The current airport transit connection concepts reflect Circulate's years of advocacy.

Circulate has been advocating for transit to the airport since 2018. We have continuously advocated for the project to consist of a rail connection to Downtown San Diego, connecting to the existing transit network. We are pleased to see this reflected in all five options for consideration.

Circulate has also advocated for a connection that is responsive to the needs of airport workers, not just travelers. We are encouraged that the options for consideration score among the highest for airport employees and local travelers.¹ Employee connectivity, project cost, and project speed should continue to be top priorities as additional analysis is conducted.

2. An airport transit connection must be one of SANDAG's top capital project priorities.

Improving transit connections to the airport routinely scores as the highest priority transit capital project among San Diego voters.² In addition to being responsive to the needs

¹ San Diego Association of Government, Airport Transit Connection Concept Evaluation Study Addendum, (September 2026), available at <https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/projects-and-programs/transit/airport-transit-connection/atc-concept-study-addendum-2026-09-11.pdf>.

² FM3 Research, San Diego MTS Community Survey Results, (March 6, 2019), available at https://assets.nationbuilder.com/circulatesd/pages/1778/attachments/original/1789665385/2020_Measure_Polling.pdf?1789665385.

of voters and transit riders, our transit system is in dire need of additional funding. Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) is facing a \$120 million budget deficit in 2028 that, if not addressed, will require severe service cuts to mitigate.³ The most sustainable solution to address this deficit is a voter-approved sales tax measure.

If our transportation agencies are going to ask voters to pay for transit, they must listen to what voters want and deliver it. Voters want to be able to take transit to the airport. SANDAG should continue to prioritize moving this project forward to ensure that it can be included as an expenditure on a future ballot measure.

3. SANDAG must act now, or lose \$350 million for the project.

Circulate's initial transit to the airport campaign resulted in a commitment between SDIA and airline partners to dedicate \$500 million in passenger fees to airport access transportation improvements.⁴ The ten-year agreement expires in 2029, and with it the \$350 million dedicated specifically for transit improvements. We cannot lose out on this funding. Given the rapidly approaching timeline, SANDAG must move this project forward now.

4. Conclusion.

Circulate has advocated for a rail connection to the airport since 2018. We are pleased that the current concepts for consideration reflect our advocacy. Now is the time to double down on delivering the airport connectivity that voters want.

Sincerely,



Aria Grossman
Policy Manager
Circulate Planning & Policy

³Metropolitan Transit System, Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget Discussion, (May 15, 2015), available at <https://www.sdmts.com/sites/default/files/2025-05-15-board-pre-meeting-packet.pdf#page=731> p. 731.

⁴ Lori Weisberg, "San Diego airport plans to build a public transit station near Terminal 1," San Diego Union Tribune, available at <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/business/tourism/sd-fisandiego-airport-transit-station-20190201-story.html>.