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**Sierra Club Joins Lawsuit to Challenge San Diego Governments' Flawed
Transportation Plan**

Club leaders cite concerns about plan's contributions to pollution, climate change

San Diego, Calif. – The Sierra Club announced today that it has joined the Cleveland National Forest Foundation and the Center for Biological Diversity as a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit against the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). The lawsuit challenges SANDAG's 2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy and was filed in the San Diego Superior Court in November 2011.

According to the plaintiffs, SANDAG used a deficient process to develop a flawed plan that will invest heavily in freeways at the expense of public transit. The plan will unnecessarily increase pollution and exacerbate global climate change. San Diego is the first region in the state charged with updating its long-range transportation plan under SB 375, a new State law intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – and climate change – through smarter land-use and transportation planning.

“SANDAG's plan is disappointing. The agency missed an opportunity to be a leader. It could have set an example of how to plan for future transportation needs without putting public health and the environment at risk, but didn't,” said Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California. “SANDAG's plan will lead to more sprawl and traffic. What the region needs—and what the law calls for—is a visionary future that accommodates growth while protecting our air and natural resources. We need a plan that recognizes that the world has changed and that people want a transportation system that includes more and better transit.”

SANDAG approved its \$200 billion transportation plan in October 2011. The agency is required to update its vision for regional transportation developments every four years. The recently approved plan front-loads the expansion and extension of regional freeways, which will promote sprawl and reinforce the region's dependence on expensive, car-oriented transportation.

Most of the transit improvements identified in SANDAG's 2050 plan would be delayed by decades and fall far short of creating a robust transit network comprised of efficient rail systems supported by bus, bicycle and pedestrian options. Instead, the plan would encourage more driving, leading to more air pollution in a region that already suffers from very poor air quality.

“Having an environmental powerhouse like the Sierra Club join us as plaintiffs further supports our belief that SANDAG violated the law” said Jack Shu, president of the Cleveland National Forest Foundation. “SANDAG failed in its obligation to serve all of our communities and plan for a better future.”

SANDAG’s plan relies so heavily on freeways and sprawl that regional per capita greenhouse gas emissions will actually *increase* over the coming decades, interfering with California’s landmark efforts to curb climate change.

“As drafted, SANDAG’s plan will be increasing greenhouse pollution at a time when the rest of the world will need to be making dramatic reductions in order to avoid the worst of climate change,” said Kevin Bundy, senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. “We’re very pleased to have Sierra Club on board with this lawsuit, and we hope SANDAG takes this as a sign of just how wrong they got it.”

Throughout the planning process, opponents of the plan have urged SANDAG to prioritize transit investments in the urban core and reject extending freeways into the far reaches of the county.

About the Center for Biological Diversity (www.biologicaldiversity.org)

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 320,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

About the Cleveland National Forest Foundation (www.cnff.org)

The Cleveland National Forest Foundation is made up of private citizens who believe that action must be taken to protect the remaining undeveloped lands in the forest and that sound regional planning to build sustainable, quality urban communities is fundamental to saving the integrity of our wilderness areas.

About Sierra Club California (www.sierraclubcalifornia.org)

Sierra Club California represents the Club’s 13 local chapters and 160,000 statewide members and advocates to protect California’s natural resources and to improve the health and safety of Californians.

About Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger LLP (www.smwlaw.com)

Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger LLP, whose attorneys are lead plaintiffs’ counsel in the case, specializes in government, land use, natural resource and environmental law. Since 1980, the firm has provided representation to public agencies and community groups throughout California.

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